

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

[Indicator 5.b.1: Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex](#)

Institutional information

Organization(s):

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Concepts and definitions

Definition:

The proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex is defined as the 'proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex'.

Rationale:

Mobile phone networks have spread rapidly over the last decade and the number of mobile-cellular subscriptions is quasi equal to the number of the people living on earth. However, not every person uses, or owns a mobile-cellular telephone. Mobile phone ownership, in particular, is important to track gender equality since the mobile phone is a personal device that, if owned and not just shared, provides women with a degree of independence and autonomy, including for professional purposes. A number of studies have highlighted the link between mobile phone ownership and empowerment, and productivity growth.

Existing data on the proportion of women owning a mobile phone suggest that less women than men own a mobile phone. This indicator highlights the importance of mobile phone ownership to track and to improve gender equality, and monitoring will help design targeted policies to overcome the gender divide. The collection of this indicator was proposed by the Task Group on Gender of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development.

Concepts:

An individual owns a mobile cellular phone if he/she has a mobile cellular phone device with at least one active SIM card for personal use. Mobile cellular phones supplied by employers that can be used for personal reasons (to make personal calls, access the Internet, etc.) are included. Individuals who have only active SIM card(s) and not a mobile phone device are excluded. Individuals who have a mobile phone for personal use that is not registered under his/her name are also included. An active SIM card is a SIM card that has been used in the last three months.

A mobile (cellular) telephone refers to a portable telephone subscribing to a public mobile telephone service using cellular technology, which provides access to the PSTN. This includes analogue and digital

cellular systems and technologies such as IMT-2000 (3G) and IMT-Advanced. Users of both postpaid subscriptions and prepaid accounts are included.

Comments and limitations:

While the data on the ‘proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone’ currently only exist for very few countries, ITU is encouraging all countries to collect data on this indicator through national household surveys and the indicator is expected to be added to the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development’s Core List of Indicators. The number of countries with official data for this indicator is expected to increase in the near future.

Methodology

Computation Method:

Countries can collect data on this indicator through national household surveys. This indicator is calculated by dividing the total number of in-scope individuals who own a mobile phone by the total number of in-scope individuals.

Disaggregation:

For countries that collect this indicator through a national household survey, and if data allow breakdown and disaggregation, the indicator can be broken down not only by sex but also by region (geographic and/or urban/rural), by age group, by educational level, by labour force status, and by occupation.

Treatment of missing values:

- [At country level](#)

Missing values are not estimated.

- [At regional and global levels](#)

Missing values are not estimated.

Regional aggregates:

ITU has not produced any global estimates but is working on a methodology to produce global estimates for this indicator. This methodology is expected to be published at the end of 2016.

Sources of discrepancies:

None. ITU uses the data provided by countries, including the in-scope population that is used to calculate the percentages.

Data Sources

Description:

This indicator is a newly developed ITU indicator that was approved by the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS) 2014. The indicator's definition and methodology were developed under the coordination of ITU, through its Expert Groups and following an extensive consultation process with countries. Data for the proportion of individuals owning a mobile phone were first collected in 2015, through an annual questionnaire that ITU sends to national statistical offices (NSO). In this questionnaire, through which ITU already collects a number of ICT indicators, ITU collects absolute values. The percentages are calculated a-posteriori. The survey methodology is verified to ensure that it meets adequate statistical standards. The data are verified to ensure consistency with previous years' data and other relevant country-level indicators (ICT and economic).

Data are usually not adjusted, but discrepancies in the definition, age scope of individuals, reference period or the break in comparability between years are noted in a data note. For this reason, data are not always strictly comparable.

Collection process:

ITU collects data on this indicator through an annual questionnaire that it sends to the heads of the national statistical offices (NSO). In this questionnaire, through which ITU already collects a number of ICT indicators, ITU collects absolute values. The percentages are calculated a-posteriori. The survey methodology is verified to ensure that it meets adequate statistical standards. The data are verified to ensure consistency with previous years' data and other relevant country-level indicators (ICT and economic).

Data Availability

2013 to 2015 (latest) data are available for 23 countries, including some OECD countries.

Calendar

Data collection:

Data are collected through the ITU long household questionnaire that is sent to all NSOs in Q3 each year. Data are released in December of each year.

Data release:

December 2016.

Data providers

National Statistical Offices (NSOs).

Data compilers

ITU

References

URL:

<http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/default.aspx>

References:

Since the definition and methodology of this indicator will only be collected as of 2015, the indicator is not yet included in the ITU Manual for Measuring ICT Access and Use by Households and Individuals 2014. It will be included in the next version of the Manual.

For a discussion on the importance of this indicators, see also the UNCTAD, Measuring ICT and gender: an assessment.

Related indicators as of February 2020

1.4, 2.c, 11.b, 12.8, 13.1, 16.10, 17.8