

Voices of 500 Women

What Women's Experiences Reveal About
the Future of Digital Education in West Africa



Over the past few months, DODO's research team engaged 500 women across 8 West African countries: Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. What we found was both interesting and revealing. Findings pointed women's digital adoption decisions, patterns and behaviours, and shed light on the drivers of the same.

We have compiled some of these findings and insights to share with you here, even providing recommendations to inform your thought processes, strategic decisions and ultimately your business growth.

Insights emerged across the healthtech, e-commerce, edtech and fintech industries that highlight market opportunities, and innovation pathways that will inform business strategy and investment decisions across these sectors.

Edtech in West Africa sits at the intersection of opportunity and constraint. A rapidly growing youth population and widespread mobile adoption make digital education a natural pathway for expanding access to learning.

Yet high costs, unreliable infrastructure, and uneven digital literacy continue to shape how, when, and where learners can engage with technology.

For leaders in the sector, the opportunity exists to create platforms that are both inclusive and sustainable, balancing affordability with business viability, and innovation with the realities of the women who are intended to use them.

To successfully do this, a deeper look into what these women are saying and more importantly are experiencing is essential.

PATHWAYS TO LIVELIHOOD

40

% of respondents in Ghana, use their devices for education or job search

Though the sample size in Liberia was smaller, similar trends occurred, highlighting that women increasingly rely on digital platforms not just for communication, but to access learning opportunities that improve their employability and quality of life.

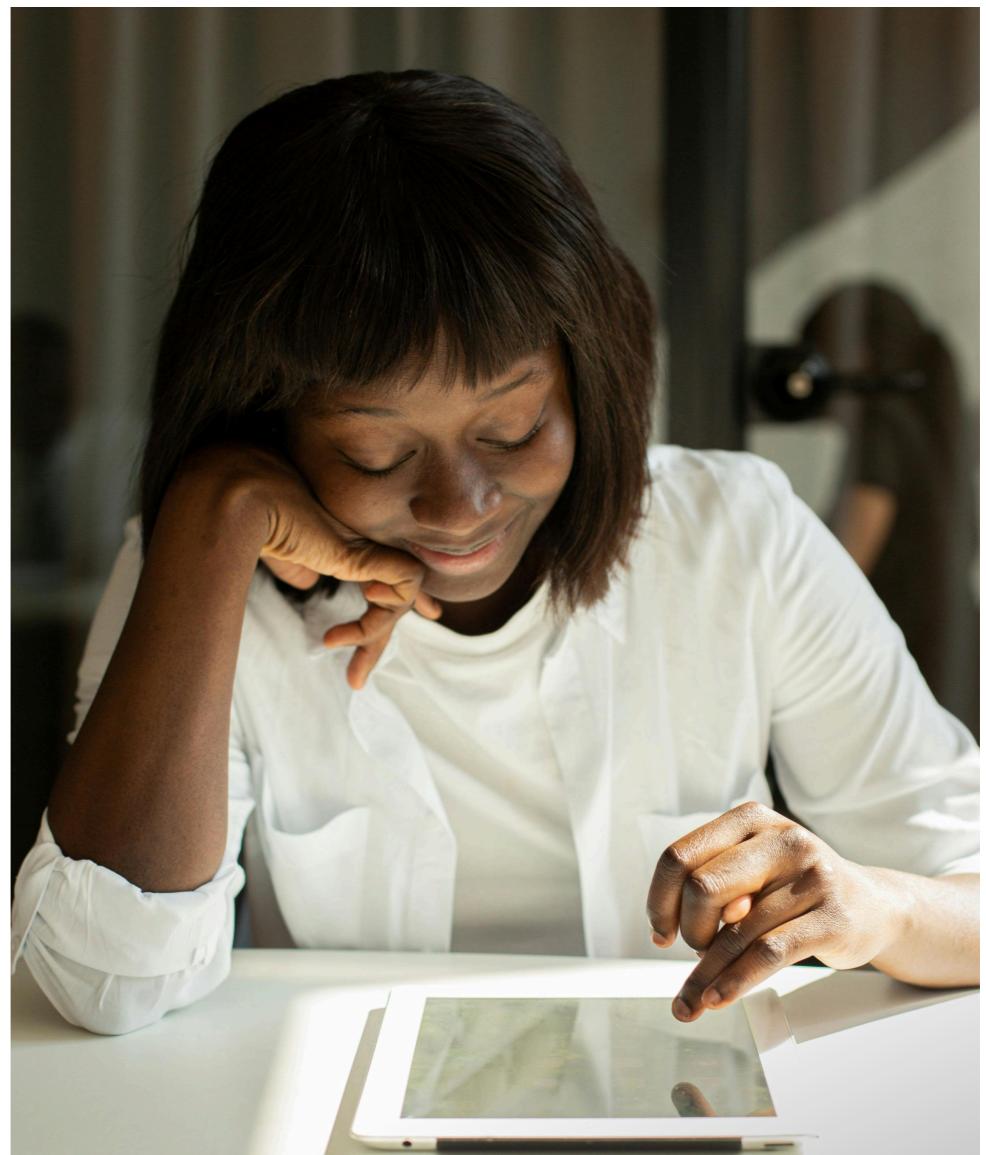
Source: DODO's survey of women in West Africa

Sample size: n=33 (Ghana).

Base: Women in West Africa aged 18+, who reside primarily in urban areas and have access to mobile phones. Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who selected "learning something new and job search" as top 3 things they use digital platforms for.

Mobile devices are becoming the primary gateways for professional development, education, and skill development, especially for women who might have resource limitations¹, underscoring the need for mobile-optimized, low-data, and accessible learning solutions that are essential to ensure equitable participation in the digital economy. This serves as a transformative potential of digital access for individuals across Sub-Saharan Africa.

This shift signals that digital adoption among women is also being driven by tangible value like knowledge, skills, and access to work. With digital tools are significantly becoming a part of how women grow their skills and explore new income opportunities, when digital platforms offer meaningful learning and skill-building opportunities, women are more likely to engage consistently.



¹World Bank Group. (2025). Digital Economy for Africa (DE4A) Report

**How might we design EdTech platforms that fit
seamlessly into women's existing digital habits,
transforming everyday phone use into pathways
for learning, gaining confidence, and creating
opportunities?**

A young woman with dark skin and braided hair is sitting on the ground in a park-like setting with fallen leaves. She is wearing a mustard-yellow sweater and white headphones. She is looking down at an open book she is holding in her lap. A person's arm and hand are visible on the right side of the frame, pointing towards the book.

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LEARNING
WITHOUT LIMITS

70

% of respondents in Benin, reported that while many women have smartphones, high data costs and device limitations still restrict consistent use.

64% in Nigeria , and 100% of respondents in Senegal had similar concerns.

This means that, because data is expensive, women who cannot sustain regular internet use because of this barrier would have limited access to digital learning platforms or continuous study.

Source: DODO's survey of women in West Africa

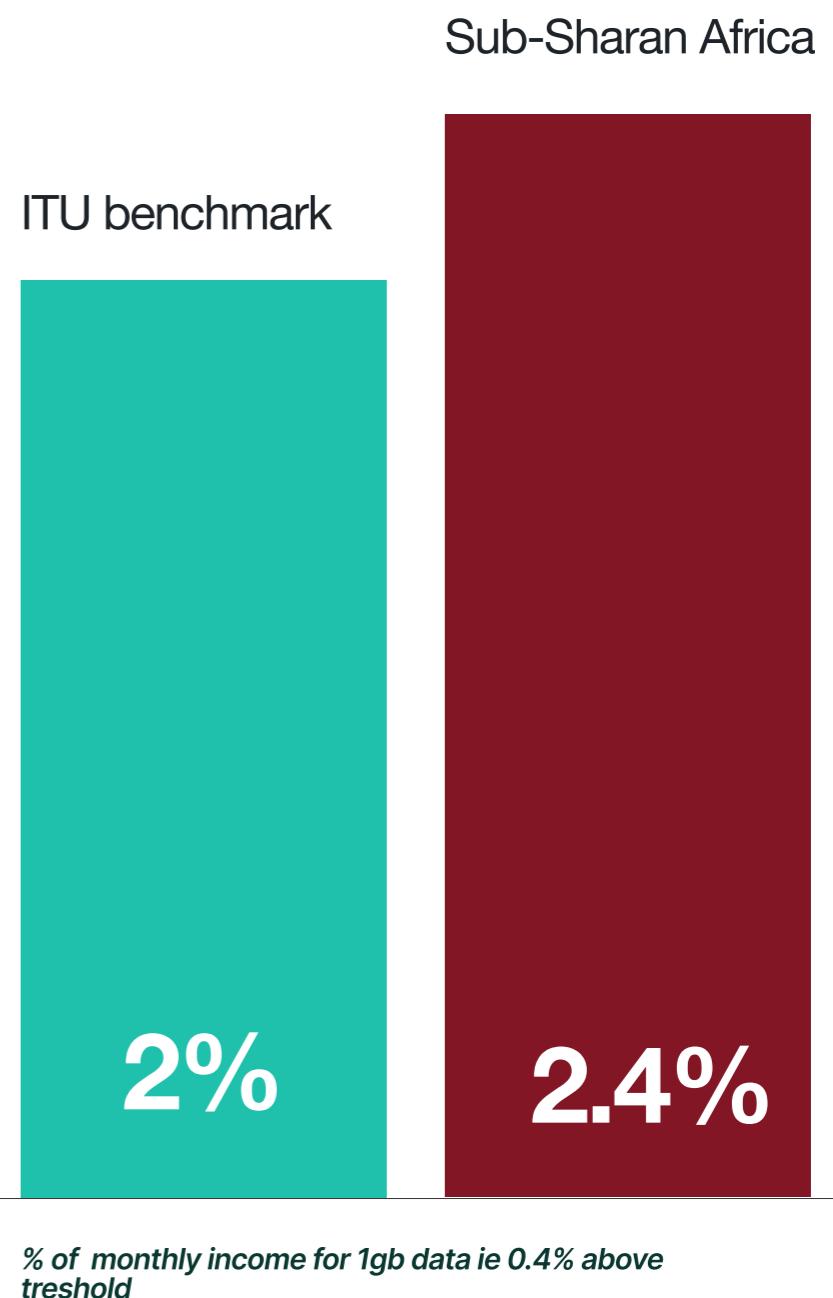
Sample sizes: n=33 (Ghana) and n=295 (Nigeria).

Base: Women in West Africa aged 18+, who mostly reside in urban areas and have access to mobile phones. Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who selected “high data cost” as the top 3 top three (3) things that matter most to them when choosing an app or website?

A report by world Bank shows that in Sub-Saharan Africa, users pay on average 2.4% of monthly income for 1 GB of mobile data, above the affordability benchmark of 2% set by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)¹.

Spending lower may require buying smaller data bundles or using less data-intensive services, which may exclude them from rich digital educational experiences.

Together, these reinforce data cost as a structural challenge in West Africa, especially for women and in contexts of digital learning.



¹ITU ICT Price Basket Statistics Manual, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), January 2025.

1

How might we design EdTech platforms that require minimal data use so that the solutions we bring to market are used by a larger customer base?

2

How might we partner with mobile network operators or donors to subsidize or zero-rate data for learning content targeted at women?

3

Can we monitor and segment women-learner audience by data-budget profile to tailor content accordingly (e.g., “data-light learners” vs “standard data users”)?

ALWAYS
WITHIN REACH

A large, stylized white number '26' is centered on a dark red background. The number has a thick, rounded font style and is partially outlined in white, creating a three-dimensional effect.

26% of respondents still rely on basic phones (feature/basic, not full smartphones).

18% in Benin, despite smartphone usage prevailing in other regions surveyed with about 82-100% in each region

Highlighting the exclusion gap that still exists in accessing digital platforms for learning. This means a smartphone-only strategy risks excluding a non-negligible share of the target.

Source: DODO's survey of women in West Africa

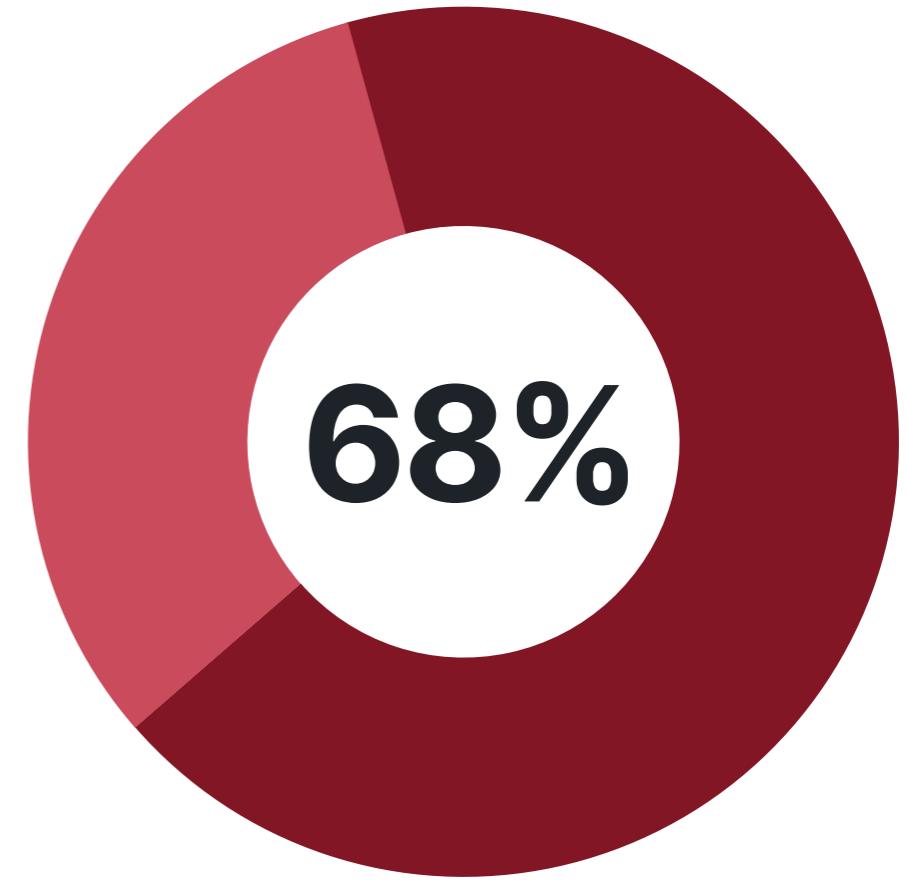
Sample size: n=50 (Benin) and n=295 (Nigeria)

Base: Women in West Africa aged 18+, who mostly reside in urban areas and have access to mobile phones. Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who selected "basic phones/non-smartphones", as a device they use or have access to.

Device ownership (smartphone or internet-capable device) still stands as a barrier to accessing internet-based services and opportunities, with reports showing no fewer than 68% of Nigerian women do not own a smartphone, restricting their ability to access internet-based services¹.

Women who struggle to pay for smartphones are frequently also the ones who are looking for ways to improve their skills and manage informal businesses. They are also students that edtech ought to be aiming for, but platforms that take smartphone ownership for granted are the first to ignore them.

¹



- *Nigerian women population without access to smartphones.*
- *Nigerian women population who own a smartphone*

¹68% of Nigerian women do not own a smartphone, The Guardian Nigeria, The Guardian Nigeria, May 2025

1

Could Edtech providers explore more inclusive measures for basic phone users such as USSD, SMS, lightweight web, offline, or shared devices?

2

How might we reimagine an education system where learning is natively built into the everyday tools people already use, accessible anytime, anywhere, without needing apps, data, or even continuous connectivity?

LOOKING FOR DEEPER INSIGHTS?

We welcome the opportunity to partner with your strategy and product team to uncover the needs of new markets, validate existing assumptions or refine opportunity areas for your current customers.

Data reflects survey responses with unequal sample sizes by country. Results from Nigeria, Bénin, and Ghana represent more robust samples, while findings from Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire should be viewed as exploratory signals.

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