AFTERACCESS

Only 13% of Bangladeshis use the Internet

THE **AFTERACCESS** SURVEYS – RECENTLY LAUNCHED IN BANGLADESH BY A REGIONAL ICT POLICY THINK-TANK, LIRNE*ASIA* – REVEAL IMPORTANT STATISTICS REGARDING MOBILE AND INTERNET ACCESS AND USE IN THE COUNTRY.

A recently released research report shows that by late 2017 only 13% of Bangladeshis aged 15-65 used the Internet and social media. This is despite 45% of the same age group owning an Internet-friendly device.

The findings are part of AfterAccess, an international-award-winning effort to collect reliable data on access to and use of mobile phones and the Internet in the Global South. The Bangladesh-specific results of the AfterAccess surveys were released by a regional ICT-policy think-tank, in Dhaka on October 2nd, 2018.

"Mobile phones and the Internet are becoming ubiquitous, and information on access to and use of mobile phone and the Internet are of prime importance to governments and other decision-makers," said lead researcher for the Asia component, Helani Galpaya, CEO of LIRNE*asia*. "The available information is insufficient, in that it is either supply-side provided, or not representative of national populations. The only meaningful way to understand the real level of access and use is by talking to users (and non-users) directly. This is what we have done with the AfterAccess surveys."

In Bangladesh, 2,000 households and individuals were surveyed from 100 wards and villages in 40 Zillas. The sampling methodology was designed to ensure representation of the target group (population aged 15-65) at a national level with 95% confidence interval and a +/-3.3% margin of error.

The methodology used in Bangladesh is comparable across all 18 survey countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The AfterAccess database is thus the most rigorous and comprehensive database on mobile phone and Internet access and use in the Global South. The current data includes information collected via 38,005 face-to-face interviews of households and individuals. The data allows for disaggregation by gender, rural or urban setting, and age among other factors.

"This report highlights key issues in our telecommunications sector and provides deep insights on disparity in use of mobile phones, Internet, social media and platforms," said Abu Saeed Khan, Senior Policy Fellow of LIRNE*asia*. "It also underscores the potential for growth of a Digital Bangladesh, and we must use this data to inform future policy, regulatory and industry decisions."

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Sixty-seven percent of Bangladeshis aged 15-65 who do not use the Internet said the main reason for not using the Internet is that they do not know what it is. This finding highlights the importance of creating awareness on the Internet and its uses among the population.

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Other key findings from the Bangladesh report:

- The urban-rural divide in mobile ownership (7%) is among the lowest of all countries surveyed in Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- The rural population aged 15-65 in Bangladesh are 42% less likely than their urban counterparts to use the Internet.
- The gender gap in Internet use is highest in Bangladesh from among all survey countries, with Bangladeshi women between the ages of 15-65 being 34% less likely to have their own mobile phone, and 62% less likely to use the Internet, than men in the same age group.
- Bangladesh is highest user of mobile banking in all countries surveyed. Twenty-seven percent of all mobile phone owners aged 15-65 said they used mobile banking.
- Less than a quarter of Internet users aged 15-65 aware of various kinds of platforms for buying and selling goods and services. Of the few aware, the number that actually use such platforms is negligible.
- The key difficulty is skills; the main reason cited for non-use of platform by 59% of those who are aware is not knowing how to.

About LIRNEasia

LIRNEasia is an Asia Pacific ICT policy and regulation think tank, which has been active in Bangladesh since 2005 conducting both demand- and supply-side research as well as advocating for policy changes in the telecom sector. It has been conducting similar surveys across Asia for over a decade. The organization is also involved in mentoring a big data research program at the University of Dhaka.

For more information on AfterAccess, visit afteraccess.net or follow **@afteraccess**
For more information on LIRNE*asia*, visit lirneasia.net or follow **@lirneasia**
Contact: **info@lirneasia.net,** ayesha@lirneasia.net