

# VISUALIZE GENDER EQUALITY



*Visualize Gender Equality - Viz5 - is an effort to help realize UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.*

## THEME 9 - THE DIGITAL GENDER GAP

The internet is the gateway to a vast volume of information, and a huge range of services and transformational opportunities. This year, more than any other, the urgency of building an online, and virtually connected world, has become a global imperative. COVID-19 has intensified the digital gender gap and magnified existing disparities. Offline communities could previously access myriad services, opportunities, tools, and educational resources in-person, but since the pandemic, many of these have moved almost exclusively online, massively limiting the potential of whole families, communities, and even countries.

Just think about the number of times you engage with resources, communications tools, services, and systems that are powered by the internet, each and every day. On the surface, it appears that internet is a ubiquitous and openly accessible tool, that has spread and established itself globally. But this is not the case.

In 2020, nearly half of the world remains offline, with no access to the internet. The majority of this offline population are women in Low- and Middle- Income Countries (LMICs). This month, Viz5 wanted to highlight the digital gender gap, and help raise awareness of both the progress that still needs to be made, and the deep disparities that exist in access to digital and communications technology, globally.

## ABOUT THE THEME

This month's Viz5 data comes from the Inclusive Internet Index, a project of the Economist Intelligence Unit. The data reveals the stark inequities in internet access globally, showing that: "men remain 21% more likely to be online than women, rising to 52% in the world's least developed countries (LDCs)."<sup>1</sup>

If we don't mobilize action to close this digital gender gap, women and girls will be disconnected from the myriad social, financial, and educational opportunities offered by the internet, and they'll be cut off from communications tools and technologies that could enable them to positively transform their lives.

*"To be offline today means to miss out on learning and earning, accessing valuable services, and participating in the democratic public debate. The digital divide between people who have internet access and those who do not could be deepening existing gender inequalities, pushing women further to the margins of society." - World Wide Web Foundation <sup>2</sup>*

Promoting the empowerment of women through technology forms Target 5.b in the the global work to achieve SDG 5 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Target 5.b seeks to: "enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women."<sup>3</sup> The target covers both equitable access to the internet, and also access to mobile phones and communications technology.

Mobile phones, and devices with internet connectivity using mobile data, have revolutionized internet access globally, but especially for those in lower-income groups. These devices are helping to break down barriers to internet access in low income countries, though significantly more needs to be done to make tariffs affordable and accessible to all people in these countries. These devices have been shown to be of particular benefit for women living in LMICs, especially because access to a mobile device with a data plan is the principal enabler for individuals to control and manage their own finances and assets.

The Inclusive Internet Index shows that out of those with access to a mobile phone, "56% of female respondents use a mobile phone to perform financial tasks, compared with 48% of men."<sup>4</sup> This 8% positive differential shows that these devices are powerful forces for gender equity, economic inclusion, and financial freedom and control.

Despite this trend, data shows that progress in actually getting women access to mobile phones and devices, is moving in the wrong direction. In low income countries, the gender gap in mobile phone access widened by 3% last year, and progress is frustratingly slow.

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<sup>1</sup> The gender gap in internet access: using a women-centred method, Web Foundation · March 10, 2020, by Carlos Iglesias, Senior Research Manager.

<sup>2</sup> The gender gap in internet access: using a women-centred method, Web Foundation · March 10, 2020, by Carlos Iglesias, Senior Research Manager.

<sup>3</sup> <https://sdg-tracker.org/gender-equality>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/assets/external/downloads/3i-executive-summary.pdf>, p. 8

*"The gender gap in mobile internet use in low- and middle-income countries remains substantial, with over 300 million fewer women than men accessing the internet on a mobile... Women across low- and middle-income countries are eight per cent less likely than men to own a mobile phone, which translates into 165 million fewer women than men owning a mobile."*<sup>5</sup>

So much more needs to be done to address gender inequality in both access to the Internet and mobile communications technologies. In this deeply connected online world - where so much of the economy is powered exclusively by online businesses and services, and education and social networks and services are powered by the internet - being offline means being disconnected. Disconnected from economic and vocational opportunity, social and educational advancement, cultural and political movements, health systems, and so much more.

*"The internet has been transformative for women around the world; providing a platform to cut through male-dominated debate; allowing girls to learn about their periods when it's taboo at home; and helping power movements for action"*<sup>6</sup>

Help Viz5 raise awareness of the digital gender gap, and spur action towards establishing universal internet access, by participating this month!

If you want to find out more about the great advocacy work being done to achieve universal internet access, check out the work of [The World Wide Web Foundation](#). Founded in 2009 by the inventor of the web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, and Rosemary Leith, the foundation seeks to "advance the open web as a public good and basic right".<sup>7</sup>

## ABOUT THE DATA

This month's data comes from the [Inclusive Internet Index](#), a project of the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#).

The data we've selected is a subset of the 2020 Inclusive Internet Index. This data explores the gender gap in digital access, using both calculations of the gender gap ratio in internet access and mobile phone access. Positive values in the data indicate that male access exceeds female access, while negative values indicate that female access is greater.

In addition, the data explores the percentage of households with internet access at home, defined as access via a computer, but also can include mobile phones, digital TVs, etc.

To find out more about the data, its methodology, and calculations, check out the accompanying data dictionary!

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GSMA-The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2020.pdf>, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> [Why expanding internet access is critical to achieving the global goals](#), Web Foundation · September 25, 2020, by Adrian Lovett.

<sup>7</sup> <https://webfoundation.org/about/>

## ABOUT VIZ

The ultimate goal of Viz5 is to create a space where data advocacy and insights meet impact. This work seeks to ignite a data advocacy effort with the power to not only raise awareness of extreme gender inequality, but also catalyze global action to end it.

Viz5 is led by Operation Fistula, with #MakeoverMonday and Tableau Foundation operating as critical partners.

OPERATION  
**FISTULA**

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F O U N D A T I O N



Viz5 will mobilize the power of the #MakeoverMonday and Tableau communities, to visualize 12 data sets, over 12 months. These data sets will feature 12 themes, curated to present different areas of gender inequality. Collectively, these data sets and visualizations will begin to tell the story of where and how gender inequality is at its most extreme.

The visualizations that are produced during Viz5 will serve as advocacy tools, awareness-raising artifacts, and data-driven insight drivers for anyone working to end gender inequality.

Join us as we work to visualize a more equal world! Sign up to our community at [www.viz5.org](http://www.viz5.org).