

THE MOBILE GENDER GAP REPORT 2026



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INTRODUCTION



Mobile phones and mobile internet can be life-changing resources, enabling people to connect with each other and access information, healthcare, education, income-generating opportunities, e-commerce and financial services from anywhere.

In 2025, more than 3.2 billion people in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) accessed the internet using a mobile phone.¹ Mobile is still the primary way that people in LMICs access the internet, accounting for 84% of broadband connections in 2025.²

In LMICs, 84% of women now own a mobile phone, 64% own a smartphone and 65% use mobile internet. Yet mobile access and use remain unequal among men and women. Across LMICs, women are still less likely than men to have access to mobile phones, mobile money, mobile internet and other mobile services. Women are also less likely to use these services as much as men. This is particularly true for the most underserved women, including those with low literacy levels and low incomes and those who live in rural areas or have a disability.

In last year's report, we highlighted that progress in closing the gender gap in mobile internet adoption across LMICs had stalled after narrowing slightly the previous year. Our latest data shows that, in 2025, this gender gap decreased slightly to 12%. This reduction continues a slow narrowing of the gender gap since 2022.

Addressing the mobile gender gap provides significant social and commercial benefits to individuals, societies and economies. Connectivity is integral to achieving the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those related to health, education, climate and financial inclusion. GSMA analysis has estimated that from 2023 to 2030,³ closing the gender gap in mobile ownership and use in LMICs could deliver \$230 billion in additional revenue to the mobile industry,⁴ and closing the gender gap in mobile internet adoption in LMICs would add \$1.3 trillion in additional gross domestic product (GDP) over this period.⁵ Mobile access and use can also transform women's lives. GSMA research has shown that once women use mobile internet, most believe it has a positive impact on their lives and to a similar degree as men.⁶ Mobile can strengthen women's resilience in the face of economic, climate and political crises and shocks.

In this ninth edition of *The Mobile Gender Gap Report* series, we share the latest data on women's access to and use of mobile in LMICs, the barriers they face and how these findings compare to men. We also share recommendations to close the mobile gender gap and reach more women with mobile, including actionable suggestions for mobile network operators (MNOs), policymakers, regulators, the development community and other stakeholders.

The world is becoming rapidly more digital, and the acceleration of technologies like AI is creating more digital divides, making it more essential than ever for women to access and use mobile. We must strive for equal access and use so that women, their communities and society at large can realise the transformational benefits of mobile. Achieving this goal requires attention, investment and collaboration from all.



1. GSMA Intelligence, 2025.

2. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates for 2025.

3. This period is inclusive of the years 2023 and 2030.

4. GSMA. (2023). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023](#).

5. GSMA. (2024). [The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2024](#).

6. GSMA. (2023). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023](#); GSMA. (2024). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2024](#).

THIS REPORT PROVIDES:



Updated data on gender gaps in mobile ownership, smartphone ownership and mobile internet adoption in LMICs and how these figures have changed over time.



Updated insights on the barriers to mobile internet adoption and further mobile internet use.



New data on how men and women mobile internet users perceive the impact of mobile internet use on their livelihoods and incomes.



New breakdowns of mobile gender gaps in low- and middle-income countries by urban and rural areas, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS).

The findings of this report draw on the annual **GSMA Consumer Survey**, which had more than

16,000
RESPONDENTS FROM
14 LMICs

These face-to-face, nationally representative surveys were conducted between September and November 2025. Analysis of other research and data from the GSMA, as well as other organisations that investigate and track the mobile gender gap, also inform the findings of this report.

KEY FINDINGS



KEY FINDINGS

- 1. The gender gap in mobile internet adoption across low- and middle-income countries decreased slightly in 2025**, driven primarily by Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This continues a slow narrowing of the gender gap since 2022.
- 2. More than 1.5 billion women in low- and middle-income countries are now using mobile internet, with women's rate of adoption similar to last year.**
- 3. Women are now 12% less likely than men to use mobile internet across low- and middle-income countries.** This translates to around 200 million fewer women than men. Currently, 74% of men in these countries use mobile internet compared to only 65% of women.
- 4. More than two-thirds of the 810 million women still not using mobile internet in low- and middle-income countries live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.** These regions also have the widest gender gaps in mobile internet adoption: 26% and 25%, respectively.
- 5. The gender gap in mobile internet adoption tends to be two to three times wider in rural areas than urban areas of low- and middle-income countries.** The mobile internet gender gap in rural areas is widest in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Middle East and North Africa.
- 6. Of the different categories of low- and middle-income countries, the widest gender gap in mobile internet adoption is in least developed countries,** followed by landlocked developing countries.
- 7. The gender gap in smartphone ownership across low- and middle-income countries is relatively unchanged at 13%.** This translates to around 210 million fewer women owning smartphones than men. In these countries, 64% of women now own a smartphone compared to 73% of men. Smartphone gender gaps tend to be wider in contexts with wider gender gaps in mobile internet adoption, such as in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and in rural areas of LMICs.
- 8. The gender gap in mobile ownership across low- and middle-income countries is 7% and has not changed notably in nine years.** There are still around 385 million women who do not own a mobile phone, and they are proving difficult to reach.
- 9. The vast majority of mobile internet users in survey countries access it from their own phone.** However, in several countries, including Pakistan, India and Ethiopia, a much higher percentage of women mobile internet users than men continue to only use the internet on someone else's mobile phone.
- 10. Awareness of mobile internet is high and remains almost equal among men and women in most of the survey countries, but notable gender gaps remain in some countries.** Awareness does not always lead to adoption, particularly for women.
- 11. For those who are already aware of mobile internet, the top reported barriers to adopting it are still affordability (primarily of handsets) and literacy and digital skills.** With millions more women offline than men, women are disproportionately affected by these barriers. Women also tend to experience these barriers more acutely due to social norms and structural inequalities, such as lower education and income.
- 12. Once men and women use mobile internet, the top reported barriers to further use are still safety and security concerns, affordability (particularly data but also handsets) and, to some extent, connectivity experience.** These barriers vary more by local context and less by gender. For example, in countries with higher rates of mobile internet adoption, safety and security concerns tend to be reported more by both men and women.
- 13. Most mobile internet users access it every day, especially men. Female mobile internet users still tend to use it for a narrower range of use cases than men on a daily and weekly basis.** The most popular use cases for both men and women are related to communication and entertainment.
- 14. In almost every survey country, the vast majority of mobile internet users report that using it has either improved or had no impact on their livelihoods and income, rather than worsened it.** Views are similar among men and women and vary more by region and economic activity. For example, mobile internet users in Sub-Saharan Africa are more likely than users in any other region to report that using mobile internet has improved their livelihoods and income.

IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES



65%

of women now use mobile internet



This compares to **74%** of men

THE GENDER GAP IN MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION NARROWED SLIGHTLY IN THE PAST YEAR



Women are now 12%



less likely than men to use mobile internet

This means

200M



FEWER WOMEN
than men use mobile internet



810M

women are still **not using mobile internet**

MORE THAN

2/3

LIVE IN South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa



Women are

7%

less likely than men to own a mobile phone

385M

women still **do not own a mobile phone**



IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

WOMEN ARE 13%

less likely than men to own a smartphone



210M

fewer women than men own a smartphone



The gender gap in mobile internet use tends to be **2–3 times higher in rural areas** than urban areas



Of the different categories of low- and middle-income countries, the largest mobile gender gaps are in **least developed countries**, followed by landlocked developing countries.

Closing the **gender gap in mobile internet adoption** from 2023 to 2030 would add

\$1.3 TRILLION
IN ADDITIONAL GDP



ACROSS 14 SURVEY COUNTRIES

MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION

THE TOP BARRIERS

preventing women who are aware of **mobile internet** from adopting it are:



1. AFFORDABILITY
(PRIMARYLY OF HANDSETS)



2. LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS

FURTHER MOBILE INTERNET USE

THE TOP BARRIERS

preventing women who use **mobile internet** from **using it more** are:



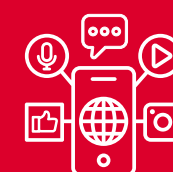
1. SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERNS



2. AFFORDABILITY
(PRIMARYLY OF DATA, BUT ALSO HANDSETS)



3. CONNECTIVITY EXPERIENCE



The most **popular mobile internet use cases** are related to **communication** and **entertainment**.

The vast majority of mobile internet users report that using it has either **improved** or had **no impact** on their **livelihoods and income**, rather than worsened it.

DEFINITIONS

FEATURE PHONE OWNER

A mobile owner who has sole or primary use of a feature phone. A feature phone is an internet-enabled mobile phone with a small screen and basic keypad with several letters per button. A feature phone may have some pre-installed apps but does not have the ability to download apps from an online app store, such as Google Play or the App Store. Smart feature phones are a subgroup of feature phones and are not recorded as a separate category in the survey.

GENDER GAP

The gender gap in mobile phone ownership and mobile internet use is calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Gender gap in ownership / use (\%)} = \frac{\text{Male owners / users (\% of male population)} - \text{Female owners / users (\% of female population)}}{\text{Male owners / users (\% of male population)}}$$

LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRY

A country classified as landlocked and developing (LLDC) by the United Nations.⁷

LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRY

A least developed country (LDC) is classified by the United Nations⁸ as a low-income country that faces severe structural impediments to sustainable development. LDCs are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets.

LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRY

A country classified as low-income, lower-middle income and upper-middle income by the World Bank Country and Lending Groups.⁹

MOBILE INTERNET USER

A person who has used the internet on a mobile phone at least once in the past three months.¹⁰ Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone. Therefore, they can be non-mobile phone owners who use mobile internet by accessing it on someone else's phone.

MOBILE OWNER

"Mobile phone owner" and "mobile owner" are used interchangeably in this report to mean a person who has sole or main use of a SIM card or mobile phone that does not require a SIM and uses it at least once a month. The vast majority of SIM owners also have sole or main use of a handset (a median of 94% across the countries, ranging from 83% to 99%).

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATE

A country classified as a small island and developing state (SIDS) by the United Nations.¹¹

SMARTPHONE OWNER

A mobile owner who has sole or primary use of a smartphone. A smartphone is a mobile phone with a touchscreen display, an advanced operating system (Android or iOS) and the ability to download apps from an online app store, such as Google Play or the App Store.

7. United Nations, [List of LLDCs](#).

8. United Nations, [Least Developed Countries](#).

9. [World Bank Country and Lending Groups](#).

10. Respondents were asked the question: "Have you ever used the internet on a mobile phone? Please think about all the different ways of using the internet on a mobile phone. Just to confirm, people are using the internet on their mobile phones when they do any of the following: visit internet website (e.g. Google or Amazon), visit social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Weibo), send emails or instant messages (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat, WeChat, LINE) or download apps." Mobile internet users are those who answered, "Yes, I have used the internet on a mobile phone in the past three months."

11. United Nations, [List of SIDS](#). For this analysis, high-income countries are omitted from the analysis of SIDS. It therefore excludes Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Nauru, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles, Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago.

THE MOBILE GENDER GAP IN 2025



2025 was yet another challenging year for many in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), due to geopolitical shocks, economic hardship and extreme weather events. Across LMICs, women's overall mobile ownership remained largely unchanged, while their levels of mobile internet use and smartphone ownership increased slightly. Men's levels remained relatively unchanged, resulting in gender gaps similar to those in 2024.

Between 2017 and 2020, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption narrowed substantially from 25% to 16%. While the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns brought many people online for the first time, it also led to long-lasting economic crises. In 2021 and 2022, progress in increasing mobile internet adoption stalled, and the gender gap in mobile internet adoption rose slightly to 18%. Since 2022, we have seen a gradual narrowing of the gender gap in mobile internet adoption, at a much slower rate than prior to 2020. This trend continued in 2025, with women across LMICs now 12% less likely than men to use mobile internet. This small narrowing of the gender gap from 2024 to 2025 is due to women adopting mobile internet at a slightly faster rate than men. Still, across LMICs, around 200 million fewer women than men use mobile internet.

It is also important to understand the gender gap in mobile ownership, specifically of internet-enabled devices. Women are 13% less likely than men to own a smartphone, and this gap is relatively unchanged since 2024. This translates into around 210 million fewer women than men. There are still approximately 840 million women in LMICs who do not yet own a smartphone, which limits their ability to access and use mobile internet to meet their needs.

Across LMICs, women are 7% less likely than men to own a mobile phone of any type, which translates into around 135 million fewer women than men. The gender gap in mobile ownership has not changed substantially since we began tracking it in 2017. Although just short of 2 billion women in these countries own a mobile phone, the remaining approximately 385 million women who do not are proving difficult to reach.

Gender gaps in mobile internet adoption, smartphone ownership and overall mobile ownership have been consistently widest in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where most of those not using mobile internet live (Figure 1). However, there has been some promising progress in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in 2025. The gender gap in mobile internet adoption has narrowed in Sub-Saharan Africa from 30% in 2024 to 26% in 2025, continuing a positive trend observed for the past two years. In South Asia, it decreased from 33% in 2024 to 25% in 2025. Still, there are around 230 million and 330 million women in each region, respectively, who do not use mobile internet.

Women are
13% less likely than men to own a smartphone

Women are
12% less likely than men to use mobile internet



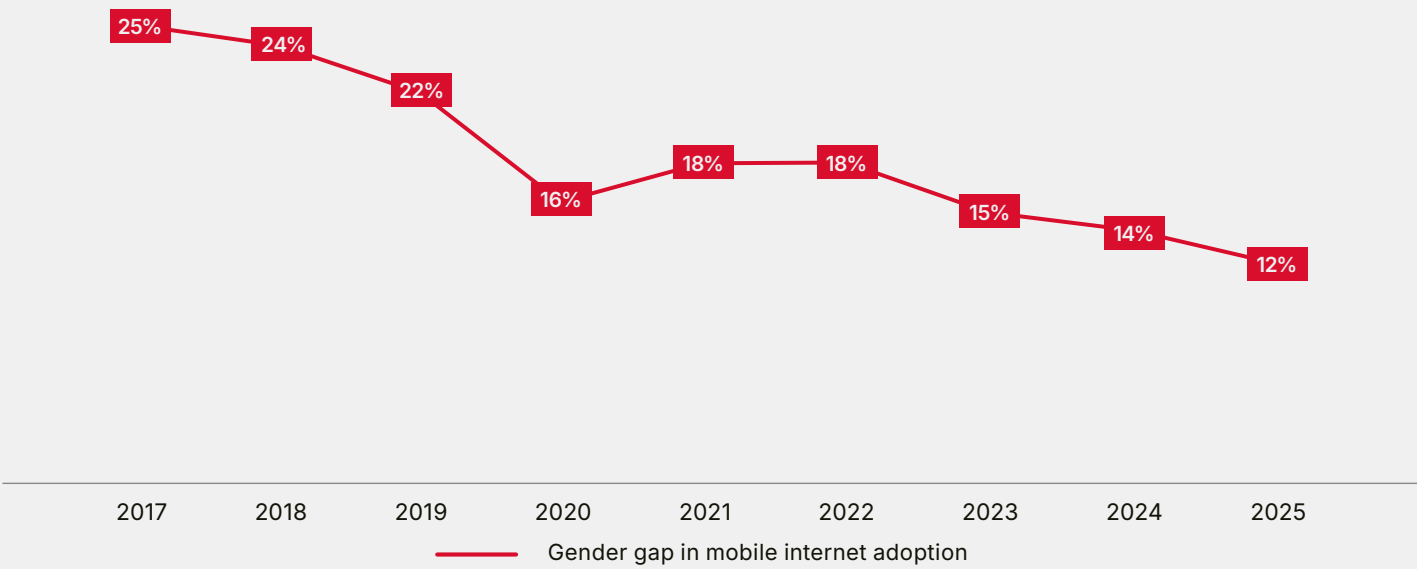
200
million
fewer women than men are using mobile internet



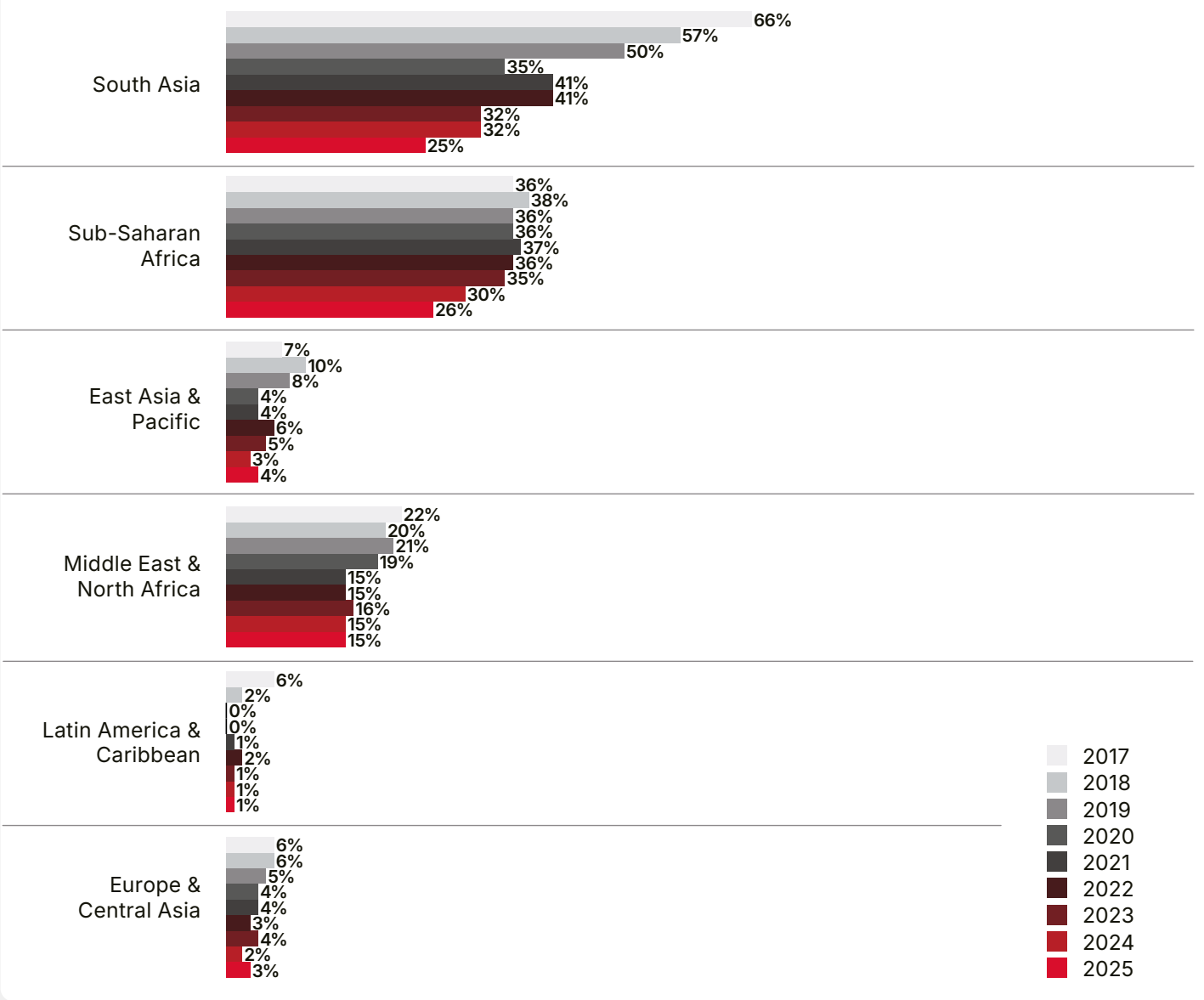
Figure 1
Gender gaps across LMICs and by region, 2017–2025
Among total adult population

GENDER GAP IN MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION

Across LMICs overall

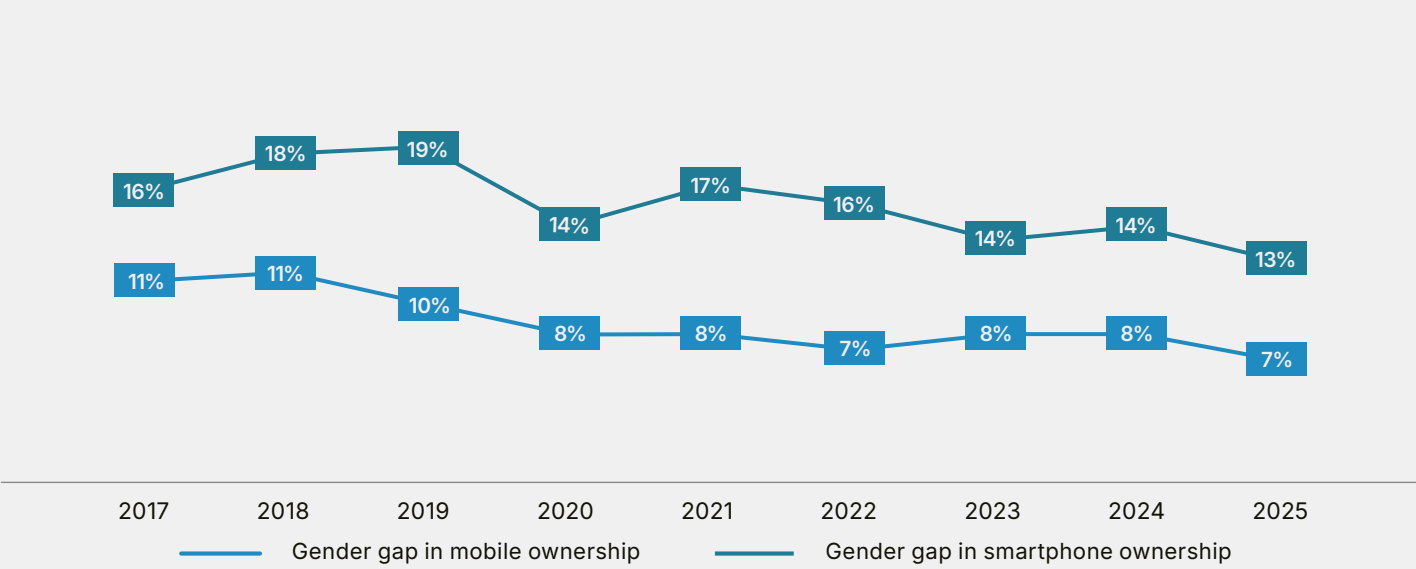


Gender gap in mobile internet adoption

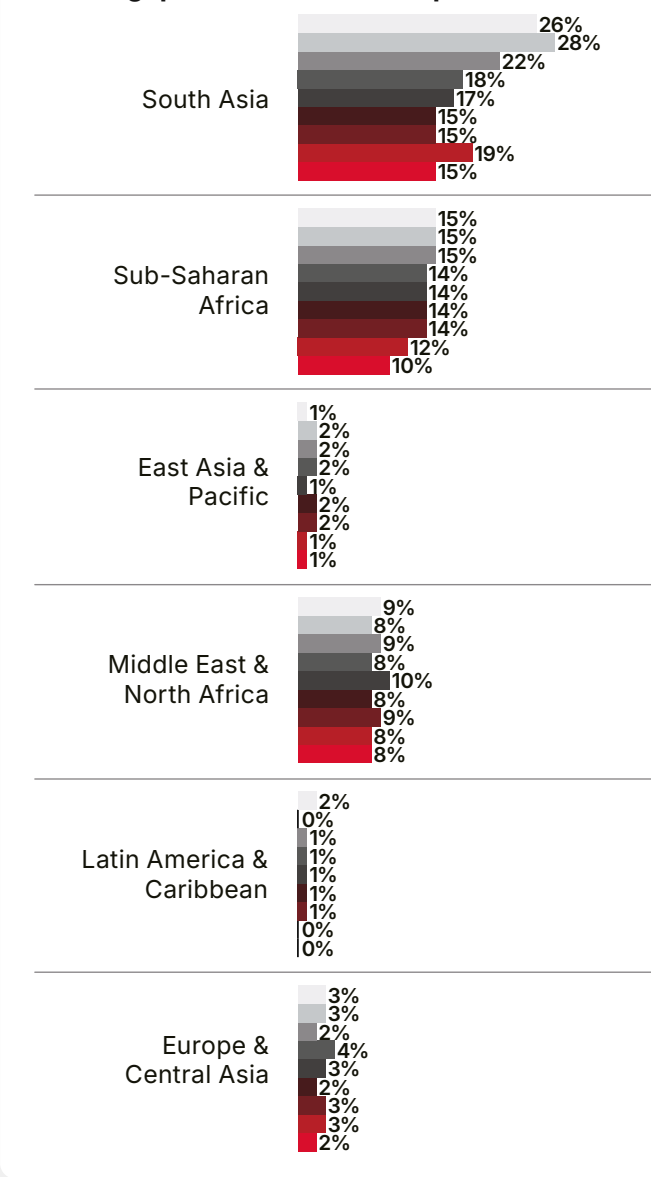


GENDER GAPS IN MOBILE OWNERSHIP AND SMARTPHONE OWNERSHIP

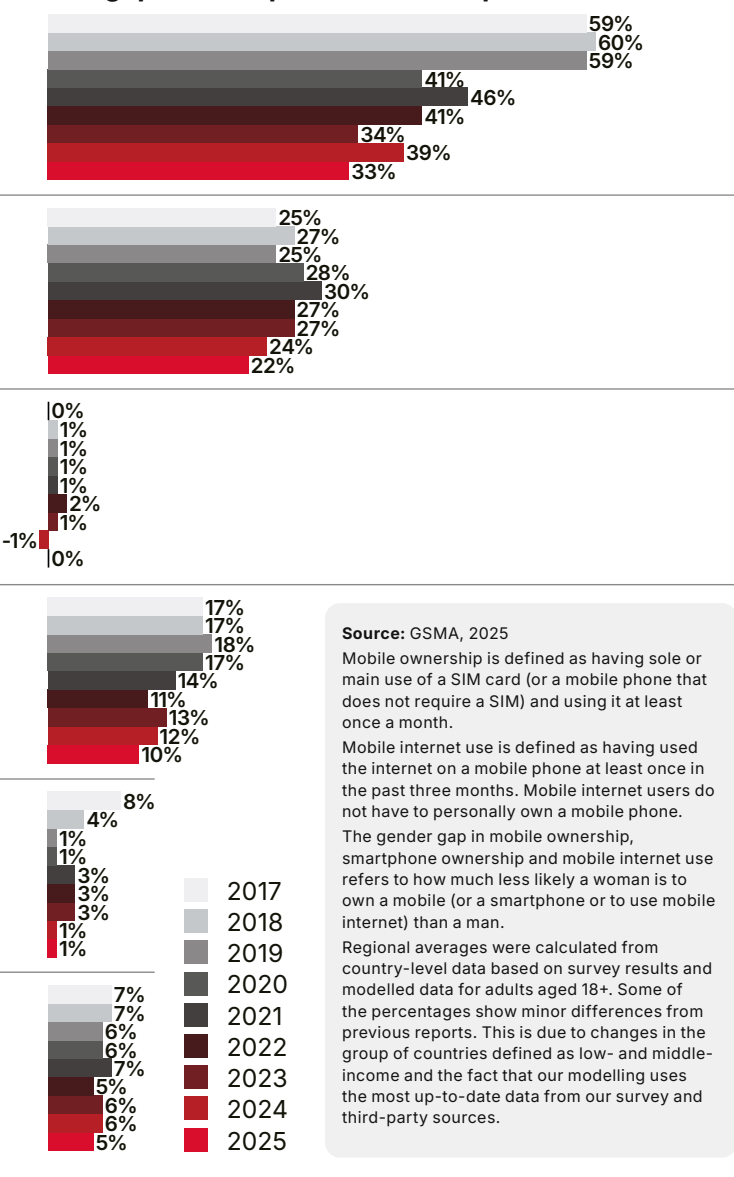
Across LMICs overall



Gender gap in mobile ownership



Gender gap in smartphone ownership



Source: GSMA, 2025

Mobile ownership is defined as having sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM) and using it at least once a month.

Mobile internet use is defined as having used the internet on a mobile phone at least once in the past three months. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone.

The gender gap in mobile ownership, smartphone ownership and mobile internet use refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a mobile (or a smartphone or to use mobile internet) than a man.

Regional averages were calculated from country-level data based on survey results and modelled data for adults aged 18+. Some of the percentages show minor differences from previous reports. This is due to changes in the group of countries defined as low- and middle-income and the fact that our modelling uses the most up-to-date data from our survey and third-party sources.

This year, for the first time, we explored mobile gender gaps in three subgroups of LMICs with significantly lower levels of connectivity than LMICs in general: least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS).^{12,13} The widest gender gaps in mobile internet adoption, smartphone ownership and mobile ownership are in LDCs, followed by LLDCs (see Figure 2). For instance, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption is 33% in LDCs and 23% in LLDCs, compared to 11% in SIDS and 10% in the remaining LMICs.¹⁴

LDCs are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have lower levels of economic and social development than other countries. In LLDCs, geography is often a barrier to widespread access to mobile internet and its benefits, with infrastructure less developed than coastal countries. Many people in LDCs and LLDCs are also speakers, readers and signers of unsupported “nondigital” languages, and are left without access to locally relevant online content. Since women are

more vulnerable to economic shocks and tend to experience barriers to mobile internet adoption more acutely than men, it is not surprising that gender gaps are wider in LDCs and LLDCs, where these challenges are more acute.

Although SIDS can face similar constraints,¹⁵ they have the smallest gender gaps of the three subgroups of LMICs, likely because a relatively large proportion are classified as upper-middle income.^{16, 17} Yet gender gaps in SIDS have been more stagnant in recent years compared to gender gaps in LDCs and LLDCs, which have declined.

Structural limitations in LDCs and LLDCs compound the barriers women already face in benefiting from mobile technologies, making them especially well placed to gain from efforts to improve access to mobile technologies. While the picture is better for women in SIDS than in other subgroups of LMICs, the stubborn gender gaps in these contexts suggest they should not be left out of efforts to ensure women benefit from digital technologies as much as men.



12. A least developed country (LDC) is a country classified as low income by the UN that faces severe structural impediments to sustainable development. LDCs are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets. A landlocked developing country (LLDC) is a country classified as landlocked and developing by the UN. A small island developing state (SIDS) is a country classified as a small island and developing state by the UN.

13. GSMA. (2025). *The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2025: Trends in Mobile Internet Connectivity*.

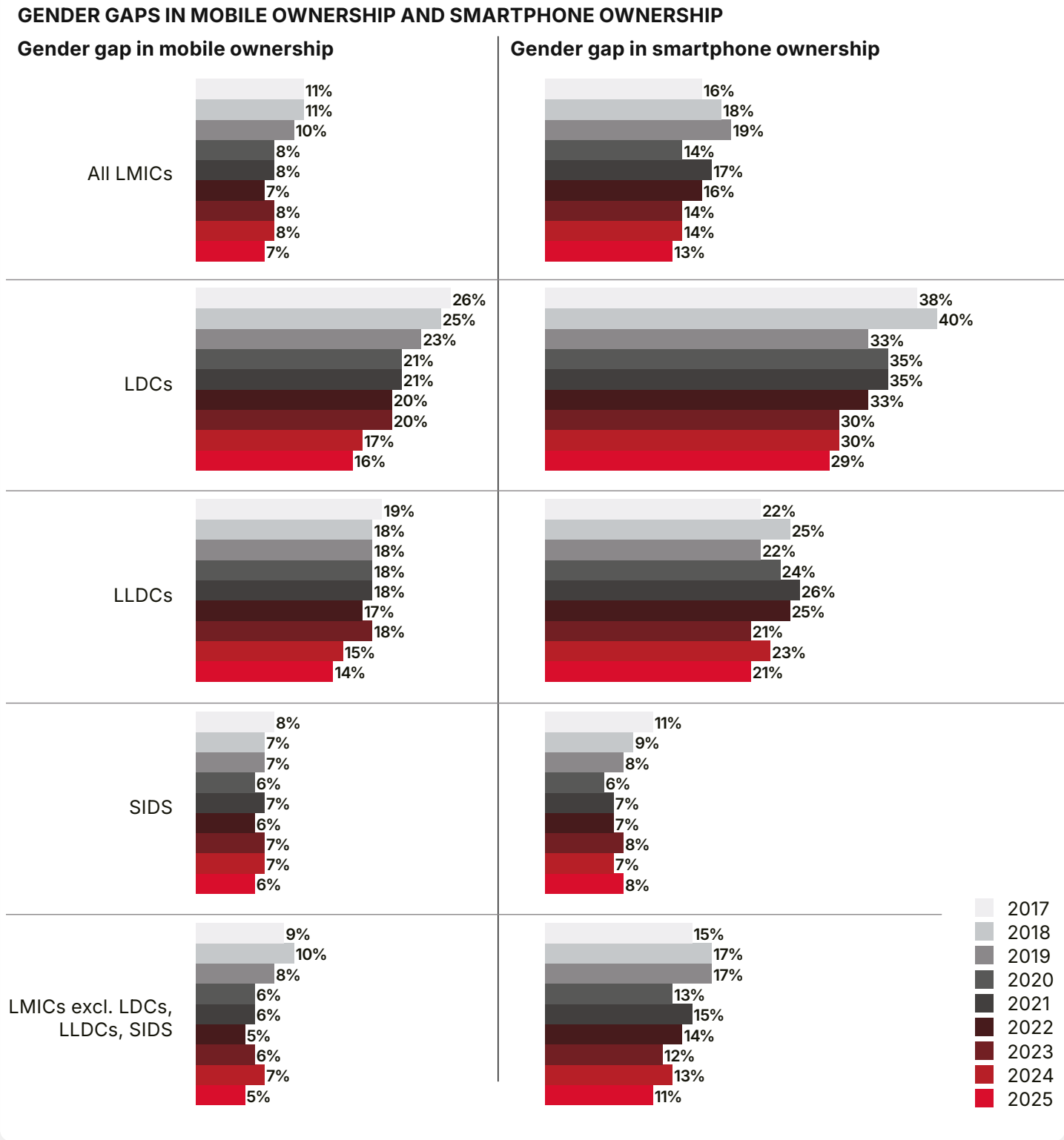
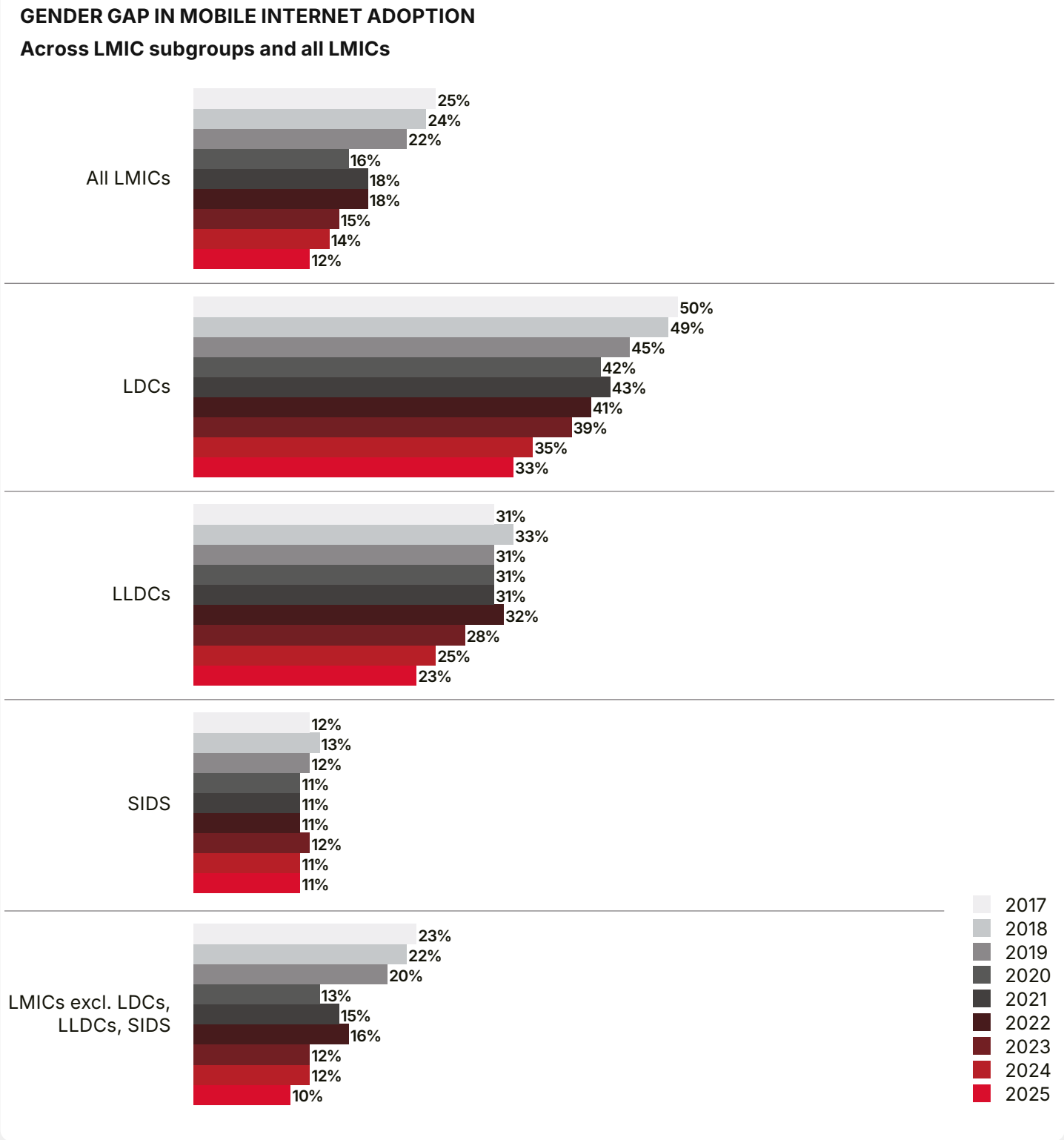
14. “Remaining LMICs” refer to LMICs excluding LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

15. With the exception that they are not landlocked.

16. [World Bank Country and Lending Groups 2025](#).

17. 64% of the SIDS included in this analysis are classified as upper-middle income, compared to 28% of LLDCs and 2% of LDCs.

Figure 2
Gender gaps across subgroups of LMICs, 2017–2025
Among total adult population



Source: GSMA, 2025

Mobile ownership is defined as having sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM) and using it at least once a month. Mobile internet use is defined as having used the internet on a mobile phone at least once in the past three months. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone. The gender gap in mobile ownership, smartphone ownership and mobile internet use refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a mobile (or a smartphone or to use mobile internet) than a man.

LDCs are countries classified as low income by the UN that face severe structural impediments to sustainable development.¹⁸ They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets.

LLDCs are countries that are defined as landlocked and developing by the UN.¹⁹

SIDS are countries that are classified as a small island and developing state by the UN.²⁰

LMIC subgroup averages were calculated from country-level data based on survey results and modelled data for adults aged 18 and over.

18. United Nations, [Least Developed Countries](#).

19. United Nations, [List of LLDCs](#).

20. United Nations, [List of SIDS](#). For this analysis, high-income countries are omitted from the analysis of SIDS. It therefore excludes Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Nauru, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles, Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago.

Women are not a homogeneous group and some may be at risk of being more digitally excluded than others. This year, for the first time, we explored mobile gender gaps in all urban and rural localities across LMICs.

In LMICs, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption tends to be two to three times wider in rural areas than urban areas. In 2025, across all LMICs, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption was more than three times wider in rural areas than urban areas (Figure 3). There is also a difference at the regional level, where the gender gap in mobile internet adoption is wider in rural than urban areas of LMICs in every region except Europe and Central Asia²¹ (Figure 3). For example, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption is 34% in rural areas of LMICs in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to 21% in urban areas and is 30% in rural areas of LMICs in South Asia compared to 18% in urban areas. Even in some regions with comparatively low gender gaps in mobile internet adoption in both urban and rural areas of LMICs, namely East Asia and Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, gender gaps in rural areas are notably higher than in urban areas.

Similarly, in 2025, across all LMICs, gender gaps in smartphone ownership and mobile ownership were more than three times wider in rural areas than urban areas (Figure 3). At the regional level, these gender gaps are one to three times wider in rural areas than urban areas of LMICs in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa. For example, in South Asia, the gender gap in smartphone ownership is 38% in rural areas of LMICs compared to 27% in urban areas. Differences in gender gaps in smartphone and mobile ownership between urban and rural areas of LMICs are more mixed in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia and East Asia and Pacific (Figure 3).

Addressing rural gender gaps is essential to advancing digital inclusion for women overall. In particular, women who live in rural areas tend to have limited physical access to essential services and may have the most to gain from better access to mobile and mobile internet. Addressing gender gaps in mobile ownership, particularly of smartphones, and in mobile internet use can help women in rural areas benefit from these digital technologies to the same extent as men.



21. In LMICs in Europe and Central Asia, gender gaps are low but marginally higher in urban areas than rural areas.

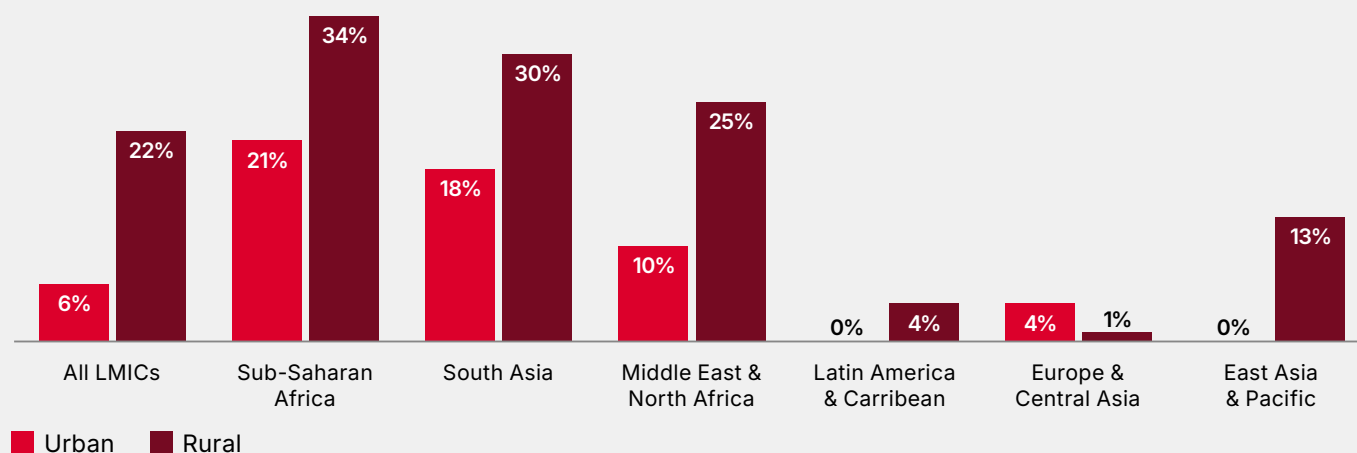
Figure 3

Gender gaps in urban and rural areas across LMICs and by region, 2025

Among total adult population

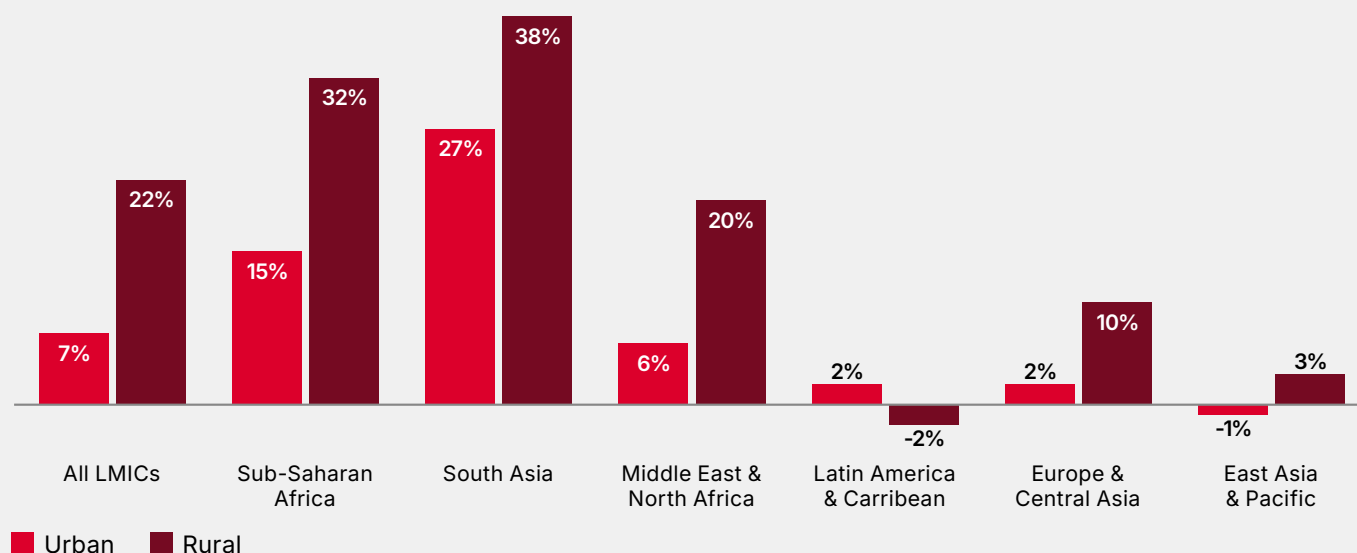
GENDER GAP IN MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION

Urban and rural areas across LMICs and by region, 2025



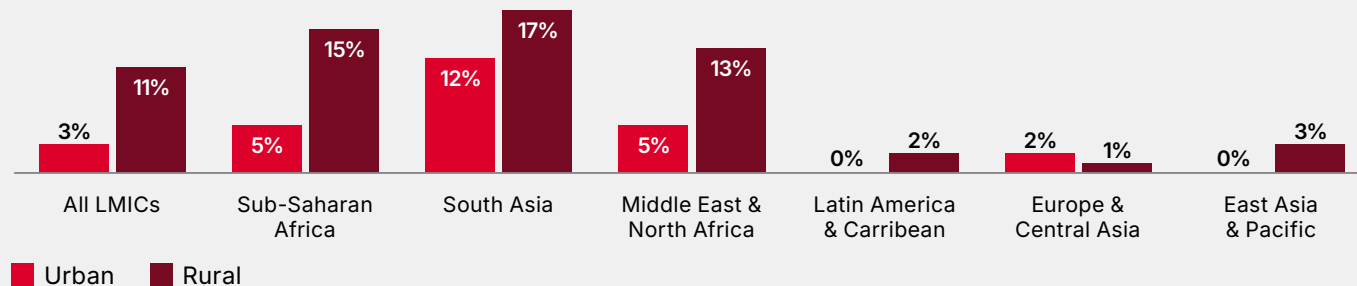
GENDER GAP IN SMARTPHONE OWNERSHIP

Urban and rural areas across LMICs and by region, 2025



GENDER GAP IN MOBILE OWNERSHIP

Urban and rural areas across LMICs and by region, 2025



Source: GSMA, 2025

Mobile ownership is defined as having sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM) and using it at least once a month.

Mobile internet use is defined as having used the internet on a mobile phone at least once in the past three months. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone.

The gender gap in mobile ownership, smartphone ownership and mobile internet use refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a mobile (or a smartphone or to use mobile internet) than a man.

Country-level gender gaps in mobile ownership, smartphone ownership and mobile internet adoption

While the gender gap in mobile ownership and smartphone ownership remained stagnant across LMICs and the gender gap in mobile internet adoption narrowed slightly, there were some variations at the country level.

Women are less likely than men to use mobile internet in all but two of the 14 survey countries. In the other two survey countries, Sri Lanka and Mexico, mobile internet use is equal between men and women. The survey countries with the widest gender gaps in mobile internet adoption are Bangladesh (38%), Ethiopia (36%), Uganda (33%), Nigeria (26%) and India (25%) (Figure 4).

Encouragingly, gender gaps in mobile internet adoption narrowed in half of the 12 survey countries that were surveyed in both 2024 and 2025: Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, India and Pakistan. The most notable changes were in Pakistan, where this gender gap narrowed from 25% to 8%, and in India, where it narrowed from 33% to 25% (Figure 4). In both countries, these shifts were due to women adopting mobile internet at a faster rate than men. However, there are still millions more women offline in Pakistan and India than men. In most of the other countries surveyed in both 2024 and 2025, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption remained relatively stagnant.

In just over half the survey countries, women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone of any type (Figure 4). The countries with the largest gender gaps in mobile ownership are Pakistan (27%), Ethiopia (22%) and Bangladesh (20%) (Figure 4). However, in six of the 14 survey countries (Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Mexico), ownership levels among men and women are similar. In each of these countries, mobile ownership is also near universal.

While the gender gap in mobile ownership did not change considerably between 2024 and 2025 in most survey countries, it narrowed significantly in Pakistan and Senegal. Pakistan saw the most significant change, with the gender gap in mobile ownership shrinking from 37% in 2024 to 27% in 2025. Mobile ownership rates also increased notably among women in Senegal, from 81% to 91%, and the gender gap narrowed from 13% to 6% (Figure 4).

Gender gaps in mobile internet adoption are wider than those in mobile ownership in nearly all markets. Even in countries with relatively narrow gender gaps in mobile ownership and near universal rates of mobile ownership among both men and women, such as in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption can be high. In Ghana and Kenya there are also near universal levels of mobile money account ownership, which may give women a strong incentive to own a mobile phone (including basic handsets) but not necessarily to own an internet-enabled handset or to use their handset to access the internet.^{22, 23} In Pakistan, however, the gender gap in mobile ownership is substantially higher than the gender gap in mobile internet adoption (Figure 4). This is likely to be driven by the relatively high proportion of women mobile internet users in Pakistan who exclusively access mobile internet through someone else's mobile phone (28% of women compared to only 4% of men) (Figure 12).

Gender gaps in smartphone ownership also vary significantly by country but remain high in all survey countries except Mexico and Sri Lanka, where men's and women's levels of smartphone ownership are similar (Figure 4). The widest gender gap in smartphone ownership is in Bangladesh, where women are 40% less likely than men to own a smartphone.

Gender gaps in smartphone ownership narrowed in seven of the 12 countries that were surveyed in both 2024 and 2025 (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, India and Pakistan). In each of these countries, women's smartphone ownership increased more than men's. Smartphone ownership by men also increased in three of these countries (Nigeria, Senegal and India) but remained stagnant in the other four (Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya and Pakistan). The story is especially positive in India, where despite no material growth in women's smartphone ownership between 2023 and 2024, in 2025, women's smartphone ownership jumped from 36% to 44%, growing faster than men's (58% to 65%) and narrowing the gender gap in smartphone ownership from 39% to 33%.

In the remaining five countries that were surveyed in both 2024 and 2025, gender gaps in smartphone ownership either remained stagnant (Bangladesh, Guatemala and Mexico) or increased (Uganda and Indonesia).

22. GSMA. (2026). *The State of the Industry Report on Mobile Money*.

23. Many mobile money users access it via USSD, which does not require an internet-enabled phone.

Figure 4
 Mobile ownership, smartphone ownership and mobile internet adoption among men and women
 Percentage of total adult population



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
 Base: Total population aged 18+
 A mobile owner is defined as a person who has sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM) and uses it at least once a month. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a phone. The gender gap in mobile ownership, smartphone ownership and mobile internet adoption refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a mobile (or a smartphone or to use mobile internet) than a man.
 n=498 to 1,093 for women and n=464 to 1,200 for men



THE JOURNEY TO MOBILE INTERNET USE

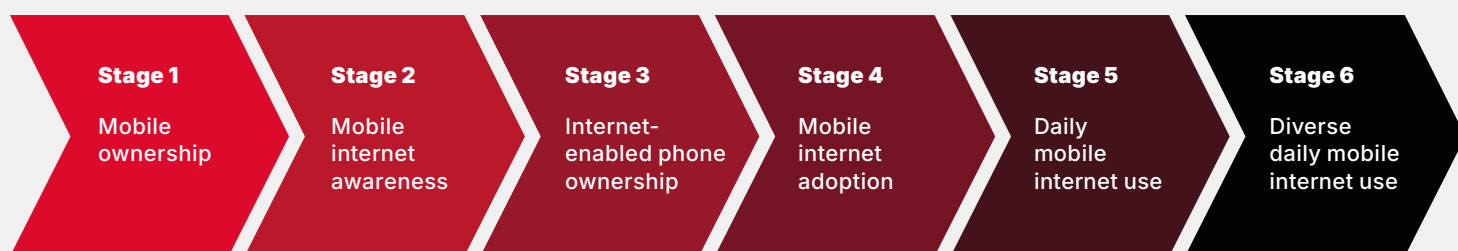


Mobile remains the primary and often only way that people in LMICs access the internet, especially women. In 13 of the 14 survey countries, a higher proportion of women mobile internet users than men mobile internet users accessed it exclusively on a mobile phone. In Ghana, for example, 73% of female mobile internet users access it exclusively on a mobile phone, compared to 60% of male mobile internet users.

While no two people have the same experience acquiring and using mobile technology, there are common milestones and barriers along the journey

to mobile internet use (Figure 5). This journey starts with owning a handset (stage 1), becoming aware of mobile internet (stage 2) and then owning an internet-enabled phone²⁴ (stage 3). Awareness often precedes ownership of an internet-enabled phone because most people are unlikely to invest in these more sophisticated and expensive devices without first knowing about mobile internet and its benefits. Internet-enabled phone ownership is typically followed by mobile internet adoption (stage 4) and, finally, daily mobile internet use (stage 5) and diverse daily mobile internet use (stage 6).

Figure 5
The mobile internet user journey



Understanding where men and women usually get stuck on this user journey is key to targeting action to ensure equal access and use of mobile internet. Data from the survey countries (see Figure 7) shows the progress of men and women along this journey and how gender gaps tend to widen at each stage.

In the majority of survey countries, most people tend to drop off between mobile internet awareness (stage 2) and internet-enabled phone ownership (stage 3), particularly women. For example, while 90% of women in Nigeria are aware of mobile internet (Figure 6), only 59% own an internet-enabled handset – a drop-off of 30 percentage points. This drop-off is smaller for men at 23 percentage points, meaning that even once women in Nigeria are aware of mobile internet, they are less likely than men to own an internet-enabled device.

However, once men and women²⁵ own an internet-enabled device (stage 3), the majority progress to the next stage of mobile internet adoption (stage 4). For example, in Nigeria, relatively fewer women drop off between stages 3 and 4 (an 18-percentage point drop-off) than between stages 2 and 3 (a 30-percentage point drop-off) (see Figure 6). Focussing on efforts to increase internet-enabled phone ownership among women who are already aware of mobile internet is likely to be the most effective way to significantly reduce the gender gap in mobile internet adoption.

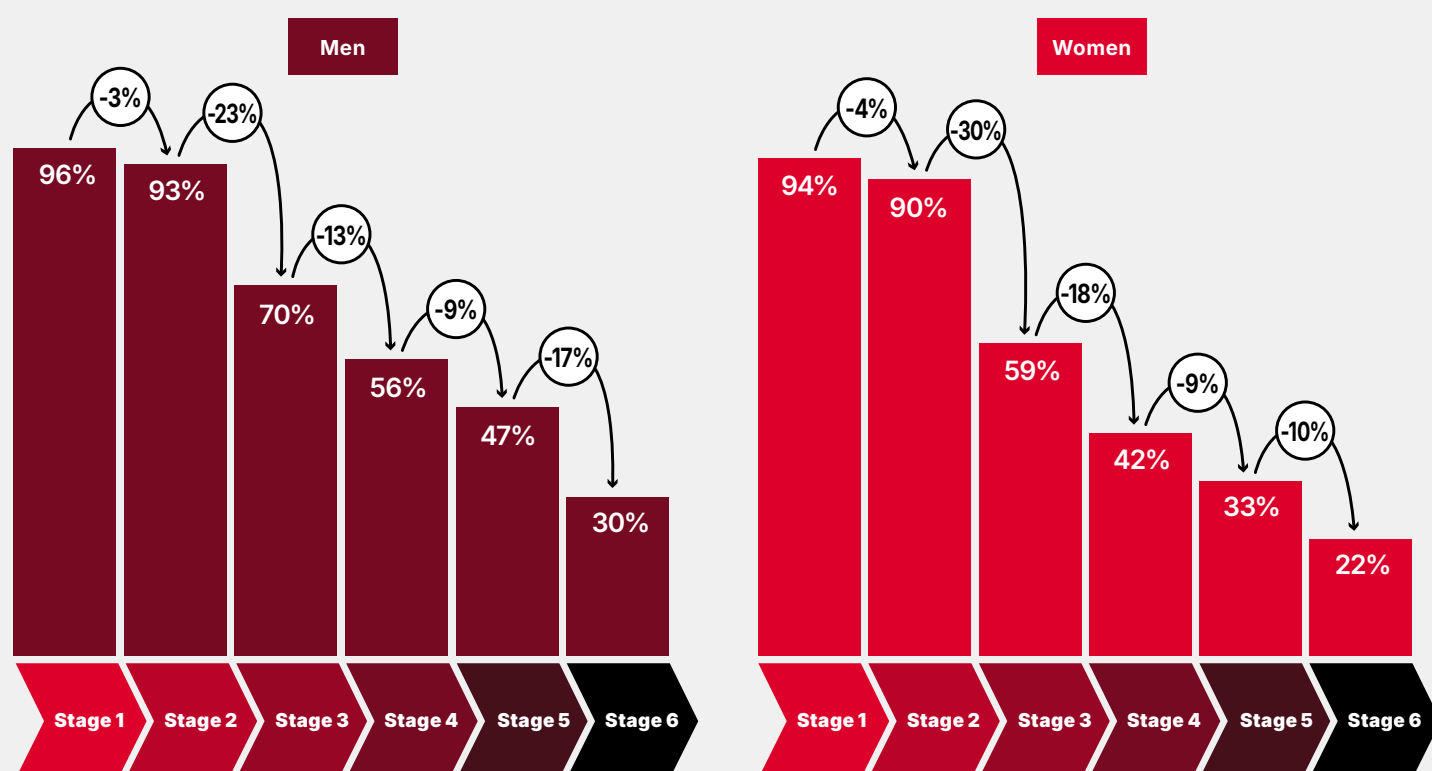
24. Either a feature phone or a smartphone.

25. This is true for all survey countries except Bangladesh, where only 45% of women internet-enabled handset owners use mobile internet.

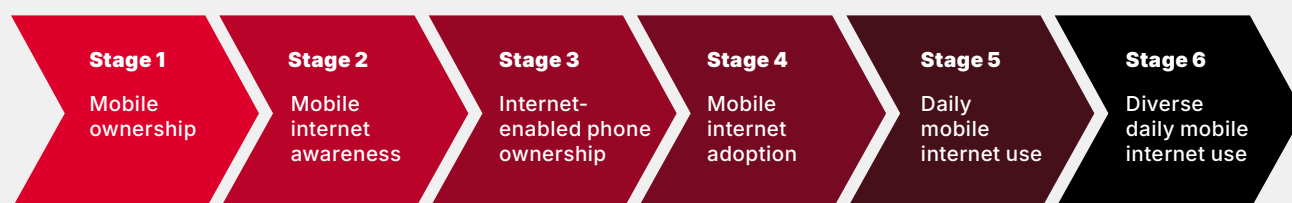
Figure 6

The mobile internet user journey in Nigeria

Percentage of total adult population in Nigeria at each stage



Percentage point drop-off between two stages in the mobile internet user journey



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025

Base: Total population aged 18+

A mobile owner is defined as a person who has sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM) and uses it at least once a month. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone. Diverse daily mobile internet use is defined as performing at least three mobile internet use cases daily. n=498 for women and n=514 for men

While most people who use mobile internet (stage 4) access it from their own internet-enabled phone, this is not always the case, particularly for women in settings with more restrictive social norms (see Figure 12). However, in nearly all survey countries, once women own an internet-enabled phone, particularly a smartphone, their adoption and use of mobile internet is almost on par with men.

For example, once they own an internet-enabled phone, 91% of men and 88% of women in India use mobile internet (stage 4). Once they use mobile internet, 96% of men and 97% of women in India use it daily (stage 5). This underscores the importance of women owning internet-enabled handsets, not only to use mobile internet, but to use it as often as they like and for a range of activities that meet their needs.

Figure 7

The mobile internet user journey in survey countries

Percentage of total adult population at each stage

		Stage 1 Mobile ownership	Stage 2 Mobile internet awareness	Stage 3 Internet-enabled phone ownership	Stage 4 Mobile internet adoption	Stage 5 Daily mobile internet use	Stage 6 Diverse daily mobile internet use
EGYPT	Men	89%	85%	70%	67%	64%	32%
	Women	89%	76%	63%	59%	57%	28%
ETHIOPIA	Men	88%	74%	47%	32%	16%	11%
	Women	68%	59%	28%	20%	9%	5%
GHANA	Men	96%	91%	79%	74%	65%	51%
	Women	93%	85%	66%	62%	52%	38%
KENYA	Men	95%	93%	57%	61%	48%	39%
	Women	93%	87%	51%	51%	40%	33%
NIGERIA	Men	96%	93%	70%	56%	47%	30%
	Women	94%	90%	59%	42%	33%	22%
SENEGAL	Men	96%	98%	84%	87%	77%	62%
	Women	91%	95%	72%	78%	63%	48%
UGANDA	Men	93%	71%	44%	43%	23%	19%
	Women	88%	64%	32%	29%	13%	12%
BANGLADESH	Men	89%	72%	69%	43%	40%	30%
	Women	71%	68%	50%	26%	23%	18%
INDIA	Men	86%	80%	68%	65%	62%	49%
	Women	75%	69%	47%	49%	47%	33%
INDONESIA	Men	86%	91%	74%	74%	70%	61%
	Women	79%	86%	68%	70%	66%	59%
PAKISTAN	Men	93%	85%	62%	58%	54%	35%
	Women	68%	85%	41%	53%	43%	24%
SRI LANKA	Men	92%	88%	70%	68%	63%	57%
	Women	90%	87%	71%	66%	63%	53%
GUATEMALA	Men	89%	95%	79%	83%	74%	66%
	Women	80%	92%	69%	76%	65%	57%
MEXICO	Men	89%	95%	84%	86%	78%	60%
	Women	90%	97%	82%	86%	79%	61%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025

Base: Total population aged 18+

A mobile owner is defined as a person who has sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM) and uses it at least once a month. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone. Daily and diverse mobile internet use is defined as performing at least three mobile internet use cases daily.

n=498 to 1,093 for women and n=464 to 1,200 for men

THE GENDER GAP IN MOBILE OWNERSHIP

There is a persistent gender gap in mobile ownership. 84% of women in LMICs own a mobile phone (of any type) compared to 90% of men. As a result, women are 7% less likely than men to own a mobile phone. This gender gap has remained nearly the same every year since 2020 (Figure 1). A total of around 385 million women in LMICs still do not own a mobile phone compared to around 240 million men. These women (and men) are especially difficult to reach and are typically the most underserved, including those who have low literacy levels, are older than 55, are unemployed, have low incomes, live in a rural area or have a disability.

The gender gap in mobile ownership varies across regions, from 0.5% in Latin America and the Caribbean to 15% in South Asia (see Figure 8) and has stayed relatively stagnant over the past year across most regions.²⁶

Previous GSMA research has shown that the top reported barriers to mobile ownership for women (and men) who still do not have a mobile phone are affordability (primarily of handsets) and literacy and digital skills.²⁷

26. The exception is South Asia, where the gender gap returned to 2023 levels after an increase in 2024.

27. See Table 1 in [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023](#).

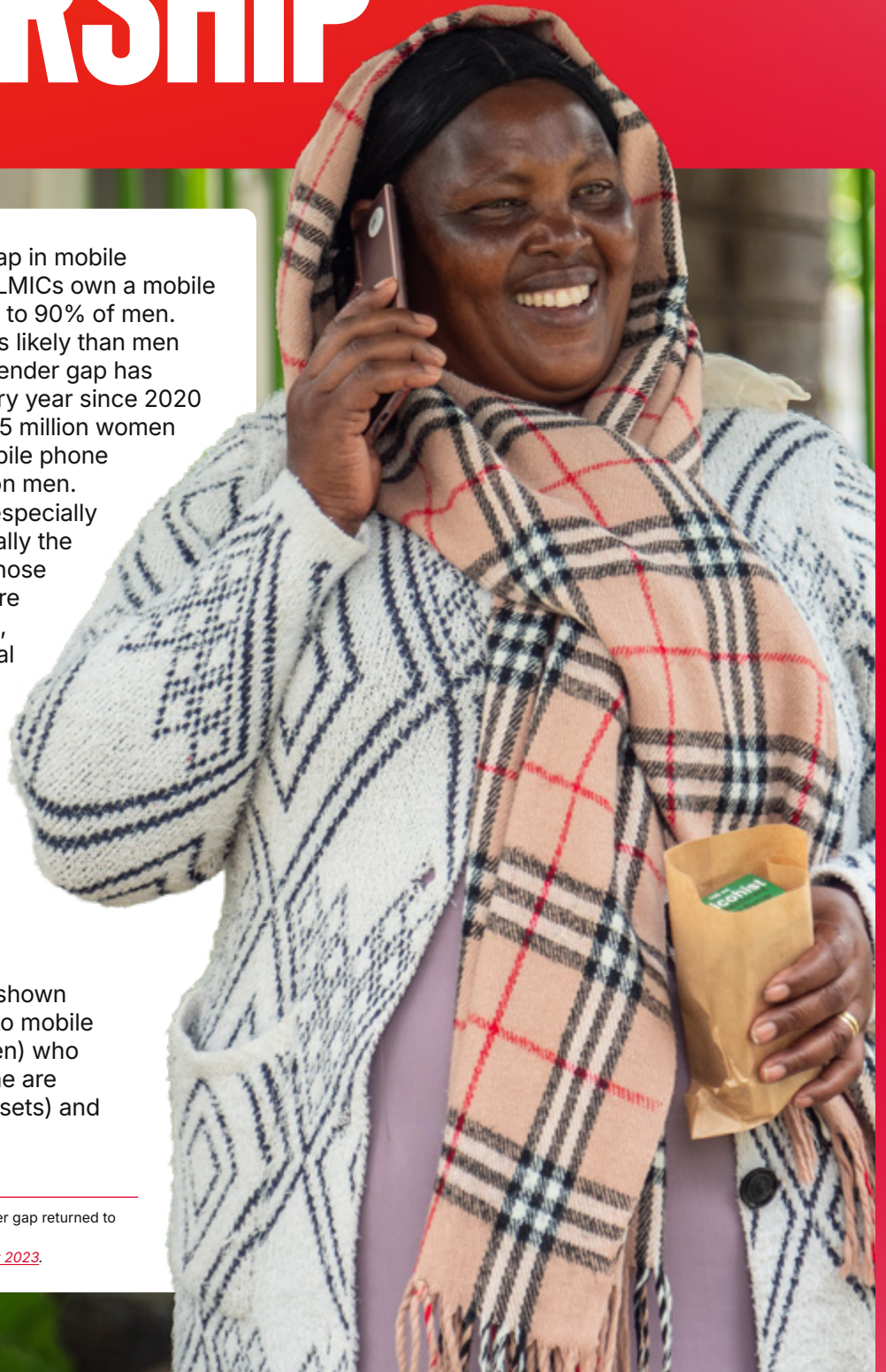
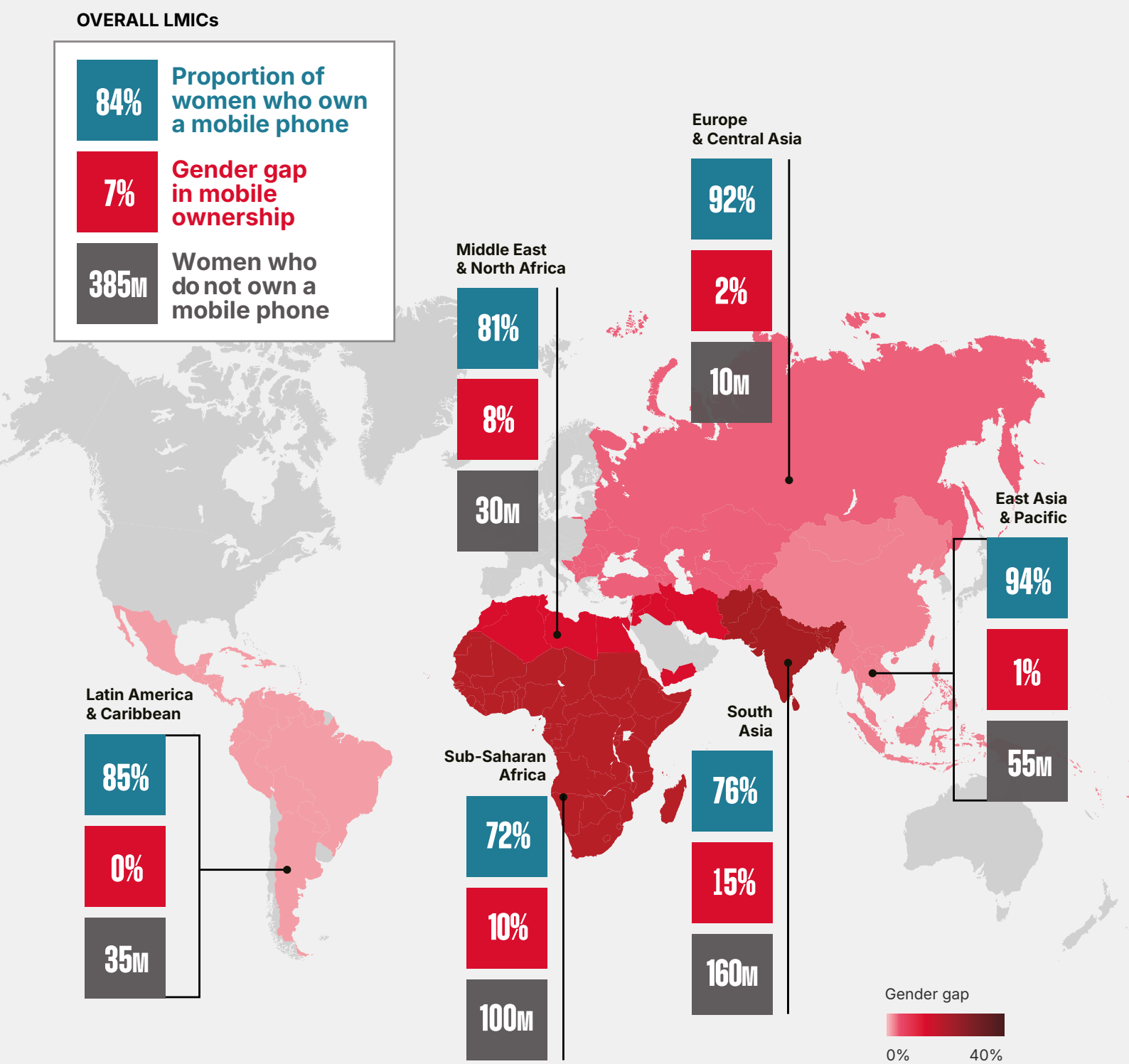


Figure 8
 Gender gap in mobile ownership in LMICs, by region
Among total adult population



Source: GSMA, 2025

The gender gap refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a mobile than a man. Mobile ownership is defined as having sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM) and using it at least once a month. Based on survey results and modelled data for adults aged 18+.

The gender gap in smartphone ownership

The type of mobile device a person owns matters, as it typically affects whether and how they use the internet. Once someone owns a smartphone, they are much more likely to be aware of mobile internet, adopt it and use it regularly and in a variety of ways. In fact, once women own a smartphone, these metrics more closely resemble those of men. In Uganda, for example, 18% of men and 12% of women who own a basic phone use mobile internet. Among feature phone owners, this percentage increases to 27% of men and 17% of women and, among smartphone owners, to 93% of men and 83% of women.

Across LMICs, 64% of women and 73% of men now own a smartphone. This means that while more than 1.5 billion women own a smartphone, there are still approximately 840 million who do not, and 210 million fewer women who own a smartphone compared to men (see Figure 9). Women's rate of growth in smartphone ownership increased slightly in 2025 compared to 2024, while men's slowed. In 2024, around 90 million women and 115 million men acquired a smartphone, while around 100 million women and 80 million men acquired one in 2025.

Gender gaps in smartphone ownership are widest in South Asia at 33%, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa at 22%. This gender gap has remained largely unchanged across the regions, except for South Asia, where a narrowing over the past year has been driven primarily by Pakistan, where women's rate of smartphone ownership increased from 30% to 40% and men's stayed relatively stagnant, and India, where women's rate of smartphone ownership increased from 36% to 44% and men's from 58% to 65%.

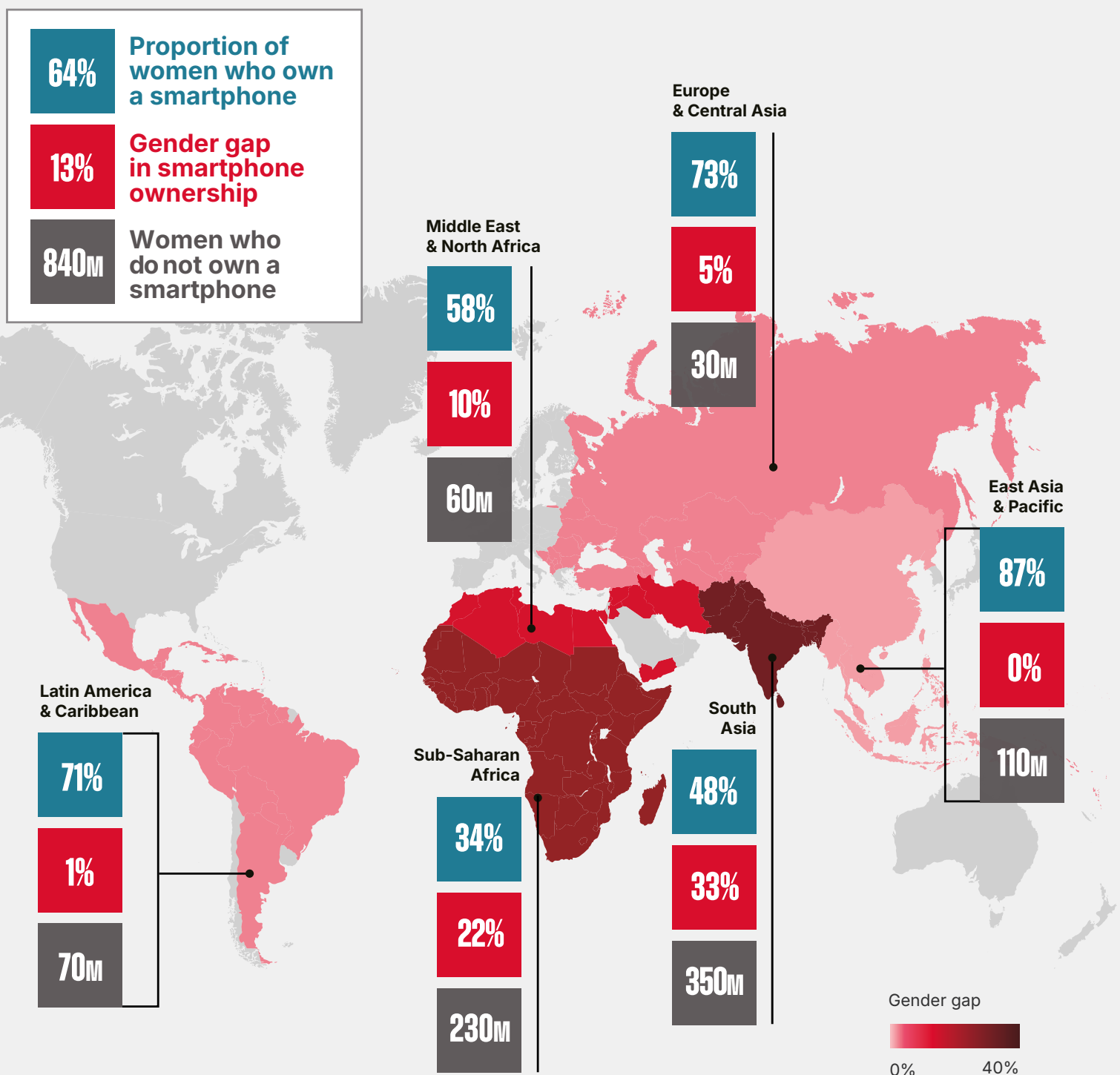
Gender gaps in smartphone ownership vary across survey countries and are widest in Bangladesh (40%), Ethiopia (34%), India (33%), Pakistan (30%) and Uganda (26%). These are also the five survey countries with the lowest overall levels of smartphone penetration.

In eight of the 12 countries that were surveyed in both 2024 and 2025, the smartphone ownership gender gap narrowed. In the remaining four survey countries, this gender gap either did not change materially (Bangladesh, Guatemala and Mexico) or increased marginally (Uganda) since last year. While observing year-on-year trends in the gender gap in smartphone ownership can help track progress, it is also important to consider the underlying smartphone penetration levels for both men and women. For example, although the gender gap in smartphone ownership narrowed notably in Pakistan by 18 percentage points, only 40% of women own a smartphone compared to 57% of men.

In some survey countries, a surprisingly high proportion of smartphone owners are not using mobile internet. This is especially true for women: in four countries, around one in five women who own a smartphone are not using mobile internet. The countries with the highest proportion of women smartphone owners who do not use mobile internet are Ethiopia (27%), Bangladesh (24%), Nigeria (19%), Uganda (17%) and Sri Lanka (10%). These are also the countries with the highest proportion of male smartphone owners who do not use mobile internet, but the rates are lower for these men than for their female counterparts. Some women who own smartphones are not even aware of mobile internet. In Ethiopia, 10% of women smartphone owners are not aware of mobile internet, compared to 5% of men smartphone owners.

Figure 9
Gender gap in smartphone ownership in LMICs, by region
Among total adult population

OVERALL LMICs



Source: GSMA, 2025
The gender gap refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a smartphone than a man.
Based on survey results and modelled data for adults aged 18+.

Basic phone and feature phone ownership

The types of handsets that men and women own vary more by country than by gender.

Basic phones remain important handsets in many countries. For example, the most sophisticated handset owned by 48% of women and 43% of men in Uganda is a basic mobile phone (Figure 10). While these phones enable people to communicate via SMS/MMS or network calls and use mobile money via USSD, other mobile use cases are limited without access to mobile internet.

In most survey countries, feature phones make up only a small proportion of the handsets owned by both men and women. The exceptions are Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda and Bangladesh, where a relatively higher proportion of men and women own feature phones compared to other countries. In Bangladesh in particular, a higher proportion of men (24%) and

women (23%) own feature phones than basic phones (18% and 17%, respectively) (Figure 10).

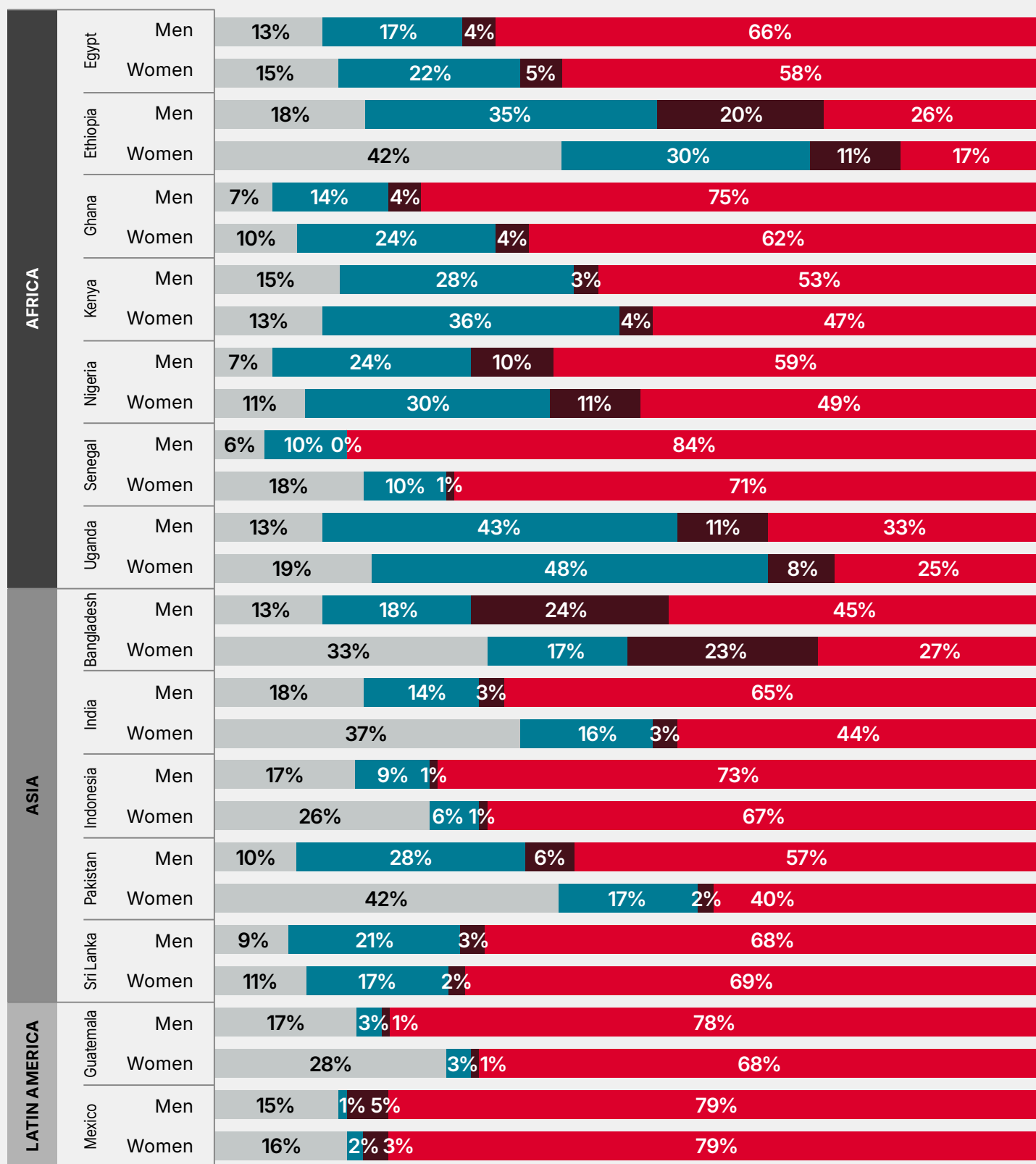
In nearly all the 12 countries surveyed in both 2024 and 2025, feature phone and basic phone ownership rates did not change materially, while smartphone ownership rates increased for both men and women. An exception is Nigeria, where women saw a 10-percentage point decrease in basic phone ownership levels and a 10-percentage point increase in smartphone ownership between 2024 and 2025. Similarly, men in Nigeria saw a 5-percentage point decrease in basic phone ownership levels and a 9-percentage point increase in smartphone ownership over the same period. Given the only marginal increase in overall mobile ownership rates among women and men in Nigeria during this period, it appears some male and more female mobile owners have upgraded from basic phones to smartphones in the past year.



Figure 10

Types of handsets owned by men and women

Percentage of total adult population



No phone
 Basic phone
 Feature phone
 Smartphone

Internet-enabled phone

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025

Base: Total population aged 18+

The total percentage of handset owners does not exactly match the percentage of mobile owners in Figure 4. Figure 4 captures people who have sole or main use of a SIM card whereas Figure 10 represents people who have sole or main use of a handset.

Respondents are categorised according to the most advanced device they own and can only be included in one category. For example, smartphone owners who also own a basic or feature phone are counted only as smartphone owners.

n=498 to 1,093 for women and n=464 to 1,200 for men

THE GENDER GAP IN MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION

In LMICs, 65% of women – just over 1.5 billion women – now use mobile internet, compared to 74% of men. Around 80 million women across LMICs started using mobile internet in 2025, compared to around 85 million in 2024. While more women in these countries are using mobile internet than ever before, approximately 810 million are still not using it, compared to 595 million men. Women are now 12% less likely than men to use mobile internet across LMICs (see Figure 11).

Between 2017 and 2020, the gender gap in mobile internet adoption narrowed significantly. After progress in closing this gender gap stalled in 2021 and 2022, we have seen a gradual narrowing, but at a much slower rate than prior to 2020. This trend continued in 2025, as the gender gap in mobile internet adoption narrowed slightly to 12%. This small narrowing of the gender gap from 2024 to 2025 is due to women adopting mobile internet at a slightly faster rate than men.

While the gender gap in mobile internet adoption has stalled in most regions, there is promising progress in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the regions with the widest gender gaps. In South Asia, the gender gap decreased from 33% in 2024 to 25% in 2025. This change can largely be explained by Pakistan, where women's rates of mobile internet adoption increased from 45% to 53% and men's stayed relatively stagnant, and India, where women's rates increased from 39% to 49% and men's from 58% to 65%. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the gender gap in mobile internet decreased from 30% in 2024 to 26% in 2025.

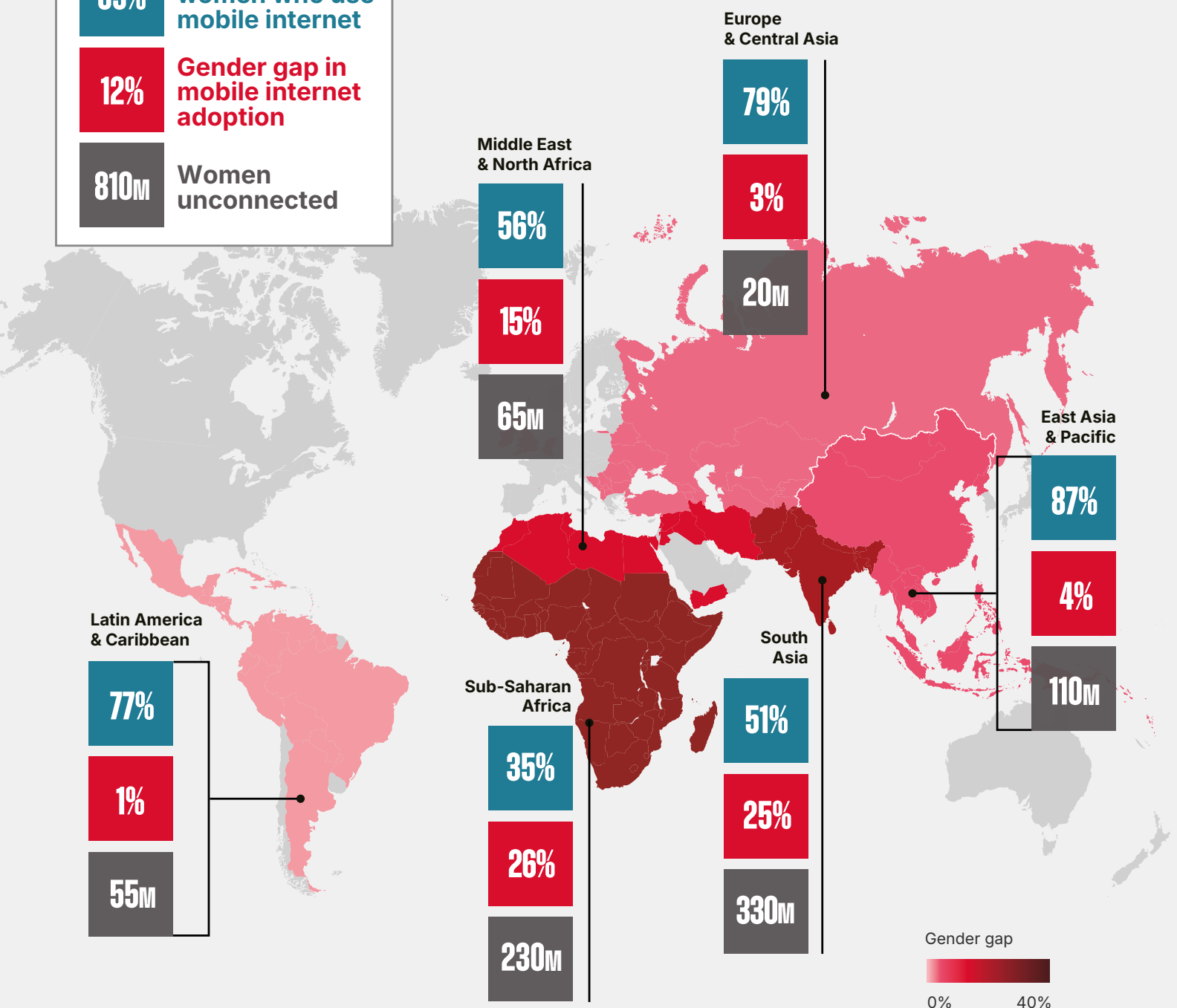
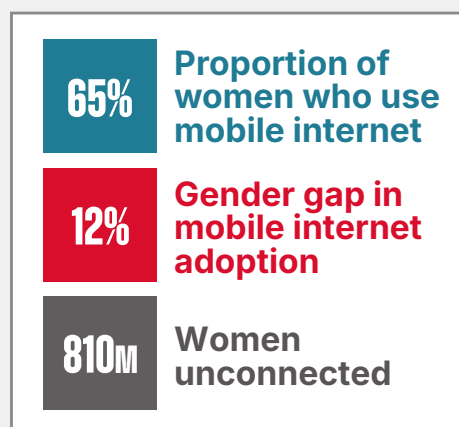


Figure 11

Gender gap in mobile internet adoption in LMICs, by region

Among total adult population

OVERALL LMICs



Source: GSMA, 2025

The gender gap refers to how much less likely a woman is to use mobile internet than a man. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone, so the above figures also include those who used mobile internet on someone else's phone. Based on survey results and modelled data for adults aged 18+.

How men and women are accessing mobile internet

In all survey countries, the vast majority of mobile internet users own an internet-enabled phone, particularly a smartphone, and are accessing the internet on their own device. In Egypt, for example, 97% of men and 96% of women who use mobile internet own an internet-enabled phone.

However, data also indicates that some mobile internet users do not own an internet-enabled phone, implying that they are exclusively accessing the internet from someone else's device.²⁸ While this phenomenon is observed in all survey countries (see Figure 12), it is particularly common in Ethiopia, Uganda, India and Pakistan, and in most cases these users are women. In Ethiopia and Uganda, it is more common for these male and female borrowers to own a basic phone, while in India and Pakistan it is more common for them to not own any type of handset. In each of these four countries, a higher proportion of women mobile internet users than men only access mobile internet on someone else's device. This disparity is especially pronounced in Pakistan, where 28% of female mobile internet users do not personally own an internet-enabled phone compared to only 4% of male mobile internet users. In fact, 29% of female mobile internet users in Pakistan report they cannot use it more because the phone they use to access the internet is shared (compared to 17% of men).

GSMA research²⁹ has shown that while mobile phone sharing enables access to some services, it limits a borrower's ability to use life-enhancing services and gain digital literacy skills. Sharing devices also limits the borrower's privacy, which is crucial for female users who may feel uncomfortable using some mobile services, such as maternal health apps, on someone else's handset. Exclusively borrowing internet-enabled devices also prevents borrowers from receiving important information directly from service providers. However, accessing mobile internet on one's own device means that people can use the internet more privately, conveniently, regularly and in more ways to meet their life needs.

In the four survey countries where it is most common to access mobile internet exclusively on a shared device (Ethiopia, Uganda, India and Pakistan), these women borrowers use it less frequently than women who own their internet-enabled device. In Pakistan, for example, 94% of women mobile internet users who own an internet-enabled device access mobile internet every day, compared to just 48% of women who use mobile internet but do not own an internet-enabled device. Similarly in Ethiopia, 53% of women mobile internet users who own an internet-enabled device access mobile internet every day, compared to only 24% of women who use mobile internet but do not own an internet-enabled device.



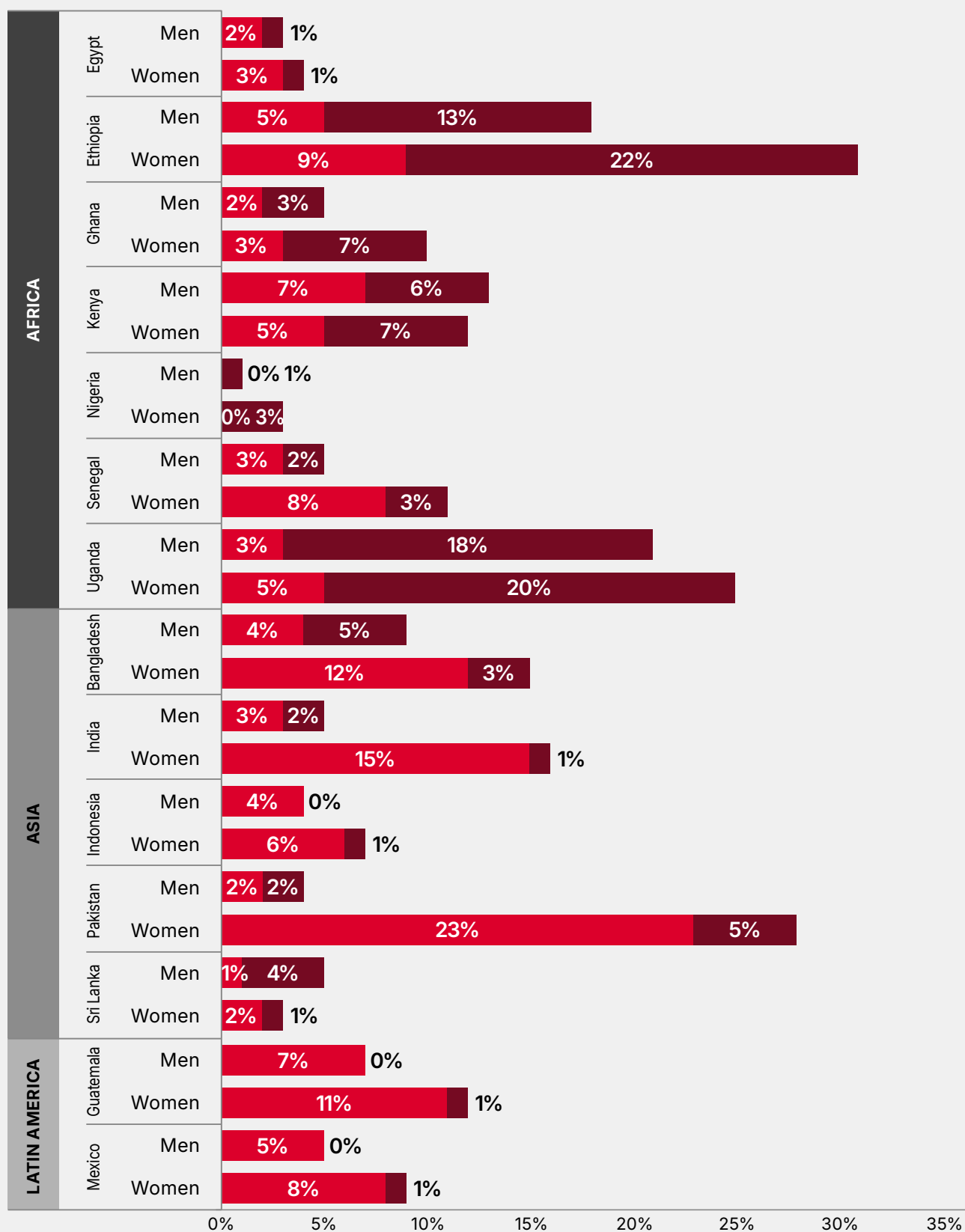
28. Our definition of mobile internet users captures people who have used mobile internet in the past three months. Based on our definition, mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone, meaning they can also access mobile internet on someone else's phone.

29. GSMA. (2015). [Bridging the Mobile Gender Gap 2015](#).

Figure 12

Mobile internet users who do not own an internet-enabled phone

Percentage of mobile internet users



Source: GSMA, 2025

Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+

Respondents are categorised according to the most advanced device they own and can only be included in one category. Therefore, if someone owned a smartphone and a basic phone, they would be categorised as a smartphone owner and not captured in this figure.

n=115 to 531 for women and n=181 to 785 for men

■ Does not own a mobile phone

■ Owns a basic phone

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S USE OF MOBILE INTERNET

In addition to adopting mobile internet, it is also important that men and women can use it regularly and for a variety of use cases that meet their needs. Even once women are online, they often face barriers to using mobile internet as frequently and for as many use cases as men. As a result, there are typically gender gaps in mobile internet use that mean women may not be realising its benefits to the same extent as men.



Gender gaps in diversity and frequency of mobile internet use

In most survey countries, once people start using mobile internet, most use it every day – regardless of gender. However, in more than half of the survey countries (eight out of 14), there is still a gender gap in daily use among mobile internet users, both in contexts where daily usage is high (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Guatemala) and in contexts where overall daily usage is low (Ethiopia and Uganda). In the remaining six countries (Egypt, Kenya, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Mexico), women who use mobile internet are equally as likely as male users to use it every day. In more than half of the survey countries (eight out of 14), many mobile internet users only use it for one or two use cases each day, especially women. For example, in Ghana, 65% of men and 52% of women use mobile internet daily, but only 51% of men and 38% of women use it for a diverse range of use cases (three or more) each day.

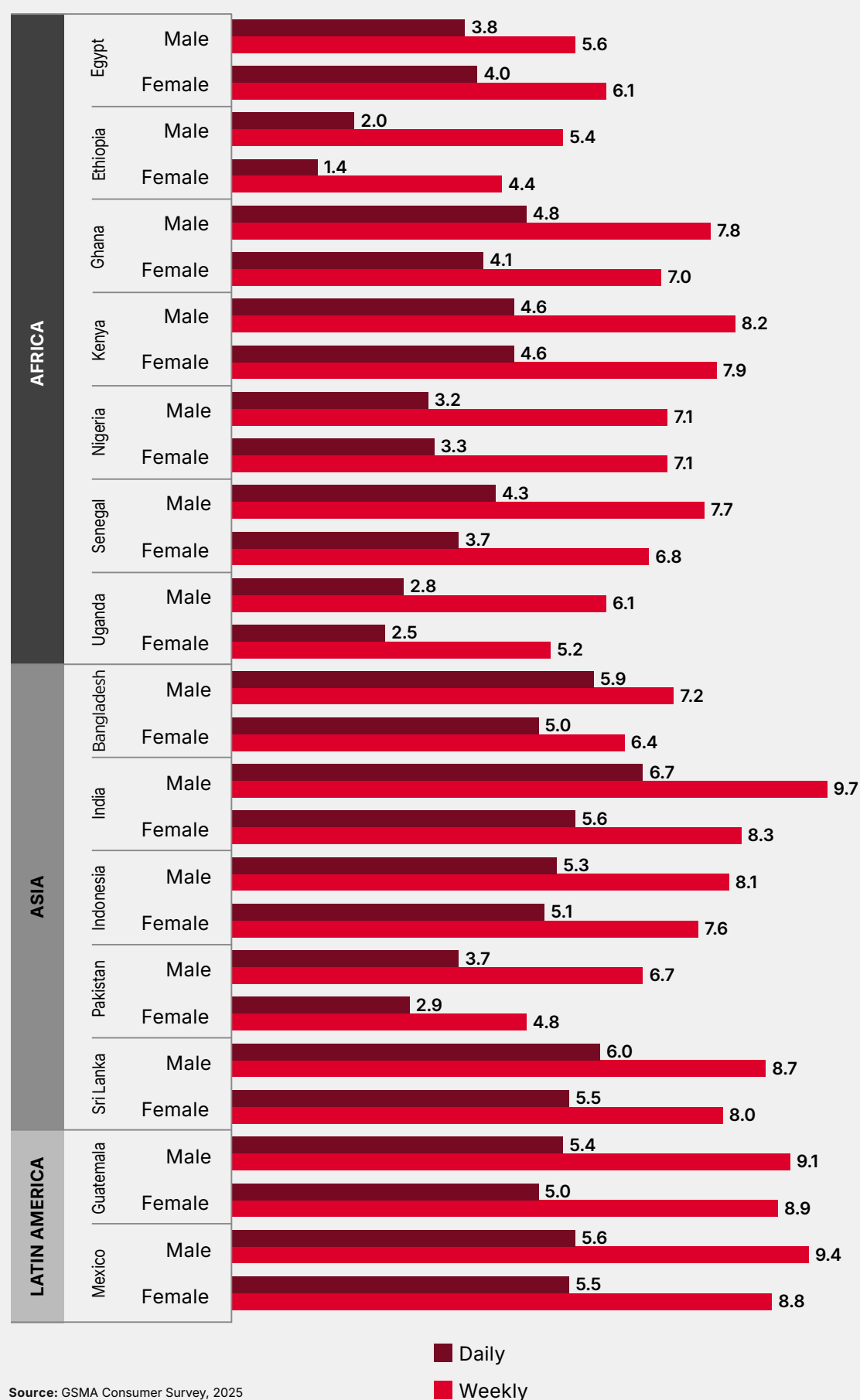
Women also tend to use mobile internet in fewer ways than men on a daily and weekly basis (see Figure 13), even when the number of use cases performed by men and women is relatively high. In India, for example, male mobile internet users perform 6.7 use cases a day on average compared to 5.6 a day on average for female mobile internet users. Across survey countries, both men and women who use mobile internet perform a higher number of use cases on a weekly basis than on a daily basis, but there is still a gender gap in nearly all survey countries. For example, in India, male mobile internet users perform 9.7 use cases a week on average compared to 8.3 a week on average by female mobile internet users.



Figure 13

Average number of mobile internet use cases performed on a daily and weekly basis

Among mobile internet users



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+
n=115 to 531 for women and n=181 to 785 for men

Different types of mobile internet use

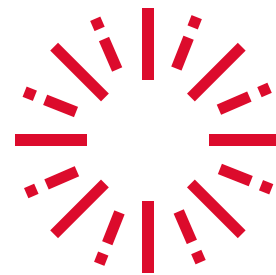
Mobile internet users were also asked about their use of 17 distinct mobile internet use cases, from social media and instant messaging to online banking, income generation, education and skill building.

On a weekly basis, the most common mobile internet use cases are the same among men and women mobile internet users and largely consistent with

previous years (see Appendix 2). These use cases are instant messaging, social media, online calling and watching online videos. While they tend to perform the same types of use cases, across survey countries, male mobile internet users are more likely than women mobile internet users to perform most use cases on a weekly basis.



SPOTLIGHT: PERCEIVED IMPACT OF MOBILE INTERNET ON LIVELIHOODS AND INCOME



Mobile internet can have an impact on many aspects of a person's life, including their livelihood and income. For example, using websites or apps on a mobile device may affect a person's ability to earn money, find or perform a job, sell goods and services, receive and save money or learn a skill to do a new job. This year, we asked mobile internet users whether they feel using it has improved, worsened or had no impact on their livelihood and income (see Appendix 3).³⁰ Their perceptions of the impact of mobile internet on their livelihood and income tend to vary more by region and the type of economic activity they perform than by gender.

In nearly every survey country, the vast majority of both male and female mobile internet users are more likely to report that using it has either improved or had no impact on their livelihood and income than they are to report that it has worsened their livelihood and income (Figure 14). In fact, in all survey countries, less than 15% of mobile internet

users report that using mobile internet worsened their livelihood and income. For example, in Kenya, 80% and 81% of men and women mobile internet users, respectively, say that using mobile internet improved their livelihood and income, while only 4% and 5%, respectively, said it worsened their livelihood and income (Figure 14).

Respondents in survey countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are significantly more likely than respondents in other regions to say that using mobile internet has improved their livelihood and income. In contrast, in survey countries outside Sub-Saharan Africa, men and women mobile internet users are most likely to say that mobile internet has had no impact on their livelihood and income. For example, between 49% and 87% of respondents in survey countries in Sub-Saharan Africa report that using mobile internet has improved their livelihood and income, while between 42% and 66% of respondents across survey countries in Asia³¹ say that it has had no impact.



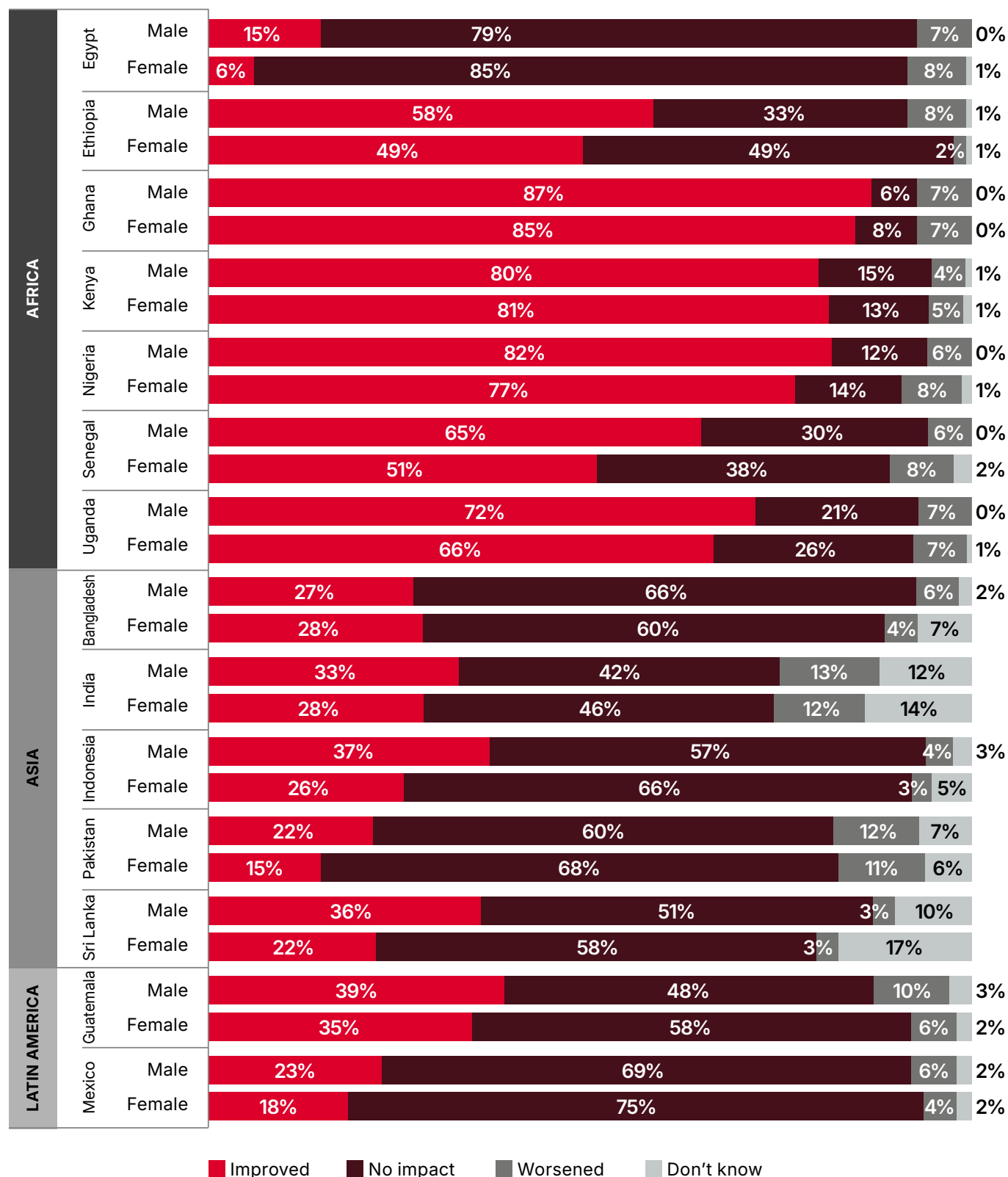
30. Mobile internet users were asked: "There are many ways in which specifically using the internet on a mobile phone may impact a person's income or livelihood. For example, using websites or apps may impact a person's ability to earn money, find a job, perform a job, sell things, receive money, save money, or learn a skill to do a job. E.g. Facebook, Facebook Marketplace, YouTube, WhatsApp, Google, online banking/mobile money provider, etc. In general, what impact, if any, has using the internet on a mobile phone had on your livelihood or income?" Respondents chose one of the following options: 1. Significantly improved my income or livelihood; 2. Somewhat improved my income or livelihood; 3. Had no impact on my income or livelihood; 4. Somewhat worsened my income or livelihood; 5. Significantly worsened my income or livelihood; 6. Don't know. For the purposes of the analysis, responses 1 and 2 were combined to reflect reports that mobile internet has "improved" users' livelihood and income and responses 4 and 5 were combined to reflect reports that mobile internet has "worsened" users' livelihood and income.

31. All Asian survey countries are in South Asia, except Indonesia.

Figure 14

Reported impact of mobile internet on users' livelihoods and income

Among mobile internet users



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025

Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+

The "improved" category includes respondents who report that mobile internet either significantly improved or somewhat improved their livelihood and income and the "worsened" category includes respondents who report that mobile internet either significantly worsened or somewhat worsened their livelihood and income. Respondents also had the choice to respond, "Don't know".

n=115 to 531 for women and n=181 to 785 for men

Looking at economic activity, in survey countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the perceived positive impact of mobile internet on users' livelihood and income is relatively similar, regardless of the type of employment performed (or whether they are unemployed). For example, in Ghana, 86% of men and 84% of women mobile internet users who are employed by someone else say that using it has improved their livelihood and income, compared to 86% of men and 87% of women mobile internet users who are self-employed and 92% of men and 82% of women mobile internet users who are unemployed (Figure 15).³²

By contrast, in survey countries outside Sub-Saharan Africa, mobile internet users who are self-employed are more likely than those who are employed by someone else or who are unemployed to say that mobile internet has improved their livelihood and income. In Indonesia, for example, 64% of men and 54% of women mobile internet users who are self-employed say that using mobile internet has improved their livelihood and income, compared to 29% of men and 16% of women mobile internet users who are employed and 28% of men and 22% of women mobile internet users who are unemployed (Figure 15). This suggests that in survey countries outside Sub-Saharan Africa, perceptions of the impact of mobile internet on livelihoods and income may be at least partly related to the type of income-generating activity mobile internet users perform or whether they perform one at all.

While more self-employed people in survey countries outside Sub-Saharan Africa typically report that mobile internet has improved their livelihood and income, in most survey countries it also appears to have a meaningful impact for a large proportion of people who are employed by someone else and even unemployed (see Figure 24 in Appendix 3). In 10 of the 14 survey countries, more than 25% of unemployed mobile internet users report that it has improved their livelihood and income. In six of these 10 countries, this figure is more than 50%. For example, in Senegal, 55% of unemployed male mobile internet users and 45% of unemployed female mobile internet users report that using mobile internet has improved their livelihood and income.

This suggests that the benefits of mobile internet on livelihoods and income can be felt even without participating directly in income-generating activities, such as through higher household incomes or receiving remittance payments³³ on mobile devices from geographically distant family members or from government authorities. In nearly all survey countries, the proportions of men and women mobile internet users who are unemployed and report that mobile internet use has improved their livelihood and income are similar, except in Bangladesh where the proportion of these women is higher than men. However, in all survey countries, millions more women than men do not directly participate in an income-generating activity,³⁴ suggesting that women may benefit disproportionately from the impact of mobile internet use on livelihoods and income when unemployed. More research is needed to understand the potential positive impacts of mobile internet on livelihoods and income for individuals who do not personally perform an income-generating activity.

In nearly all survey countries, men and women mobile internet users who report that mobile internet improved their livelihood and income perform a higher number of use cases³⁵ on a daily and weekly basis on average than those who report that mobile internet use has had no impact on their livelihood and income. For example, in Indonesia, men and women mobile internet users who say that it has improved their livelihood and income perform three and 2.4 more use cases (out of a possible 17) on average, respectively, on a daily basis than men and women who say it has had no impact on their livelihood and income.

32. "Unemployed" includes respondents who are unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, homemakers (looking after the home, children or relatives, etc.), studying, retired or other.

33. Naji, L. (16 June 2020). "[Mobile money-enabled remittances: Building resilience in times of crisis](#)". *GSMA Mobile for Development Blog*.

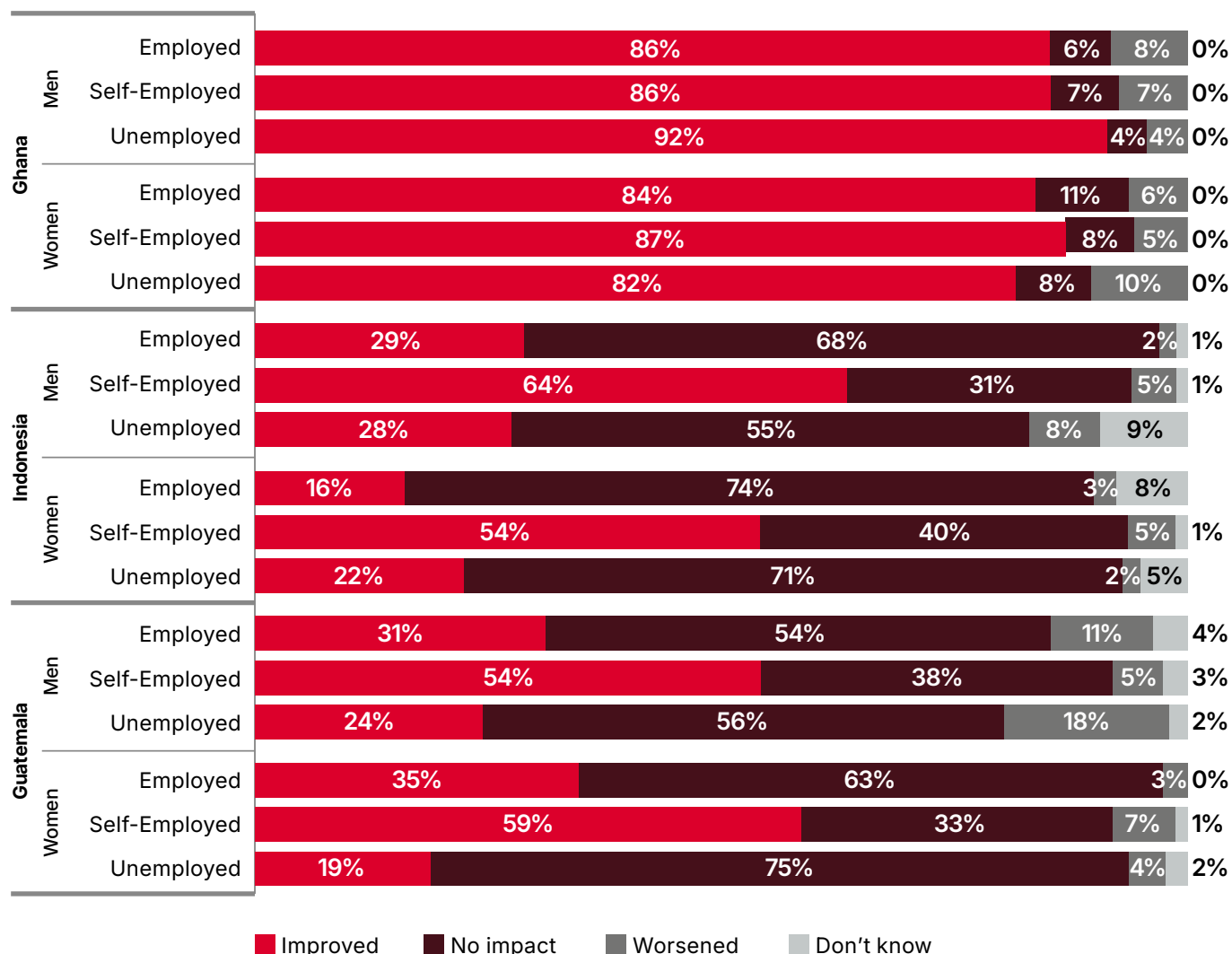
34. World Bank Group. (2025). "[Labor force participation rate, female \(% of female population ages 15+\) \(modelled ILO estimate\)](#)". *World Bank DataBank*.

35. Mobile internet users tend to use it daily and for a diverse range of use cases. As a result, there are fewer differences between respondents who report that mobile internet has improved, worsened or had no impact on their livelihood and income in terms of their frequency and diverse use of mobile internet. There are also fewer differences in the types of use cases that they perform than there are in the number of use cases they perform on a daily or weekly basis.

Figure 15

Reported impact of mobile internet on livelihoods and income, by gender and employment type in Ghana, Indonesia and Guatemala

Among mobile internet users



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025

Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+

The "improved" category includes respondents who report that mobile internet either significantly improved or somewhat improved their livelihood and income and the "worsened" category includes respondents who report that mobile internet either significantly worsened or somewhat worsened their livelihood and income. Respondents also had the choice to respond, "Don't know".

n=59 to 208 for women and n=45 to 206 for men



UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS TO MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION AND USE



Given there are still substantial gender gaps in mobile internet adoption and use in many countries, it is important to understand the unique barriers preventing women from starting to use mobile internet and from using it more, and how these compare to the barriers men face.

All survey respondents were asked whether they have heard of mobile internet before, and those who had were then asked whether certain barriers³⁶ prevent them from adopting it (if they do not already use it) or from using it more (if they do already use it). They were then asked to identify which barriers they feel are more important and their single most important barrier.

Across survey countries, the overall top barriers preventing men and women from starting to use mobile internet and from using it more are: lack of awareness of mobile internet, affordability, literacy and digital skills and safety and security concerns (see Figure 16).

Mobile internet awareness has grown substantially since we began tracking it in 2017, but it has plateaued in recent years. While awareness is now high and almost equal in most survey countries, there are still four countries – Ethiopia, Uganda, Bangladesh and India – where it is still relatively low, especially among women. In these countries, between 30% and 45% of women are still not aware of mobile internet, compared to 20% to 30% of men (see Figure 17).

Among those who are already aware of mobile internet, barriers to both mobile internet adoption and use

depend on the local context and, to a lesser extent, the gender of the respondent (see Figure 16). However, affordability, particularly of handsets, and literacy and digital skills stand out as the two top barriers to mobile internet adoption among both men and women who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it (see Table 1).

Once men and women use mobile internet, the top barriers to further use vary more by country. They are typically affordability (particularly of data), safety and security concerns and literacy and digital skills, in varying order across countries. For example, safety and security concerns are the top barrier to further mobile internet use for both men and women mobile internet users in Senegal, India, Indonesia, Guatemala and Mexico. However, in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda, the top barrier to further use for both men and women mobile internet users is affordability – particularly of data, but also of handsets.³⁷

Women tend to experience barriers more acutely due to structural inequalities, such as disparities in access to education and income. Analysis also shows that even when women have the same level of education, income, literacy and employment as men, they are still less likely to use mobile internet.³⁸ Other issues are likely at play as well, such as discrimination and social norms. In fact, in some survey countries, such as Pakistan, barriers related to social norms emerge as the top barrier to mobile internet adoption for a sizable proportion of people who are aware of mobile internet but have not yet adopted it, particularly women (17%) (see Figure 19 in Appendix 1).

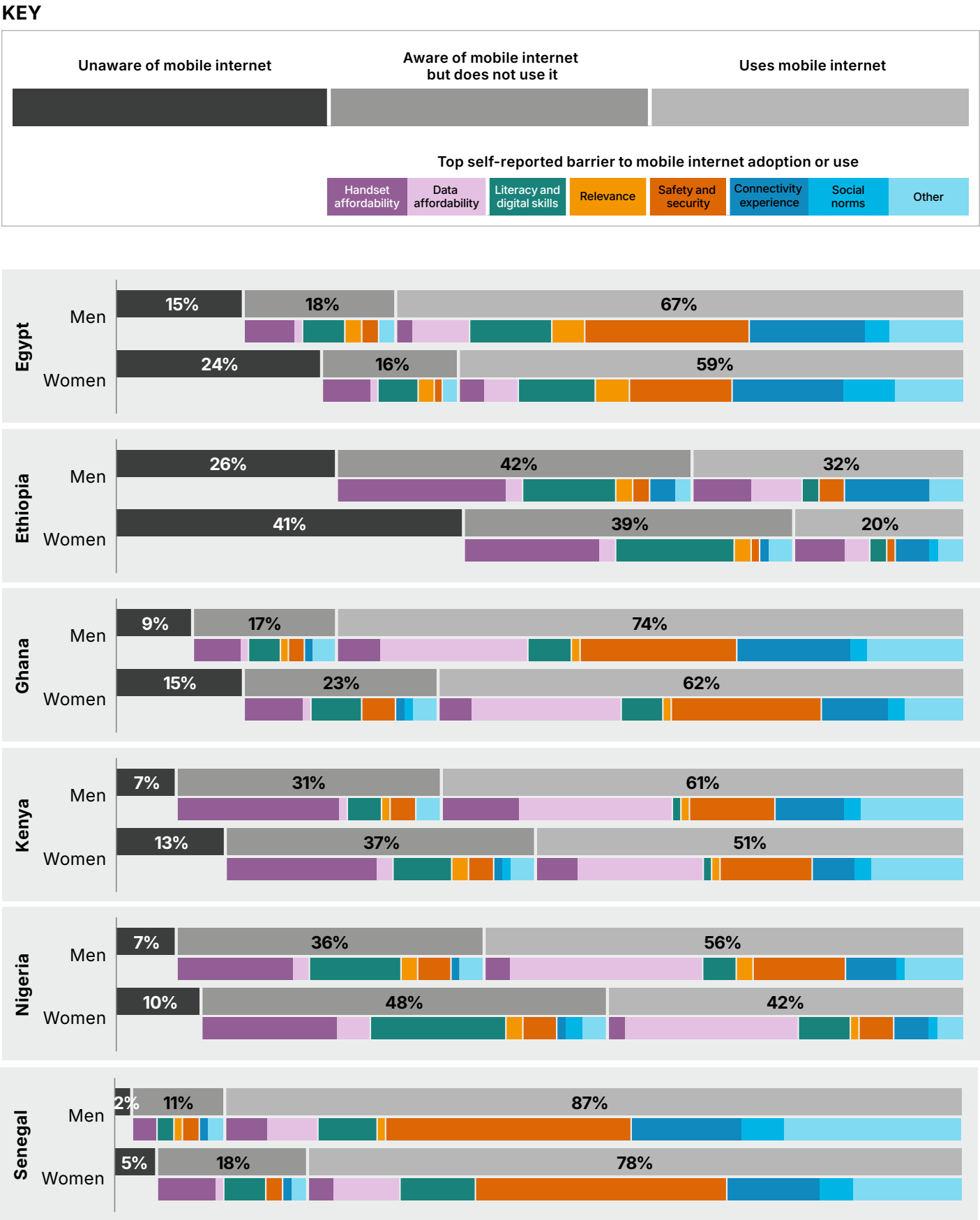


36. This was a predefined list of 22 barriers that has been refined over years and based on the research and experience of the GSMA and other organisations.

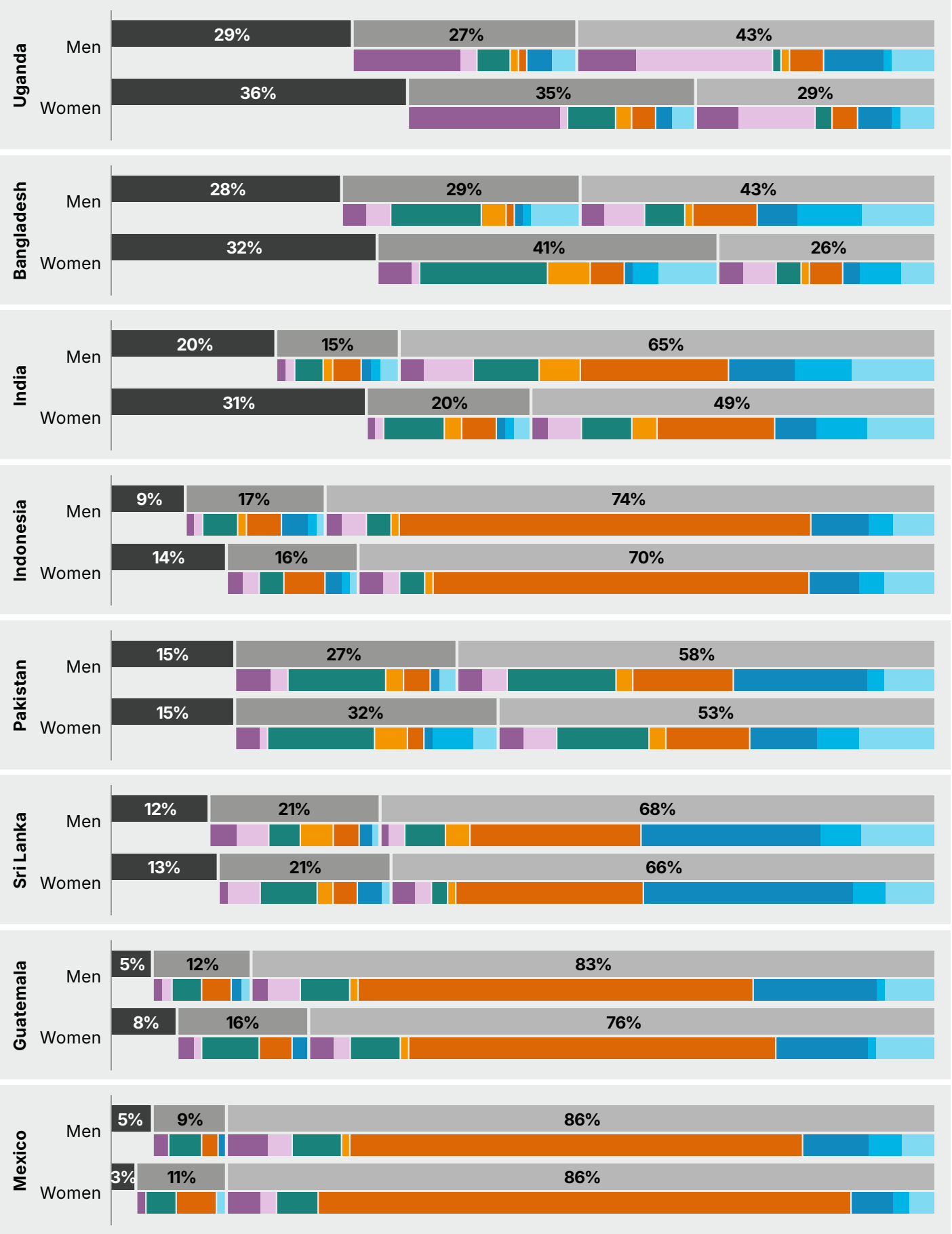
37. While true in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda, in Ethiopia, affordability of handsets is the top barrier for men and women mobile internet users, followed by data affordability.

38. Butler, C. and Shanahan, M. (27 August 2020). ["Does just being a woman reduce the likelihood of using mobile?": GSMA Mobile for Development Blog.](#)

Figure 16
Barriers to mobile internet adoption across survey countries
Percentage of total adult population



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Total population aged 18+
n=498 to 1,093 for women and n=464 to 1,200 for men





Affordability, particularly of handsets, is one of the top three reported barriers to mobile internet adoption and use in almost all survey countries for those who are already aware of it. Affordability of both handsets and data are key barriers to both mobile internet adoption and use, but each of these barriers affects people differently depending on where they are in the mobile internet user journey. While people who are aware of mobile internet but do not yet use it more frequently report affordability of handsets as a barrier to mobile internet adoption, existing users more frequently report affordability of data as a barrier to further mobile internet use. For example, in Ghana, 44% of women who are already aware of mobile internet but do not yet use it report handset affordability as a barrier to mobile internet adoption, compared to 30% who report data affordability as a barrier (Figure 16). Among women who are already using mobile internet, 21% report handset affordability as a barrier to further mobile internet use compared to 38% who report data affordability. A similar trend is apparent among men in Ghana, too.

Handset affordability is a particularly significant barrier in survey countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, home to more than a quarter of the world's unconnected population and where an entry-level device is equivalent to 87% of monthly income for the poorest 20%. For example, in Ethiopia, 36% of women and 37% of men who are already aware of mobile internet report that handset affordability is either their top barrier to mobile internet adoption or further use, compared to 7% of women and 11% of men who report data costs as their top barrier. Although affordability is one of the top barriers for both male and female respondents across the survey countries, research has shown that issues such as the gender pay gap and women's lower employment rates mean that handsets are already less affordable for women than men. GSMA analysis has found that, on average, the cost of an entry-level handset represents 23% of women's monthly income in LMICs, compared to 12% of men's.³⁹



Literacy and digital skills are one of the top barriers to mobile internet adoption but is reported much less frequently as the top barrier to further mobile internet use in survey countries. Still, in some countries, it was reported as a top barrier to further use by a significant proportion of men and women who are aware of mobile internet. For example, in Pakistan, 40% of women and 40% of men who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it report lack of literacy and digital skills as their top barrier to mobile internet adoption, and 20% of women and 22% of men who use mobile internet report it as their top barrier to further use. In most survey countries, basic literacy is reported more than digital skills as the top barrier to mobile internet adoption and further use by both male and female respondents.



Safety and security concerns continue to be a barrier to mobile internet use for many women and men who are already aware of mobile internet, particularly in survey countries in Asia and Latin America, and a particularly significant barrier to further use of mobile internet once people start using it. For example, in Mexico, 69% of women and 61% of men who are aware of mobile internet report safety and security concerns as either their top barrier to mobile internet adoption or further use. These include concerns related to the reliability of information found online, scams or fraud, information security, unwanted contact from strangers and exposure to harmful content. In all survey countries, these concerns are felt more strongly by existing mobile internet users than those who do not yet use it, regardless of gender. The type of concern that is reported most varies by context and by gender, with no clear trends across survey countries. For example, among mobile internet users, 30% of men and 42% of women report scams or fraud as a barrier to further mobile internet use in Senegal, and 42% of men and 46% of women report information security as a barrier to further mobile internet use in Indonesia.

39. GSMA. (2025). *The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2025: Affordability of Internet-Enabled Handsets and Data*.



Fundamental enablers cover a wide range of issues, from connectivity experience to social norms, so they are not grouped as a composite. In several countries, but especially in Pakistan, lack of family approval is a major barrier to women adopting mobile internet, and restrictions on how and when women are allowed to use mobile internet is a barrier to further use. For example, 23% of women in Pakistan who are aware of mobile internet report that family disapproval prevents them from adopting or using mobile internet (compared to 14% of men). Considering the role of gatekeepers is therefore key to women's mobile internet adoption and equal use, especially in settings with more restrictive gender norms. There are no significant gender differences where connectivity experience is reported as the top barrier to mobile internet adoption or further use. For example, in Guatemala, 12% of women and 13% of men who are aware of mobile internet report inconsistent or no coverage as their top barrier to either mobile internet adoption or further use.



Relevance is a key barrier to using mobile internet, particularly for those who do not yet use it. This includes perceptions that the internet is not relevant and that there is a lack of content in local languages, which is reported as a barrier to a lesser extent in all survey countries. While not among the top-reported barriers to adoption and further use for many, it is still reported by many women and men who are aware of mobile internet as a general barrier to adoption and use. For example, while not reported as the top barrier to mobile internet adoption or further use, 21% of women and 20% of men in India who are aware of mobile internet still report the internet not being relevant as a barrier. It is also important to recognise that the perception of relevance depends on a respondent's awareness of the various possible uses of mobile internet.



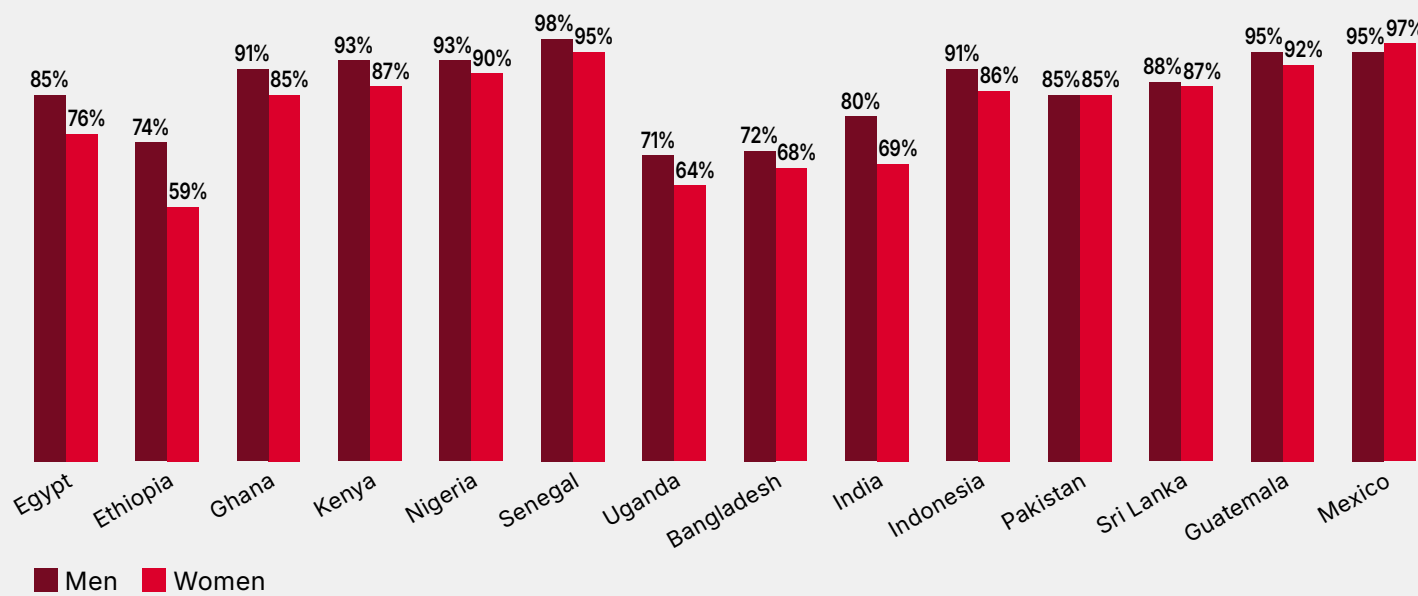
Awareness of mobile internet

Awareness of mobile internet is high (above 75%) and almost equal among men and women in 10 of the 14 survey countries. The countries with notable gender gaps in mobile internet awareness are Ethiopia (74% of men and 59% of women), Uganda (71% of men and 64% of women), Bangladesh (72% of men and 68% of women) and India (80% of men and 69% of women) (see Figure 17).

Growth in awareness has slowed in recent years as most survey countries have reached higher levels of mobile internet awareness. The survey countries

where both men and women experienced relatively high increases in awareness between 2024 and 2025 are India and Guatemala. Specifically, awareness grew by six and seven percentage points for men and women, respectively, in India and nine and eight percentage points for men and women, respectively, in Guatemala. Women’s awareness levels in Ethiopia and Nigeria also increased by six percentage points between 2024 and 2025, while men’s awareness showed no material change.

Figure 17
Mobile internet awareness
Percentage of total adult population



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Total population aged 18+
A person is considered aware of mobile internet if they have either used mobile internet before or have not used mobile internet but are aware they can access the internet on a mobile phone.
n=498 to 1,093 for women and n=464 to 1,200 for men

While awareness is a critical first step to mobile internet use, it does not necessarily translate into adoption. For example, 72% of men and 68% of women in Bangladesh are aware of mobile internet, but only 43% of men and 26% of women have adopted it. This drop-off in the mobile internet user journey (Figure 5) between awareness (stage 2) and adoption (stage 4)

suggests other barriers are at play. Beyond awareness of mobile internet, it is also important to ensure that people are aware of the various ways they can use it to meet their life needs, especially women. However, in last year's *Mobile Gender Gap Report*, we highlighted that women were less likely to be aware of the broad range of mobile internet use cases compared to men.⁴⁰

40. GSMA. (2025). *The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025*.

Barriers to mobile internet adoption among those who are aware of it

For those who are aware of mobile internet but do not yet use it, the top reported barriers to adoption for both men and women across survey countries remain affordability and literacy and digital skills (see Table 1). Among those who are aware of mobile internet and reported affordability as their top barrier to adoption, most reported affordability of handsets rather than affordability of data as the top barrier. Men and women who are aware of mobile internet and reported literacy and digital skills as their top barrier to adoption tended to report reading and writing difficulties as the top barrier.

There are some variations at the country level (see Table 1). Affordability remains the top reported barrier to adoption for men and women who are aware of mobile internet in all six Sub-Saharan African survey countries, while literacy and digital skills remain a top barrier in survey countries in South Asia. In Indonesia, safety and security is the top barrier to mobile internet adoption reported by women and men who are aware of mobile internet. This is also true for women in Mexico. Indonesia and Mexico are also the two countries with relatively

higher rates of mobile internet adoption among women, which may result in more awareness of, and exposure to, safety and security concerns.

Consistent with previous years, family disapproval remains the second-most reported top barrier to mobile internet adoption for female respondents in Pakistan, while men did not report it as a significant barrier. This highlights the importance of considering social norms when addressing women's digital inclusion. While this is the only barrier explicitly about social norms, all barriers are underpinned by complex structural realities that can lower women's access to finance, education and employment opportunities in every country.

Women's lower levels of mobile internet adoption underline the fact that millions more women face these barriers and that while addressing them will support everyone to start using mobile internet, it would especially benefit women.



Table 1

Top reported barriers to mobile internet adoption for those who are aware of it
Among those who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it

	Women			Men		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
ALL COUNTRIES	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns
Egypt	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Relevance	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns
Ethiopia	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Relevance	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Connectivity experience
Ghana	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns
Kenya	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns
Nigeria	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns
Senegal	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns
Uganda	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Connectivity experience
Bangladesh	Literacy and digital skills	Affordability	Relevance	Literacy and digital skills	Affordability	Do not have time
India	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability
Indonesia	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Literacy and digital skills	Connectivity experience
Pakistan	Literacy and digital skills	Social norms	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Affordability	Safety and security concerns
Sri Lanka	Literacy and digital skills	Affordability	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Relevance	Literacy and digital skills
Guatemala	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability
Mexico	Safety and security concerns	Literacy and digital skills	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025

Base: Adults aged 18+ who have not used mobile internet in the past three months on any device despite being aware of it (excludes those who are not aware of mobile internet). The barriers above are composite barriers. These composite barriers are aggregates (not averages) of the responses for two to five sub-barriers (see Appendix 1). Access-related barriers are not grouped as a composite since they cover a disparate range of topics. Rankings include the relative aggregated proportion of respondents who answered, "This is the most important reason stopping me" to the question, "Which one of those factors would you say is the single most important reason stopping you from using the internet on a mobile phone?"
n=62 to 238 for women and n=43 to 240 for men

Barriers to further mobile internet use for existing users

Even once women start using mobile internet, evidence shows they are less likely than men to use it regularly and for a diverse range of use cases. Our previous research has shown that, in most survey countries, women mobile internet users were also more likely than men to report that they would like to use mobile internet more than they do currently. For example, 60% of female mobile internet users in Uganda reported they would like to use it more than they do, compared to 49% of male users.⁴¹ It is necessary to understand not only women's barriers to adopting mobile internet, but also the barriers preventing them from using it more and how these compare to the barriers experienced by men.

Like last year, the top reported barriers to further mobile internet use vary more by country than by gender. Across survey countries, the top reported barriers to further mobile internet use among existing users are still safety and security concerns, affordability (primarily of data, but also handsets) and, to some extent, connectivity experience (see Table 2), in varying order by country.

Safety and security concerns are among the top three barriers to further mobile internet use for male and female mobile internet users in all survey countries. These concerns tend to be related to scams and fraud, information security and, to some extent, harmful content and unwanted contact from strangers. As in previous years, high levels of reported safety and security concerns tend to be associated with high rates of mobile internet adoption. This is likely because, as people come online, they may become more exposed to digital harms, increasing both their awareness and concern about these harms. For example, scams and fraud are the most commonly reported top barrier to further mobile internet use in Indonesia, Senegal, Guatemala and Mexico. These are also the four countries with the highest levels of mobile internet adoption among men and women.

Affordability, particularly of data but also handsets, is the top reported barrier to further use for male and female mobile internet users in most surveyed Sub-Saharan African countries. For example, in Uganda,

38% of men and 32% of women who already use mobile internet report affordability of data as the top barrier preventing them from using it more. It is also among the top three reported barriers for men and women mobile internet users in many other surveyed countries. While fewer men and women who use mobile internet report that handset cost is their top barrier to further use, it remains a significant obstacle. For example, in Kenya, while handset affordability is not ranked as the top barrier to using mobile internet more, 28% of men and 26% of women users reported that it is still a barrier to further use.

Connectivity experience is also one of the top three reported barriers to further use in most survey countries for both male and female mobile internet users. This is related to either slow connections, connections dropping most of the time or a lack of coverage overall, which can be due to a variety of reasons. For example, in Sri Lanka, where connectivity is the most reported top barrier preventing both men and women mobile internet users from using it more, more than 40% of mobile broadband subscribers either use feature phones or 3G smartphones to access the internet, which would limit their connectivity experience. Of the different types of sub-barriers related to connectivity experience, slow connection speed is reported by 18% of men and 20% of women who use mobile internet, and inconsistent or no coverage is reported as the top connectivity issue by 14% of men and 19% of women who use mobile internet.

41. See Figure 16 in [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2024](#).

Table 2

Top reported barriers to further mobile internet use for those who already use it

Among mobile internet users

	Women			Men		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
ALL COUNTRIES	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Connectivity experience
Egypt	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Literacy and digital skills
Ethiopia	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Literacy and digital skills	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns
Ghana	Affordability	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Affordability	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience
Kenya	Affordability	Safety and security concerns	Internet drains my battery	Affordability	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience
Nigeria	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Connectivity experience	Affordability	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience
Senegal	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Do not have time
Uganda	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns
Bangladesh	Affordability	Social norms	Safety and security concerns	Safety and security concerns	Social norms	Affordability
India	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Literacy and digital skills
Indonesia	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Affordability	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Affordability
Pakistan	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Connectivity experience	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns
Sri Lanka	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns	Literacy and digital skills
Guatemala	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Literacy and digital skills	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Literacy and digital skills
Mexico	Safety and security concerns	Affordability	Connectivity experience	Safety and security concerns	Connectivity experience	Affordability

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025

Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+. The barriers above are composite barriers. These composite barriers are aggregates (not averages) of the responses for two to five sub-barriers (see Appendix 1). Access-related barriers are not grouped as a composite since they cover a disparate range of topics. Rankings include the relative aggregated proportion of respondents who answered, "This is the most important reason stopping me" to the question, "Which one of those factors would you say is the single most important reason stopping you from using the internet more on a mobile phone?"
n=115 to 531 for women and n=181 to 785 for men

RECOMMENDATIONS



This year's *Mobile Gender Gap Report* highlights persistent and significant gender gaps in mobile access and use across LMICs. It underscores the urgent need for targeted efforts from MNOs and the mobile industry, policymakers, regulators and the development community to address the barriers limiting women's mobile access and use. In an increasingly digital world where advancements in technologies like AI are capturing our attention, it is imperative we do not forget the 1.4 billion people in LMICs who still do not have basic access to the internet, most of whom are women.

The mobile gender gap is not going to close on its own. The following recommendations provide practical guidance for a range of stakeholders to address the key barriers women face. This list is not exhaustive, and the recommendations should be implemented alongside broader efforts to tackle structural inequalities, including income gaps, educational disparities and restrictive social norms that underpin digital exclusion.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can move from commitment to meaningful action that drives digital inclusion for women. This will help ensure that no woman is left behind in the digital era and society and industry can reap the significant socio-economic and commercial benefits of mobile.

Additional recommendations for MNOs and other organisations can be found in the GSMA Connected Women report [*Reaching 50 Million Women with Mobile: A Practical Guide*](#).⁴² Governments and policymakers can refer to the GSMA report, [*Policy Considerations to Accelerate Digital Inclusion for Women in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*](#).⁴³

Recommendations for all stakeholders to close the mobile gender gap



Ensure there is a focus on gender equality and reaching women at an organisational and policy level, with senior leaders championing the issue and setting specific gender equity targets.



Understand the mobile gender gap by improving the quality and availability of gender-disaggregated data and understanding women's needs and the barriers they face to mobile ownership and use.



Explicitly address women's needs, circumstances and challenges in the design and implementation of mobile-related products, services, interventions and policies. This includes addressing the barriers women face related to affordability, knowledge and digital skills, safety and security, access and the availability of relevant content, products and services.



Collaborate and partner with different stakeholders to address the mobile gender gap. Targeted intervention is needed from industry, policymakers, the development community and other stakeholders to ensure that women are no longer left behind.

42. GSMA Connected Women. (2020). "[Top 10 recommendations for reaching women with mobile across low- and middle-income countries](#)".

43. GSMA Connected Women. (2022). [Policy considerations to accelerate digital inclusion for women in low- and middle-income countries](#).

Figure 18
Recommendations for closing the mobile gender gap in LMICs, by stakeholder and barrier addressed

Barrier addressed by the action	MNOs ⁴⁴	Internet companies	Policymakers and regulators ^{47, 48, 49}	Development community
Affordability	Support industry efforts to improve the availability of lower cost internet-enabled phones. E.g. Ensure ultra low-cost smartphones and smart feature phones are part of the device portfolio for customers to purchase directly.	Partner with MNOs to address handset affordability. E.g. Offer subsidies for low-cost smartphones to encourage mobile internet adoption.	Ensure policies and regulations help lower the cost of handsets and data for consumers, which is likely to benefit women disproportionately. E.g. Review and remove sector-specific taxes and fees for handsets and data. For example, import taxes that treat handsets as luxury items, excise duties on data charges and SIM registration and taxes on social media use.	Partner with and support the mobile ecosystem on projects that promote affordable handsets. E.g. Handset financing schemes provided through governments, MNOs, local NGO networks and grassroots networks led by women, such as women's savings groups.
Knowledge and digital skills	Design solutions to reduce the burden of the “one-off” cost of internet-enabled phones for consumers, making them more affordable, especially smartphones. E.g. Partner to provide microloans, instalment repayment plans or subsidised devices.	Consider how to adapt products and services to make them more affordable without compromising quality. E.g. Make “data-light” versions of apps or lightweight operating systems to help reduce the cost for more price-sensitive users.	Adopt policies and regulations that make it easier for users, especially women, to pay for handsets, data and other services. E.g. Enable innovative financing mechanisms for handsets, such as facilitating greater access to credit to enable women to cover the upfront cost of mobile handsets.	Fund and/or facilitate mobile-based digital literacy training for women. E.g. Use trusted local community and peer networks to deliver digital skills training to women, potentially in partnership with an MNO.
Safety and security	Develop clear and transparent pricing for credit and data, and introduce more creative pricing to appeal to price-sensitive customers. E.g. Encourage low-cost or free trials of mobile internet services through promotional deals or extend the length of data packages.	Implement digital skills training, paying attention to women's needs, interests and circumstances. E.g. Through partnerships or via products and services.	Consider subsidy programmes to help make handsets and data services more affordable. E.g. Design subsidy programmes that target underserved women. ⁵⁰	Raise awareness of the threats preventing women from accessing and using the internet and how they can be addressed. E.g. Awareness campaigns, digital literacy programmes and formal education programmes/curriculum.
Fundamental enablers to access	Improve customers’ digital skills, including providing assistance to new users who may need additional support and paying attention to women’s needs, interests and circumstances. E.g. Train and incentivise mobile agents to provide digital skills training and support to customers, such as using the GSMA Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit. ⁴⁵	Develop apps, services and other measures to help women feel safer online. E.g. Adopt privacy and safety-by-design approaches ⁴⁶ and make it easy and safe for customers to report online abuse. Collaborate with relevant government agencies to ensure these reports are responded to quickly and effectively.	Address wider policy and regulatory barriers that are discriminatory to women accessing financing and can impede their ability to afford handsets and data. E.g. Review and revise regulations and laws ⁵¹ (such as inheritance, property, equal pay for work of equal value laws) that affect women's access to finance and ability to secure credit.	Develop and support initiatives to increase women's access to and use of mobile and mobile internet. Also consider how mainstream projects and interventions can be adapted to advance digital inclusion for women.
Relevance	Consider incentivising women's social networks to help teach them how to use mobile handsets and services. E.g. Leverage existing customers, friends and family, savings groups, community groups, etc.	Help women to navigate the internet confidently and safely and to feel secure and in control when using internet apps and services. E.g. Provide training on how to avoid and respond to negative behaviours and threats.	Develop and deliver digital skills training programmes that meet women’s preferences for what and how they want to learn. E.g. Define groups of women to target, understand their needs and goals and ensure the training includes a focus on mobile given the mobile-first nature of access for many.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
	Develop apps and services that can help increase safety for women. E.g. Develop intuitive “safety services” like apps that allow women to alert contacts in an emergency or call-blocking services.	Ensure mobile apps and operating systems are accessible for women who are less confident and have fewer literacy skills. E.g. Consider local languages, clear user menus with fewer steps, simplified content, simple terminology and a shorter sign-up process. Use icons, symbols, pictures, videos and comic-style stories in addition to (or instead of) text.	Raise awareness of the threats preventing women and girls from accessing and using the internet and how these threats can be addressed or reduced. E.g. Public awareness campaigns, investing in digital literacy programmes and formal education programmes/ curriculum (targeting both men and women).	Work to address restrictive social norms. This includes those that restrict women's access to mobile technology by challenging misconceptions and demonstrating positive and relevant use cases. E.g. Fund awareness campaigns in partnership with the government or other stakeholders to address restrictive social norms that limit women's access to and use of mobile.
	Consider the role of gatekeepers in facilitating women’s mobile ownership and use. E.g. Demonstrate through marketing the value of women having access to mobile phones and mobile internet.	Develop and incorporate tools to improve the usability of digital services for women with low literacy levels or who only speak their local language. E.g. Integrate voice search, chatbots or text-to-speech.	Strengthen measures to protect women against internet-related abuse and harassment. E.g. Review existing legal and policy frameworks to ensure they recognise digital harassment and fraud, and make it easy and safe to report online abuse.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
	Ensure agent networks are accessible for women. E.g. Ensure locations and operating hours are accessible for women and consider recruiting female agents in settings where gender roles are very different and women feel more comfortable interacting with other women.	Understand and incorporate the content, features, channels and services that women in your market find useful and relevant. E.g. Make relevant video content in local languages more available and accessible.	Encourage the development and uptake of apps and services that make it safer for women to access and use the internet. E.g. Encourage the adoption of privacy and safety-by-design approaches. ⁵²	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
	Ensure marketing and services are accessible for women and those with lower literacy, digital skills and awareness and understanding of mobile internet. E.g. Offer content and advertising through channels that are accessible to women in local languages. Use simple messaging, avoid technical jargon and consider the use of pictures, icons and videos.		Create an enabling policy and regulatory environment to help women purchase and access mobile services. E.g. Review your know-your-customer (KYC) requirements and ID registration policy to ensure they do not exclude women.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
	Communicate the relevance of mobile ownership and mobile internet use in women's daily lives. E.g. Showcase relatable use cases in marketing targeted at women and/or ensure that women are featured in more broadcast advertising campaigns as active users of the service.		Ensure mobile-related sales, access and training facilities are accessible for women as well as men. E.g. Ensure regulation does not unintentionally exclude women from becoming agents.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
			Raise awareness of the benefits of mobile for women to address social norms that restrict women's access and use of mobile. E.g. Challenge misconceptions and help gatekeepers understand the benefits of mobile for women.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
			Ensure digital government services are accessible for those with lower literacy and digital skills. E.g. Provide an interactive voice response (IVR) helpline, use simple terminology, local languages, icons, symbols, pictures, videos and comic-style stories in addition to (or instead of) text.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
			Raise awareness of mobile internet-enabled content, apps and services and how they can be relevant to women's lives. E.g. Promote the life-changing benefits of mobile internet via relevant channels, including local radio stations and local workers supporting the delivery of basic government services.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
			Create an enabling environment that supports the development of content, apps and services that meet women's needs. E.g. Support businesses and start-ups to develop inclusive solutions with and for women.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.
			Ensure that digital public services are developed to meet the needs of women. E.g. Consult and engage all types of women when designing and testing e-government content, apps and services.	Raise awareness of the barriers to women's mobile ownership and use, and advocate for stakeholders to take action to address the mobile gender gap.

44. More detailed recommendations on how MNOs can increase mobile adoption among women can be found here: <https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/reaching-women-with-mobile/>.

45. GSMA Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit (MISTT): <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/connected-society/mistt/>.

46. For example, providers could help users manage their privacy by making them aware of their app's privacy default settings. For more information on safety-by-design approaches, see: [GSMA. \(2012\). Privacy Design Guidelines for Mobile Application Development.](#)

47. More detailed recommendations on how policymakers can increase mobile adoption among the underserved can be found here: https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/gsma_resources/accelerating-mobile-internet-adoption-policy-considerations/.

48. More detailed recommendations on how policymakers can improve handset affordability can be found here: http://gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/gsma_resources/improving-handset-affordability-in-low-and-middle-income-countries/.

49. More detailed recommendations on how policymakers can improve digital skills can be found here: https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/gsma_resources/advancing-digital-skills-for-greater-digital-inclusion-in-low-and-middle-income-countries/.

50. The GSMA has developed a Handset Subsidy Toolkit to support governments with structuring effective handset subsidy programmes. If this is of interest, please send an email to: connectedsociety@gsma.com.

51. Governments can consult the [World Bank's Women, Business and the Law data set](#) to identify laws and regulations that may hinder gender equality.

52. For example, providers could help users manage their privacy by making them aware of their app's privacy default settings. For more information on safety-by-design approaches, see: [GSMA. \(2012\). Privacy Design Guidelines for Mobile Application Development.](#)

APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: BARRIERS TO MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION AND USE

In each of the 14 survey countries:

- Respondents who were aware of mobile internet but had not used it (in the past three months) were asked to identify the barriers preventing them from adopting it.⁵³
- Respondents who had used mobile internet (in the past three months) were asked to identify the barriers preventing them from using it more.

Respondents selected from a list of 22 barriers during a face-to-face survey. For barriers to mobile internet adoption and further mobile internet use, respondents were first asked to identify all relevant barriers from this list (see Figure 20 and 22) and then to identify

those that were most important and, finally, to identify the single most important barrier (see Figure 19 and Figure 21).

Strongly related or thematically overlapping barriers were grouped into composites that were used to calculate country-level and overall rankings of barriers. The results may not fully reflect the importance of subtle, underlying structural impediments, particularly those grounded in social norms that disproportionately affect women and might not be reported directly by respondents, such as the perceived inappropriateness of spending money on mobile services for themselves.



53. Respondents who were not aware of mobile internet were not asked to identify the barriers preventing them from using it as it was not deemed appropriate.

Figure 19
 Top barriers to mobile internet adoption
Percentage of those who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it who reported the following as the single most important barrier to adopting mobile internet

			AFFORDABILITY		LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS				RELEVANCE		SAFETY AND SECURITY					FUNDAMENTAL ENABLERS						
			HANDSET COST	DATA COST	READING/ WRITING DIFFICULTIES	DIFFICULTIES USING A MOBILE IN GENERAL	NOT CONFIDENT USING MOBILE INTERNET	NOT SUFFICIENT SUPPORT IN LEARNING TO USE THE INTERNET	INTERNET IS NOT RELEVANT FOR ME	INSUFFICIENT CONTENT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE	STRANGERS CONTACTING ME	HARMFUL CONTENT (SELF/FAMILY)	INFORMATION SECURITY	DO NOT TRUST INFORMATION ON WEBSITES OR APPS	SCAMS OR FRAUD	INCONSISTENT/ NO COVERAGE	SLOW CONNECTION SPEEDS	INTERNET DRAINS MY BATTERY	ACCESS TO AGENT SUPPORT	DO NOT HAVE TIME TO USE MOBILE INTERNET	SHARED PHONE ACCESS	FAMILY DOES NOT APPROVE
AFRICA	Egypt	M	33%	6%	15%	10%	2%	0%	7%	3%	5%	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	3%	3%	3%	0%
		W	37%	6%	16%	11%	0%	2%	9%	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	2%	5%	0%	2%
	Ethiopia	M	47%	6%	20%	1%	3%	1%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	5%	2%	1%	0%	5%	0%	0%
		W	40%	5%	24%	4%	6%	1%	6%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	4%	0%	0%
	Ghana	M	33%	4%	21%	0%	3%	0%	7%	0%	1%	3%	5%	0%	2%	2%	3%	3%	0%	10%	2%	0%
		W	33%	5%	14%	1%	6%	3%	1%	1%	3%	3%	2%	3%	7%	1%	2%	2%	0%	12%	0%	3%
	Kenya	M	59%	3%	6%	1%	3%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%	4%	0%	2%	3%	1%
		W	49%	5%	11%	3%	4%	1%	5%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	6%	2%	2%
	Nigeria	M	38%	6%	25%	2%	4%	0%	5%	0%	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%	2%	0%	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%
		W	34%	8%	28%	1%	3%	1%	3%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	3%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	4%	5%
	Senegal	M	27%	4%	19%	3%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	8%	2%	0%	6%	5%	0%	6%	2%	8%	6%	0%
		W	39%	3%	16%	3%	8%	1%	1%	0%	3%	2%	1%	1%	5%	2%	2%	4%	0%	3%	3%	2%
	Uganda	M	47%	8%	9%	2%	2%	2%	4%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	10%	0%	1%	2%	7%	2%	1%
		W	53%	3%	7%	1%	3%	4%	4%	1%	1%	3%	2%	0%	3%	6%	0%	2%	2%	2%	3%	0%
ASIA	Bangladesh	M	11%	9%	22%	8%	4%	3%	6%	4%	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%	3%	6%	0%	11%	3%	5%
		W	9%	3%	28%	6%	1%	1%	4%	8%	0%	5%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	5%	1%	6%	6%	8%
	India	M	10%	9%	12%	2%	5%	5%	4%	6%	3%	4%	5%	2%	8%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	6%	4%
		W	6%	5%	21%	2%	6%	7%	7%	2%	3%	3%	4%	1%	9%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%	5%	4%
	Indonesia	M	7%	7%	12%	3%	7%	0%	6%	0%	3%	4%	6%	0%	11%	8%	9%	0%	3%	5%	1%	7%
		W	14%	10%	8%	2%	6%	0%	1%	1%	4%	2%	8%	3%	13%	7%	8%	0%	0%	0%	4%	7%
	Pakistan	M	16%	8%	32%	0%	4%	4%	7%	2%	1%	5%	2%	1%	4%	4%	2%	3%	0%	4%	0%	2%
		W	10%	3%	32%	4%	2%	2%	9%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%	3%	1%	0%	5%	3%	17%
	Sri Lanka	M	14%	19%	6%	4%	9%	1%	20%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	3%	5%	1%	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%
		W	4%	19%	10%	3%	17%	3%	10%	0%	5%	6%	1%	1%	1%	10%	2%	0%	2%	4%	1%	2%
LATIN AMERICA	Guatemala	M	12%	12%	12%	14%	2%	0%	0%	0%	7%	7%	0%	2%	10%	9%	0%	2%	0%	7%	2%	0%
		W	11%	3%	28%	3%	5%	4%	2%	1%	10%	4%	6%	2%	6%	13%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
	Mexico	M	23%	0%	14%	0%	16%	11%	3%	0%	3%	3%	11%	0%	8%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
		W	14%	4%	6%	10%	8%	6%	4%	0%	0%	2%	17%	2%	12%	4%	0%	0%	0%	4%	6%	2%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Adults aged 18+ who have not used mobile internet in the past three months on any device, despite being aware of it (excludes those who are not aware of mobile internet).
 Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered, “This is the most important reason stopping me” to the question, “Which one of those factors would you say is the single most important reason stopping you from using the internet on a mobile phone?”
 n=62 to 238 for women and n=43 to 240 for men



Figure 20
A barrier to mobile internet adoption
Percentage of those who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it who reported the following as a barrier to adopting mobile internet

			AFFORDABILITY		LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS				RELEVANCE		SAFETY AND SECURITY					FUNDAMENTAL ENABLERS							
			HANDSET COST	DATA COST	READING/ WRITING DIFFICULTIES	DIFFICULTIES USING A MOBILE IN GENERAL	NOT CONFIDENT USING MOBILE INTERNET	NOT SUFFICIENT SUPPORT IN LEARNING TO USE THE INTERNET	INTERNET IS NOT RELEVANT FOR ME	INSUFFICIENT CONTENT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE	STRANGERS CONTACTING ME	HARMFUL CONTENT (SELF/FAMILY)	INFORMATION SECURITY	DO NOT TRUST INFORMATION ON WEBSITES OR APPS	SCAMS OR FRAUD	INCONSISTENT/ NO COVERAGE	SLOW CONNECTION SPEEDS	INTERNET DRAINS MY BATTERY	ACCESS TO AGENT SUPPORT	DO NOT HAVE TIME TO USE MOBILE INTERNET	SHARED PHONE ACCESS	FAMILY DOES NOT APPROVE	
AFRICA	Egypt	M	63%	44%	58%	34%	30%	28%	37%	16%	21%	25%	23%	20%	30%	14%	14%	23%	22%	22%	9%	10%	
		W	60%	51%	44%	34%	28%	20%	29%	10%	27%	23%	28%	17%	31%	13%	19%	18%	15%	21%	8%	13%	
	Ethiopia	M	73%	39%	43%	36%	45%	31%	17%	16%	19%	14%	14%	12%	17%	39%	36%	20%	12%	25%	3%	3%	
		W	75%	44%	55%	46%	58%	39%	22%	14%	18%	15%	14%	10%	19%	33%	27%	18%	16%	30%	6%	6%	
	Ghana	M	45%	22%	32%	9%	16%	14%	21%	6%	14%	12%	16%	12%	18%	18%	13%	12%	7%	20%	10%	4%	
		W	44%	30%	29%	17%	22%	19%	14%	14%	20%	17%	16%	15%	27%	17%	15%	17%	14%	29%	11%	11%	
	Kenya	M	71%	45%	21%	16%	26%	15%	23%	14%	21%	21%	23%	21%	26%	10%	8%	19%	6%	22%	19%	5%	
		W	69%	52%	27%	18%	24%	16%	26%	18%	21%	21%	23%	20%	27%	17%	10%	21%	12%	28%	16%	5%	
	Nigeria	M	57%	49%	44%	22%	27%	16%	26%	15%	16%	11%	13%	16%	20%	10%	9%	20%	10%	23%	17%	5%	
		W	52%	48%	45%	22%	27%	16%	20%	12%	17%	14%	13%	17%	22%	11%	9%	16%	10%	17%	15%	16%	
	Senegal	M	48%	40%	38%	20%	28%	21%	15%	23%	24%	32%	27%	26%	31%	44%	30%	31%	20%	37%	26%	6%	
		W	62%	46%	45%	33%	32%	21%	9%	21%	17%	29%	29%	17%	31%	37%	28%	24%	13%	28%	27%	15%	
	Uganda	M	70%	50%	32%	26%	35%	38%	25%	41%	31%	29%	26%	24%	39%	40%	30%	37%	22%	31%	22%	6%	
		W	74%	52%	32%	29%	42%	44%	28%	34%	31%	30%	26%	25%	42%	37%	28%	30%	28%	29%	23%	7%	
ASIA	Bangladesh	M	29%	28%	32%	28%	20%	17%	28%	20%	18%	22%	19%	19%	22%	13%	15%	21%	13%	27%	9%	10%	
		W	28%	22%	33%	28%	22%	20%	25%	22%	21%	21%	18%	18%	18%	13%	15%	18%	14%	23%	17%	18%	
	India	M	35%	33%	35%	27%	29%	28%	28%	27%	22%	24%	33%	23%	31%	22%	25%	26%	25%	21%	22%	26%	
		W	32%	37%	35%	32%	38%	33%	35%	31%	35%	32%	34%	27%	41%	30%	29%	23%	31%	32%	28%	26%	
	Indonesia	M	48%	45%	23%	33%	45%	38%	41%	30%	43%	46%	49%	33%	51%	42%	35%	31%	35%	38%	33%	25%	
		W	60%	60%	30%	42%	54%	45%	45%	33%	62%	58%	59%	42%	63%	49%	40%	33%	45%	40%	42%	40%	
	Pakistan	M	66%	54%	60%	47%	41%	34%	49%	42%	29%	42%	43%	39%	49%	38%	35%	36%	30%	38%	34%	20%	
		W	47%	44%	57%	43%	37%	32%	42%	29%	26%	37%	32%	22%	39%	27%	25%	16%	22%	29%	30%	36%	
	Sri Lanka	M	47%	38%	19%	24%	31%	21%	30%	24%	29%	40%	30%	12%	36%	30%	24%	11%	23%	22%	10%	9%	
		W	43%	34%	23%	26%	28%	20%	28%	18%	31%	37%	29%	11%	31%	32%	22%	11%	20%	21%	6%	11%	
LATIN AMERICA	Guatemala	M	33%	36%	33%	30%	30%	25%	9%	8%	29%	32%	25%	15%	40%	17%	19%	13%	8%	21%	11%	7%	
		W	41%	43%	43%	35%	29%	34%	21%	26%	45%	44%	40%	32%	48%	37%	27%	27%	21%	21%	29%	12%	
	Mexico	M	41%	38%	21%	26%	24%	21%	14%	7%	23%	48%	35%	19%	33%	14%	11%	14%	17%	16%	14%	12%	
		W	47%	38%	24%	39%	47%	37%	32%	14%	34%	42%	58%	30%	49%	23%	24%	21%	18%	32%	29%	20%	

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Adults aged 18+ who have not used mobile internet in the past three months on any device, despite being aware of it (excludes those who are not aware of mobile internet). Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered, “Yes – this is something that stops me” to the question, “For each of the possible reasons that I read out, please indicate whether this is something that stops you from using the internet on a mobile phone.”
n=62 to 238 for women and n=43 to 240 for men



Figure 21
Top barrier to further mobile internet use
Percentage of mobile internet users who reported the following as the single most important barrier to using mobile internet more

			AFFORDABILITY		LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS				RELEVANCE		SAFETY AND SECURITY					FUNDAMENTAL ENABLERS									
			HANDSET COST	DATA COST	READING/ WRITING DIFFICULTIES	DIFFICULTIES USING A MOBILE IN GENERAL	NOT CONFIDENT USING MOBILE INTERNET	NOT SUFFICIENT SUPPORT IN LEARNING TO USE THE INTERNET	INTERNET IS NOT RELEVANT FOR ME	INSUFFICIENT CONTENT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE	STRANGERS CONTACTING ME	HARMFUL CONTENT (SELF/FAMILY)	INFORMATION SECURITY	DO NOT TRUST INFORMATION ON WEBSITES OR APPS	SCAMS OR FRAUD	INCONSISTENT/ NO COVERAGE	SLOW CONNECTION SPEEDS	INTERNET DRAINS MY BATTERY	ACCESS TO AGENT SUPPORT	DO NOT HAVE TIME TO USE MOBILE INTERNET	SHARED PHONE ACCESS	FAMILY DOES NOT APPROVE	ONLY ALLOWED TO USE MOBILE INTERNET FOR SPECIFIC REASONS	ONLY ALLOWED TO USE MOBILE INTERNET FOR A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME OR AT CERTAIN TIMES OF THE DAY	
AFRICA	Egypt	M	3%	10%	6%	4%	2%	3%	5%	2%	6%	6%	9%	4%	4%	13%	7%	7%	1%	5%	0%	1%	1%	2%	
		W	5%	7%	6%	3%	1%	5%	5%	1%	3%	3%	6%	5%	5%	15%	8%	7%	1%	4%	3%	5%	3%	2%	
	Ethiopia	M	22%	19%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	19%	11%	3%	1%	6%	3%	1%	0%	0%	
		W	27%	13%	5%	2%	0%	2%	1%	1%	0%	3%	1%	2%	1%	14%	7%	5%	2%	6%	3%	4%	1%	1%	
	Ghana	M	7%	23%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	5%	4%	4%	1%	12%	13%	5%	7%	2%	6%	1%	0%	1%	2%	
		W	7%	28%	6%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	6%	5%	6%	2%	11%	10%	4%	7%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	
	Kenya	M	14%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	1%	5%	2%	7%	9%	5%	10%	1%	6%	4%	1%	2%	1%	
		W	9%	30%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	6%	5%	3%	2%	5%	7%	3%	12%	0%	5%	4%	0%	1%	3%	
	Nigeria	M	5%	40%	6%	0%	1%	1%	1%	3%	5%	3%	2%	2%	7%	8%	3%	7%	1%	3%	2%	0%	1%	2%	
		W	6%	48%	12%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	8%	2%	5%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	
	Senegal	M	5%	7%	7%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	4%	8%	7%	1%	12%	11%	5%	8%	1%	14%	1%	1%	2%	3%	
		W	4%	10%	8%	1%	3%	1%	0%	0%	4%	8%	9%	3%	13%	10%	4%	5%	0%	10%	1%	1%	0%	4%	
	Uganda	M	15%	38%	2%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	13%	4%	4%	1%	4%	1%	0%	1%	1%	
		W	19%	32%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%	1%	3%	11%	4%	5%	1%	2%	4%	1%	2%	1%	
ASIA	Bangladesh	M	6%	11%	4%	2%	2%	4%	0%	2%	7%	4%	0%	8%	1%	4%	7%	12%	1%	5%	2%	3%	5%	11%	
		W	11%	14%	1%	7%	0%	5%	0%	2%	1%	8%	3%	0%	4%	5%	4%	5%	0%	4%	8%	7%	7%	4%	
	India	M	5%	10%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	6%	4%	10%	4%	8%	5%	3%	5%	2%	3%	3%	5%	
		W	4%	9%	3%	2%	4%	3%	4%	3%	6%	4%	6%	3%	10%	4%	6%	3%	2%	6%	5%	3%	5%	3%	
	Indonesia	M	2%	4%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	7%	6%	22%	4%	26%	6%	4%	2%	0%	4%	0%	1%	1%	1%	
		W	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	7%	9%	24%	2%	22%	6%	3%	1%	2%	4%	1%	2%	1%	2%	
	Pakistan	M	5%	6%	16%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%	6%	2%	6%	8%	21%	4%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	0%	
		W	6%	8%	15%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	5%	3%	2%	6%	2%	13%	4%	1%	8%	4%	4%	4%	2%	
	Sri Lanka	M	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%	5%	14%	4%	1%	8%	14%	18%	5%	2%	5%	1%	3%	1%	3%	
		W	4%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	8%	6%	12%	2%	8%	19%	20%	3%	2%	2%	1%	4%	0%	3%	
LATIN AMERICA	Guatemala	M	2%	5%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	15%	10%	11%	3%	19%	13%	5%	4%	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	
		W	4%	2%	4%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	13%	11%	12%	4%	18%	12%	3%	4%	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%	1%	
	Mexico	M	6%	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%	1%	1%	8%	12%	23%	4%	18%	7%	2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	
		W	5%	2%	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	0%	11%	16%	23%	5%	19%	4%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+
Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered, "This is the most important reason stopping me" to the question, "And which one of those factors would you say is the single most important reason stopping you from using the internet more on a mobile phone?"
n=115 to 531 for women and n=181 to 785 for men



Figure 22
A barrier to further mobile internet use
Percentage of mobile internet users who reported the following as a barrier to using mobile internet more

			AFFORDABILITY		LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS				RELEVANCE		SAFETY AND SECURITY					FUNDAMENTAL ENABLERS									
			HANDSET COST	DATA COST	READING/ WRITING DIFFICULTIES	DIFFICULTIES USING A MOBILE IN GENERAL	NOT CONFIDENT USING MOBILE INTERNET	NOT SUFFICIENT SUPPORT IN LEARNING TO USE THE INTERNET	INTERNET IS NOT RELEVANT FOR ME	INSUFFICIENT CONTENT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE	STRANGERS CONTACTING ME	HARMFUL CONTENT (SELF/FAMILY)	INFORMATION SECURITY	DO NOT TRUST INFORMATION ON WEBSITES OR APPS	SCAMS OR FRAUD	INCONSISTENT/ NO COVERAGE	SLOW CONNECTION SPEEDS	INTERNET DRAINS MY BATTERY	ACCESS TO AGENT SUPPORT	DO NOT HAVE TIME TO USE MOBILE INTERNET	SHARED PHONE ACCESS	FAMILY DOES NOT APPROVE	ONLY ALLOWED TO USE MOBILE INTERNET FOR SPECIFIC REASONS	ONLY ALLOWED TO USE MOBILE INTERNET FOR A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME OR AT CERTAIN TIMES OF THE DAY	
AFRICA	Egypt	M	14%	15%	8%	6%	11%	8%	11%	8%	12%	14%	13%	15%	14%	17%	16%	15%	9%	14%	6%	8%	8%	8%	
		W	14%	15%	6%	7%	9%	10%	10%	5%	12%	12%	14%	12%	13%	17%	13%	14%	7%	12%	7%	6%	8%	9%	
	Ethiopia	M	39%	56%	12%	8%	8%	10%	12%	15%	19%	13%	18%	23%	24%	60%	56%	37%	12%	27%	13%	6%	7%	8%	
		W	49%	46%	16%	14%	14%	14%	16%	11%	20%	19%	18%	20%	24%	53%	45%	25%	17%	26%	21%	15%	11%	11%	
	Ghana	M	19%	36%	10%	7%	8%	7%	7%	8%	18%	15%	17%	11%	21%	25%	18%	22%	8%	15%	6%	5%	7%	8%	
		W	21%	38%	14%	7%	9%	8%	8%	8%	22%	17%	20%	15%	23%	27%	19%	23%	10%	14%	9%	9%	10%	8%	
	Kenya	M	28%	43%	6%	5%	6%	6%	11%	7%	21%	19%	19%	18%	23%	31%	28%	36%	7%	20%	12%	3%	13%	13%	
		W	26%	43%	4%	3%	4%	4%	8%	4%	23%	12%	15%	17%	22%	31%	24%	36%	4%	14%	10%	2%	10%	11%	
	Nigeria	M	17%	42%	15%	7%	9%	8%	7%	8%	14%	9%	14%	16%	18%	23%	16%	23%	8%	12%	7%	4%	8%	8%	
		W	18%	47%	24%	9%	10%	10%	7%	6%	18%	11%	10%	12%	16%	22%	13%	24%	5%	13%	5%	6%	8%	7%	
	Senegal	M	25%	35%	15%	8%	10%	9%	8%	11%	25%	28%	31%	21%	30%	44%	39%	39%	10%	38%	10%	7%	13%	13%	
		W	27%	39%	26%	12%	20%	18%	10%	16%	36%	38%	38%	31%	42%	45%	40%	39%	12%	41%	17%	11%	16%	20%	
	Uganda	M	58%	66%	14%	8%	10%	17%	14%	24%	38%	30%	31%	27%	41%	58%	57%	57%	16%	27%	16%	3%	18%	20%	
		W	55%	69%	14%	16%	20%	24%	15%	23%	38%	27%	29%	30%	40%	56%	46%	59%	18%	37%	21%	6%	24%	22%	
ASIA	Bangladesh	M	18%	26%	4%	8%	7%	10%	13%	11%	14%	16%	17%	19%	13%	20%	22%	24%	10%	20%	6%	10%	20%	21%	
		W	16%	18%	11%	10%	9%	11%	9%	6%	11%	13%	11%	9%	11%	14%	18%	15%	8%	14%	14%	13%	14%	14%	
	India	M	36%	40%	26%	31%	34%	31%	32%	29%	35%	36%	38%	35%	40%	36%	37%	37%	30%	33%	32%	31%	33%	32%	
		W	36%	36%	26%	27%	29%	31%	31%	26%	32%	34%	38%	30%	40%	34%	33%	34%	28%	33%	33%	30%	34%	32%	
	Indonesia	M	27%	24%	8%	9%	14%	18%	16%	16%	41%	39%	42%	31%	46%	34%	27%	29%	13%	20%	12%	9%	17%	16%	
		W	28%	24%	7%	11%	16%	17%	15%	15%	40%	37%	46%	30%	46%	36%	30%	27%	13%	21%	14%	11%	17%	18%	
	Pakistan	M	30%	35%	30%	19%	23%	17%	21%	24%	27%	31%	29%	30%	32%	36%	45%	32%	19%	24%	17%	12%	18%	19%	
		W	33%	34%	31%	21%	20%	16%	21%	14%	29%	34%	33%	29%	38%	25%	38%	25%	14%	25%	29%	15%	22%	20%	
	Sri Lanka	M	19%	22%	7%	11%	8%	11%	12%	16%	22%	23%	23%	16%	30%	29%	28%	21%	10%	16%	8%	13%	10%	12%	
		W	20%	23%	4%	6%	9%	6%	7%	11%	26%	24%	25%	12%	27%	32%	26%	18%	8%	12%	8%	12%	8%	11%	
LATIN AMERICA	Guatemala	M	19%	20%	9%	8%	7%	6%	4%	5%	40%	37%	40%	19%	42%	34%	21%	21%	7%	7%	4%	4%	5%	7%	
		W	17%	24%	8%	10%	10%	6%	7%	5%	41%	40%	42%	18%	43%	34%	27%	21%	8%	8%	8%	4%	6%	10%	
	Mexico	M	22%	17%	4%	7%	14%	10%	6%	4%	40%	39%	44%	26%	47%	17%	14%	18%	7%	10%	7%	7%	11%	11%	
		W	31%	22%	5%	8%	14%	14%	7%	4%	48%	47%	51%	33%	53%	20%	15%	16%	8%	10%	9%	7%	8%	10%	

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+
Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered “Yes – this is something that stops me” to the question, “For each of the possible reasons that I read out, please indicate whether this is something that stops you at all from using the internet more on a mobile phone.”
n=115 to 531 for women and n=181 to 785 for men



APPENDIX 2: USE CASES

Figure 23
Weekly mobile internet use cases among mobile internet users
Percentage of mobile internet users who perform each use case at least once a week

			CALL ONLINE	VIDEO CALLS	INSTANT MESSAGING	SOCIAL MEDIA	ONLINE VIDEO	ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT	READ NEWS	SEARCH FOR ONLINE INFORMATION	EDUCATION/ LEARNING SUPPORT	SEARCH FOR ONLINE JOB/BUSINESS INFORMATION	ORDER GOODS/ SERVICES	INCOME GENERATION	ONLINE BANKING/ MOBILE MONEY	HEALTH SERVICES	GOVERNMENT SERVICES	AGRICULTURE INFORMATION	EMPLOYMENT OR ONLINE WORK
AFRICA	Egypt	M	63%	57%	71%	72%	68%	58%	29%	21%	17%	17%	17%	13%	15%	13%	15%	4%	14%
		W	65%	53%	75%	82%	76%	65%	32%	30%	22%	8%	22%	14%	16%	19%	15%	2%	14%
	Ethiopia	M	39%	34%	55%	73%	53%	65%	55%	18%	22%	18%	6%	6%	31%	14%	28%	10%	17%
		W	43%	37%	45%	66%	48%	54%	32%	25%	13%	5%	5%	5%	18%	14%	14%	2%	14%
	Ghana	M	76%	69%	84%	86%	74%	74%	49%	45%	46%	33%	15%	30%	25%	26%	24%	10%	18%
		W	73%	67%	81%	82%	66%	72%	39%	39%	37%	27%	16%	26%	21%	20%	18%	6%	13%
	Kenya	M	68%	59%	85%	88%	77%	78%	57%	47%	46%	37%	13%	24%	42%	25%	28%	25%	27%
		W	69%	57%	85%	88%	78%	78%	55%	43%	42%	31%	11%	23%	37%	27%	22%	19%	27%
	Nigeria	M	77%	62%	84%	82%	56%	54%	51%	29%	25%	27%	15%	29%	55%	19%	21%	12%	14%
		W	78%	69%	89%	84%	63%	56%	41%	23%	28%	23%	13%	29%	51%	17%	17%	8%	19%
	Senegal	M	73%	49%	91%	84%	68%	70%	63%	26%	35%	30%	17%	29%	53%	21%	35%	16%	13%
		W	69%	51%	88%	83%	66%	70%	43%	25%	25%	16%	18%	23%	40%	20%	25%	5%	11%
	Uganda	M	56%	44%	69%	77%	70%	65%	53%	27%	24%	27%	3%	14%	15%	19%	19%	18%	7%
		W	54%	41%	69%	69%	55%	62%	36%	23%	21%	17%	6%	9%	13%	13%	13%	9%	11%
ASIA	Bangladesh	M	76%	82%	69%	72%	74%	66%	40%	32%	26%	21%	29%	25%	28%	26%	23%	5%	24%
		W	76%	80%	64%	68%	79%	70%	25%	37%	24%	3%	16%	18%	23%	18%	17%	1%	17%
	India	M	75%	73%	78%	79%	80%	75%	57%	54%	51%	43%	48%	43%	52%	52%	50%	19%	45%
		W	71%	71%	71%	72%	82%	70%	45%	43%	45%	17%	42%	35%	39%	40%	36%	13%	38%
	Indonesia	M	94%	90%	94%	84%	85%	76%	53%	39%	30%	31%	26%	13%	27%	18%	24%	6%	19%
		W	94%	87%	93%	84%	86%	73%	44%	35%	30%	17%	26%	13%	24%	18%	19%	3%	14%
	Pakistan	M	79%	75%	76%	78%	74%	64%	26%	20%	21%	18%	20%	18%	30%	17%	21%	10%	22%
		W	61%	68%	64%	55%	64%	48%	17%	14%	16%	3%	11%	11%	11%	13%	12%	3%	11%
LATIN AMERICA	Guatemala	M	91%	82%	92%	91%	78%	79%	61%	47%	59%	43%	22%	25%	33%	36%	32%	15%	29%
		W	90%	80%	91%	89%	79%	76%	59%	47%	65%	28%	21%	27%	33%	41%	31%	7%	30%
	Mexico	M	75%	65%	88%	83%	80%	71%	66%	59%	58%	49%	42%	32%	51%	36%	43%	7%	32%
		W	74%	66%	89%	86%	82%	73%	61%	61%	61%	26%	34%	29%	43%	32%	33%	4%	30%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+
Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered that they perform each use case once a day or at least once a week using mobile internet.
n=115 to 531 for women and n=181 to 785 for men



APPENDIX 3: REPORTED IMPACTS OF MOBILE INTERNET ON LIVELIHOODS AND INCOME

In each of the 14 survey countries, respondents who use mobile internet were asked to report the perceived impact of using mobile internet on their livelihood and income. Respondents were provided with a list of ways in which using the internet on a mobile phone may impact a person's income or livelihood, such as their ability to earn money, find a job, perform a job, sell things, receive money, save money or learn a skill to do a job. Respondents were also provided with examples of apps or websites like Facebook, Facebook Marketplace, YouTube, WhatsApp, Google, online banking or mobile money services and local examples.

Respondents selected from a list of five responses during a face-to-face survey, reporting whether using mobile internet on a mobile device significantly worsened, worsened, had no impact, improved or significantly improved their livelihood and income. They also had the option to respond "Don't know".⁵⁴

For the purposes of analysis, the five options were grouped into three composite responses:

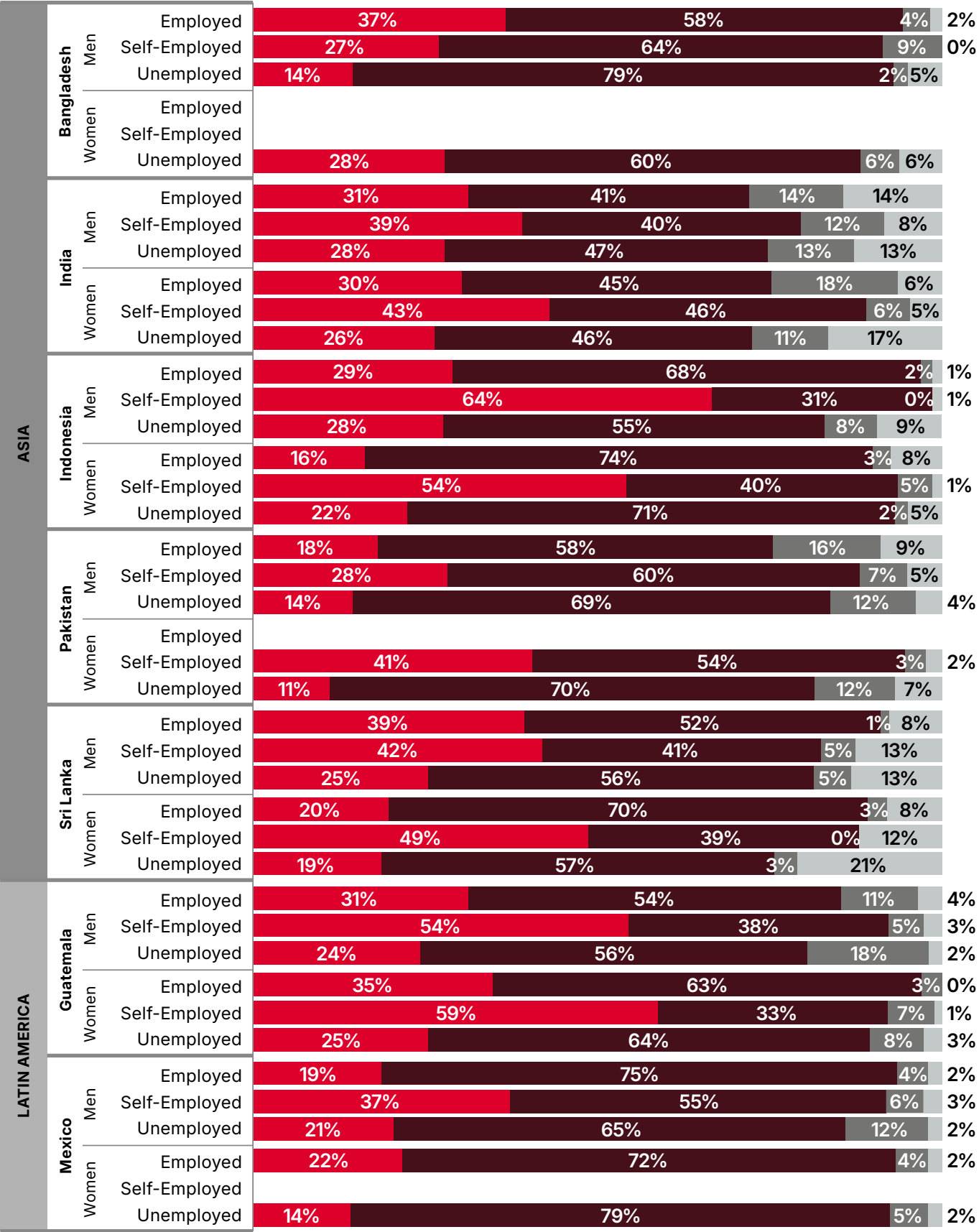
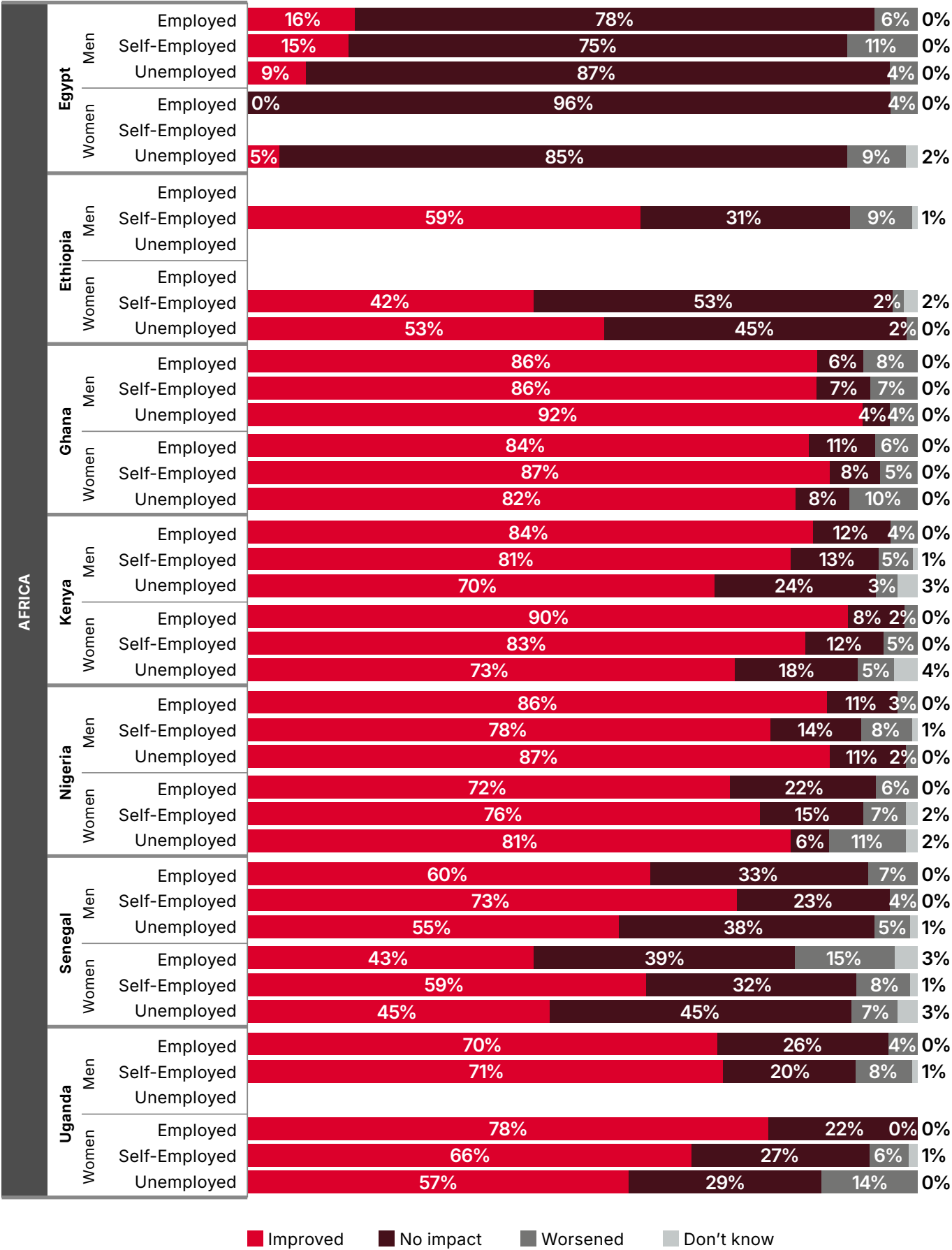
- "Significantly worsened" and "Worsened" were grouped into one "Worsened" category
- "Significantly improved" and "Improved" were grouped into one "Improved" category
- "No impact" remained its own category

Figure 24 illustrates the reported impact of mobile internet on users' livelihoods and income, by gender and employment type, for all survey countries where the sample size was large enough to conduct this analysis. A few countries did not have a large enough sample size due to relatively low mobile internet uptake or employment rates in some employment categories and were excluded from the analysis (these are shown as blank in Figure 24).

While participants were prompted to consider the potential ways in which using mobile internet may impact their livelihood or income (see above), they were not explicitly prompted to consider how using mobile internet on a mobile phone may adversely affect a person's livelihood or income, such as the costs involved in buying, maintaining and using an internet-enabled device. Therefore, this potential limitation should be taken into consideration when interpreting the survey results.

54. In most survey countries, around 0–2% of respondents answered "Don't know" to this question. The exceptions are survey countries in South Asia, where around 5–14% of respondents answered "Don't know" to this question.

Figure 24
Reported impact of mobile internet on users' livelihoods and income, by gender and employment type
Among mobile internet users



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2025
Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+
The 'improved' category includes mobile internet users who reported that mobile internet either significantly improved or somewhat improved their livelihoods and income and the 'worsened' category includes respondents who reported that mobile internet either somewhat worsened or significantly worsened their livelihoods and income. Respondents also had the choice to respond, "Don't know".
n=32 to 360 for women and n=41 to 322 for men

APPENDIX 4: METHODOLOGY

This report is based on an analysis of the results of face-to-face surveys conducted by the GSMA in 14 LMICs between September and November of 2025. This is supplemented by 2017–2024 GSMA survey results from 17 additional countries,⁵⁵ as well as third-party survey results that cover another 14 countries.

Survey methodology

In all countries surveyed in 2025, a sample of approximately 1,000 male and female adults aged 18 and over were surveyed, except in India where the sample was approximately 2,000. The samples were nationally representative, except in Ethiopia where no interviews were conducted in the Amhara region and four other zones.⁵⁶ These areas represent 27% of the population in Ethiopia, therefore, the sample was representative of the 73% who live outside these areas.

In all countries, the sampling frame was based predominantly on data from national statistics offices, including census data where possible, and a range of other sources. To ensure a geographically representative distribution of interview subjects,

particularly in urban and rural areas, around 100 sampling points were used per country. However, very remote areas or areas with security concerns were excluded.

Interviews were conducted with individuals in their local language. All surveys were interviewer-administered using handheld devices. Both female and male interviewers conducted the surveys and, in more remote rural areas in countries such as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, local teams tried to ensure female interviewers conducted the survey for female respondents, where practical. Data was weighted to known population profiles to correct any imbalances in the distributions achieved during fieldwork.



55. Six countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria and Guatemala. Two countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Indonesia and Mexico. One country was surveyed by the GSMA in 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Senegal. One country was surveyed in 2017, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Egypt. One country was surveyed by the GSMA in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Ethiopia. One country was surveyed by the GSMA in 2019, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Uganda. One country was surveyed in 2017 and 2024: Philippines. One country was surveyed in 2018 and 2024: Tanzania. One country was surveyed only in 2024: Rwanda. One country was surveyed only in 2025: Sri Lanka. One country was surveyed in 2017, 2021, 2022 and 2025: Ghana. Two countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: Algeria and Mozambique. Three countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018 and 2019: Myanmar, South Africa and Brazil. Four countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017 and 2018: China, Côte d'Ivoire, Argentina and Dominican Republic. Five countries were surveyed by the GSMA only in 2017: Thailand, Vietnam, Chile, Colombia and Nicaragua. However, since Chile is now defined as a high-income country, it is not included in this analysis. Fieldwork was conducted from September to January in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Fieldwork was conducted from September to November in 2025.

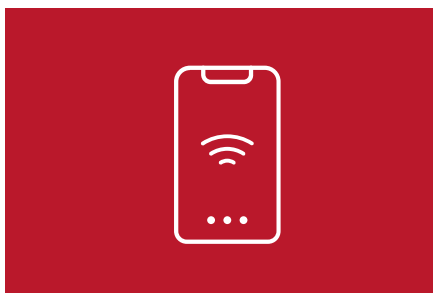
56. Western Tigray, Metekel-Zone (Benishangul Gumz), Zone 2 (Afar) and Guji-Zone (Oromia).

Extrapolating the mobile gender gap to non-surveyed countries

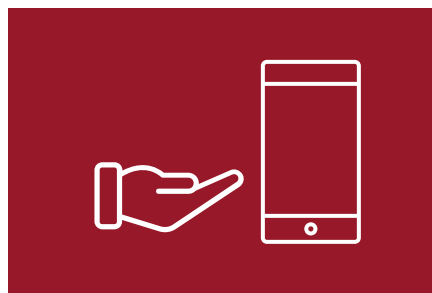
This report provides estimates of the gender gaps in LMICs for three key metrics:



MOBILE OWNERSHIP



MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION



SMARTPHONE OWNERSHIP

The presented aggregates include all LMICs⁵⁷, as well as LMIC regional aggregates (South Asia, East Asia and Pacific, Latin America, Europe and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa). Additional aggregates include the following subgroups of LMICs based on the latest 2025 classifications: least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.^{58, 59, 60}

The estimates of gender gaps for countries covered by the 2017–2025 GSMA Consumer Surveys are derived from the survey results. The group of survey countries depends on the year and covers 31 countries representing up to 75% of the adult population in all LMICs.⁶¹ In addition, we relied on third-party and publicly available survey data when we considered it robust. This provided gender gap proxy measures for selected years of mobile ownership in another 12 countries, mobile internet use in 13 countries and smartphone ownership in four countries.⁶²

To estimate the size of the mobile gender gaps in the remaining LMICs, we relied on machine learning classifiers, which are trained using data from countries where observations of gender gaps in mobile technology are available. We combined these observations into a dataset that included other variables that are potential predictors of mobile gender gaps, such as indicators of technology adoption and socio-economic conditions.

We used this dataset as training data to teach the classifiers what patterns of technology adoption and socio-economic conditions are associated with larger or smaller mobile gender gaps. The trained classifiers then used these recognised patterns to make predictions about gender gaps in countries that were not directly surveyed. We used separate classifiers to estimate each type of mobile gender gap (mobile ownership, mobile internet use and smartphone ownership).

We gathered data on potential predictors of mobile gender gaps. This data, which was not uniformly available for every country and year, included indicators sourced from the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), the World Bank, Gallup World Poll and others (Table 3). Given that some data was missing for certain country-year combinations, we relied on a multiple imputation technique. This created several datasets with each missing value imputed based on the patterns observed in other variables of the dataset. In the next step, classifiers were fitted using each imputed dataset, with the final gender gap estimates calculated as an average of all fitted values across all imputed datasets and classifiers.

57. [World Bank Country and Lending Groups 2025](#)

58. United Nations, [List of LDCs](#).

59. United Nations, [List of LLDCs](#).

60. United Nations, [List of SIDS](#), excluding high-income members such as Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Nauru, Palau, Singapore, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago and Aruba

61. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2022). [World Population Prospects 2022](#).

62. Data was sourced from [After Access](#) (Cambodia, Rwanda, Paraguay and Peru and for mobile and mobile internet for 2017, South Africa for mobile internet for 2018 and 2022, Uganda for mobile internet in 2018 and mobile, mobile internet and smartphone in 2022, Tanzania for mobile and smartphone for 2012); from [Pew Global Attitudes and Trends](#) (mobile and mobile internet for Jordan and Lebanon for 2017 and Philippines for 2018 and 2019); ITU (Iran for mobile and mobile internet for 2017 to 2019); RLMS-HES (Russia for mobile, mobile internet and smartphone for 2018 and 2019); [CNNIC](#) (China for mobile internet for 2017 to 2022); and [ZimStat](#) (Zimbabwe for mobile, mobile internet and smartphone for 2020).

Table 3**Variables used as predictors of mobile gender gaps**

Variable(s)	Source
Mean schooling years – females and males and gender ratio	UN Human Development Reports
Expected schooling years for a child entering education – females and males and gender ratio ⁶³	UN Human Development Reports
Human Development Index – overall and females only	UN Human Development Reports
Gender Inequality Index	UN Human Development Reports
Gender Development Index	UN Human Development Reports
Gross national income (GNI) per capita – female and male absolute income and gender ratio	UN Human Development Reports
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, purchasing power parity (PPP)	IMF World Economic Outlook
Percentage of persons with access to internet – overall and females only and urban and rural split	Gallup World Poll
Gender gap in internet use and urban-rural gap in internet use	Gallup World Poll
Gender gap in mobile ownership for personal calls and urban-rural gap in mobile ownership for personal calls	Gallup World Poll
Percentage of persons owning a mobile phone for personal calls – overall and females only and urban and rural split	Gallup World Poll
Facebook gender gap	GSMA Intelligence analysis of Facebook Audience Insights
World region dummy variables	World Bank regional groupings
Income group dummy variables	World Bank analytical classifications
Measure of gender equality under law – overall index score and individual area scores	World Bank's Women, Business and the Law indicators
Average revenue per subscriber	GSMA Intelligence database

Source: GSMA Intelligence analysis

Adult male and female mobile subscribers

This was calculated using the estimated gender gap in mobile ownership, GSMA Intelligence estimates and forecasts of the adult mobile penetration rate and UN estimates and forecasts of the adult population by gender.

Adult male and female mobile internet users

This was calculated using the estimated gender gap in mobile internet use, GSMA Intelligence estimates and forecasts of the adult mobile internet penetration rate and UN estimates and forecasts of the adult population by gender.

Adult male and female smartphone users

This was calculated using the estimated gender gap in smartphone ownership, GSMA Intelligence estimates and forecasts of the adult smartphone penetration rate and UN estimates and forecasts of the adult population by gender.

63. The gender ratio for a variable is calculated by taking the female value and dividing it by the male value. For example, the gender ratio for mean schooling years is equal to mean female schooling years divided by mean male schooling years.

ENDNOTES

1. GSMA Intelligence, 2025.
2. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimates for 2025.
3. This period is inclusive of the years 2023 and 2030.
4. GSMA. (2023). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023](#).
5. GSMA. (2024). [The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2024](#).
6. GSMA. (2023). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023](#); GSMA. (2024). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2024](#).
7. United Nations, [List of LLDCs](#).
8. United Nations, [Least Developed Countries](#).
9. [World Bank Country and Lending Groups](#).
10. Respondents were asked the question: "Have you ever used the internet on a mobile phone? Please think about all the different ways of using the internet on a mobile phone. Just to confirm, people are using the internet on their mobile phones when they do any of the following: visit internet website (e.g. Google or Amazon), visit social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Weibo), send emails or instant messages (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat, WeChat, LINE) or download apps." Mobile internet users are those who answered, "Yes, I have used the internet on a mobile phone in the past three months."
11. United Nations, [List of SIDS](#). For this analysis, high-income countries are omitted from the analysis of SIDS. It therefore excludes Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Nauru, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles, Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago.
12. A least developed country (LDC) is a country classified as low income by the UN that faces severe structural impediments to sustainable development. LDCs are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets. A landlocked developing country (LLDC) is a country classified as landlocked and developing by the UN. A small island developing state (SIDS) is a country classified as a small island and developing state by the UN.
13. GSMA. (2025). [The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2025: Trends in Mobile Internet Connectivity](#).
14. "Remaining LMICs" refer to LMICs excluding LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.
15. With the exception that they are not landlocked.
16. [World Bank Country and Lending Groups 2025](#).
17. 64% of the SIDS included in this analysis are classified as upper-middle income, compared to 28% of LLDCs and 2% of LDCs.
18. United Nations, [Least Developed Countries](#).
19. United Nations, [List of LLDCs](#).
20. United Nations, [List of SIDS](#). For this analysis, high-income countries are omitted from the analysis of SIDS. It therefore excludes Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Nauru, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Seychelles, Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago.
21. In LMICs in Europe and Central Asia, gender gaps are low but marginally higher in urban areas than rural areas.
22. GSMA. (2026). [The State of the Industry Report on Mobile Money](#).
23. Many mobile money users access it via USSD, which does not require an internet-enabled phone.
24. Either a feature phone or a smartphone.
25. This is true for all survey countries except Bangladesh, where only 45% of women internet-enabled handset owners use mobile internet.
26. The exception is South Asia, where the gender gap returned to 2023 levels after an increase in 2024.
27. See Table 1 in [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2023](#).
28. Our definition of mobile internet users captures people who have used mobile internet in the past three months. Based on our definition, mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone, meaning they can also access mobile internet on someone else's phone.
29. GSMA. (2015). [Bridging the Mobile Gender Gap 2015](#).
30. Mobile internet users were asked: "There are many ways in which specifically using the internet on a mobile phone may impact a person's income or livelihood. For example, using websites or apps may impact a person's ability to earn money, find a job, perform a job, sell things, receive money, save money, or learn a skill to do a job. E.g. Facebook, Facebook Marketplace, YouTube, WhatsApp, Google, online banking/mobile money provider, etc. In general, what impact, if any, has using the internet on a mobile phone had on your livelihood or income?" Respondents chose one of the following options: 1. Significantly improved my income or livelihood; 2. Somewhat improved my income or livelihood; 3. Had no impact on my income or livelihood; 4. Somewhat worsened my income or livelihood; 5. Significantly worsened my income or livelihood; 6. Don't know. For the purposes of the analysis, responses 1 and 2 were combined to reflect reports that mobile internet has "improved" users' livelihood and income and responses 4 and 5 were combined to reflect reports that mobile internet has "worsened" users' livelihood and income.
31. All Asian survey countries are in South Asia, except Indonesia.
32. "Unemployed" includes respondents who are unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, homemakers (looking after the home, children or relatives, etc.), studying, retired or other.
33. Naji, L. (16 June 2020). "Mobile money-enabled remittances: Building resilience in times of crisis". *GSMA Mobile for Development Blog*.
34. World Bank Group. (2025). "Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modelled ILO estimate)". *World Bank DataBank*.
35. Mobile internet users tend to use it daily and for a diverse range of use cases. As a result, there are fewer differences between respondents who report that mobile internet has improved, worsened or had no impact on their livelihood and income in terms of their frequency and diverse use of mobile internet. There are also fewer differences in the types of use cases that they perform than there are in the number of use cases they perform on a daily or weekly basis.
36. This was a predefined list of 22 barriers that has been refined over years and based on the research and experience of the GSMA and other organisations.
37. While true in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda, in Ethiopia, affordability of handsets is the top barrier for men and women mobile internet users, followed by data affordability.
38. Butler, C. and Shanahan, M. (27 August 2020). "[Does just being a woman reduce the likelihood of using mobile?](#)". *GSMA Mobile for Development Blog*.
39. GSMA. (2025). [The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity 2025: Affordability of Internet-Enabled Handsets and Data](#).
40. GSMA. (2025). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025](#).
41. See Figure 16 in [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2024](#).
42. GSMA Connected Women. (2020). "[Top 10 recommendations for reaching women with mobile across low- and middle-income countries](#)".
43. GSMA Connected Women. (2022). [Policy considerations to accelerate digital inclusion for women in low- and middle-income countries](#).
44. More detailed recommendations on how MNOs can increase mobile adoption among women can be found here: <https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/reaching-women-with-mobile/>.

45. GSMA Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit (MISTT): <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/connected-society/mistt/>.
46. For example, providers could help users manage their privacy by making them aware of their app's privacy default settings. For more information on safety-by-design approaches, see: [GSMA. \(2012\). Privacy Design Guidelines for Mobile Application Development](#).
47. More detailed recommendations on how policymakers can increase mobile adoption among the underserved can be found here: https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/gsm_resources/accelerating-mobile-internet-adoption-policy-considerations/.
48. More detailed recommendations on how policymakers can improve handset affordability can be found here: http://gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/gsm_resources/improving-handset-affordability-in-low-and-middle-income-countries/.
49. More detailed recommendations on how policymakers can improve digital skills can be found here: https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/gsm_resources/advancing-digital-skills-for-greater-digital-inclusion-in-low-and-middle-income-countries/.
50. The GSMA has developed a Handset Subsidy Toolkit to support governments with structuring effective handset subsidy programmes. If this is of interest, please send an email to: connectedsociety@gsma.com.
51. Governments can consult the [World Bank's Women, Business and the Law data set](#) to identify laws and regulations that may hinder gender equality.
52. For example, providers could help users manage their privacy by making them aware of their app's privacy default settings. For more information on safety-by-design approaches, see: GSMA. (2012). [Privacy Design Guidelines for Mobile Application Development](#).
53. Respondents who were not aware of mobile internet were not asked to identify the barriers preventing them from using it as it was not deemed appropriate.
54. In most survey countries, around 0–2% of respondents answered "Don't know" to this question. The exceptions are survey countries in South Asia, where around 5–14% of respondents answered "Don't know" to this question.
55. Six countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria and Guatemala. Two countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Indonesia and Mexico. One country was surveyed by the GSMA in 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Senegal. One country was surveyed in 2017, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Egypt. One country was surveyed by the GSMA in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Ethiopia. One country was surveyed by the GSMA in 2019, 2023, 2024 and 2025: Uganda. One country was surveyed in 2017 and 2024: Philippines. One country was surveyed in 2018 and 2024: Tanzania. One country was surveyed only in 2024: Rwanda. One country was surveyed only in 2025: Sri Lanka. One country was surveyed in 2017, 2021, 2022 and 2025: Ghana. Two countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: Algeria and Mozambique. Three countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017, 2018 and 2019: Myanmar, South Africa and Brazil. Four countries were surveyed by the GSMA in 2017 and 2018: China, Côte d'Ivoire, Argentina and Dominican Republic. Five countries were surveyed by the GSMA only in 2017: Thailand, Vietnam, Chile, Colombia and Nicaragua. However, since Chile is now defined as a high-income country, it is not included in this analysis. Fieldwork was conducted from September to January in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Fieldwork was conducted from September to November in 2025.
56. Western Tigray, Metekel-Zone (Benishangul Gumz), Zone 2 (Afar) and Guji-Zone (Oromia).
57. [World Bank Country and Lending Groups 2025](#)
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63. The gender ratio for a variable is calculated by taking the female value and dividing it by the male value. For example, the gender ratio for mean schooling years is equal to mean female schooling years divided by mean male schooling years.

For more information, visit
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