More than half the world's people do not have Internet access

That's over 4 billion people, offline, unable to use the Internet to look for a job, help educate themselves, or chat with friends and family.

WHO IS ONLINE?

DEVELOPING WORLD: 35.3% (1 IN 3)

AFRICA: 20.7% (1 IN 5)

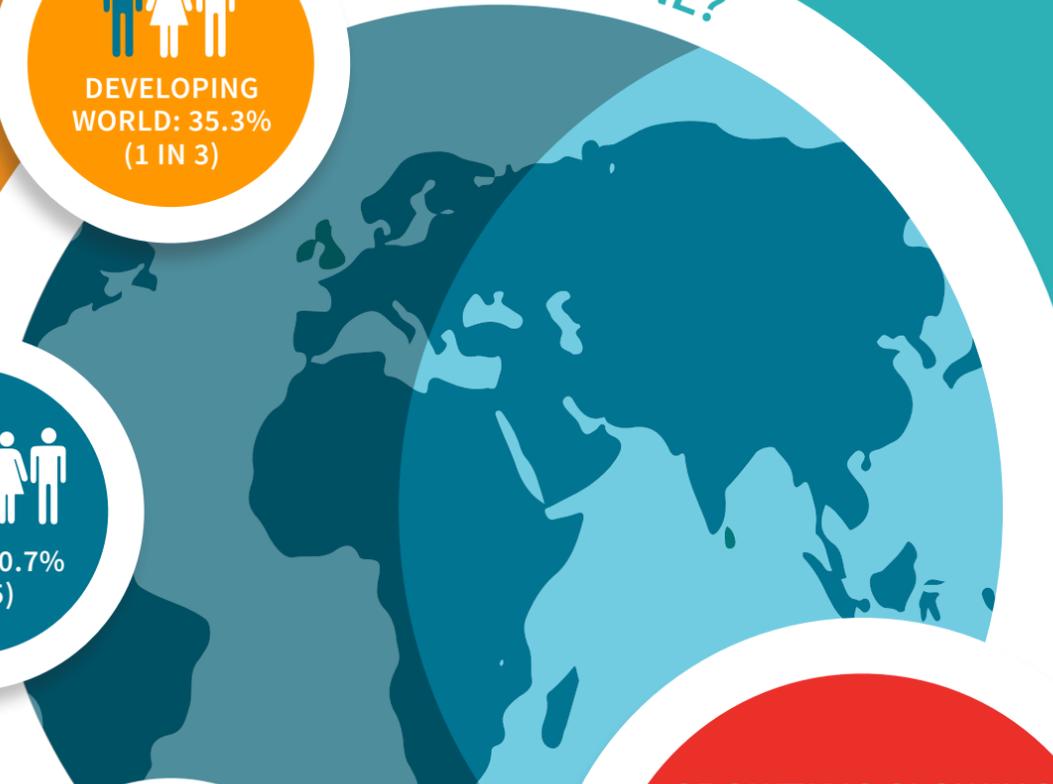**LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES: 9.5% (1 IN 10)**

MOST PEOPLE SIMPLY CAN'T AFFORD TO BE ONLINE

Across the developing world, a basic mobile broadband connection costs around **8% of average monthly income. In Africa, this figure nearly doubles to over 15%**.

Women, rural populations and those living in poverty least likely to be online.
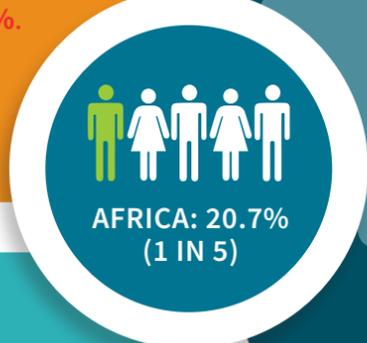
GROWTH IS SLOWING

In Africa, Internet use grew by just 1.7% over the past year. At this rate, it will be decades before Africa can match the Internet usage rates seen in Europe today.

INTERNET ACCESS BRINGS ECONOMIC & SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Could contribute $13-18 billion to combined GDP+
- Could lift 130m out of extreme poverty*
- Could create 44m jobs in Africa, 65m in India*
- Could Cut infant deaths by 130,000 in Africa*
- Could Increase life expectancy for the 2m+ living with HIV/AIDS*

THE GOOD NEWS

The technology to connect everyone affordably is available. To unlock the power of this technology, we need everyone – governments, companies and civil society – to work together to change policies and regulations.

+Extending Internet access to an additional 600,000 women in developing countries (Intel). *Extending Internet access to 75% of the world's population (Deloitte).

Seven Policy Options for Driving Down the Cost to Connect

A4AI ALLIANCE FOR AFFORDABLE INTERNET

① ## Develop effective broadband plans & strategies

Clear, comprehensive national broadband plans allow for increased private investment, remove barriers to infrastructure deployment, and encourage public-private partnerships. *In 2014, A4AI research across 51 countries proved a statistical link between having an effective broadband plan in place, and lower fixed and mobile broadband costs. Some countries don't have these plans yet, and must urgently develop them. For countries with plans in place, there must be a clear focus on delivery, as well as monitoring and evaluation.*

② ## Encourage infrastructure sharing

To connect everyone affordably, we need better infrastructure. This comes at a high cost. Countries can increase efficiency and cut costs by incentivising the development of ICT infrastructure on an open access basis – meaning operators share key equipment like towers, base stations and cables. *In fact, one study estimates that mobile operators could save over $8 billion by sharing towers across the Middle East and Africa – allowing prices to fall for customers.*

③ ## Enhance competition

Competition is not a silver bullet. But a healthy, competitive market typically drives prices down, and having a range of providers to choose from gives people power to pick a package that suits their needs. *In Myanmar, the recent liberalisation of the ICT sector and market entry of competing mobile operators contributed to a dramatic drop in the price of a SIM card – from US$150 in 2013 to just US$1.50 today.*

④ ## Review taxation

Smartphones or computers are sometimes taxed as luxury items or are subject to high import duties. Changing this can drive down prices and lead to economic growth, meaning a greater overall tax take for the government. Simplifying tax regimes across provinces and regions can also incentivise more companies to come to market. *When Kenya scrapped VAT on handsets in 2009, devices in circulation quadrupled and overall mobile penetration rose from 50% to more than 70%.*

⑤ ## Have strategies specifically for underrepresented populations

Connecting some groups in society will take more work, and we can't always rely on market forces. Tools like Universal Service & Access Funds and public access centres can fill existing gaps and ensure universal access becomes a reality. *Thailand has used such a fund to create public WiFi networks in over 30,000 centres with a total of 150,000 access points.*

⑥ ## Be flexible

New technologies are emerging all the time. Countries need to be open-minded, and ready to review regulations and policies to harness the power of new technologies. *A first in Africa, Ghana completed successful trials of white space technologies that can be used for the commercial deployment of broadband and subsequently granted a licence for commercial white space operations.*

⑦ ## Measure and adapt

We can't manage what we don't measure. We need to gather more and better data on how people are using ICTs, measure success and change tack, if needed. *With A4AI's support, Mozambique is one country taking concrete steps in this area, and is working to gather data on ICT penetration and use in their forthcoming national census.*

About A4AI

We're the world's broadest technology sector coalition. Our 70+ members include technology giants, country governments and civil society heavyweights.

Across three continents, we bring together decision-makers to debate solutions to high Internet prices and put plans in place to suit the local environment. Then, we use our members' skills, resources and energy to help turn these plans into reality.

Want to help? Visit A4AI.org to find out how to get involved.