

GSMA

# The Mobile Disability Gap Report 2025





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The Connected Society programme works with the mobile industry, technology companies, the development community and governments to increase access to and adoption of mobile internet, focusing on underserved population groups in developing markets.

For more information, please visit [www.gsma.com/connected-society](https://www.gsma.com/connected-society)

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# Introduction



For many people across the globe, mobile connectivity plays a critical role in their daily lives. It enables people to communicate with others, and to access information and services from anywhere. Across low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), mobile is the primary, and in some cases only, way people access the internet. In 2024, mobile accounted for 84% of broadband connections<sup>1</sup> and over 3.7 billion people accessed the internet on a mobile phone in LMICs.<sup>2</sup>

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that around 16% of the world's population, which equates to 1.3 billion people, experience significant disability.<sup>3</sup> Mobile devices and services have the potential to provide substantial life-changing benefits to persons with disabilities, offering access to critical services in an increasingly digital world. For persons with disabilities, mobile phones can be powerful assistive tools for inclusion and participation because of their built-in features and assistive technology (AT) apps, with mobile internet providing access to critical information, healthcare, education, e-commerce, financial services, and income-generating opportunities.

Despite an increase in awareness of mobile technology's potential to deliver services to those in need, and growing recognition of the need for targeted action for persons with disabilities,<sup>4</sup> they remain the most digitally excluded. Persons with disabilities are less likely than non-disabled persons to own a mobile phone and be aware of and access mobile internet and other mobile services. Further, disability-disaggregated data on mobile internet access and use is scarce, undermining efforts to close the digital divide.

As the world becomes more digitised, the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities is crucial to provide universal and equal access to safe, inclusive and accessible services for all. Digital inclusion benefits individuals, families and societies, and supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those related to health, education and financial inclusion. Now more than ever, we must strive for equal access and use so that persons with disabilities, their communities and society can reap the full and life-changing benefits of mobile.

This report presents the latest data on the access and use of mobile phones for persons with disabilities, the barriers they face, and how this compares with non-disabled persons in 14 LMICs.<sup>5</sup> We share new analysis on the intersection of disability, gender and rurality, looking at mobile access and use among women with disabilities and rural residents with disabilities compared to their male and urban counterparts. The report includes key recommendations to close the mobile disability gap and reach persons with disabilities via mobile, and suggested actions for policymakers and regulators, the development community and other stakeholders.



**16% of the world's population, or around 1.3 BILLION PEOPLE, experience significant disability**

1. International Telecommunications Union (ITU) estimates for 2024.  
 2. GSMA Intelligence, Q4 2024.  
 3. World Health Organization. (2023). [Disability](#). (Accessed 22 May 2025).  
 4. United Nations. (2024). [Disability and Development Report 2024](#).  
 5. This report contains data from 14 LMICs: Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Guatemala and Mexico.

## Study limitations

While the 2024 Consumer Survey is nationally representative, it was not designed as a disability-focused study. Fieldwork was not tailored to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities (e.g. sign language interpreters or adaptable modes of survey administration), interviewers may not have been trained to interview persons with disabilities, and no quotas were applied to ensure representation across different types of impairments. As a result, it is likely that the survey data is not necessarily representative across different types of impairments and the views of some persons with disabilities were omitted.

In line with standard research practice, this report presents findings for groups where the number of respondents with disabilities exceeds a minimum threshold of 30. In some cases, disaggregating data by disability status and other factors resulted in sample sizes that were too small to confidently make claims about the broader population. While the Washington Group Short Set of Questions was included in the survey across 15 countries, data from Nigeria was excluded in this report due to insufficient sample size of persons with disabilities.

As the report progresses into more in-depth analysis—such as the barriers to mobile internet adoption and use—eligible sample sizes decreased, and consequently, fewer countries were included in these sections of the analysis. In a limited number of cases, due to a lack of data on the subject, the analysis includes groups with sample sizes below the 30-respondent threshold to provide a potential indicative estimate.<sup>6</sup> All such instances are clearly annotated in the relevant tables and figures. Where this has been done, given the small sample size, these figures should be interpreted with caution and not treated as conclusive.

Lastly, the Washington Group Short Set of Questions has only been included in the GSMA Consumer Survey in three non-consecutive years. Due to this limited data, the relatively small sample sizes and year-on-year variability, longitudinal comparisons have been excluded. As such, this report does not attempt to draw conclusions about trends over time.

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6. Due to limited data, sample sizes with a minimum of 25 respondents were considered in the analysis of barrier to mobile internet adoption and use. All such instances are clearly annotated in the relevant tables and figures.



# Key findings



## Key findings

- 1. Persons with disabilities are significantly less likely than non-disabled persons to use mobile internet in all survey countries.** The widest disability gaps in mobile internet adoption were found in surveyed countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with adoption levels ranging from 6% to 49% for persons with disabilities, as compared with 23% to 74% for non-disabled persons.
- 2. Persons with disabilities have lower levels of mobile ownership compared to non-disabled persons.** The disability gap in mobile ownership is widest in surveyed countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, where ownership levels among persons with disabilities (48% to 87%) consistently fall behind that of non-disabled persons (68% to 95%). In most surveyed countries, phone borrowing is common among persons with disabilities, with many owning a SIM but not a handset.
- 3. Despite the life-enhancing potential of internet-enabled phones as an assistive technology, persons with disabilities are less likely to own an internet-enabled phone, especially a smartphone, than non-disabled persons.** For example, in Uganda, while 47% of persons with disabilities own an internet-enabled phone, only 11% own a smartphone, compared to 47% and 25% of non-disabled persons. However, in most surveyed countries, once persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons own an internet-enabled phone, most progress to using mobile internet.
- 4. Women with disabilities and rural residents with disabilities have the lowest levels of mobile internet adoption, smartphone ownership and mobile ownership in comparison to their male and urban counterparts.** This is likely due to the intersectionality of being a woman with disability or living in a rural area with disability that compounds the barriers to accessing and using mobile technology.
- 5. Persons with disabilities are less likely to be aware of mobile internet compared to non-disabled persons.** In 10 of the 14 surveyed countries, one-third of persons with disabilities are unaware of mobile internet. Even when people are aware of mobile internet, there are many who are not yet using it, especially persons with disabilities. This indicates that there are further barriers preventing persons with disabilities from adopting mobile internet.
- 6. For persons with disabilities who are already aware of mobile internet, the top reported barriers to adoption are literacy and digital skills, as well as affordability, primarily of handsets.** These are the same top two barriers for non-disabled persons, but persons with disabilities tend to experience them more acutely due to structural inequalities and social norms.
- 7. Among existing mobile internet users in Senegal and India, the top reported barriers to further use for persons with disabilities are affordability (primarily of data but also handsets) and safety and security concerns.** The barriers to further use vary by local context as well as disability status.
- 8. Once mobile internet users access mobile internet, most use it daily, regardless of disability status. However, mobile internet users with disabilities tend to use it for a limited range of use cases on a daily basis compared to non-disabled persons.** The most popular use cases are related to communication and online entertainment for both persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons.
- 9. The most valued features of an internet-enabled phone, apart from price, are related to performance, functionality and longevity of the device rather than aesthetics, physical features and brand reputation.** These preferences were similar regardless of disability status.

# ACROSS 14 SURVEY COUNTRIES:

Persons with disabilities are significantly **less likely** than non-disabled persons **to use mobile internet**.



Mobile internet adoption ranges from just

**6% to 49%** among persons with disabilities,

compared to 32% to 85% for non-disabled persons.

Persons with disabilities **are less likely than non-disabled persons to own** an internet-enabled phone, especially a smartphone.



In **10 of the 14** surveyed countries:

**one-third** of persons with disabilities are unaware of mobile internet.



Women with disabilities and rural residents with disabilities have the **lowest** levels of **mobile ownership, smartphone ownership** and **mobile internet adoption**.



## Among persons with disabilities:

### MOBILE INTERNET ADOPTION

#### The top barriers

- **Literacy and digital skills**



- **Affordability** (primarily of handsets)



### FURTHER MOBILE INTERNET USE\*

#### The top barriers

- **Affordability** (particularly of data, but also handsets)



- **Safety and security concerns**



\* Analysis of top barriers to further mobile internet use among persons with disabilities was conducted only in India and Senegal.

# Definitions

## ACCESS

The potential for an individual to use a mobile phone through owning, borrowing or renting.

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## ACCESSIBILITY

The design of products, devices, services or environments for persons with disabilities.

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## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES (ATs)

An umbrella term for the systems and services used to deliver assistive products and services, including through digital technologies. In this report, the term “assistive technologies” is based on the World Health Organization’s (WHO) definition, but also includes mobile phones.

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## DISABILITY

The interaction between individuals with a health condition (e.g. cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, depression) and personal and environmental factors (e.g. negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, limited social support).<sup>7</sup>

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## MOBILE OWNER

“Mobile phone owner” and “mobile owner” are used interchangeably in this report to refer to 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. Most SIM owners also have sole or main use of a handset (a median of 92% across the countries, ranging from 87% to 96%).

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## HANDSET OWNER

A person who has sole or main use of a handset, i.e. a basic phone, feature phone or smartphone. This is different from our definition of mobile ownership, as it includes those who own a handset, but not necessarily a SIM card.

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## SMARTPHONE OWNER

A handset owner that 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.

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## MOBILE INTERNET USER

A person who has used the internet on a mobile phone at least once in the last three months.<sup>8</sup> Mobile internet users can be non-mobile phone owners who use mobile internet by accessing it on someone else’s mobile phone.

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7. World Health Organization. (2023). [Disability](#). (Accessed 22 May 2025).

8. 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 websites (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.”

## MOBILE DISABILITY GAP

Refers to how less likely one group (Group 1) is to own a mobile phone, use mobile internet and perform a use case on mobile than another group (Group 2). This gap is calculated for gender, locality and/or disability throughout this report to evaluate differences in mobile ownership and usage of services.

The formula is:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} \text{👤} \text{ (%) Group 1} \\ \text{mobile owners/users} \end{array} - \begin{array}{l} \text{♿} \text{ (%) Group 2} \\ \text{mobile owners/users} \end{array}}{\begin{array}{l} \text{👤} \text{ (%) Group 1} \\ \text{mobile owners/users} \end{array}}$$

The **disability gap** refers to the differences between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons, regardless of gender.

The **gender and disability gap** considers both gender and disability and refers to the gap between men without disabilities and women with disabilities.

The **rural and disability gap** considers both locality and disability and refers to the gap between urban residents without disabilities and rural residents with disabilities.

## NON-DISABLED PERSON

A person who does not report any acute difficulty (“a lot of difficulty”) or complete inability (“cannot do at all”) to perform the functional domains of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions.

## PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

A person who reports any acute difficulty (“a lot of difficulty”) or complete inability (“cannot do at all”) to perform one or more of the functional domains of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions.

## WASHINGTON GROUP SHORT SET OF QUESTIONS

A set of questions designed to identify persons with disabilities in a survey or census.<sup>9</sup> Respondents answer questions and report difficulties experienced in six functional domains: seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care and communication.

9. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics is a United Nations Statistical Commission City Group that develops methods to improve statistics on persons with disabilities globally. It is comprised of representatives of national statistics offices with input from other UN agencies, international agencies, organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and researchers. The Short Set of Questions can be accessed at: <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss> (accessed 22 May 2025).

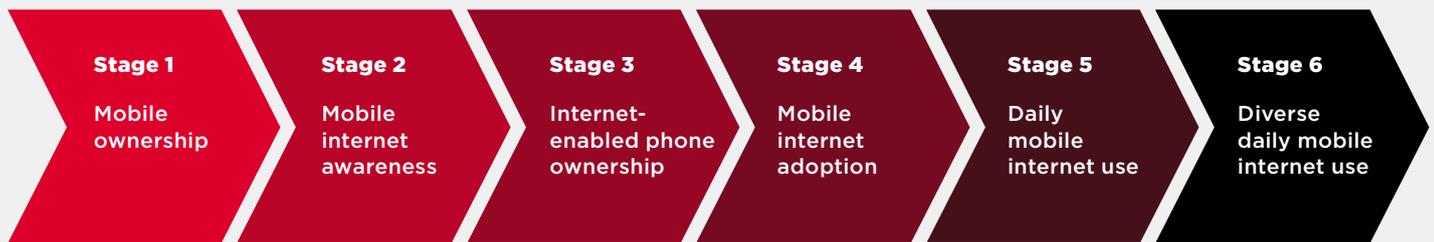
# The mobile disability gap in 2025



Mobile is the primary and often only way people in LMICs access the internet, especially persons with disabilities. While the mobile internet user journey is different for everyone, there are common milestones and barriers to learning about and using mobile technology. This journey starts with mobile ownership and progresses to mobile internet awareness, ownership of an

internet-enabled phone, mobile internet adoption and finally to regular and diverse mobile internet use (Figure 1).<sup>10</sup> Understanding where persons with and without disabilities tend to drop off on this user journey is key to targeting action and ensuring equal access and use.

**Figure 1**  
The mobile internet user journey

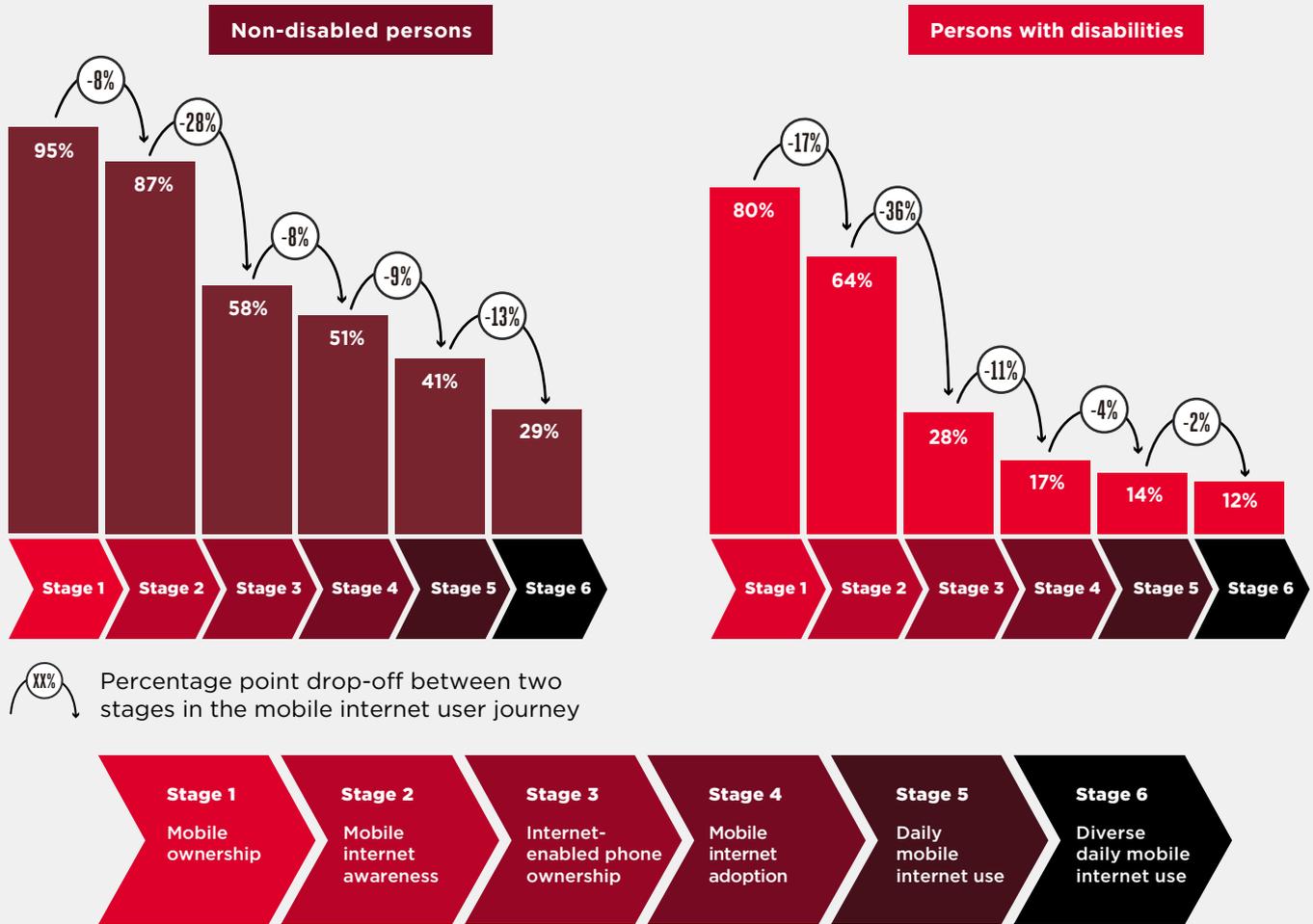


Data from the surveyed countries shows that mobile disability gaps tend to widen at each stage of the mobile internet user journey. Most people, particularly persons with disabilities, tend to drop off between mobile internet awareness (Stage 2) and internet-enabled phone ownership (Stage 3). For example, in Kenya, while 64% of persons with disabilities are aware of mobile internet, only 28% own an internet-enabled phone. This is a substantial drop-off of 36 percentage points, compared to a smaller drop-off of 28 percentage points among non-disabled persons (Figure 2). This suggests that even when aware of mobile internet, persons with disabilities are less likely than non-disabled persons to own an internet-enabled device.

Once persons with disabilities own an internet-enabled phone (Stage 3), most progress to using mobile internet (Stage 4). For instance, in Kenya, there is only an 11 percentage point drop-off between internet-enabled phone ownership and mobile internet adoption among persons with disabilities, compared to an eight percentage point drop-off among non-disabled persons. Therefore, targeted efforts aimed at improving internet-enabled phone ownership among persons with disabilities who are aware of mobile internet could significantly reduce the mobile internet disability gaps, both in Kenya and similar markets.

10. In this report, regular mobile internet use is defined as using it daily, and diverse mobile internet use is defined as performing at least three mobile internet use cases daily.

**Figure 2**  
The mobile internet user journey in Kenya  
Percentage of the total adult population



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

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. Daily and diverse mobile internet use is defined as performing at least three mobile internet use cases daily. n= from 51 for persons with disabilities and n= from 958 for non-disabled persons

It is interesting to note that once persons with and without disabilities start using mobile internet, most use it daily. In Guatemala, 44% of persons with disabilities are mobile internet users and 38% report using it every day. This drop-off of six percentage points is the same for non-disabled persons (Figure 3), indicating that once people adopt mobile internet, they use it every day regardless of disability. Despite this, in most surveyed countries there is still a disability gap in daily mobile internet use. This gap is largest in Tanzania, where 4% of persons with disabilities use mobile internet daily compared to 23% of people without disabilities (Figure 3).

The majority of daily mobile internet users only use it for one or two different use cases daily. This is especially true for persons with disabilities and is the case in most surveyed countries.<sup>11</sup> For example, in Senegal, even though a relatively high proportion of persons with disabilities use mobile internet (49%), and almost all of them use it daily (42%), only 22% perform three or more use cases every day. By comparison, 61% of non-disabled persons use mobile internet every day and 40% use it for three or more daily activities (Figure 3). This suggests that persons with disabilities tend to use mobile internet for fewer daily activities than non-disabled persons.

11. Exceptions are Mexico, Guatemala, Philippines and Indonesia, where there is a higher proportion of persons with and without disabilities using mobile internet in three or more ways in comparison to the rest of the surveyed countries.

**Figure 3**  
The mobile internet user journey in survey countries  
Percentage of total adult population

		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	Non-disabled persons	89%	87%	66%	62%	58%	34%
	Persons with disabilities	54%	64%	25%	22%	17%	13%
ETHIOPIA	Non-disabled persons	77%	64%	34%	23%	13%	7%
	Persons with disabilities	60%	34%	18%	8%	3%	0%
KENYA	Non-disabled persons	95%	87%	58%	51%	41%	29%
	Persons with disabilities	80%	64%	28%	17%	14%	12%
RWANDA	Non-disabled persons	68%	65%	49%	33%	22%	18%
	Persons with disabilities	48%	27%	28%	10%	6%	5%
SENEGAL	Non-disabled persons	87%	96%	71%	73%	61%	40%
	Persons with disabilities	75%	91%	51%	49%	42%	22%
TANZANIA	Non-disabled persons	93%	84%	39%	37%	23%	16%
	Persons with disabilities	79%	46%	14%	6%	4%	2%
UGANDA	Non-disabled persons	87%	78%	57%	32%	19%	14%
	Persons with disabilities	87%	40%	47%	10%	5%	3%
BANGLADESH	Non-disabled persons	78%	83%	59%	36%	35%	29%
	Persons with disabilities	69%	68%	33%	13%	11%	9%
INDIA	Non-disabled persons	80%	69%	52%	51%	48%	38%
	Persons with disabilities	61%	62%	33%	35%	31%	23%
INDONESIA	Non-disabled persons	89%	86%	71%	73%	68%	57%
	Persons with disabilities	71%	74%	32%	36%	24%	25%
PAKISTAN	Non-disabled persons	77%	88%	48%	55%	47%	27%
	Persons with disabilities	60%	82%	20%	25%	17%	9%
PHILIPPINES	Non-disabled persons	74%	88%	65%	74%	66%	62%
	Persons with disabilities	50%	55%	41%	35%	23%	23%
GUATEMALA	Non-disabled persons	79%	87%	68%	70%	64%	53%
	Persons with disabilities	60%	65%	36%	44%	38%	33%
MEXICO	Non-disabled persons	92%	98%	80%	85%	80%	71%
	Persons with disabilities	61%	78%	38%	49%	39%	40%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

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= from 31 to 176 for persons with disabilities and n= from 851 to 2,040 for non-disabled persons

# The disability gap in mobile ownership



## There are prominent disability gaps in mobile ownership in most surveyed countries

Mobile phones can support the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities and provide access to useful information and services. Despite this, there are prominent disability gaps in mobile ownership<sup>12</sup> in all surveyed countries, except for Uganda. The largest disability gap in mobile ownership is in Egypt, where 46% of persons with disabilities do not own a mobile phone, compared to just 11% of non-disabled persons. Rwanda has the lowest overall mobile ownership rates, with only 48% of persons with disabilities owning a mobile phone, compared to 68% of non-disabled persons (Figure 4).

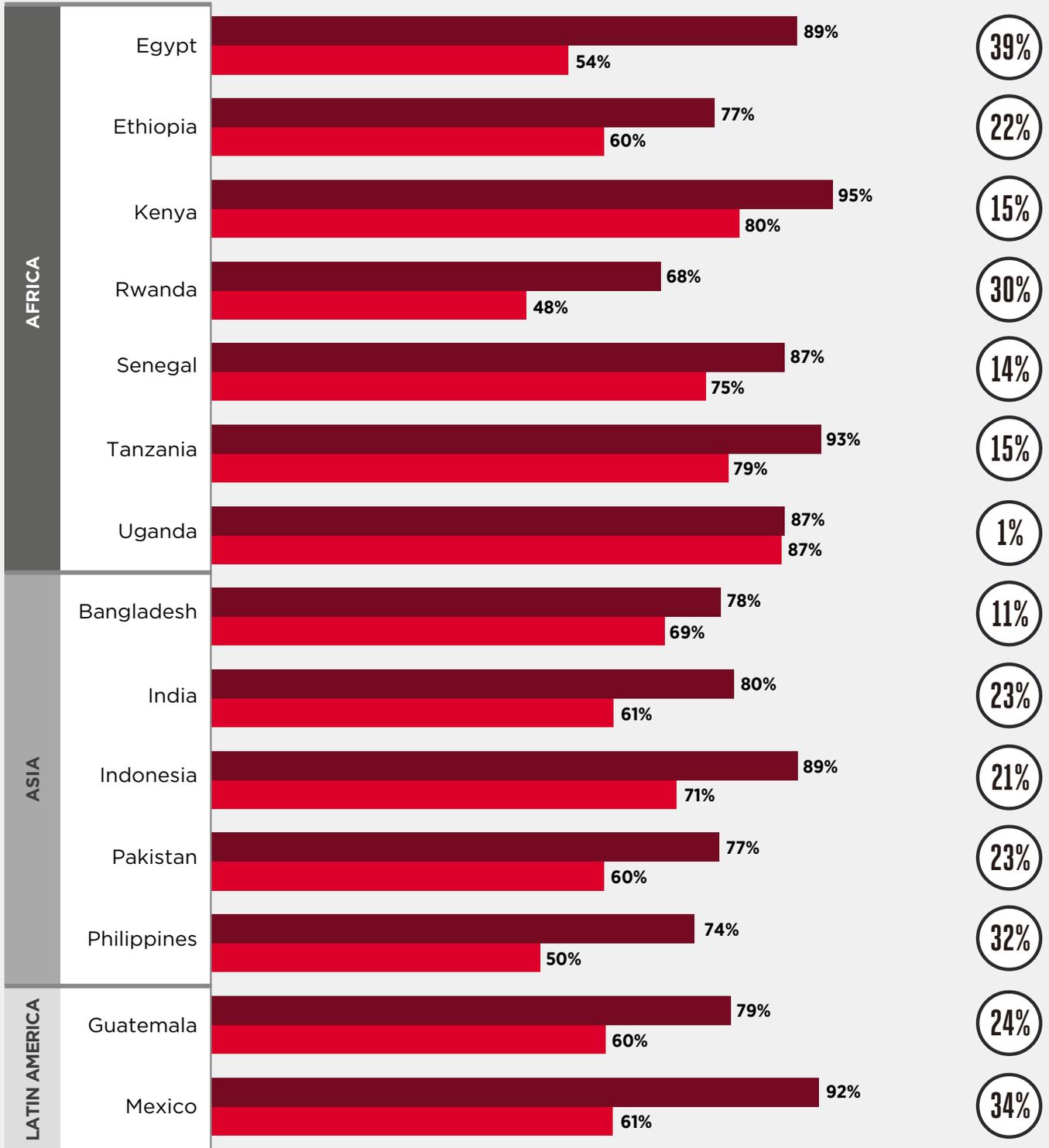
Even in countries with relatively high mobile ownership rates among persons with and without disabilities, high rates of mobile ownership do not necessarily close the disability gap. This can be best seen in Kenya, where the disability gap stands at 15%, despite overall high rates of mobile ownership among persons with and without disabilities.

Furthermore, high mobile ownership rates do not necessarily translate into equal internet-enabled phone ownership and smartphone ownership. For example, in Tanzania, 79% of persons with disabilities and 93% of non-disabled persons report owning a mobile phone. However, only 14% of persons with disabilities own an internet-enabled phone compared to 39% of non-disabled persons. Similarly, while Uganda is the only country with no disability gap in mobile ownership, persons with disabilities are 17% less likely than non-disabled persons to own an internet-enabled phone and 55% less likely to own a smartphone.



12. 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.

**Figure 4**  
 Disability gap in mobile ownership  
 Percentage of total adult population



■ Non-disabled persons ■ Persons with disabilities (X%) = Disability Gap

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

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. The disability gap in mobile ownership refers to how much less likely a person with disabilities is to own a mobile than a non-disabled person.

n= from 31 to 176 for persons with disabilities and n= from 851 to 2,040 for non-disabled persons



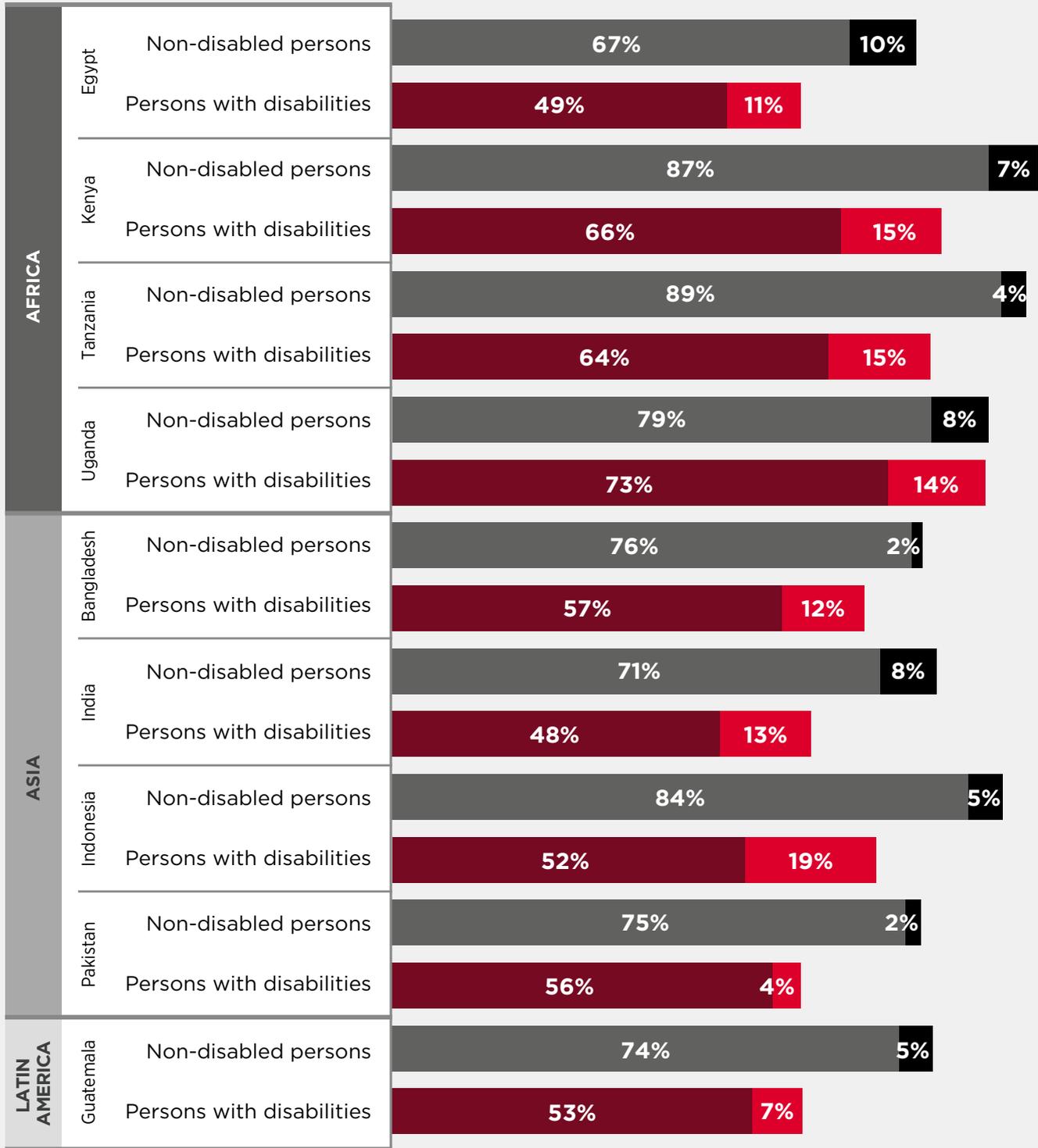
## A large proportion of persons with disabilities access mobile services using someone else's handset

It is key to note that many people, particularly persons with disabilities, own and use a SIM card and rely on borrowed and shared devices to access mobile services as they do not own a handset. This is particularly evident in Indonesia, Kenya and Tanzania, where a significant proportion of persons with disabilities—19%, 15% and 15% respectively—own a SIM but do not own a handset. By comparison, this figure is 5% for non-disabled persons in Indonesia, 7% in Kenya and 4% in Tanzania (Figure 5).

GSMA research has shown that while phone sharing can provide basic access to some mobile services, it significantly limits user's ability to benefit from life-enhancing services and gain digital literacy skills. Shared devices often do not provide the privacy needed to comfortably and securely access sensitive mobile services, such as health apps, particularly for persons with disabilities. Phone sharing also makes it challenging for service providers to accurately identify and cater to end-users' specific needs.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, individuals who access mobile services through their own devices can do so with greater privacy, more convenience, and in regular and diverse ways that meet their life needs.

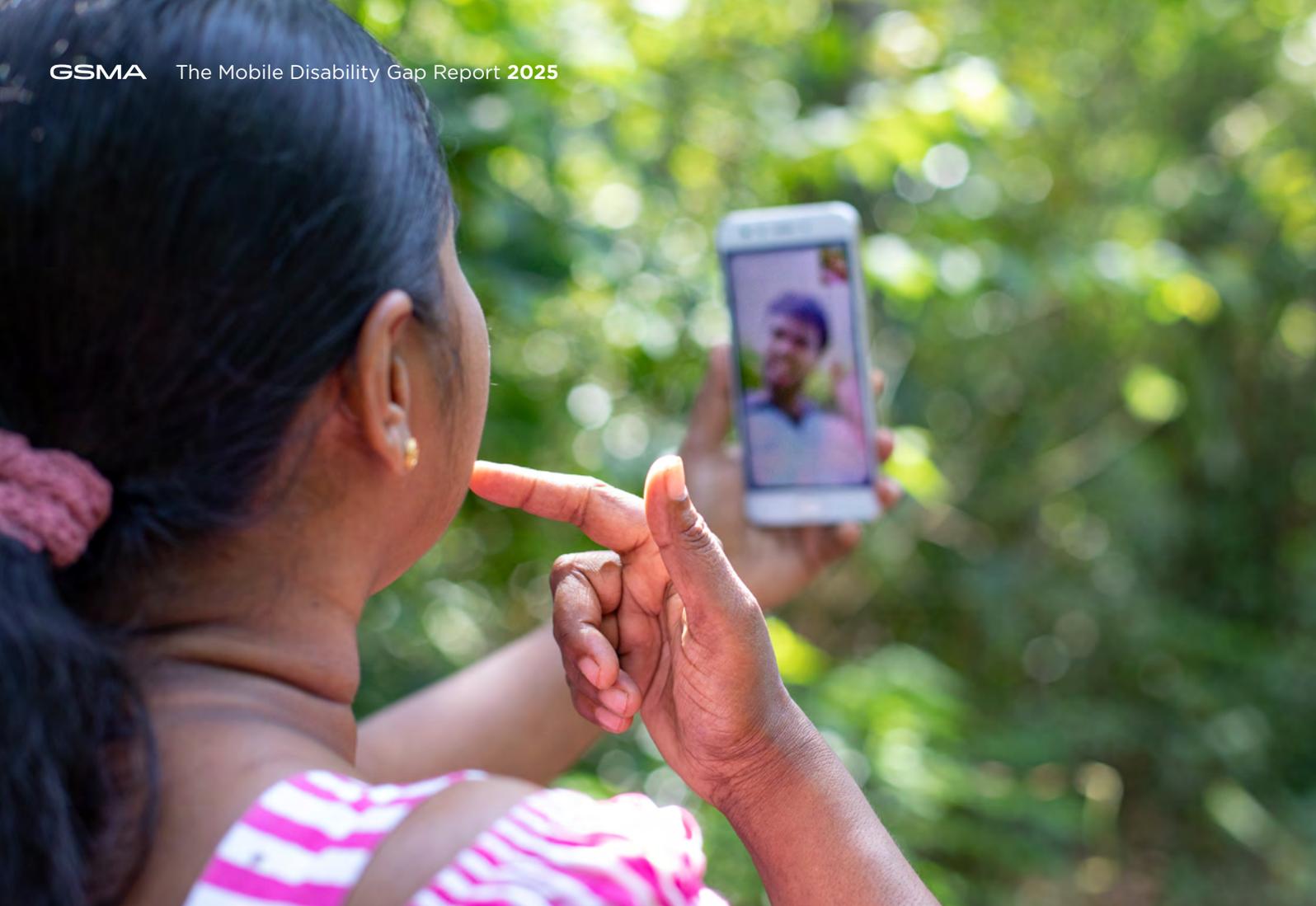
13. GSMA. (2015). Bridging the gender gap: [Mobile access and usage in low- and middle-income countries](#).

**Figure 5**  
SIM owners who do not own a handset in select survey countries  
Percentage of total adult population



SIM owners who own a handset
 
 SIM owners who do not own a handset

**Source:** GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024  
**Base:** Total population aged 18+  
 A SIM owner is defined as a person who has sole or main use of a SIM card at least once a month, whereas a handset owner is a person who has sole or main use of a handset.  
*n= from 31 to 176 for persons with disabilities and n= from 851 to 2,040 for non-disabled persons*



## Despite the potential benefits, persons with disabilities are less likely to own a smartphone

The type of handset someone owns affects the extent to which they can use the internet and reap the benefits of mobile technology. Previous research from the GSMA Consumer Survey indicates that access to smartphones enables a richer and broader connectivity experience.<sup>14</sup> Smartphone owners are more likely to be aware of and adopt mobile internet, as well as use it more frequently and for a wider variety of tasks. For example, in Senegal, 96% of non-disabled persons and 94% of persons with disabilities who own a smartphone use mobile internet. Once persons with disabilities own a smartphone, their mobile internet awareness, adoption and use closely mirror that of non-disabled persons.

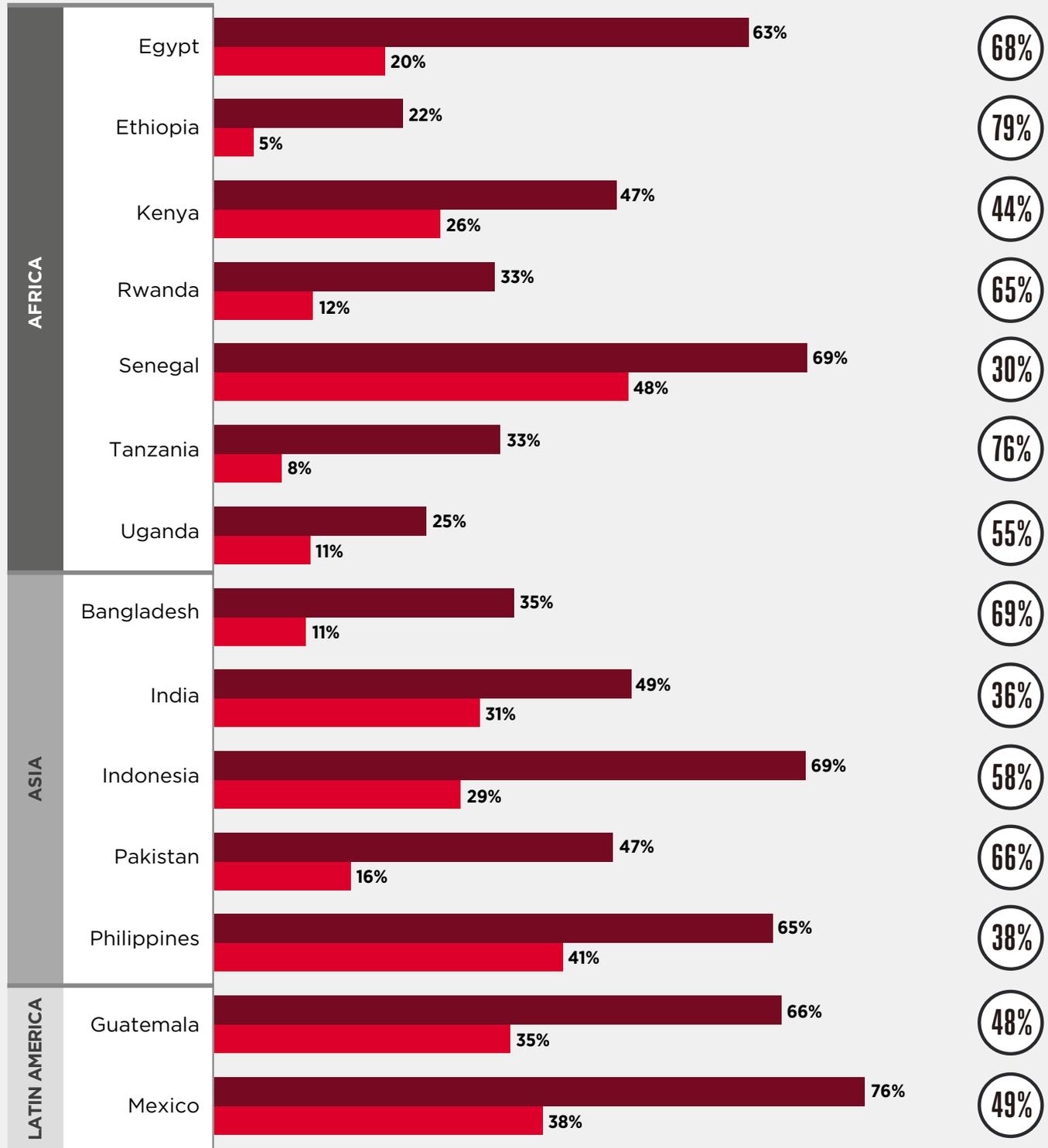
For persons with disabilities, smartphones play a critical role in digital inclusion. They offer features such as mobile-enabled screen readers,

text magnifiers, sign language video content and object recognition that allow persons with disabilities to use the internet autonomously to access life-changing digital products and services. These accessibility features are absent in basic phones and very limited in feature phones. As such, feature phones do not have the same enabling potential for persons with disabilities as smartphones.

Despite this potential, persons with disabilities are less likely to own a smartphone than non-disabled persons in all surveyed countries. The largest gap in smartphone ownership is in Ethiopia, where persons with disabilities are 79% less likely to own a smartphone than non-disabled persons. Conversely, Senegal exhibits the smallest disability gap (30%) in smartphone ownership among all countries surveyed.

14. For in-depth analysis, see Figure 9 in: GSMA. (2022). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2022](#).

**Figure 6**  
 Disability gap in smartphone ownership  
 Percentage of total adult population



■ Non-disabled persons ■ Persons with disabilities (X%) = Disability Gap

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

Base: Total population aged 18+

Respondents are categorised according to the most advanced device they own and can only be included in one category. Smartphone owners that also own a basic or feature phone are counted only as smartphone owners. The disability gap in smartphone ownership refers to how much less likely a person with disabilities is to own a smartphone than a non-disabled person.

n= from 31 to 176 for persons with disabilities and n= from 851 to 2,040 for non-disabled persons



Previous research by the GSMA indicates that while persons with disabilities face a range of barriers to owning a mobile phone,<sup>15</sup> one of the top barriers is living with a disability itself. The affordability of a handset, as well as difficulties with reading and writing, are also major barriers to mobile ownership. Although these barriers also affect non-disabled persons, they have a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, particularly considering the systemic barriers and exclusion they often face in education and employment.

15. GSMA. (2019). [Understanding the mobile disability gap: Insights on mobile phone access and usage by persons with disabilities in Kenya and Bangladesh.](#)



## The most valued features of an internet-enabled phone are related to performance, functionality and longevity

For the first time, this year's survey included a question on which features of an internet-enabled phone (feature phone or smartphone), apart from price, they value most. Respondents who either currently own an internet-enabled phone or expect to get one in the next two years were asked how important they considered 13 different features to be for their next phone.<sup>16</sup>

Seven surveyed countries had a sufficient number of eligible respondents with disabilities.<sup>17</sup> Both persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons reported that the most valued features, apart from price, related to performance, functionality and longevity. Specifically, features such as long battery life, durability, large storage capacity, fast internet and processing speed were consistently rated as very important by both persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons. For example, in Pakistan, 55% of persons with disabilities and 58% of non-disabled persons reported that long battery life was a very important feature of an internet-enabled phone.

The features reported by persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons as less important in an

internet-enabled phone were related to aesthetics, physical features and brand perception. This included features such as phone's design or colour, screen size and how expensive or new it looked. This suggests that, regardless of disability, respondents value similar features, apart from price, when choosing their next internet-enabled device.

While analysis shows that features related to performance, functionality and longevity are valued both by persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons, there are reasons why these features may be particularly important for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities may rely on their phone more intensively to support daily life and access essential services, such as communication, healthcare and education. Long battery life is also critical for individuals who use assistive apps throughout the day. In addition, fast internet connectivity and processing speed are essential for real-time navigation tools, such as screen readers, navigation apps, and video-based communication platforms, including those used for sign language interpretation.

16. Respondents were asked the following question: "Apart from price, how important, if at all, would the following features be to you if you were getting or buying a mobile phone that can access the internet (e.g. feature phone or smartphone)?"

17. Figure 7 is based on countries where the number of persons with disabilities eligible to answer this question exceeded 30 respondents. These countries are Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Guatemala. Countries with fewer than 30 eligible respondents with disabilities were excluded from the analysis.

**Figure 7**

Features of an internet-enabled handset reported as ‘very important’ across survey countries

Among those who already own an internet-enabled phone or reported they were likely to get one in the next two years

		Non-disabled persons			Persons with disabilities		
		Min	Median	Max	Min	Median	Max
Performance, functionality and longevity	Long battery life	48%	76%	90%	42%	67%	90%
	Durability	45%	75%	87%	40%	58%	84%
	Large storage capacity	43%	75%	81%	30%	54%	76%
	Faster internet speeds (e.g. 4G/5G, instead of 3G/2G)	45%	69%	77%	36%	49%	74%
	Fast processing speed	44%	67%	82%	29%	51%	70%
	Good camera quality	47%	69%	81%	33%	49%	72%
	Warranty	44%	58%	74%	36%	53%	82%
	Well known/familiar brand	43%	57%	66%	30%	46%	63%
	Multi-SIM capabilities	42%	52%	72%	30%	41%	75%
Aesthetics, physical features and brand perception	Comes pre-loaded with apps	44%	47%	61%	34%	48%	63%
	Large screen size	42%	49%	60%	28%	43%	60%
	How new or expensive the phone looks	40%	49%	65%	27%	38%	59%
	Appealing design or colour	37%	46%	56%	26%	39%	59%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey 2024

Base: Those who own an internet-enabled phone and those who do not own an internet-enabled phone but reported they were likely to get one in the next two years. Percentages indicate the proportion of people who answered: “Very important” to the question: “Apart from price, how important, if at all, would the following features be to you if you were getting or buying a mobile phone that can access the internet (e.g. feature phone or smartphone)?” Note that some features may fit in both categories. n= from 32 to 83 for persons with disabilities and n= from 586 to 1,310 for non-disabled persons

# The disability gap in mobile internet adoption and use



## Mobile internet adoption is significantly lower among persons with disabilities than non-disabled persons

Mobile internet can offer life-changing benefits for persons with disabilities by supporting them to perform daily tasks independently.<sup>18,19</sup> For example, persons who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment can use mobile internet to communicate with others using sign language in video calls, while on-demand sign language interpreters services, available through mobile apps, facilitate real-time communication with the hearing community. Persons with disabilities can also leverage AT apps that use mobile internet and a camera to explore their surroundings and identify objects and faces independently.

In eight of the 14 surveyed countries, mobile internet adoption is significantly low for both persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons. Persons with disabilities are significantly less likely than non-disabled persons to use mobile internet. The widest gap in mobile internet adoption is in Tanzania, where persons with disabilities are 84% less likely than non-disabled persons to adopt mobile internet (Figure 8). This gap is particularly striking as the

disability gap in mobile ownership in Tanzania is 15%, highlighting how much bigger the disability gap is in mobile internet adoption compared to mobile ownership. Owning a mobile does not always translate to adoption of mobile internet, especially for persons with disabilities. India has the lowest, albeit still significantly large, disability gap in mobile internet adoption at 32%, with only 35% of persons with disabilities and 51% of non-disabled persons using mobile internet.

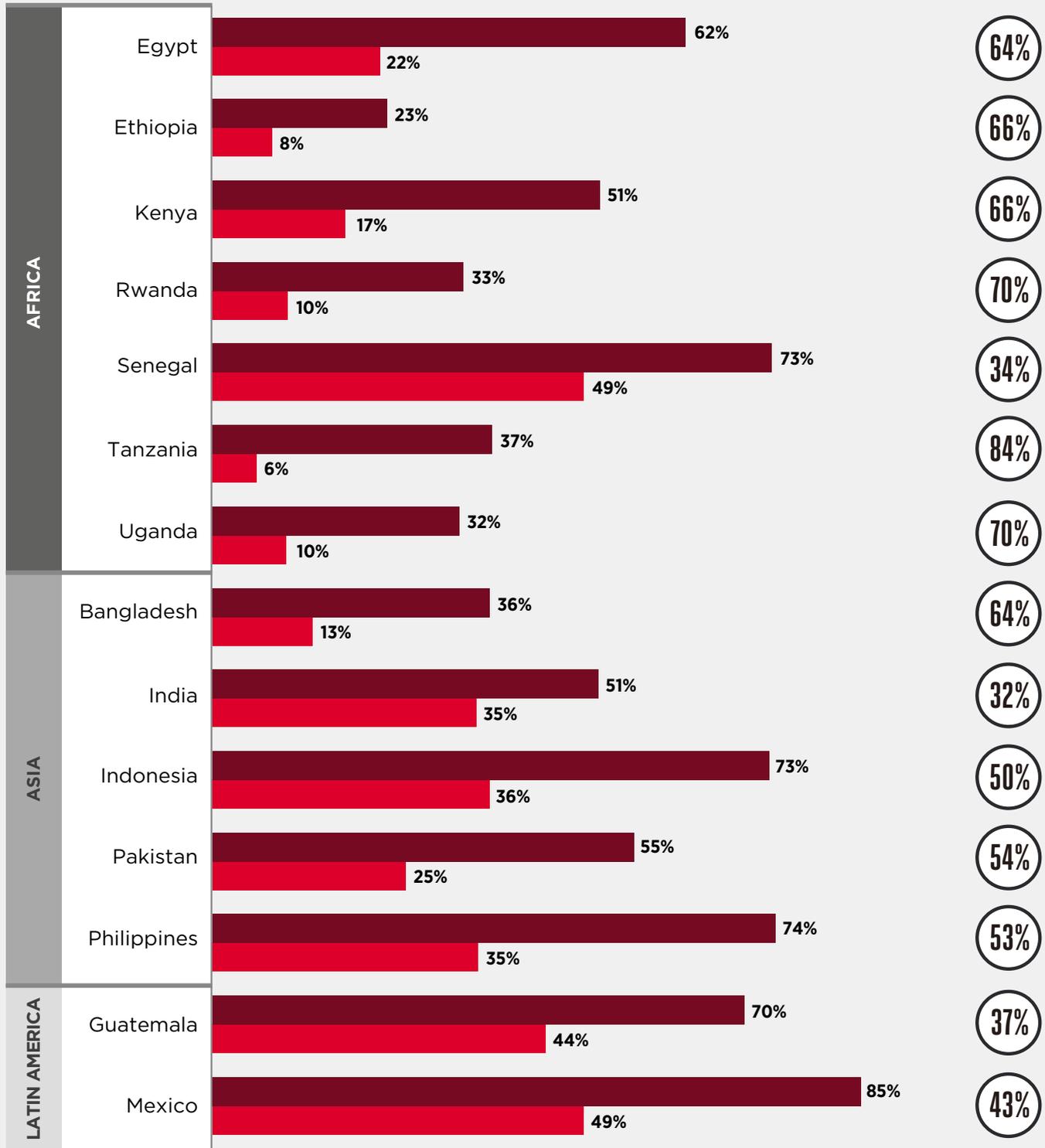
Most mobile internet users, including those with disabilities, own an internet-enabled handset, particularly a smartphone. In Senegal, 91% of mobile internet users with disabilities and 93% of non-disabled persons report owning a smartphone. Similarly, in India, this figure stands at 82% for mobile internet users with disabilities and 87% for non-disabled persons. This suggests that among mobile internet users, ownership of internet-enabled phones and particularly smartphones is high and does not significantly differ by disability status.



18. GSMA. (2021). [The Mobile Disability Gap Report 2021](#).

19. GSMA. (2019). [Understanding the mobile disability Gap: Insights on mobile phone access and usage by persons with disabilities in Kenya and Bangladesh](#).

**Figure 8**  
 Disability gaps in mobile internet adoption  
 Percentage of total adult population



■ Non-disabled persons ■ Persons with disabilities (X%) = Disability Gap

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

Base: Total population aged 18+

Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone. Mobile internet adoption is defined as having used the internet on a mobile phone at least once in the past three months. The disability gap in mobile internet adoption refers to how much less likely a person with disabilities is to use mobile internet than a non-disabled person.

n= from 31 to 176 for persons with disabilities and n= from 851 to 2,040 for non-disabled persons

## In Senegal and India, persons with disabilities perform fewer mobile internet use cases compared to non-disabled persons

In an increasingly digital world, it is important to ensure that persons with disabilities are not only able to access mobile internet but also to use it regularly and for a diverse range of use cases that meet their needs. Even when persons with disabilities are online, they face barriers to using mobile internet as often or for the same range of use cases as non-disabled persons (explained in more detail in *Barriers to mobile internet adoption and use* below). As a result, persons with disabilities may not be able to benefit from mobile internet use to the same extent as non-disabled persons.

Due to lower levels of mobile internet adoption among persons with disabilities across surveyed countries, only India and Senegal had sufficient sample sizes to analyse disability gaps in diversity and frequency among mobile internet users.<sup>20</sup> Findings from both countries show that once persons with disabilities start using mobile internet, most use it every day. However, there is still a disability gap in daily use among mobile internet users even when overall usage levels are relatively high. In Senegal, 68% of persons with disabilities who use mobile internet access it every day, compared to 98% of non-disabled persons. Similarly, in India, 50% of mobile internet users with disabilities access the internet daily, compared to 75% of non-disabled persons.

Using mobile internet for a wide range of activities is essential to fully realising the social and economic benefits of mobile connectivity. However, even once persons with disabilities start to use mobile internet, they are less likely than non-disabled persons to use it regularly and for a diverse range of use cases. In Senegal, 47% of mobile internet users with disabilities use it for three or more activities every day, compared to 55% of non-disabled persons. Similarly, in India, these figures are 66% and 76%, respectively.

Overall, in India and Senegal, persons with disabilities who use mobile internet tend to use it in fewer ways than non-disabled persons. In Senegal, persons with disabilities who use mobile internet perform on average 4.5 use cases as

compared to 6.1 for non-disabled persons on a weekly basis. Similarly, in India, persons with disabilities who use mobile internet perform on average 3.4 weekly use cases, compared to 4.9 for non-disabled persons.

Despite the gaps in daily and diverse use, the most common mobile internet use cases in India and Senegal are similar for persons with and without disabilities. These use cases tend to be watching online videos, instant messaging, social media and online entertainment. Video calls and online calls are also common among persons with and without disabilities who use mobile internet.

Although mobile internet use cases are the same for persons with and without disabilities, persons with disabilities are less likely than those without disabilities to use many of the use cases. In Senegal, 40% of mobile internet users with disabilities use social media daily, as compared to 64% of mobile internet users without disabilities. It is interesting to note, that in Senegal, some weekly use cases are reported to a higher extent by persons with disabilities than non-disabled persons. This includes searching for online information (seven percentage point difference), ordering goods and services (11 percentage point difference), and accessing health services online (six percentage point difference).

Many factors may explain the disability gaps in daily and diverse mobile internet use. One barrier is likely to be limited awareness among persons with disabilities of the range of activities and services that can be accessed online. Increasing awareness of relevant mobile internet use cases could support more meaningful mobile internet use, helping to strengthen digital inclusion for persons with disabilities and expand the reach of service providers.

20. Daily and diverse mobile internet use is defined as performing at least three mobile internet use cases daily.

## SPOTLIGHT



## The digital exclusion of women and rural residents with disabilities

**Persons with disabilities who live in rural areas and women with disabilities are less likely than urban and male counterparts to own a mobile and use mobile internet.**

Globally, persons with disabilities are often the most marginalised groups in society, subjected to significant discrimination and denied equal access to the same opportunities as non-disabled persons. These inequalities are exacerbated by other factors such as gender, employment status and whether they live in urban or rural areas.<sup>21</sup> The intersection of disability and other factors affects people's access to digital services and mobile technology.

In all surveyed countries, women with disabilities experience digital exclusion at every step of their mobile internet user journey. They are less likely to own a mobile phone, own a smartphone, and use mobile internet compared to men with disabilities, non-disabled men and non-disabled women. In Pakistan, for instance, 39% of women with disabilities own a mobile phone, compared to 91% of men with disabilities, 60% of non-

disabled women, and 93% of non-disabled men. Similarly, in Bangladesh, only 8% of women with disabilities use mobile internet, compared to 20% of men with disabilities, 28% of non-disabled women, and 45% of non-disabled men (Figure 9).

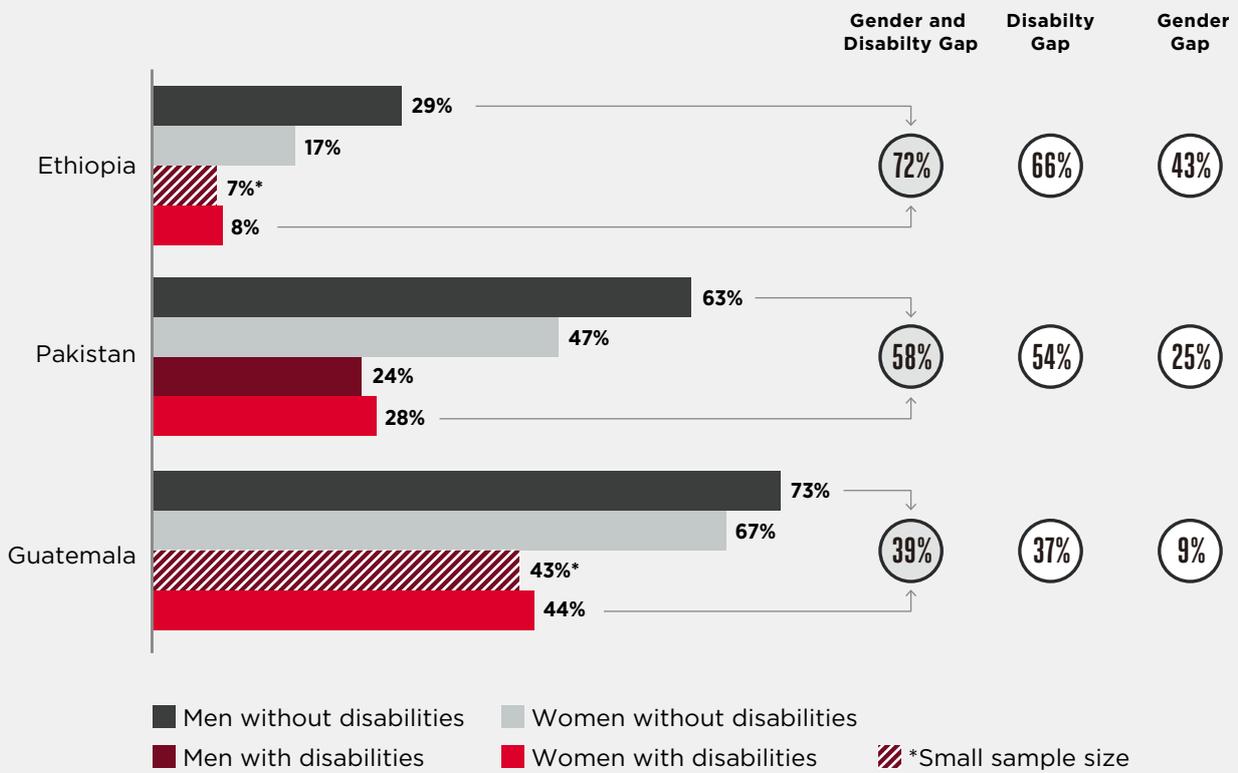
Data shows that the combined effect of being a woman and having a disability negatively impacts the digital inclusion of women with disabilities, especially in countries with strong social norms. In Ethiopia, a country with a wide gender gap (43%) and disability gap (66%) in mobile internet adoption, women with disabilities are 72% less likely than men without disabilities to use mobile internet. In Guatemala, where the mobile internet adoption gender gap is 9% and the disability gap is 37%, women with disabilities are still 39% less likely to adopt mobile internet than non-disabled men (Figure 9).

21. United Nations. (2024). [Disability and Development Report 2024](#).

**SPOTLIGHT**



**Figure 9**  
 Mobile internet adoption by gender and disability status in select survey countries  
 Percentage of total adult population



**Source:** GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

**Base:** Total population aged 18+

Respondents were asked if they had used the internet on a mobile phone in the last three months. The disability gap refers to how much less likely a person with disabilities is to use mobile internet than a non-disabled person. The gender gap refers to how much less likely a woman is to use mobile internet than a man. The gender and disability gap considers both gender and disability and refers to the gap between men without disabilities and women with disabilities. *n=* from 39 to 55 for women with disabilities, *n=* from 26 to 32 for men with disabilities, *n=* from 491 to 520 for non-disabled women, *n=* from 457 to 542 for non-disabled men

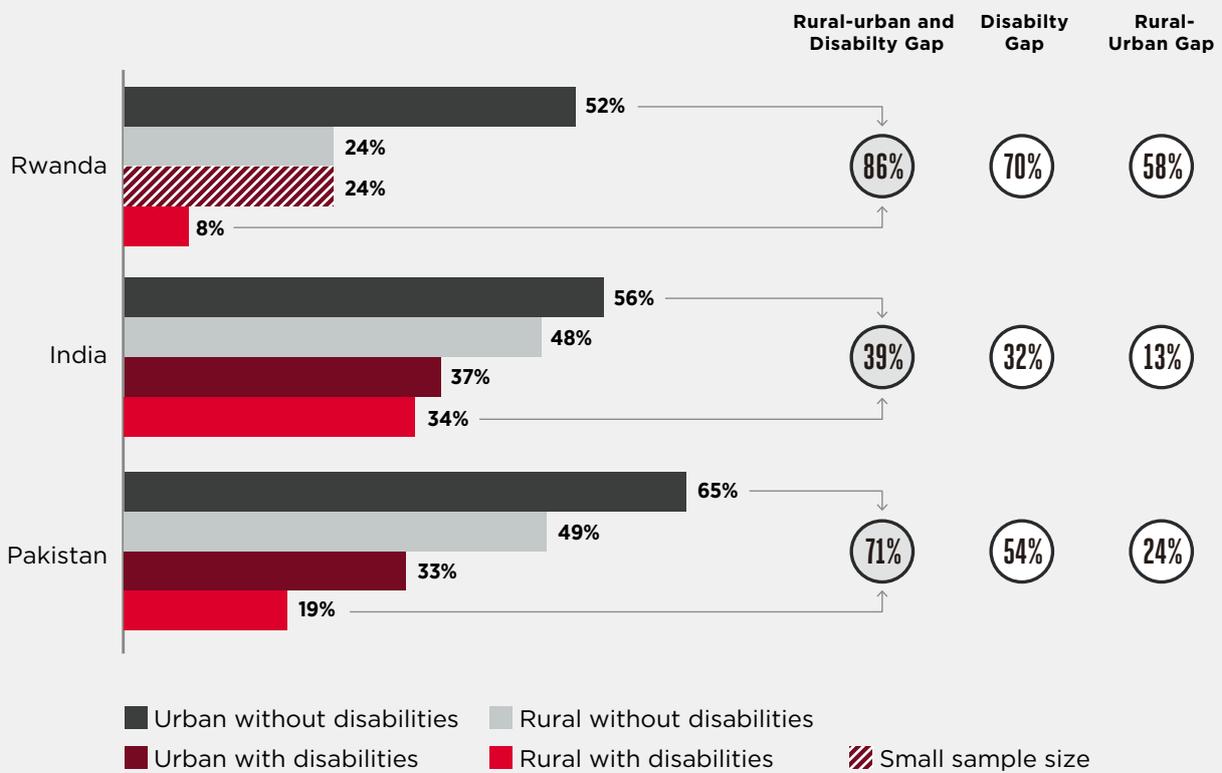
The combined effect of living in a rural area and having a disability has a similar effect on use of mobile and mobile services. In all surveyed countries, rural residents with disabilities have the lowest levels of mobile ownership and are less likely than their urban and non-disabled counterparts to be aware of mobile internet, own a smartphone and adopt mobile internet. In Rwanda, where the urban-rural gap (58%) and disability gap (70%) in

mobile internet adoption is substantial, rural residents with disabilities are 86% less likely to adopt mobile internet than their urban, non-disabled counterparts (Figure 10). Even in countries with a relatively smaller rural-urban gap (13%) and disability gap (32%) in mobile internet adoption, such as India, rural residents with disabilities are still 39% less likely to adopt mobile internet than their urban and non-disabled counterparts (Figure 10).

SPOTLIGHT



**Figure 10**  
 Mobile internet adoption by locality and disability status in select survey countries  
 Percentage of total adult population



Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

Base: Total population aged 18+

Respondents were asked if they had used the internet on a mobile phone in the last three months. The disability gap refers to how much less likely a person with disabilities is to use mobile internet than a non-disabled person. The rural-urban gap refers to how much less likely a person living in a rural area is to use mobile internet than a person living in an urban area. The rural-urban and disability gap considers both whether a person lives in a rural or urban area and disability and refers to the gap between urban residents without disabilities and rural residents with disabilities.

n= from 46 to 127 for rural residents with disabilities, n= from 25 to 58 for urban residents with disabilities, n= from 565 to 1375 for non-disabled rural residents, n= from 286 to 665 for non-disabled urban residents

Given that persons with disabilities who live in rural areas and women with disabilities have limited access to essential digital services and mobile technology, they also have the most to gain from better access to mobile and mobile internet. Failing to tackle the digital exclusion of persons with disabilities who live in rural areas and women with disabilities risks leaving many behind

in increasingly digital societies. Concerted action is essential to address the needs of those who are excluded, especially persons with disabilities who live in rural areas and women with disabilities, and ensure that mobile provides equal opportunities for all. Reaching those who are underserved also offers a vast, untapped commercial opportunity for the mobile industry.

# Barriers to mobile internet adoption and use



Several key barriers prevent persons with and without disabilities from adopting and using mobile internet (Figure 11). Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by these barriers, as evidenced by the disability gaps widening at each stage of the mobile internet user journey. Furthermore, persons with disabilities experience many structural inequalities

that underpin these barriers and translate into disparities in adoption and use of mobile internet. These include, for example, differences in income and education, and restrictive social norms. Targeted efforts to address these barriers will be essential in advancing the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities and enabling them to access and use mobile internet.

**Figure 11**  
Barriers to mobile internet adoption and use

Access, accessibility and usability	Affordability	Knowledge and skills	Relevance	Safety and security
				
Lack of access to networks and enablers, such as electricity, agents and formal IDs; and devices, content and services are not accessible or easy to use.	Inability to afford devices, data plans or other service fees.	Lack of digital skills and literacy, as well as lack of awareness and understanding of mobile and its benefits and how to use accessibility features.	Lack of relevant content, products and services that meet the needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities.	Concerns about the negative aspects and risks of mobile and the internet, such as harassment, theft, fraud, security and accessible data management.

## Persons with disabilities are less likely to be aware of mobile internet than non-disabled persons

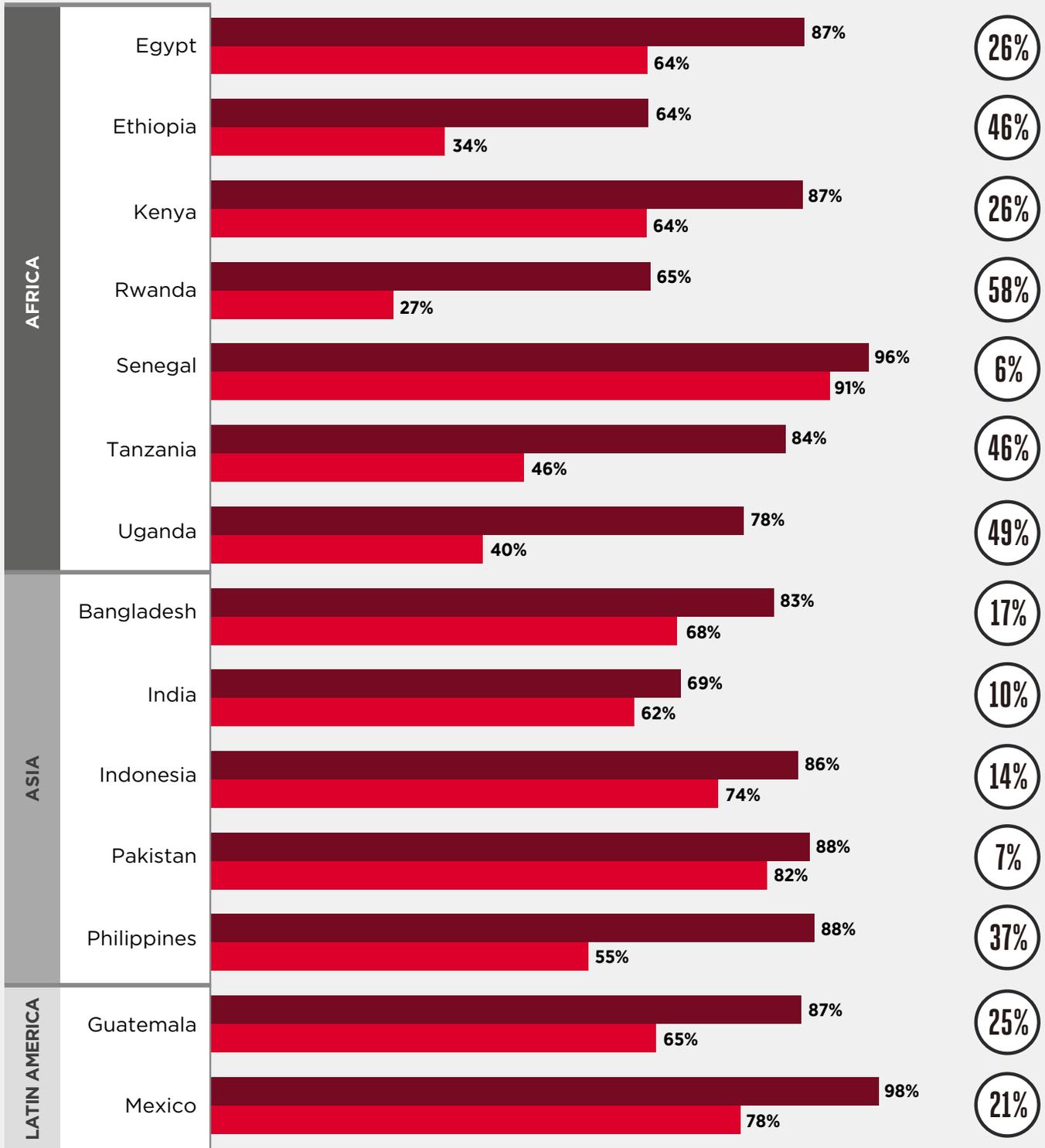
Awareness of mobile internet is a critical step to mobile internet adoption. Despite an overall global increase in mobile internet adoption, many people in LMICs are unaware of mobile internet and its benefits. The latest data from the GSMA Consumer Survey reveals that in all surveyed countries, persons with disabilities are less likely than non-disabled persons to be aware of mobile internet, and in most surveyed countries (11 of the 14 countries), the disability gaps are substantial.

Data shows that in 10 of the 14 surveyed countries, one-third of persons with disabilities are unaware of mobile internet. Awareness is particularly low in Rwanda, where only 27% of persons with disabilities report being aware of mobile internet.

Rwanda and Uganda have the largest disability gaps in mobile internet awareness across all countries surveyed. In Rwanda, persons with disabilities are 58% less likely to be aware of mobile internet than non-disabled persons, while in Uganda, this figure stands at 49% (Figure 12).

However, in some surveyed countries, the disability gaps in mobile internet awareness are much lower. In Senegal, awareness of mobile internet is relatively high, and almost equal, with 91% of persons with disabilities aware of mobile internet compared to 96% of non-disabled persons. Interestingly, mobile internet awareness levels among persons with disabilities and without disabilities are also similar in India and Pakistan.

**Figure 12**  
 Disability gaps in mobile internet awareness  
 Percentage of total adult population



■ Non-disabled persons ■ Persons with disabilities (X%) = Disability Gap

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

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= from 31 to 176 for persons with disabilities and n= from 851 to 2,040 for non-disabled persons

Nonetheless, high awareness of mobile internet does not necessarily guarantee higher levels of mobile internet adoption, especially for persons with disabilities. In Pakistan, despite 82% of persons with disabilities and 88% of non-disabled persons being aware of mobile internet, only 25% and 55%, respectively, use it. Similarly, in

Senegal, where there is a minimal disability gap in awareness of only 6%, persons with disabilities are 34% less likely than non-disabled persons to adopt mobile internet (Figure 8). This indicates that there are further barriers preventing persons with disabilities from adopting mobile internet.

## Beyond awareness, literacy and digital skills as well as affordability are the top barriers to mobile internet adoption

In each surveyed country, all respondents were asked whether they had heard of mobile internet before. Those aware of mobile internet were then asked whether certain barriers<sup>22</sup> prevented them from adopting (if they did not use it) or using mobile internet more (if they already used it). They were then asked which barriers they felt were most important and which was the single most important barrier.

As there is a substantial disability gap in mobile internet awareness and adoption across all countries surveyed, the number of respondents able to answer questions related to barriers was insufficient for analysis in eight of the 14 countries. Consequently, the findings presented are based on data from the remaining six countries where sufficient sample sizes were achieved.<sup>23</sup>

In the six surveyed countries, data shows that both persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons who are aware of mobile internet experience the same high-level barriers to mobile internet adoption, but the relevant importance and impact of these barriers differs. Among persons with disabilities who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it, the top two barriers to mobile internet adoption are literacy and digital skills, followed by affordability, primarily of handsets. While these barriers are largely the same for non-disabled persons, the latter report affordability (primarily of handsets) as their top barrier to mobile internet adoption significantly more than literacy and digital skills.

Notably, while affordability is the top barrier to mobile internet adoption for non-disabled persons in all three Sub-Saharan African countries analysed and literacy and digital skills is foremost in the Asian countries analysed, persons with disabilities

consistently report literacy and digital skills as their top barrier, regardless of region, with the exception of Rwanda (Table 1). This suggests that disability status plays a role in shaping barriers to mobile internet adoption. The prominence of literacy and digital skills as a top barrier among persons with disabilities in most countries may reflect broader structural inequalities, such as exclusion from formal education systems, with up to 40% of children with disabilities in LMICs lacking access to primary education.<sup>24</sup>

The third most frequently reported top barrier to mobile internet adoption across the six surveyed countries varies by disability status. For persons with disabilities who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it, lack of perceived relevance is the third top barrier to mobile internet adoption. This can be especially prevalent for persons with disabilities as mobile phones may not be perceived as assistive devices and may not meet the needs of users with disabilities. For non-disabled persons who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it, safety and security concerns are the third top barrier to mobile internet adoption, but it is reported significantly lower than affordability or literacy and digital skills.

Family disapproval is the third most reported top barrier to mobile internet for both persons with and without disabilities in Pakistan. This highlights the importance of considering social norms when addressing the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities. While this is the only barrier explicitly related to social norms, all barriers are underpinned by complex social norms that, in turn, lower persons with disabilities' access to income, education and employment opportunities in every country.

22. A pre-defined list of 22 barriers that has been refined over years, based on the research and experience of the GSMA and other organisations.

23. It is important to note that as barriers are context specific, the discussion is not necessarily representative of barriers that persons with disabilities face in other countries not mentioned in this report.

24. Mizunoya, S., et al. (2016). [Towards Inclusive Education: The Impact of Disability on School Attendance in Developing Countries](#). Innocenti Working Paper No. 2016-03.



**Table 1**  
 Top reported barriers to mobile internet adoption  
 Among those aware of mobile internet but not using it

	Persons with disabilities			Non-disabled persons		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
ALL COUNTRIES	Literacy and digital skills (43%)	Affordability (26%)	Relevance (10%)	Affordability (35%)	Literacy and digital skills (26%)	Safety and security (12%)
Ethiopia	Literacy and digital skills (50%)*	Affordability (34%)*	Relevance (8%)*	Affordability (46%)	Literacy and digital skills (32%)	Connectivity experience (7%)
Rwanda	Affordability (42%)*	Literacy and digital skills (26%)*	Safety and security concerns (12%)*	Affordability (57%)	Safety and security concerns (17%)	Literacy and digital skills (12%)
Senegal	Literacy and digital skills (45%)*	Affordability (37%)*	Relevance (8%)*	Affordability (55%)	Literacy and digital skills (15%)	Safety and security concerns (12%)
Bangladesh	Literacy and digital skills (42%)	Relevance (20%)	Affordability (13%)	Literacy and digital skills (34%)	Affordability (18%)	Safety and security (12%)
India	Literacy and digital skills (34%)	Safety and security concerns (19%)	Connectivity experience (16%)	Literacy and digital skills (27%)	Affordability (19%)	Safety and security concerns (18%)
Pakistan	Literacy and digital skills (59%)	Affordability (19%)	Family disapproval (8%)	Literacy and digital skills (37%)	Affordability (17%)	Family disapproval (13%)

 = \*Small sample size

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

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. Access-related barriers are not grouped as a composite since they cover a disparate range of topics.

Rankings indicate 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= from 25 to 45 for persons with disabilities and n= from 219 to 461 for non-disabled persons

## Affordability, primarily of data, and safety and security concerns are the top barriers to further mobile internet use in India and Senegal

Analysis from India and Senegal<sup>25</sup> shows that when persons with disabilities start using mobile internet, they are less likely than non-disabled persons to use it regularly and for a diverse range of use cases (see *The disability gap in mobile internet adoption and use* above). For this reason, it is essential to understand both the barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from adopting mobile internet and the barriers that stop existing mobile internet users with disabilities from using it more.

The top reported barriers to further mobile internet use in India and Senegal vary by country as well as disability status.

In Senegal, the top two reported barriers to further mobile internet use among both existing users with disabilities and non-disabled persons are affordability and safety and security concerns. Affordability, primarily of data, is reported as the top barrier to further mobile internet use among existing mobile internet users with disabilities as well as their non-disabled counterparts. However, mobile internet users with disabilities report handset affordability as their top barrier to further mobile internet use to a greater extent than their non-disabled peers. For instance, 23% of persons with disabilities and 24% of non-disabled persons who already use mobile internet reported data affordability as their top barrier to further use. In comparison, 22% of mobile internet users with disabilities and just 7% of their non-disabled counterparts reported handset costs as their top barrier (Figure 15).

While the top two barriers to further mobile internet use in Senegal are similar for existing users with disabilities and non-disabled persons, the third top barrier varies by disability status. Literacy and digital skills is the third top ranked barrier among mobile internet users. More generally, 39% of persons with disabilities report reading and writing difficulties as a barrier to further mobile internet use compared to 20% of non-disabled persons (Figure 16).

In contrast, connectivity experience is the third most reported top barrier to further use among non-disabled mobile internet users (Table 2). This is related to either slow or unreliable connections, or lack of coverage overall.

In India, the top reported barrier to further mobile internet use among mobile internet users with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts is safety and security concerns, particularly regarding scams and fraud. Mobile internet users with disabilities in India disproportionately report safety and security as a barrier to further mobile internet use, with 49% reporting concerns related to scams and fraud as a barrier that stops them further using mobile internet further compared to 35% of non-disabled mobile internet users (Figure 16).

Similarly to Senegal, the remaining top barriers to further mobile internet use in India vary by disability status. For non-disabled mobile internet users, affordability (15%) and connectivity experience (13%) are among the top three reported barriers to further use. By contrast, 14% of persons with disabilities who already use mobile internet reported internet drains my battery as their second most reported top barrier to further use (Table 2). Social norms, specifically family disapproval, are also reported as a top barrier to further mobile internet use by persons with disabilities in India. This was not the same for non-disabled persons.

25. Due to low levels of mobile internet adoption among persons with disabilities, only India and Senegal had sufficiently large sample sizes to analyse barriers to further mobile internet use.

**Table 2**

Top barriers to further mobile internet use for existing mobile internet users in Senegal and India

Among mobile internet users

	Persons with disabilities			Non-disabled persons		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>India</b>	Safety and security concerns (24%)	Internet drains my battery (14%)	Family disapproval (13%)	Safety and security (30%)	Affordability (15%)	Connectivity experience (13%)
<b>Senegal</b>	Affordability (44%)*	Safety and security concerns (23%)*	Literacy and digital skills (17%)*	Affordability (31%)	Safety and security concerns (24%)	Connectivity experience (19%)

 = \*Small sample size

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+

The barriers above are composite barriers. These composite barriers are aggregates (not averages) of the responses for between two and five sub-barriers. Access-related barriers are not grouped as a composite since they cover a disparate range of topics.

Rankings indicate 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= 53 persons with disabilities and n= 745 for non-disabled persons in India; and n= 25 for persons with disabilities and n= 666 for non-disabled persons in Senegal



**SPOTLIGHT**



## Mobile operator initiatives advancing the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities

Mobile operators play an increasingly strategic role in closing the mobile disability gap by directly addressing key barriers to digital inclusion. This spotlight showcases a range of customer-facing initiatives implemented by mobile operators both in partnership with the GSMA and independently to address barriers around digital skills, affordability, perceived relevance, accessibility, and safety and security.

### Building digital skills through inclusive training programmes

Limited digital literacy and skills is one of the top barriers to mobile internet adoption and use among persons with disabilities. To address this, operators are developing targeted and accessible digital skills training. For example:

- Vodacom (South Africa) provides in-store and online guidance for customers with disabilities, including digital skills training for setting up devices and activating accessibility features, such as VoiceOver and TalkBack for visually impaired users.
- Dialog Axiata PLC (Sri Lanka) initially launched a digital education programme for customers with disabilities but shifted to in-person workshops after identifying barriers, such as low digital literacy and inaccessible content, that resulted in low impact of the digital education initiative. These workshops, supported by sign language interpreters, proved more effective and boosted usage of DeafTawk, an on-demand sign language interpretation app, fivefold.

### Improving the affordability of mobile devices and services for persons with disabilities

Unaffordable handset and data costs are top barriers to mobile internet adoption and use for persons with disabilities. In response, mobile operators have introduced innovative pricing and financing models to improve data affordability. For example:

- Ethio telecom (Ethiopia) launched voice, SMS and data bundles with discounts of up to 35% for persons with disabilities, tailored to accommodate diverse accessibility needs.
- Ncell (Nepal) implemented a 50% data discount for customers with disabilities through its Sadhain ON plan.
- Vodacom (South Africa) provides bespoke bundles tailored to the needs of different disability types, e.g. call and data bundles for visually impaired users, and SMS and data for deaf customers. Persons with communication barriers also receive bonus SMS bundles free of charge when purchasing standard SMS bundles to reduce costs.

## SPOTLIGHT



- MTN (South Africa) offers contracts and prepaid plans designed to suit the communication needs of customers with disabilities, helping ensure they only pay for services they can use.
- Many mobile operators are developing handset affordability solutions aimed at underserved populations more broadly. The GSMA is working to ensure that these interventions are designed and implemented in ways that also reach and meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

### Improving perceived relevance of the internet through promotion of relevant use cases and benefits for persons with disabilities

Lack of awareness about how mobile technology can benefit persons with disabilities persists in many markets, resulting in low perceived relevance of mobile phones and the internet by people with disabilities and their caregivers or family. Operators are addressing this barrier through targeted awareness-raising efforts, inclusive campaigns and partnerships. For example:

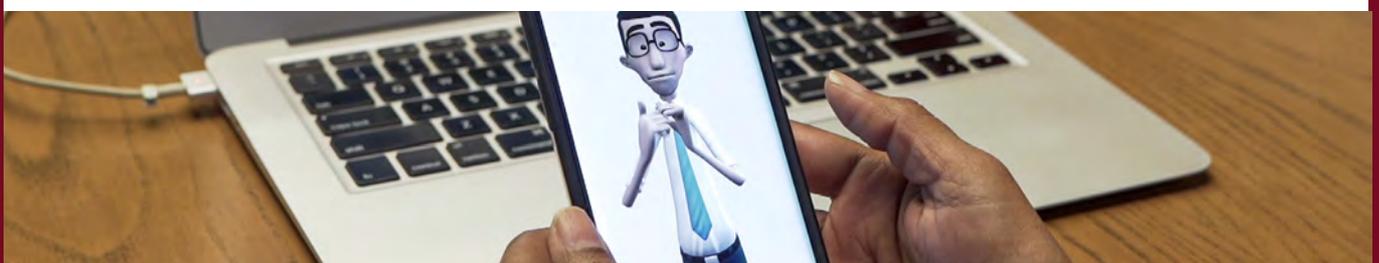
- Dialog Axiata PLC (Sri Lanka) ran a DeafTawk promotion campaign that reached nearly 500,000 YouTube views and 28,000 Facebook likes. This increased awareness of the practical benefits of mobile internet for persons with disabilities and helped shift perceptions of its relevance among users and their families. Dialog also partnered with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to extend its reach and promote relevant mobile-enabled services to persons with disabilities.
- Orange (France) developed the Autonomy Catalogue to provide customers with disabilities with information on all relevant mobile products and services available to them.

- Vodacom (South Africa) partnered with OPDs to promote relevant mobile services and set up four dedicated kiosks at OPD locations to improve outreach.
- Vodacom (South Africa) and MTN have embedded the Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative (GARI), a project of the Mobile & Wireless Forum that provides a searchable database of accessible devices, including mobile phones, tablets, apps, wearables and smart TVs, to guide customers with disabilities to identify products that meet their specific accessibility requirements.

### Developing inclusive products and services that meet diverse user needs

Embedding accessibility and user-centred design from the outset is critical for ensuring mobile services and products meet the diverse needs of people with different types of disabilities. Operators are also adapting customer-facing services and communication channels to improve accessibility for customers with visual, hearing and mobility impairments. For example:

- Orange Group employs a “design for all” framework, adapting retail and digital interfaces for accessibility. Features include voicemail transcription via SMS and voice call blocking for deaf customers, which sends an auto-reply suggesting contact via text.
- Vodacom (South Africa) prompts hearing-impaired users to leave an SMS voicemail if they cannot answer a call, offering an accessible alternative to audio messages.
- Ethio telecom (Ethiopia) ensured its mobile money service, Telebirr, is accessible to visually impaired customers, enabling them to independently send and receive money and pay bills using voice commands via IVR and the app.



## SPOTLIGHT



### Improving accessibility of customer service touchpoints

Inclusive customer support is essential for ensuring equitable mobile access. Customers with disabilities may require additional, ongoing support due to the nature of their access needs. It is therefore essential that customer service channels are designed to be inclusive, responsive and equipped to meet diverse accessibility requirements. Operators have enhanced retail spaces and customer support to ensure persons with disabilities are welcomed and included. For example:

- Dialog Axiata PLC (Sri Lanka) retrofitted 14 stores with ramps, six stores with lifts and integrated DeafTawk tablets in 23 outlets (scaling up to 110) to enable store staff to communicate effectively with deaf customers.
- Safaricom (Kenya), Vodacom (Ghana) and Vodacom (South Africa) introduced video sign language support at call centres to better serve deaf customers.

### Supporting safe and secure use of mobile internet for persons with disabilities

Concerns about online safety and fraud disproportionately impact persons with disabilities. While fewer examples exist in this area, operators are starting to address the need for safer digital products. For example, Smart (Philippines) includes dedicated modules on internet safety and mobile wallets in their Digital Business Basics training programme for customers with disabilities. This example shows initial steps are being taken towards ensuring that persons with disabilities feel confident using mobile internet and can protect themselves against fraud, scams and digital harassment.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate examples of how mobile operators may embed disability inclusion in every aspect of their operations, from product design and customer experience to marketing and digital skills development. By addressing key barriers and creating more accessible and inclusive mobile environments, operators are making meaningful progress to advance the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities and helping to close the mobile disability gap. Further in-depth insights on how mobile operators can advance digital inclusion for persons with disabilities can be found in the GSMA's *Disability Inclusion as a Business Imperative* report.<sup>26</sup>

26. GSMA. (2025). [Disability Inclusion as a Business Imperative](#).

# Recommendations



# Calls to action for closing the mobile disability gap

Key stakeholders in the mobile industry have a critical role to play in closing the mobile disability gap and ensuring digital inclusion for all. This includes policymakers, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, OPDs, mobile operators and other ecosystem players, such as start-ups and device manufacturers. Based on this research, we offer the following recommendations.

## Understand the mobile disability gap and how to reach and serve persons with disabilities better by gathering data and evidence

Actions to drive the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities must be informed by understanding local issues and local context and the lived experiences of persons with disabilities. Accurate and reliable disability-disaggregated data is crucial to develop a better understanding of the requirements, views and barriers of persons with disabilities in order to better serve them. Policymakers, digital players, and the public and private sectors can collect, analyse and track ethical disability-disaggregated data<sup>27</sup> related to the access and use of mobile products and services to monitor progress, evaluate and iterate solutions. To better serve persons with disabilities, stakeholders can engage directly through partnerships, user testing and feedback, while also learning from best practice approaches by organisations in other markets. Disability data is not always available, but where possible, analysing it alongside factors like gender, age, location and impairment type<sup>28</sup> can uncover important differences in mobile use and inform more inclusive, targeted solutions.

## Build the digital skills of persons with disabilities, including the use of mobile phones and accessibility features

Many persons with disabilities are digitally excluded because they do not know how to use mobile and mobile internet in a way that meets their needs. Stakeholders can support the delivery of mobile digital skills programmes to train persons with disabilities and their caregivers and relatives on how to use mobile internet safely to meet their needs. Policymakers and MNOs can also explore partnerships with OPDs or other relevant organisations to support the development and implementation of inclusive training programmes to build the digital skills of persons with disabilities, and ensure trainers are well equipped to address the needs of persons with disabilities. Stakeholders can use existing resources, such as the GSMA's Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit (MISTT), to train people on how to access and use mobile internet services, including accessibility features. The toolkit is a visual, easy-to-follow guide that helps trainers demonstrate the functionality and value of the internet on internet-enabled mobile phones.

## Ensure internet-enabled phones, especially smartphones, and mobile data services are affordable for persons with disabilities

Internet-enabled phones, and especially smartphones, which typically provide the most accessibility features and drive substantially higher mobile internet use, are often unaffordable for persons with disabilities. To address this barrier, mobile operators can design solutions to make internet-enabled phones and data more affordable for persons with disabilities. This could include innovative financing models that appeal to persons with disabilities' price sensitivity, such as micro loans and tariff plans, rolling out accessible data-light versions of mobile apps and services, developing partnerships with other stakeholders to ensure affordable means for supplying mobile products, and promotional deals to encourage trial of products and services by persons with disabilities.

27. Data collection methods need to be sensitively designed to ensure persons with disabilities feel comfortable sharing their experiences and insights. The widely used Washington Group (WG) Short Set of Questions is a standardised methodology that enables internationally comparable data collection.

28. As disability covers a wide spectrum of impairments, there is additional value in disaggregating data by type of impairments, in line with international guidelines and standards.

### **Collaborate to raise awareness of mobile internet and its benefits for persons with disabilities**

Awareness of mobile internet is lower among persons with disabilities than non-disabled persons, limiting its potential usage. Even when aware of mobile internet, many persons with disabilities and their families perceive it as irrelevant to their needs, often unaware of the benefits it can offer or the many compelling use cases that could be particularly advantageous for them. To promote the benefits of mobile internet and smartphones as an assistive technology, policymakers and MNOs can develop marketing campaigns targeting persons with disabilities, and explore partnerships with OPDs and other stakeholders to raise awareness about how mobile services such as apps and accessibility features available on handsets are relevant to persons with disabilities.

### **Develop inclusive and relevant products and services that meet the diverse needs of persons with disabilities**

Once persons with disabilities are aware of mobile internet and its benefits, it is important that they have access to locally relevant and accessible content and services that meet their needs and preferences. Stakeholders should ensure that all existing and new digital content, products and services (e.g. apps and websites) are developed with persons with disabilities in mind. This can include adopting user-centred design and inclusive or universal design practices, embedding accessibility criteria into digital product quality assurance processes, and including people with disabilities in the testing process to improve accessibility and usability. Mobile operators should also ensure their customer engagement touchpoints, including retail, customer service and marketing, are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. This involves providing physically accessible locations, training staff and agents to ensure persons with disabilities do not face stigma, and embedding on-demand sign language interpretation in customer service touchpoints. Customer service teams should also be equipped and trained to effectively support the diverse needs of all customers, including persons with disabilities.

### **Ensure persons with disabilities feel safe and secure using mobile content, products and services**

Concerns about the safe and secure use of mobile is one of the barriers preventing mobile internet adoption and use for persons with disabilities. Real or perceived risks of mobile device theft, data security fraud or harm, privacy and internet use may have a significant impact on adoption and use of mobile products and services. Stakeholders can support the design of mobile products and services that either minimise the risk of harassment and fraud or increase the safety of customers with disabilities (e.g. interactive voice response, voice activated passwords). They can also implement marketing and promotional activities to train customers with disabilities to protect themselves online, as well as ensure that agents are effectively trained and incentivised to teach users about online safety and how to avoid harassment and fraud.

A more detailed set of recommendations for the mobile industry can be found in the GSMA's *Principles for Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>29</sup> For governments and policymakers, more detailed recommendations to close the mobile disability gap can be found in the *Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities: Policy considerations for low- and middle income-countries*.<sup>30</sup>

29. GSMA. (2020). [Principles for Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#).

30. GSMA. (2022). [Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities: Policy considerations for low- and middle-income countries](#).

# Appendices



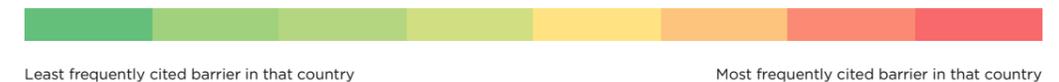
# Appendix 1: Barriers to mobile internet adoption and use

**Figure 13**  
 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					ACCESS							
			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	Ethiopia	Non-disabled persons	42%	4%	18%	5%	9%	1%	4%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	2%	2%	1%	4%	0%	1%
		Persons with disabilities*	34%	0%	25%	8%	12%	4%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%
	Rwanda	Non-disabled persons	55%	1%	8%	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	5%	2%	1%	7%	4%	1%	0%	0%	3%	1%	1%
		Persons with disabilities*	42%	0%	22%	0%	0%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	0%	0%	4%	4%	4%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
	Senegal	Non-disabled persons	49%	6%	13%	0%	1%	0%	5%	0%	2%	1%	2%	3%	5%	3%	1%	1%	0%	5%	1%	0%
		Persons with disabilities*	34%	4%	26%	15%	4%	0%	4%	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
ASIA	Bangladesh	Non-disabled persons	8%	9%	22%	5%	3%	3%	8%	1%	3%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	5%	4%	3%	4%	5%
		Persons with disabilities	7%	6%	34%	5%	3%	0%	15%	5%	2%	5%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	5%	3%
	India	Non-disabled persons	6%	12%	17%	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	7%	4%	5%	5%	2%	3%	5%	2%
		Persons with disabilities	9%	2%	22%	4%	6%	2%	8%	0%	5%	2%	4%	0%	8%	9%	7%	0%	2%	0%	6%	4%
	Pakistan	Non-disabled persons	11%	6%	29%	3%	2%	3%	7%	1%	1%	6%	5%	0%	0%	2%	4%	1%	1%	3%	2%	13%
		Persons with disabilities	11%	8%	49%	5%	2%	4%	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	4%	8%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024  
 Base: Adults aged 18+ who have not used mobile internet in the past three months 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= from 25 to 45 for persons with disabilities and n= from 219 to 461 for non-disabled persons

 = \*Small sample size



**Figure 14**  
A barrier to mobile internet adoption

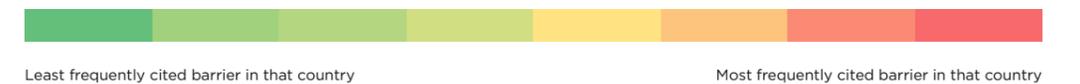
Percentage of those who are aware of mobile internet but do not use it who reported the following as a barrier to adopting mobile internet

			AFFORDABILITY		LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS			RELEVANCE		SAFETY AND SECURITY					ACCESS							
			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	Ethiopia	Non-disabled persons	72%	38%	46%	37%	47%	38%	24%	22%	18%	11%	12%	12%	19%	35%	30%	21%	18%	26%	9%	4%
		Persons with disabilities*	40%	20%	58%	50%	50%	50%	12%	20%	8%	12%	4%	12%	4%	24%	18%	4%	8%	15%	8%	0%
	Rwanda	Non-disabled persons	76%	39%	21%	10%	23%	32%	13%	31%	26%	30%	28%	20%	40%	32%	25%	18%	17%	24%	24%	4%
		Persons with disabilities	62%	48%	33%	21%	44%	50%	26%	37%	16%	38%	34%	31%	44%	32%	31%	23%	18%	26%	24%	7%
	Senegal	Non-disabled persons	65%	40%	35%	24%	22%	15%	16%	18%	24%	20%	27%	25%	30%	23%	19%	24%	17%	22%	17%	10%
		Persons with disabilities	53%	43%	52%	38%	31%	14%	24%	17%	20%	23%	26%	17%	23%	11%	14%	11%	7%	17%	7%	10%
ASIA	Bangladesh	Non-disabled persons	20%	22%	24%	18%	13%	12%	17%	11%	10%	12%	10%	10%	11%	8%	8%	12%	12%	13%	10%	10%
		Persons with disabilities	22%	26%	41%	31%	19%	19%	23%	19%	14%	18%	21%	17%	12%	9%	18%	17%	17%	19%	17%	14%
	India	Non-disabled persons	33%	32%	31%	28%	24%	27%	27%	25%	28%	27%	29%	25%	30%	25%	24%	28%	24%	23%	27%	24%
		Persons with disabilities	36%	41%	36%	24%	33%	36%	30%	35%	37%	35%	45%	40%	43%	24%	30%	35%	31%	19%	35%	36%
	Pakistan	Non-disabled persons	61%	62%	58%	48%	44%	34%	53%	40%	35%	45%	45%	32%	42%	38%	36%	34%	35%	42%	37%	37%
		Persons with disabilities	81%	79%	72%	78%	60%	52%	68%	54%	39%	58%	50%	43%	51%	38%	26%	37%	49%	51%	50%	41%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024

Base: Adults aged 18+ who have not used mobile internet in the past three months 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 at all from using the internet on a mobile phone."  
n= from 28 to 64 for persons with disabilities and n= from 243 to 474 for non-disabled persons

 = \*Small sample size



**Figure 15**  
Top barriers to further mobile internet use in India and Senegal  
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					ACCESS								
		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	I AM ONLY ALLOWED TO USE THE INTERNET FOR SPECIFIC REASONS	I AM ONLY ALLOWED TO USE THE INTERNET FOR A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME OR AT CERTAIN TIMES
Senegal	Non-disabled persons	7%	24%	8%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	4%	3%	5%	2%	10%	14%	5%	5%	0%	8%	1%	1%	0%	0%
	Persons with disabilities*	22%	23%	8%	4%	0%	5%	0%	0%	4%	4%	4%	0%	11%	0%	0%	12%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
India	Non-disabled persons	4%	11%	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	5%	4%	6%	2%	13%	5%	8%	8%	2%	5%	3%	2%	3%	3%
	Persons with disabilities	0%	11%	4%	0%	2%	2%	8%	5%	3%	0%	0%	7%	13%	2%	0%	14%	2%	8%	2%	4%	4%	5%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024  
 Base: Mobile internet users aged 18+  
 Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who answered: "Yes - this is something that stops 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= 53 persons with disabilities and n= 745 for non-disabled persons in India; and n= 25 for persons with disabilities and n= 666 for non-disabled persons in Senegal



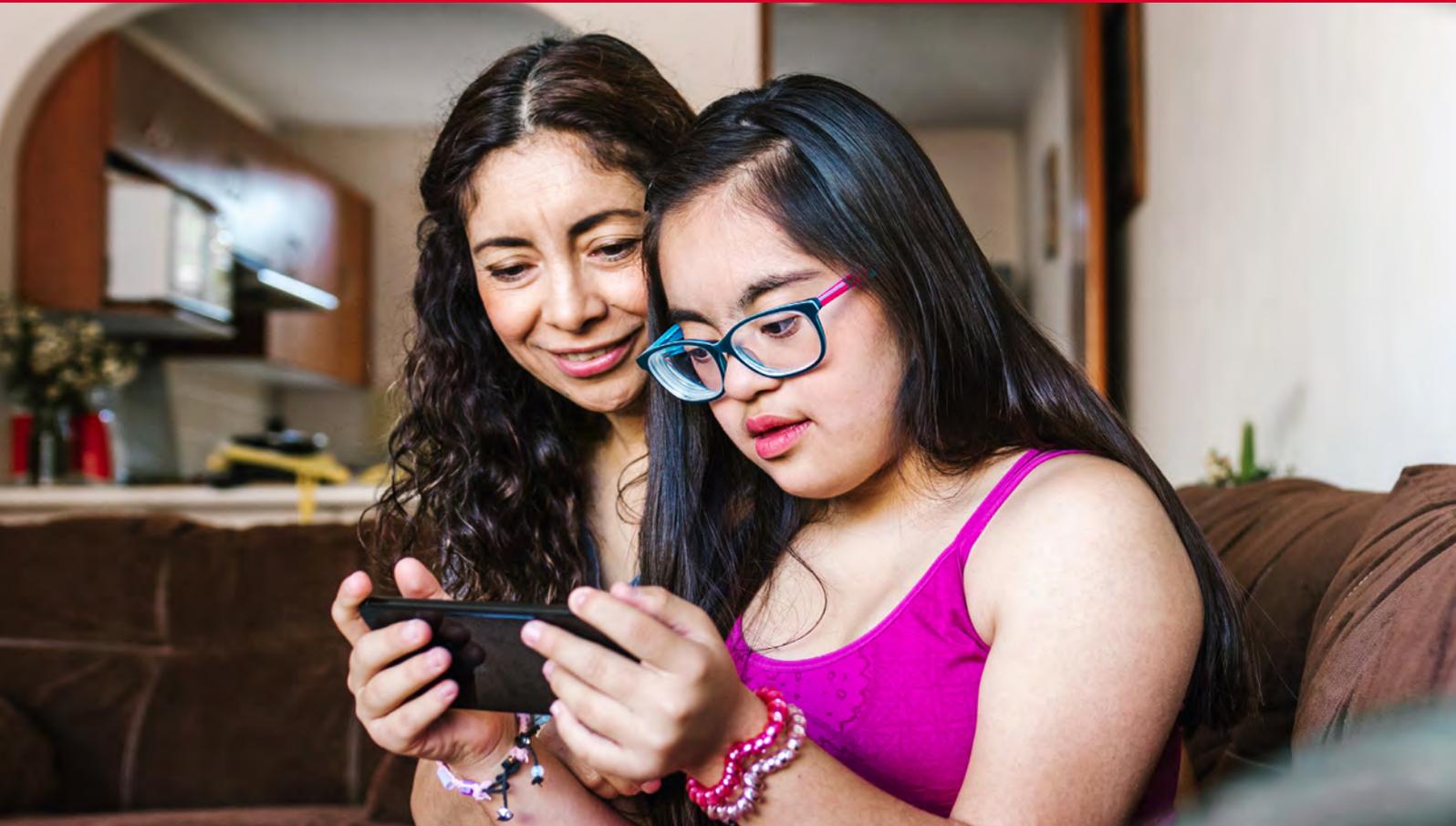
**Figure 16**  
A barrier to further mobile internet use in India and Senegal  
Percentage of mobile internet users who reported the following as a barrier to using mobile internet more

		AFFORDABILITY		LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS				RELEVANCE		SAFETY AND SECURITY					ACCESS								
		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	I AM ONLY ALLOWED TO USE THE INTERNET FOR SPECIFIC REASONS	I AM ONLY ALLOWED TO USE THE INTERNET FOR A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME OR AT CERTAIN TIMES
Senegal	Non-disabled persons	31%	54%	20%	9%	14%	8%	8%	13%	30%	22%	32%	27%	41%	43%	36%	33%	12%	25%	8%	6%	8%	8%
	Persons with disabilities	32%	32%	39%	13%	10%	7%	7%	10%	35%	28%	29%	22%	41%	16%	19%	32%	0%	24%	10%	7%	3%	4%
India	Non-disabled persons	33%	39%	21%	23%	25%	24%	26%	20%	30%	32%	34%	26%	35%	31%	31%	36%	22%	26%	27%	22%	24%	27%
	Persons with disabilities	33%	38%	30%	21%	30%	28%	49%	24%	32%	26%	28%	29%	49%	36%	30%	33%	26%	41%	36%	26%	28%	28%

Source: GSMA Consumer Survey, 2024  
 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= 62 persons with disabilities and n= 1,063 for non-disabled persons in India; and n= 32 for persons with disabilities and n= 742 for non-disabled persons in Senegal



# Appendix 2: Detailed methodology



This section details the methodology used for the Mobile Disability Gap Report 2025, which is based on the analysis of the results of a face-to-face consumer survey conducted by the GSMA in 14 LMICs in 2024.<sup>31</sup> This research draws on insights from the survey to create a more accurate picture of the use of mobile devices and services for persons with disabilities in the following countries:

- **Africa:** Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda
- **Asia:** Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines
- **Latin America:** Guatemala, Mexico

To understand the prevalence of disability in the populations of these countries, the Washington Group Short Set of Questions were added to the survey. The subsequent analysis used the Washington Group questions as a framework to better understand the level of mobile inclusion of persons with disabilities in LMICs. Specifically, this research aimed to understand mobile phone ownership, smartphone ownership, mobile internet adoption, usage of services, and the barriers to mobile internet adoption and further use.

31. The findings in this report are based on the results of the annual GSMA Consumer Survey. The 2024 survey includes over 17,000 respondents from 15 LMICs. These face-to-face, nationally representative surveys were conducted between August and November 2024. While the Washington Group Short Set of Questions was included in the survey across 15 countries, data from Nigeria was excluded in this report due to insufficient sample size of persons with disabilities.

## Defining disability: The Washington Group Short Set of Questions

The Washington Group Short Set includes questions on six core functional domains: seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care and communication. To be considered a person

with disabilities for the purpose of this analysis, a respondent had to indicate that they have “a lot of difficulty” or “cannot do at all” in at least one core domain.

**Table 3**  
Unweighted disability prevalence by country

Country	Total respondents in country	Total respondents with disabilities	Disability prevalence in the sample
Egypt	1104	49	4%
Ethiopia	1068	68	6%
Kenya	1009	51	5%
Rwanda	1003	152	15%
Senegal	1078	67	6%
Tanzania	1147	56	5%
Uganda	1078	76	7%
Bangladesh	1017	97	10%
India	2216	176	8%
Indonesia	1093	39	4%
Pakistan	1149	87	8%
Philippines	1066	32	3%
Guatemala	1025	67	7%
Mexico	1068	31	3%

## Sampling framework and fieldwork

In all countries, a sample of approximately 1,000 adults aged 18 and over were surveyed, with the exception of India where the sample was approximately 2,000. The samples were nationally representative, except for Ethiopia where no interviews were conducted in the Amhara region and four other zones due to local conflict and security concerns.<sup>32</sup> These areas represent 27% of the population in Ethiopia, thus the sample was representative of the remaining 73% who live outside these areas. 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.

In all countries, data was collected using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). Interviews were conducted with individuals in their local language, and both female and male interviewers conducted the survey. To achieve a nationally representative sample, quotas were applied in line with census data on the following metrics: age category by gender; urban and rural distribution by gender; and region/state. Quotas were applied for socio-economic class (SEC) to ensure a representative segment of lower income respondents were included. Data was weighted to known population profiles to correct any imbalances in the distributions achieved during fieldwork.

## Measuring the disability gap

A primary objective of the study was to understand the extent of the gaps in mobile ownership and mobile adoption in each country. To accurately calculate the gap between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons, the following formula was applied:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{Icon of person} \text{ (%) Group 1 mobile owners/users} \quad - \quad \text{Icon of person with wheelchair} \text{ (%) Group 2 mobile owners/users} \\
 \hline
 \text{Icon of person} \text{ (%) Group 1 mobile owners/users}
 \end{array}$$

This shows the gap in mobile ownership or mobile internet adoption relative to ownership or adoption in the broader non-disabled population. In reporting observed statistics, the analysis adheres to the industry norm that subgroups should have a minimum sample of n=30. In some cases, disaggregating results by disability status results in sample sizes that are too small to make confident claims about the broader population. In those cases, countries have been excluded from the analysis and discussion in this report.

As this report aims to align with the broader work conducted by the GSMA on digital inclusion, more details on the calculations of the digital inclusion gap (focused on gender) in the countries surveyed are described in the GSMA’s *Methodology: The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025*.<sup>33</sup> However, due to a lack of third-party data on persons with disabilities, we were unable to obtain regional or global-level modelled results. For the methodology on use cases and barriers, please refer to *Methodology: The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025*.

32. Western Tigray, Metekel zone (Benishangul-Gumuz), Administrative 2 Zone (Afar) and Guji zone (Oromia).

33. GSMA. (2025). Methodology: [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025](#).

The survey approach was not designed as a disability-focused study. Fieldwork was not tailored to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities (e.g. sign language interpreters or adaptable modes of survey administration), interviewers may not have been trained to interview persons with disabilities, and no quotas were applied to ensure representation across different types of impairments. As a result, it is likely that the survey data is not necessarily representative and the views of some persons with disabilities were omitted.

Analysis adhered to the industry norm that subgroups should have a minimum sample of  $n=30$ . In some cases, disaggregating data by disability status and other factors resulted in sample sizes that were too small to confidently make claims about the broader population.

While the Washington Group Short Set of Questions was included in the survey across 15 countries, data from Nigeria was excluded in this report due to insufficient sample size of persons with disabilities.

As the report progresses into more in-depth analysis—such as the barriers to mobile internet adoption and use—eligible sample sizes decreased, and consequently, fewer countries were included in these sections of the analysis. However, in a limited number of cases, due to a lack of data on the subject, the analysis includes groups with sample sizes with a minimum of 25 respondents to provide a potential indicative estimate. All such instances are clearly annotated in the relevant tables and figures. Where this has been done, given the small sample size, these figures should be interpreted with caution and not treated as conclusive.



# Endnotes

1. International Telecommunications Union (ITU) estimates for 2024.
2. GSMA Intelligence, Q4 2024.
3. World Health Organization. (2023). [Disability](#). (Accessed 22 May 2025).
4. United Nations. (2024). [Disability and Development Report 2024](#).
5. This report contains data from 14 LMICs: Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Guatemala and Mexico.
6. Due to limited data, sample sizes with a minimum of 25 respondents were considered in the analysis of barrier to mobile internet adoption and use. All such instances are clearly annotated in the relevant tables and figures.
7. World Health Organization. (2023). [Disability](#). (Accessed 22 May 2025).
8. 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 websites (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."
9. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics is a United Nations Statistical Commission City Group that develops methods to improve statistics on persons with disabilities globally. It is comprised of representatives of national statistics offices with input from other UN agencies, international agencies, organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and researchers. The Short Set of Questions can be accessed at: <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss> (accessed 22 May 2025).
10. In this report, regular mobile internet use is defined as using it daily, and diverse mobile internet use is defined as performing at least three mobile internet use cases daily.
11. Exceptions are Mexico, Guatemala, Philippines and Indonesia, where there is a higher proportion of persons with and without disabilities using mobile internet in three or more ways in comparison to the rest of the surveyed countries.
12. 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.
13. GSMA. (2015). [Bridging the gender gap: Mobile access and usage in low- and middle-income countries](#).
14. For in-depth analysis, see Figure 9 in: GSMA. (2022). [The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2022](#).
15. GSMA. (2019). [Understanding the mobile disability gap: Insights on mobile phone access and usage by persons with disabilities in Kenya and Bangladesh](#).
16. Respondents were asked the following question: "Apart from price, how important, if at all, would the following features be to you if you were getting or buying a mobile phone that can access the internet (e.g. feature phone or smartphone)?"
17. Figure 7 is based on countries where the number of persons with disabilities eligible to answer this question exceeded 30 respondents. These countries are Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Guatemala. Countries with fewer than 30 eligible respondents with disabilities were excluded from the analysis.
18. GSMA. (2021). [The Mobile Disability Gap Report 2021](#).
19. GSMA. (2019). [Understanding the mobile disability Gap: Insights on mobile phone access and usage by persons with disabilities in Kenya and Bangladesh](#).
20. Daily and diverse mobile internet use is defined as performing at least three mobile internet use cases daily.
21. United Nations. (2024). [Disability and Development Report 2024](#).
22. A pre-defined list of 22 barriers that has been refined over years, based on the research and experience of the GSMA and other organisations.
23. It is important to note that as barriers are context specific, the discussion is not necessarily representative of barriers that persons with disabilities face in other countries not mentioned in this report.
24. Mizunoya, S., et al. (2016). [Towards Inclusive Education: The Impact of Disability on School Attendance in Developing Countries](#). Innocenti Working Paper No. 2016-03.
25. Due to low levels of mobile internet adoption among persons with disabilities, only India and Senegal had sufficiently large sample sizes to analyse barriers to further use.
26. GSMA. (2025). [Disability Inclusion as a Business Imperative](#).

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27. Data collection methods need to be sensitively designed to ensure persons with disabilities feel comfortable sharing their experiences and insights. The widely used Washington Group (WG) Short Set of Questions is a standardised methodology that enables internationally comparable data collection.
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28. As disability covers a wide spectrum of impairments, there is additional value in disaggregating data by type of impairments, in line with international guidelines and standards.
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29. GSMA. (2020). [Principles for Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#).
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30. GSMA. (2022). [Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities: Policy considerations for low- and middle-income countries](#).
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31. The findings in this report are based on the results of the annual GSMA Consumer Survey. The 2024 survey includes over 17,000 respondents from 15 LMICs. These face-to-face, nationally representative surveys were conducted between August and November 2024. While the Washington Group Short Set of Questions was included in the survey across 15 countries, data from Nigeria was excluded in this report due to insufficient sample size of persons with disabilities.
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32. Western Tigray, Metekel zone (Benishangul-Gumuz), Administrative 2 Zone (Afar) and Guji zone (Oromia).
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33. GSMA. (2025). [Methodology: The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025](#).

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