



DIGITAL COMMERCE: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE OPPORTUNITY

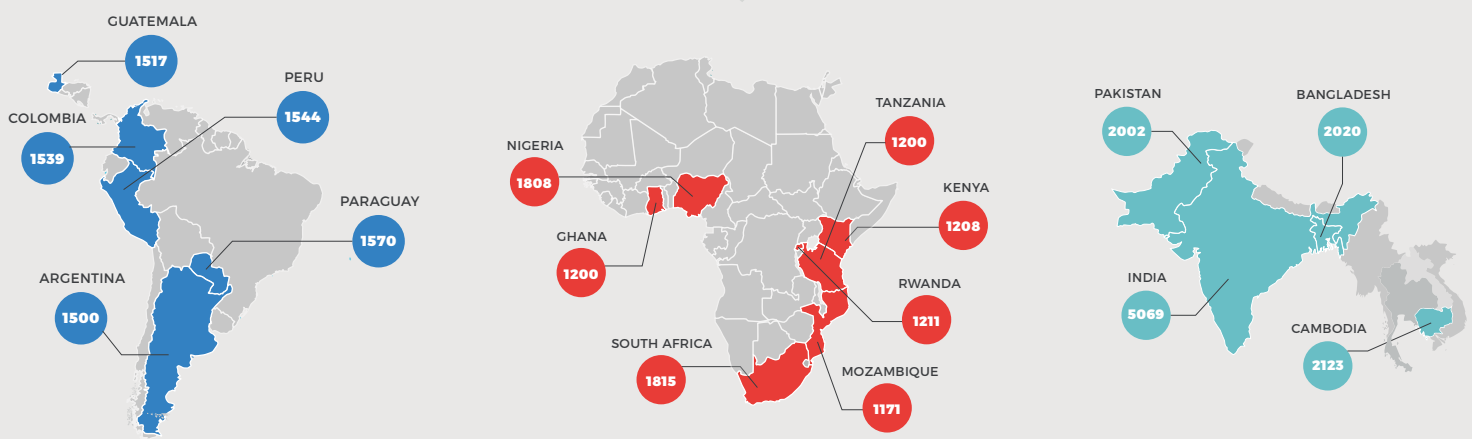
As more people gain connectivity and opportunities for digital work is increasing, debates are taking place on whether regulation of working conditions are warranted. Digital platforms are not just mediating job markets, but everything else - buying and selling of goods, taxi and transport services, accommodation. Here, AfterAccess looks into various forms of digital commerce including digital work, microwork and online freelancing

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

AfterAccess is a catalyst for positive change. A rigorous body of research that includes nationally-representative, demand-side data comparable across more than 16 developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Currently, it's the most comprehensive database on mobile phone and Internet use in the Global South.

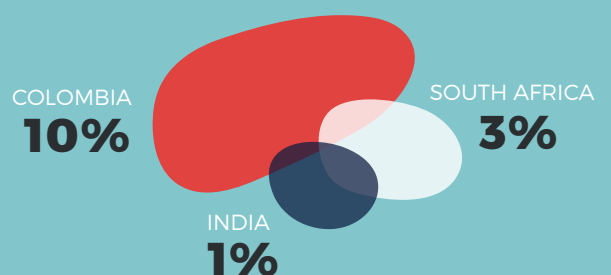
The information presented here stems from over 28,000 structured and in-depth interviews, providing a nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate the barriers to meaningful access and use. Part of the interviews explored microwork from a connectivity context. These granular analyses provide essential information to policymakers, development professionals and businesses.

The quantitative data derived from the AfterAccess surveys is complemented by quantitative and qualitative research conducted by LIRNEasia with nearly 400 respondents from India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

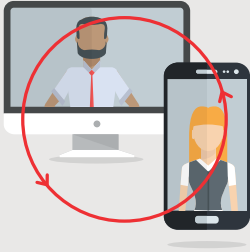


A SNAPSHOT OF ONLINE FREELANCING AND DIGITAL WORK IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Countries where a high % of internet users aged 15-65 use platforms to sell their labour online.



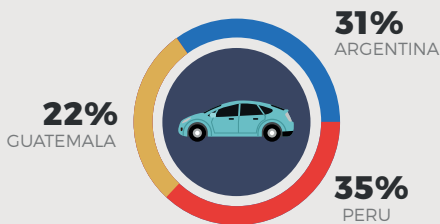
CHARACTERISTICS OF GIG WORK



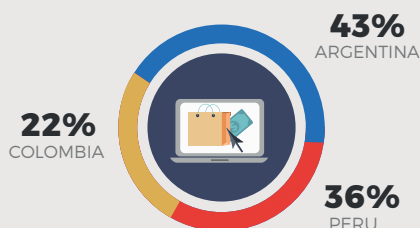
Gig work is characterised by work that takes a finite amount of time, and buyers and sellers usually simply engage on one job without the expectation of ongoing employment or employment contracts. At times, the employer could divide a large task into small ones, and have multiple workers complete each task, and assemble the completed work at the end. Buyers and sellers find each other online, on job platforms. Many platforms go beyond facilitating the meeting of buyer and seller - they provide work space for the worker to do the job, enable the work to be submitted to the buyer via the platform, and facilitate the transfer of funds from the buyer to the worker. Most will allow the buyers to rate the quality work of the seller, using various ranking systems. Sellers (worker) attempt to obtain higher ratings from their buyers, since this significantly improves their ability to get new work, and at times charge higher rates.

AFTERACCESS FOUND

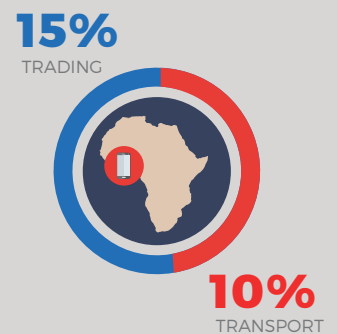
HIGHEST USE OF TRANSPORT APPS



HIGHEST USE OF E-COMMERCE APPS



GHANA IS AFRICA'S HIGHEST APP USER

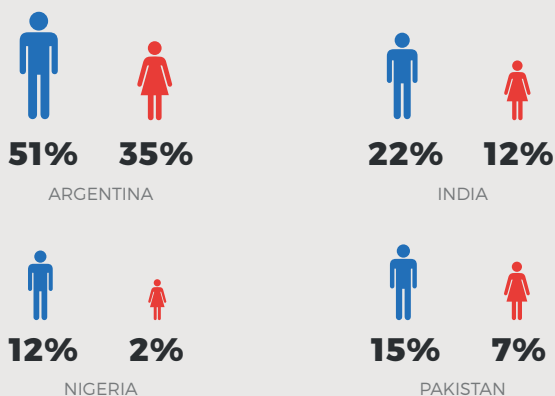


Adoption of online platforms is still low in the Global South. Colombia shows highest use at 13% while Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania show the lowest at 1%

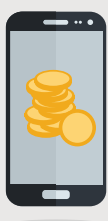
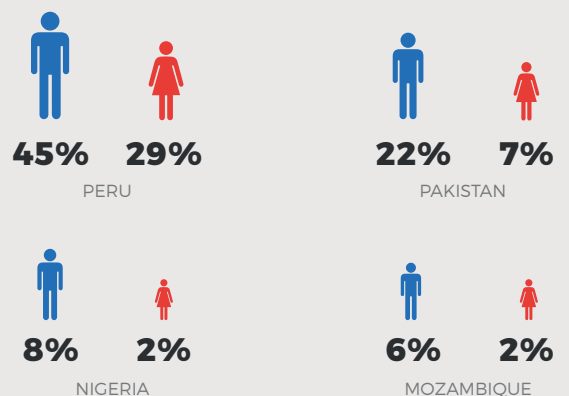
THE GENDER GAP IN TRANSPORT AND TRADING APP USAGE

On average, men consistently use transport and trading apps more than women

SOME OF THE BIGGEST GENDER GAPS IN TRADING APP USAGE:



SOME OF THE BIGGEST GENDER GAPS IN TRANSPORT APP USAGE:



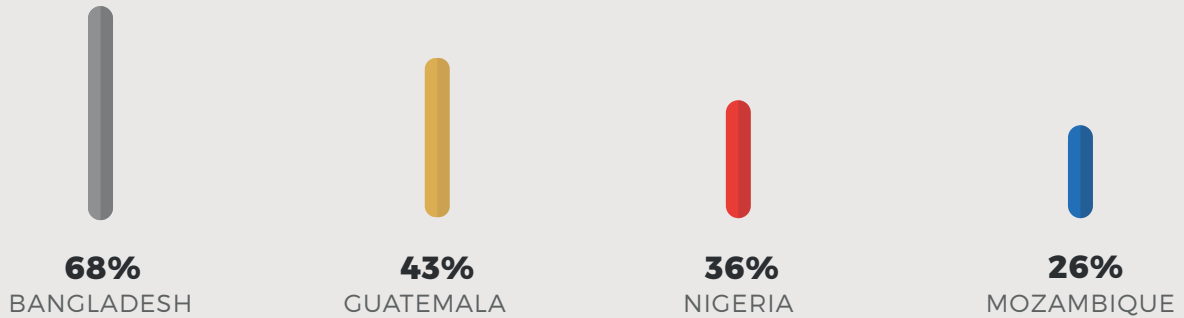
MOBILE MONEY USAGE:

High Usage in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Paraguay and Tanzania.

12% average gap in urban vs rural mobile money usage

GENDER GAP IN MOBILE MONEY USAGE:

On average, there's a **34% gender gap** in mobile money usage. Some of the biggest gender gaps:



DIGITAL WORK: DIVING INTO THE EMPLOYMENT VS. EXPLOITATION DEBATE

THE BAD

'Global race to the bottom' – competition forces workers to take on all the risk, with minimal rights and low pay.

It can exacerbate existing inequalities – for example, there is a huge gap between those with 5G connectivity and those with barely any connectivity at all

Bias in opportunities: workers are discriminated based on bias of country of origin and workers also discriminate against employers. Sri Lankan workers said did not like to work for other south Asian employers since they do not pay well and try to pay less than what was promised, preferring Australian, British or American buyers.

Power relations between employers and workers can be unbalanced.

Possibility of wage theft.

Lack of formal recognition of income and employment status, making it difficult to obtain formal financial services, or prove income.

THE OPPORTUNITY

HOW RESPONSIBLE PLATFORMS CAN HELP IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS:

Make the rules clear to help workers understand how they get 'rated'.

Let workers rate buyers to limit unethical behaviour.

Introduce a process (ability to appeal or an ombudsperson, for example) so workers can seek recourse from unscrupulous buyers.

THE GOOD

Allows jobseekers to bypass geographical boundaries AND access international labour markets at low cost.

This additional income is critical to many households around the world; for example, most South Africans and Tanzanians who participate in microwork cite the extra income as 'essential'.

In Sri Lanka, many digital gig workers do tasks online and earn significant income working a few hours per week while in other full-time employment which pays much less.

Improves matching opportunities and labour market efficiencies.

Better employment prospects of globally marginalised groups who maybe discriminated based on gender or disability.

Encourages entrepreneurship through job out-sourcing by intermediaries.

CONSIDERATIONS

Connectivity is an issue to address: In 7 African countries, only 28.43% people had connectivity. Microwork can exacerbate inequalities like the gap between people with 5G connectivity and close to no connectivity.

Platforms are designed to accommodate buyers not workers: There are unbalanced power relations between the employer and worker.

Opaque payment systems cause problems: Lack of transparency means big pay discrepancies and possible tax evasion.

AFTER ACCESS

**For more information, visit Afteraccess.net.
Find us on Twitter: [@AfterAccess](https://twitter.com/AfterAccess)**

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