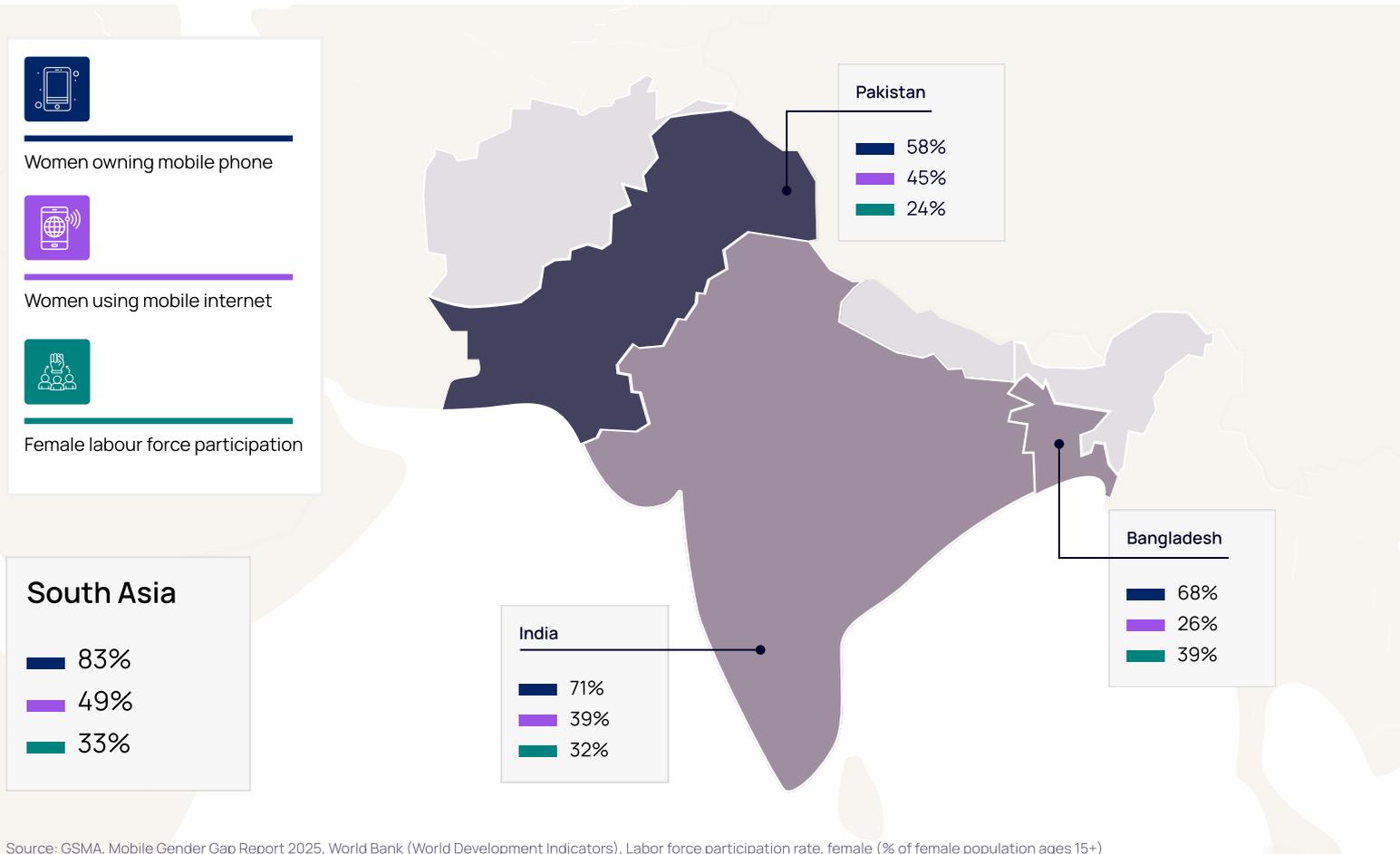# From Access to Agency:

How do Women Navigate Technology and Work in Pakistan?

01 Series Introduction

Mobile internet usage by Pakistani women is amongst the highest in the region, yet female labour force participation continues to dwindle. "**From Access to Agency**" unpacks women's patterns of mobile usage and the lived realities of workforce participation.

Women owning mobile phone

Women using mobile internet

Female labour force participation

Pakistan
- 58%
- 45%
- 24%

Bangladesh
- 68%
- 26%
- 39%

India
- 71%
- 39%
- 32%

South Asia
- 83%
- 49%
- 33%

Source: GSMA, Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025, World Bank (World Development Indicators), Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)

What does this series present?

Technology insights from survey evidence, to map gendered patterns in mobile access, ownership, digital use-cases, online interactions, identity management, and safety.

Workforce participation insights from qualitative data, illustrating women's resilience and motivation to enter work in small-towns where social influence and mobility shape their pathways.

Profile of respondents

Sample: Technology Insights

600+
Survey
Respondents

415
Women

187
Men

110 neighbourhoods
in **Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore**

18-65 years
Respondents age

37 years
Average age

75%
Men's employment rate

6.5%
Women's employment rate

PKR 81,000
Median Household Income

Sample: Workforce Participation Insights

50
hours of phone
interviews

24 qualitative interviews
First-generation professional
women identified through
snowball sampling. These are
women whose mothers had not
worked outside the home.

Interviews of women who lived in cities and
towns across **Balochistan, Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab: Bahawalpur,
Gwadar, Loralai, Turbat, Karak, Kohat,
Timergarah, Ladda, Peshawar, Quetta, Lahore
and Rawalpindi.**

5
Married

19
Single or divorced

21%

79%

3 women
with
disability

5 women
from minority
faiths

Limitations

- The research studies were designed to generate exploratory and illustrative identification of key themes.

- The sampling for the studies was not statistically representative; findings point to areas for scaled-up research with representative sampling to generate definitive results.

- Categories less than 2% have been omitted for clarity.

Questions explored in this series:

02   Access, Ownership and Usage of Mobile Technology for Women in Pakistan

- What are current patterns of women's mobile access and ownership?
- How do mobile usage patterns differ across women and men?

03   Cell Phone Usage: How Do Women Navigate Digital Spaces and Manage Harassment?

- To what extent are online spaces being used by women to work and earn?
- Is there a need to bolster the ecosystem for women to participate actively and safely in digital spaces?

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

- What motivates women to enter the workforce, and stay there?
- How do women become resilient in work environments not designed for them?