

03 Cell Phone Usage: How Do Urban Women Navigate the Digital Space?

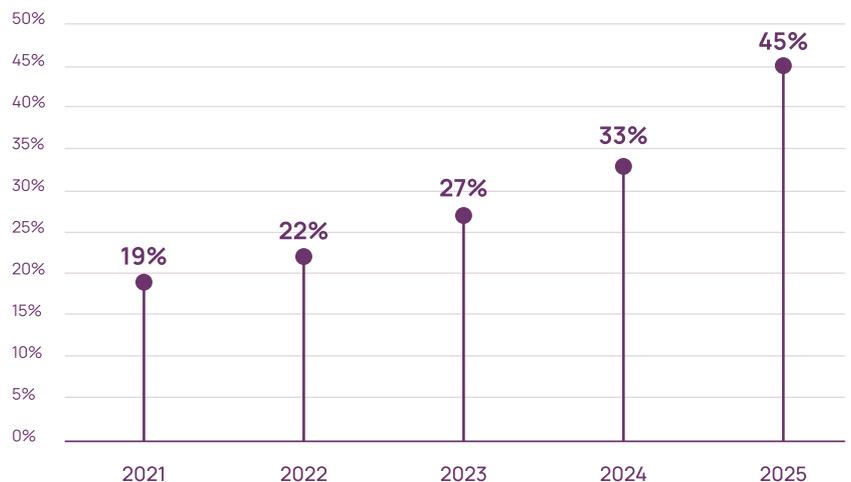
Exploring internet usage and challenges for urban women. Key questions:

- How are urban women using digital platforms?
- How present and visible are urban women online?

This is the third in a four part series on technology access and workforce participation of women.

Women using mobile internet in Pakistan have more than doubled over the last five years. This analysis presents some key factors that influence empowerment and inclusion for women in the online space.

Women using mobile internet in Pakistan



Source: GSMA, Mobile Gender Gap Report 2021-2025

Respondent Profile

600+

Survey Respondents

415



Women

187



Men

110 urban neighbourhoods in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore

18-65 years

Respondents age

37 years

Average age

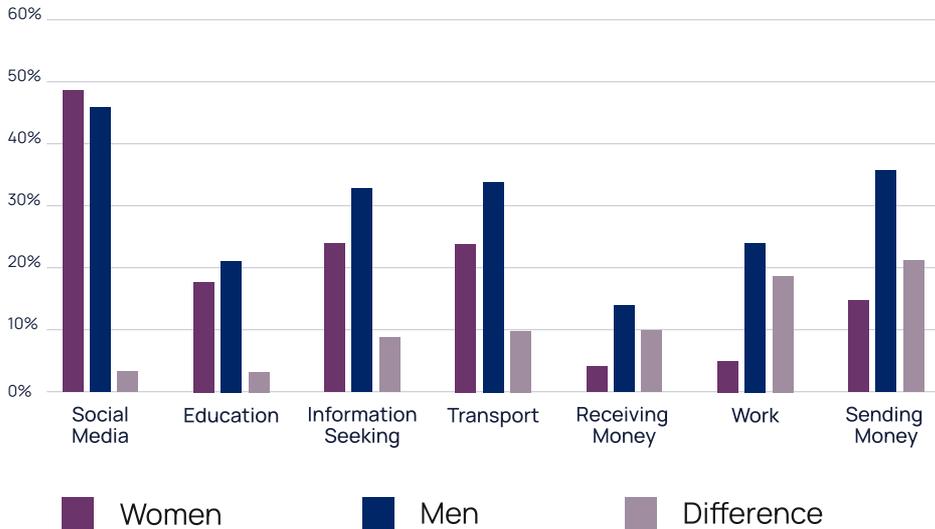
Proportions may not add to 100% due to rounding errors

* represents $p < 0.05$

** represents $p < 0.01$

Usage Patterns

How does mobile phone use differ by gender?



Insights from the survey

01

Social media was the most commonly reported reason for internet use. However, clear gender gaps were observed: men were far more likely than women to use the internet for work and making digital payments. Smaller differences (10% or less) were evident for transport, information seeking, education, and receiving money, underscoring a persistent gendered divide in digital use.

n: women= 340, men=149
subset of those who own mobile phones

How do women engage with social media?

Passive (Scrolling)

59%



Active (Likes, Shares, Posts)

41%



02

Women social media users were more likely to scroll than post. Their use was largely for entertainment (such as dramas, celebrity news, and TikTok videos), accessing information (including cooking and religious content), and staying connected with friends and family

n: women = 171
subset of women who use social media

What do women use social media for?

88%

Entertainment/Infotainment

66%

News/Information

48%

Posts (Friends & Family)

n: women = 171
subset of women who use social media

Managing Online Identities

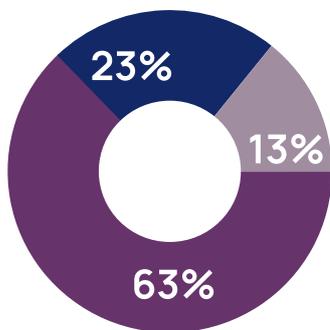
Do women use their own names online?

Women's online use of name

48%
Own name

52%
Alternate name

Do women use their own pictures on social media?



 No Picture

 Alternate Picture

 Own Picture

Why do most women avoid using their own pictures on social media?



Fear of misuse

12%



No Permission

18%



Personal Privacy Preference

70%

Insights from the survey

03

Women reported passive engagement and limited visibility on social media, and just about one in ten women used their own picture.

n: women = 171
subset of women who use social media

n: women = 171
subset of women who use social media

n: women = 149
subset of women who do not use their own picture on social media

Digital Harassment: Awareness, Experience and Reporting

Have women faced digital harassment?

13%

women said they have been harassed on their phones

3%

said they weren't harassed themselves but knew someone who was harassed digitally

What type of digital harassment do women face?

98%

Unsolicited Calls, Messages, and Pictures

5%

Non-Consensual Forwarding (Messages and Pictures)

3%

Blackmail

Does fear of harassment affect phone usage among men and women?



14%
Women



21%
Men

Insights from the survey

04

Approximately 1 in 6 women (16%) reported having been harassed online, or knew someone who was.

n: women= 349
subset of women who have access to mobile phones

05

Unsolicited calls, messages, and pictures were reported as the most widespread forms of digital harassment.

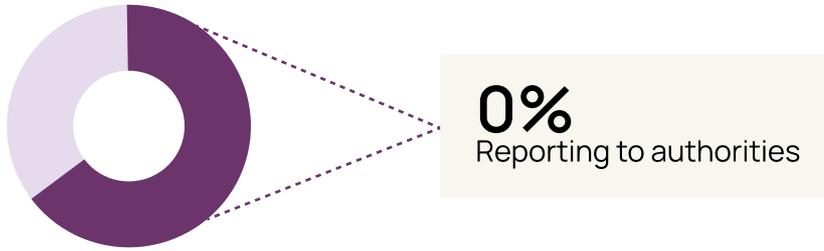
n: women= 45
subset of those women who have faced digital harassment

06

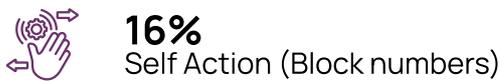
Men were significantly more cautious about harassment when using their phones. Women were more susceptible to spamming, online fraud, and other types of digital crime.*

n: women= 349, men= 149
subset of those men and women who have access to mobile phones

Are women aware that harassment is a crime, and do they report it to authorities?



Why don't women report harassment?



Insights from the survey

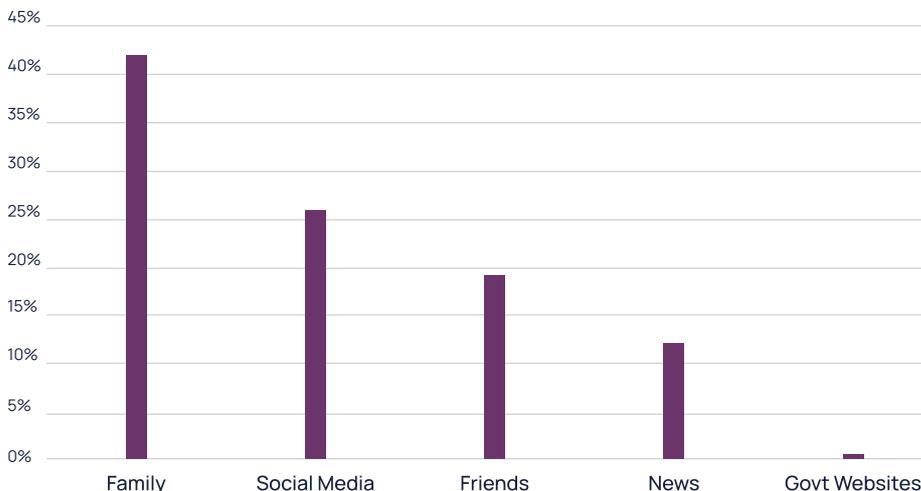
07

Lack of information and complexity of reporting prevented women from reporting online harassment.

n: women= 45
subset of women who were harassed

n: women= 45
subset of women who don't report harassment

What sources informed women that harassment is a crime?



08

Information about the seriousness of online harassment was mostly sourced through informal channels.

n: women= 231
subset of women who are aware harassment is a crime

Summary insights

How are urban women using digital platforms?



Connected women use internet for work less than men

Work and digital payments show the highest difference in usage among men and women - women reported significantly lower usage than men. For most other use-cases e.g. transport, information seeking and education, women's digital engagement was nearly at par with men.



Missing pathways for leveraging digital access and use for economic engagement

Usage trends highlighted high use of social media and entertainment, significantly more than skilling, work, or information seeking.

How present and visible are urban women online?



Awareness gaps and informal information channels leave women exposed

Limited awareness and dependence on informal information channels increased women's exposure to risks associated with digital presence.



Improved digital safety is needed to unlock safer engagement

Men were found to be more attuned to digital harassment, employing caution in online interactions. Lack of awareness by women made them more susceptible to online fraud and harassment.

Coming Up

04

Small-Town Women at Work: Lived Realities Behind the Economic Statistics

