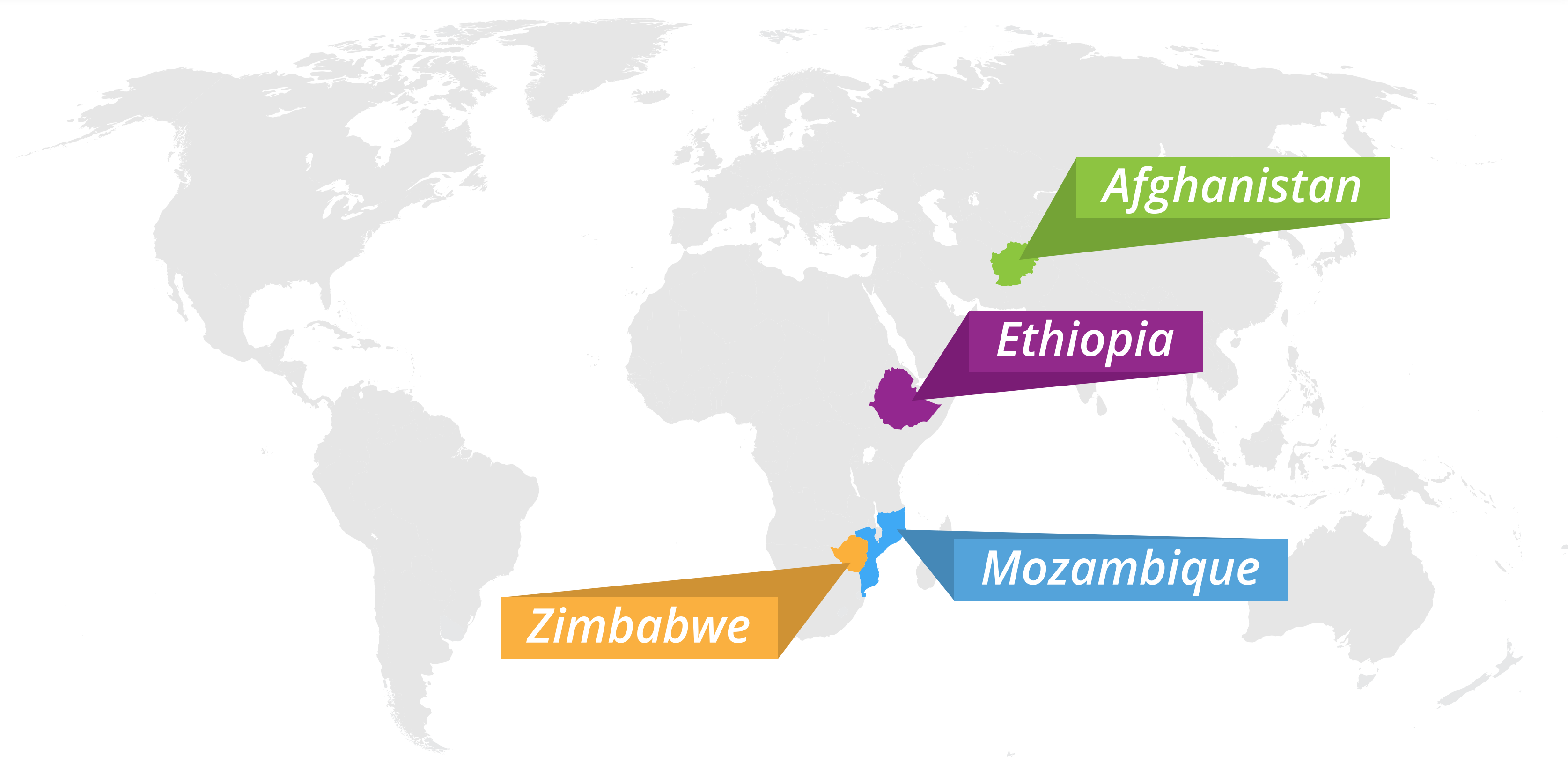
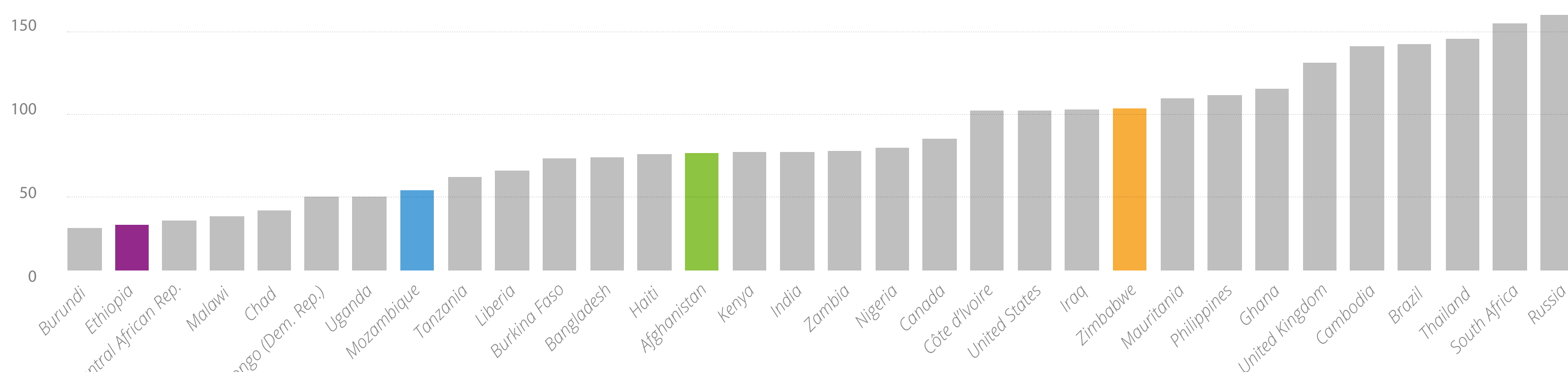


Do Mobile Phone Surveys Work in Poor Countries?



Mobile Penetration Rates Across the World

While mobile phone penetration has skyrocketed across the developing world, many development agencies have recognized an operational need for rapid, accurate, flexible, and cost-efficient tools for gathering information and engaging intended beneficiaries. This research piloted the feasibility of mobile phone surveys to gather nationally representative samples. For the pilot, we chose four countries with a spectrum of mobile penetration rates.

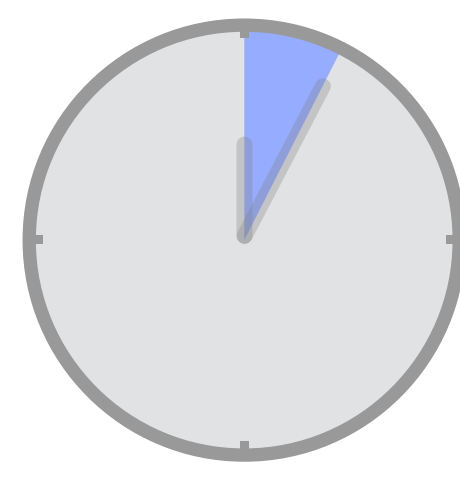


Mobile Phone vs. Household Surveys

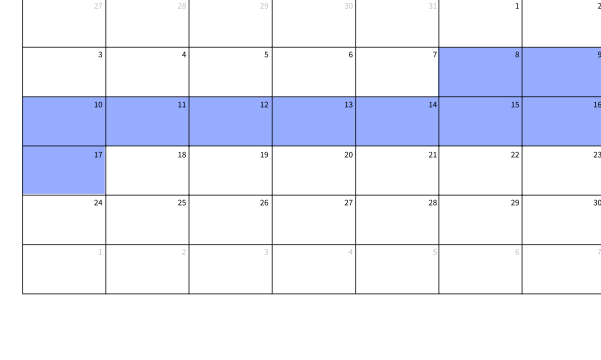
Mobile phone surveys are different from traditional household surveys in several ways and shouldn't be viewed as substitutes. For example, mobile phone surveys are less comprehensive but a more focused, cheaper, and faster tool to engage intended beneficiaries.

Mobile Phone Surveys

10-30 thousand USD per country

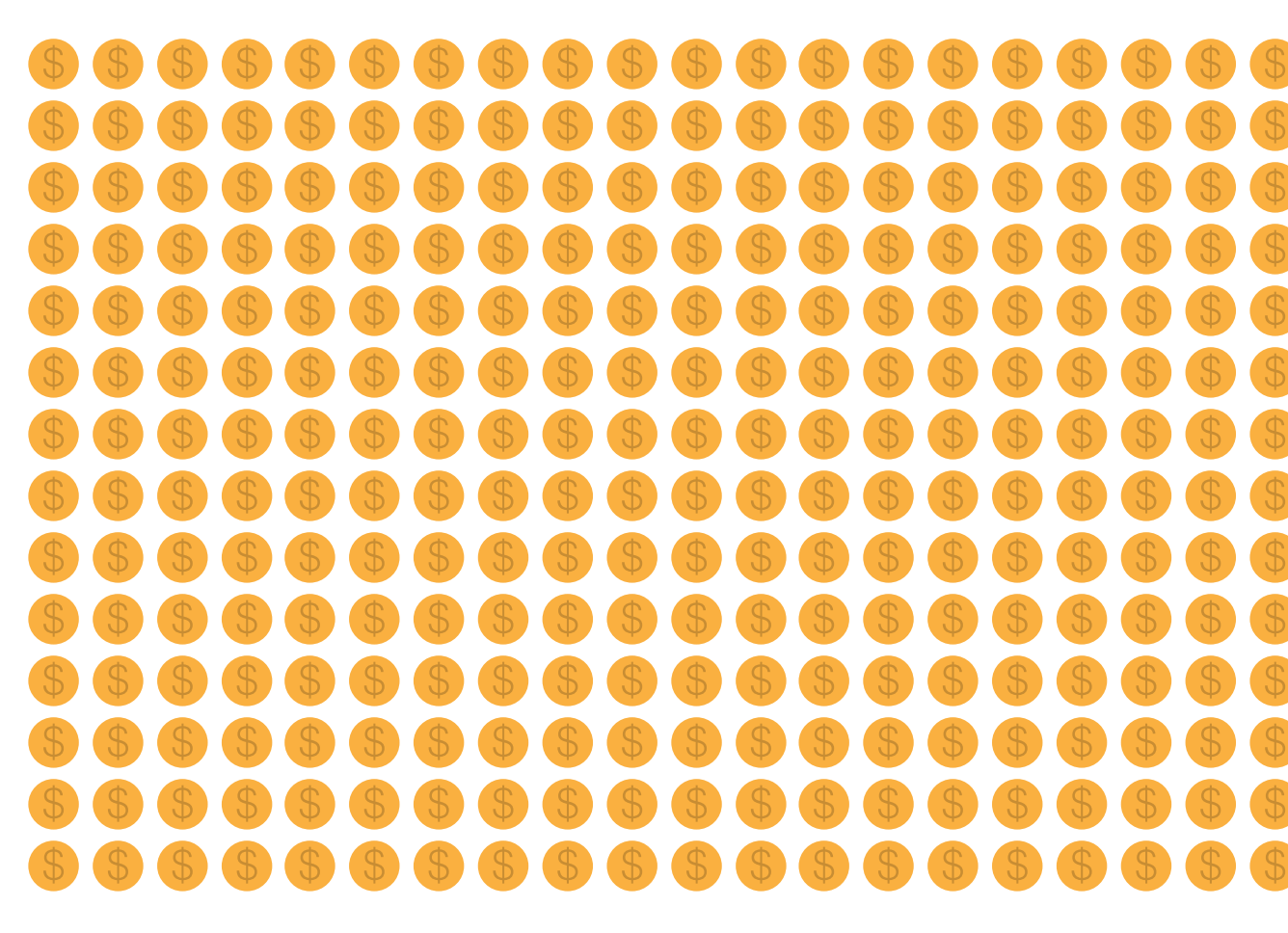


5 minutes

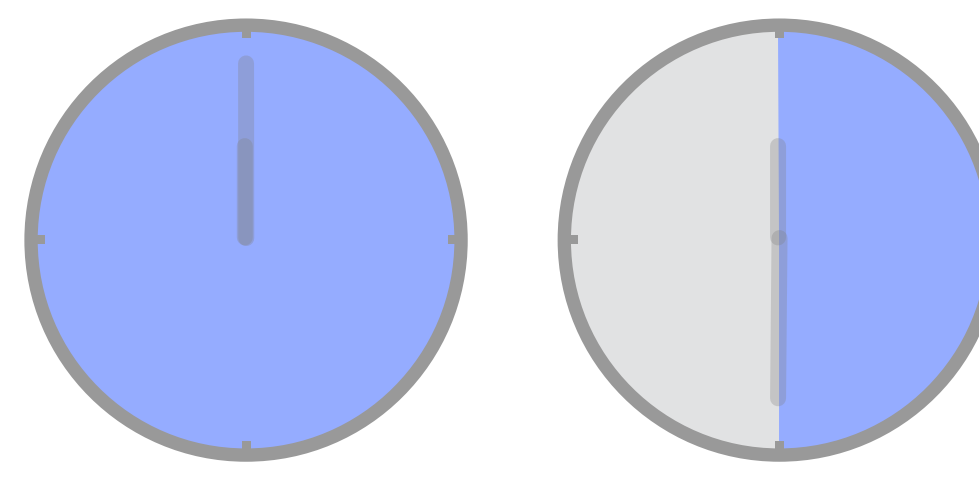


3-10 days for data collection

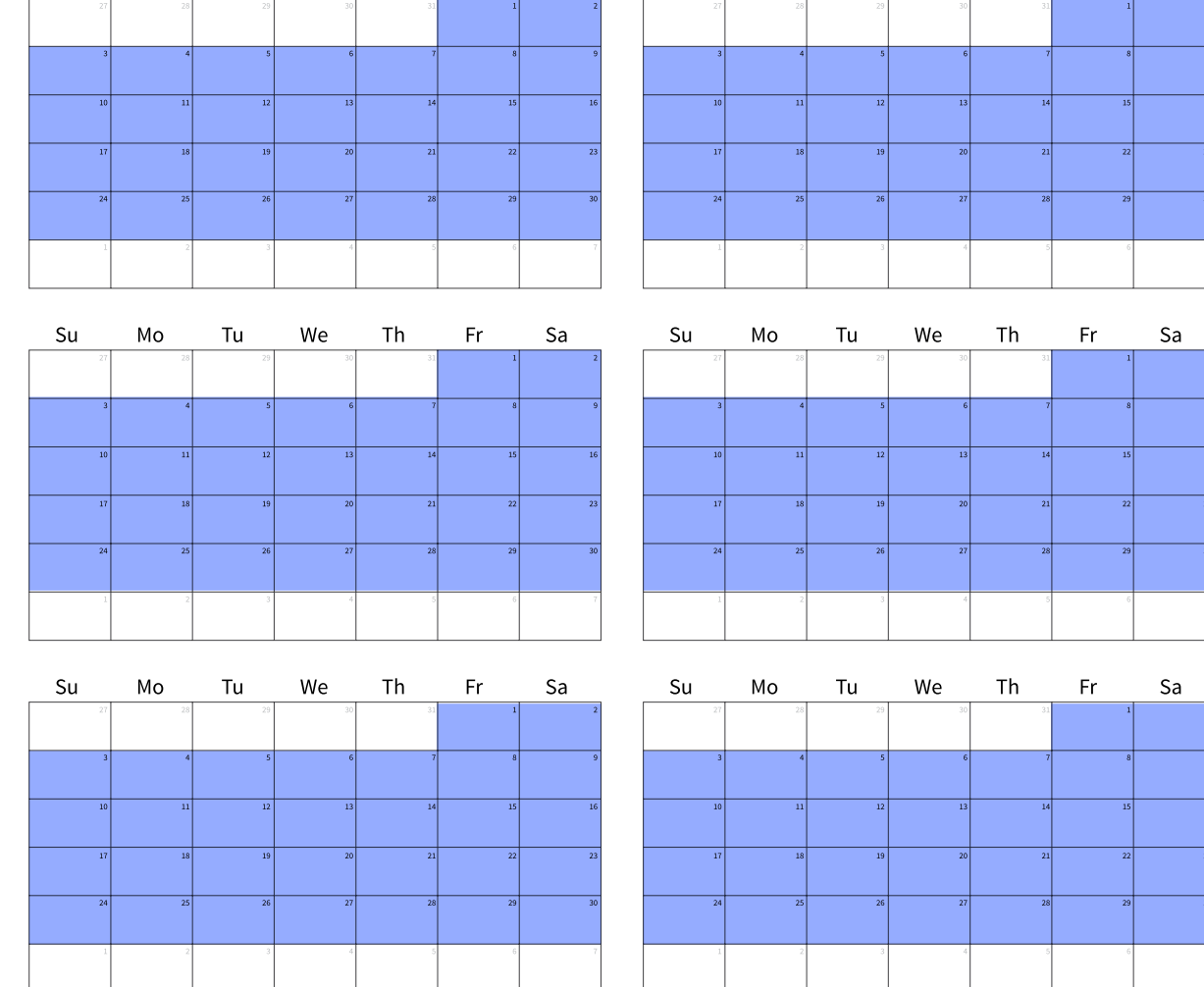
Household Surveys



2-4 million USD per country



60-90 minutes

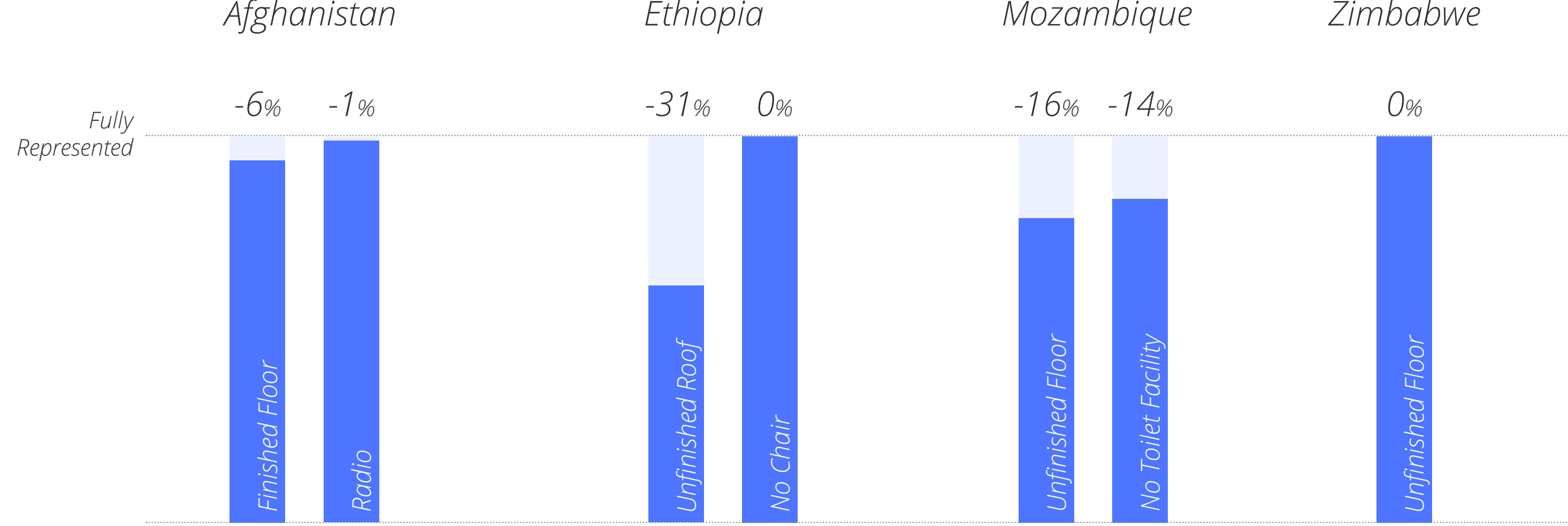


4-6 months for data collection

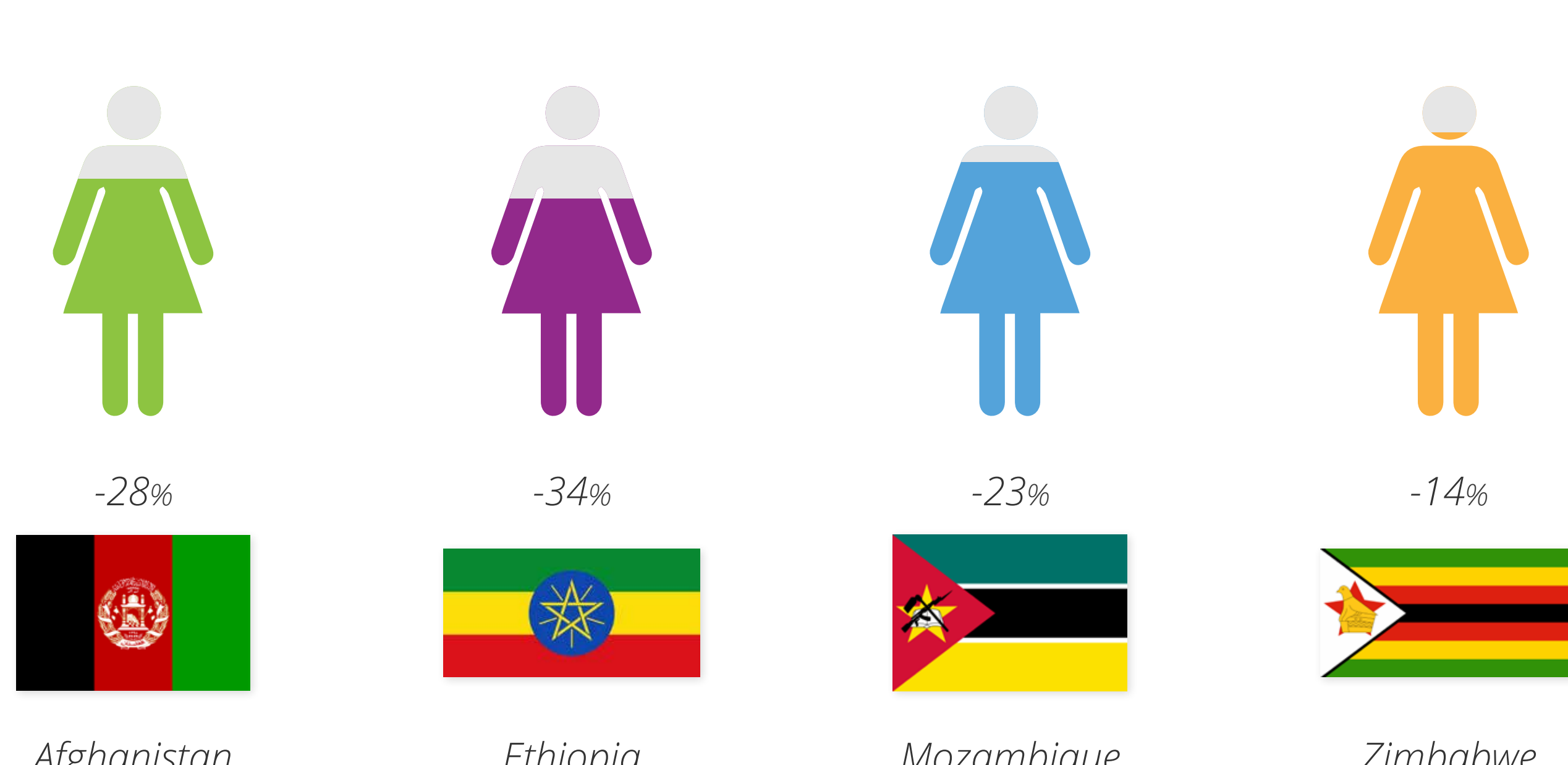
Are Mobile Phone Surveys Nationally Representative?

Although many question whether mobile phone surveys are truly reliable tools and can accurately reflect the broader population, in these four pilot countries, mobile surveys were broadly able to reach the poor (measured by ownership of key, baseline assets). However, across countries, rural female respondents were underrepresented in the surveys.

Engaging the poor



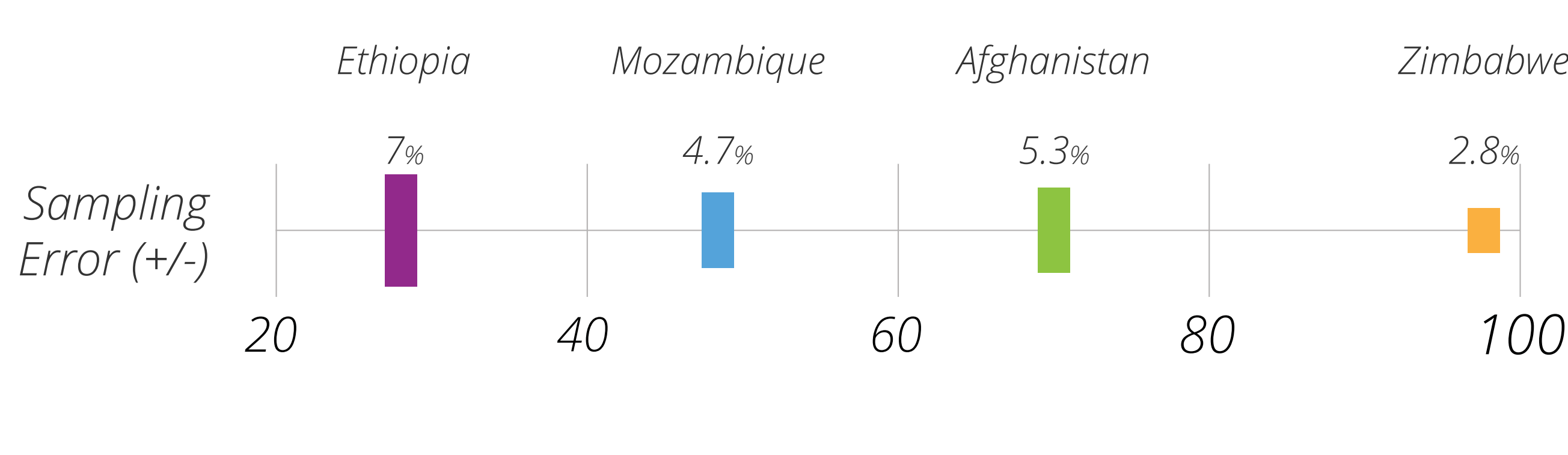
Trouble reaching rural women



Labels represent the percentage point difference between the proportion of the demographic in the sample and the population. Greater differences indicate that the sample only weakly reflects the underlying population.

Mobile penetration rates and imprecision

After normal weighting methods, sample accuracy was a challenge in Ethiopia and Mozambique (countries with lower mobile penetration rates), with a sampling error of +/- 5 to 7%. While these figures are relatively high, the data collected was still meaningful for a range of purposes. On the other hand, the sample was much more precise in Zimbabwe (+/- 2.8%).



[Read the full research here](#)

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