

The Internet as a Global Equalizer

A Call to Action for the Global Political Leadership

**Annual Survey Report of DC- Digital Economy
(Formerly DC-Internet & Jobs) 2024**

Disclaimer

1. For this report, an online study was conducted and people who have access to the internet were reached out. This year's study had broadened horizon i.e., people with no internet accessibility.
2. Weblinks given are functional at the time of writing.
3. In case you find any error or discrepancy, please reach out to the contact on the mailing list.

Acknowledgments

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About

Internet Governance Forum

Dynamic Coalition on Digital Economy (Formerly DC- Internet and Jobs)

The Internet is the fourth most impactful invention in human history after – the fire, the wheel, the electricity, and yet, we have barely scratched the potential of what the Internet can deliver. As we move ahead with technologies and tools built to leverage the Internet, skepticism is gaining ground on the potential impact of the Internet on taking away jobs.

This Dynamic Coalition on Digital Economy (formerly DC- Internet & Jobs) is the culmination of the need for sustainable and responsible automation and the potential of the Internet and Internet-based technologies to create jobs and boost economies across the world. It is a result of the initiatives taken by Dr. Rajendra Pratap Gupta, Chairman, DC-Digital Economy (formerly DC- Internet & Jobs), at the IGF, since 2018, when it was held in Paris and then, in 2019, in Berlin. Over the years, DC-Digital Economy has done path-breaking work in this field and announced Project CREATE (Collaborate to Realize Employment & Entrepreneurship For All Through Technology Ecosystem) at the 17th Annual IGF in Ethiopia on 30th November 2022 and Project CREATE released the Job Maps for various sectors at the DCs Plenary session on 12th October 2023 at Kyoto, Japan. The DC-Digital Economy is committed to work with a mission 'Internet for All. Livelihood for All'.

The Project CREATE Secretariat is hosted by Digital Health Associates Pvt. Ltd. and works with various stakeholders.

Goals

- Connect everyone to the Internet – Bridge the digital divide.
- To create jobs across sectors and geographies through a multi-stakeholder, ecosystem approach of Connecting, Coordinating, Activating, Training, and Enabling.
- To boost the economy and help people realize the human resource and entrepreneurial potential of the Internet across the globe.

Action Plan

- We come out with an annual report on 'Internet & Jobs', capturing the opportunities, best practices, and success stories to inspire people to leverage the Internet to build local economies and connect them to global opportunities.
- Organize online and offline workshops on how local communities can leverage the Internet for a better life.
- Work with stakeholders to bridge the digital divide to leverage the full potential of the internet for boosting the digital economy.
- Recognize the outstanding work done by individuals and organizations in achieving the mission of 'Internet for All. Livelihood for All'.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/dynamic-coalition-on-digital-economy>

<http://www.projectcreate.tech>

Or write to: founder@projectcreate.tech

Subscribe to the mailing list:

https://mail.intgovforum.org/mailman/listinfo/dc-digitaleconomy_intgovforum.org

Foreword

To the leaders and policymakers of the Member States of the United Nations: the time has come to reframe the Internet—not merely as a medium of connectivity, but as a powerful engine for inclusive job creation and economic resilience.

This report, grounded in responses from 30 countries across six continents, highlights a global reality: the digital economy holds promise for all, yet access and opportunity remain uneven. A majority of youth, particularly women, are willing and ready to participate in digital income streams, but are held back by gaps in skills, infrastructure, and institutional support.

Political leadership has the mandate and the means to close this divide.

The Internet Governance Forum’s Dynamic Coalition on Digital Economy, through initiatives like Project CREATE, offers a concrete roadmap: invest in digital skill-building, local infrastructure, AI-readiness, and inclusive regulatory frameworks; prioritize digital literacy in national curricula; create enabling ecosystems for micro-entrepreneurs.

As the global economy shifts, nations that empower their people through the internet will lead. Let us unite around a common goal—Internet for All. Livelihood for All. It is not just a slogan; it is a policy imperative for a fairer, future-ready world.



Dr. Rajendra Pratap Gupta, PhD

Chairman

Dynamic Coalition on Digital Economy

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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, internet-based job opportunities are transforming the way individuals earn a living. The digital economy is increasingly becoming a cornerstone of global economic growth, driven by the expansion of internet access, digital platforms, and technological innovation. It encompasses a wide range of activities that use digital technologies to produce, market, and distribute goods and services, from remote freelance work and e-commerce to content creation and online education.

As traditional employment structures evolve, internet-based job opportunities offer individuals new avenues to generate income, often beyond geographical and institutional boundaries. However, the ability to participate in the digital economy is not uniform. Access to information, digital literacy, and infrastructural support remain significant determinants of who can successfully leverage these opportunities.

Methodology

For this report, an online survey was conducted using a questionnaire hosted on the SurveyMonkey platform. The survey was promoted through the Internet Governance Forum's Meta and Twitter accounts, as well as other platforms such as LinkedIn and Survey Circle. The survey was open to the public from February 2025 to May 2025. Responses came from 30 countries across 6 continents worldwide. The data collected from the survey was subsequently analyzed and compiled into this report.

Results

The vast majority of respondents (98.20%) filled out the survey for themselves and reported having access to the internet. A small minority (1.80%) completed the survey on behalf of someone else without internet access.

Profile of Survey Respondents

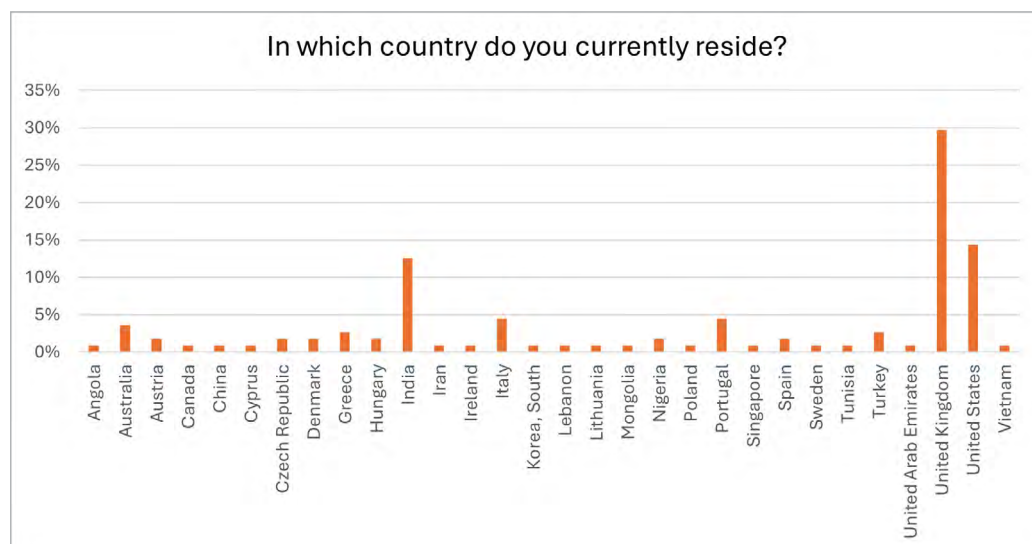


Fig. No. 1

The table presents a country-wise distribution of responses, highlighting significant international engagement. The United Kingdom leads with 29.73% of the total responses, followed by the United States at 14.41% and India at 12.61%, collectively accounting for more than half of the total. European countries such as Italy and Portugal each contribute 4.50%, while Australia adds 3.60%. Other countries like Greece, Turkey, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Nigeria, and Spain range between 1.80% and 2.70%. Additionally, a diverse set of 17 countries—including Angola, Canada, China, and the United Arab Emirates—each represent 0.90% of responses. In total, 30 countries across multiple continents are represented, reflecting a wide global reach and interest in the initiative. (Fig. No. 1)

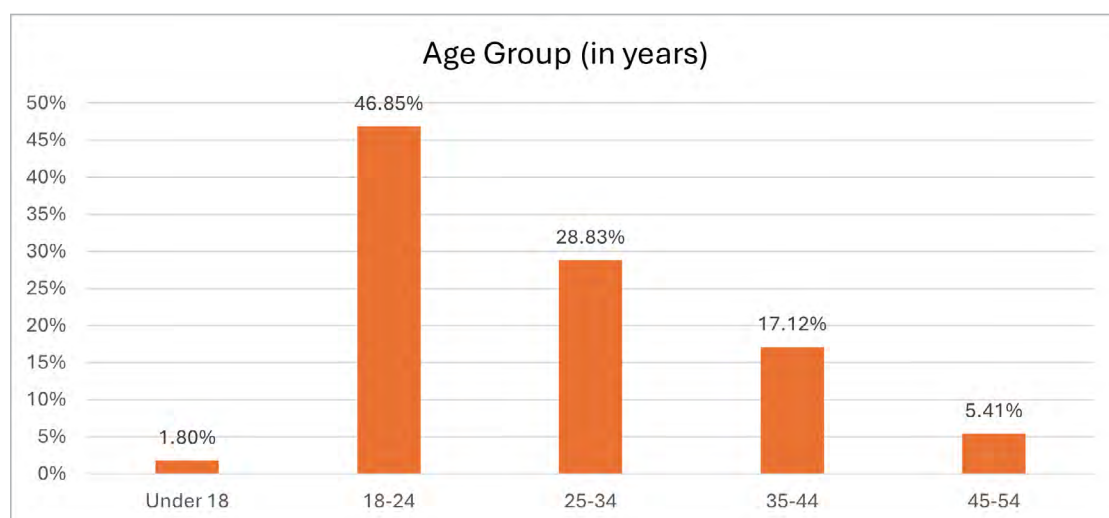


Fig. No. 2

The data shows the age-wise distribution of respondents. The largest segment is the 18–24 age group, comprising 46.85% of the total respondents, followed by the 25–34 age group at 28.83%. The 35–44 age group accounts for 17.12%, while those aged 45–54 represent 5.41%. Only 1.80% of respondents are under 18, and notably, there are no participants aged 55 and above. (Fig. No. 2)

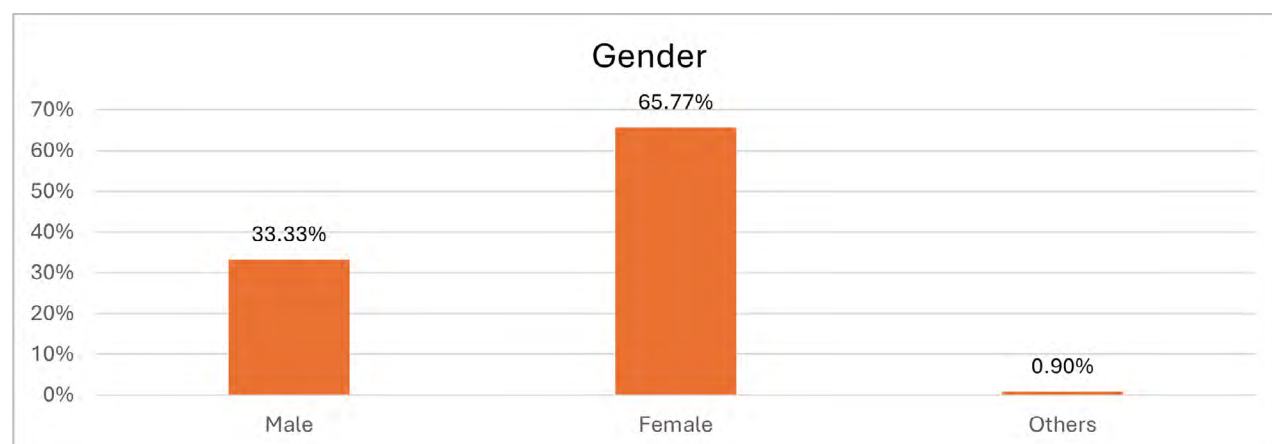


Fig. No. 3

The gender distribution of respondents is notably skewed towards females, who make up 65.77% of the total. Males constitute 33.33%, while 0.90% of respondents identify as other genders. This suggests a strong female majority among participants, with relatively limited representation from other gender identities. (Fig. No. 3)

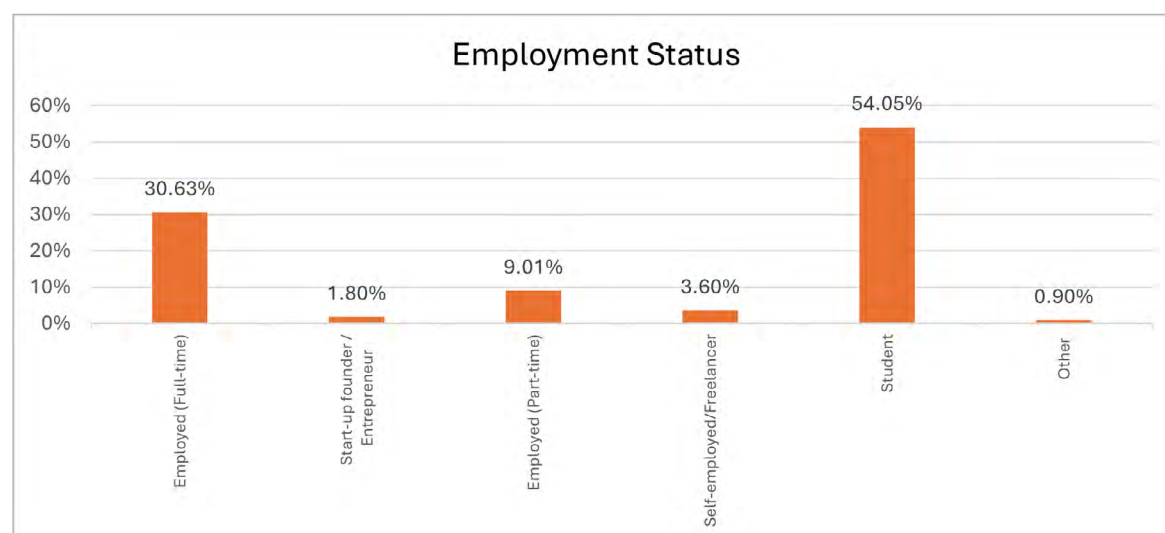


Fig. No. 4

The employment status distribution reveals that a majority of respondents are students, accounting for 54.05% of the total. Among working individuals, 30.63% are employed full-time, while 9.01% work part-time. Self-employed or freelance professionals make up 3.60%, and 1.80% identify as start-up founders or entrepreneurs. A small fraction, 0.90%, selected other¹ as their employment status. (Fig. No. 4)

¹ Employed (part-time) & Student (full time)

Internet for Job Creation

The internet has evolved from being merely a platform for information and job searching to becoming a powerful space for actual work and income generation. People can now not only look for job opportunities online but also engage in remote work, freelance projects, start online businesses, and build careers through digital platforms.

Usage of Internet

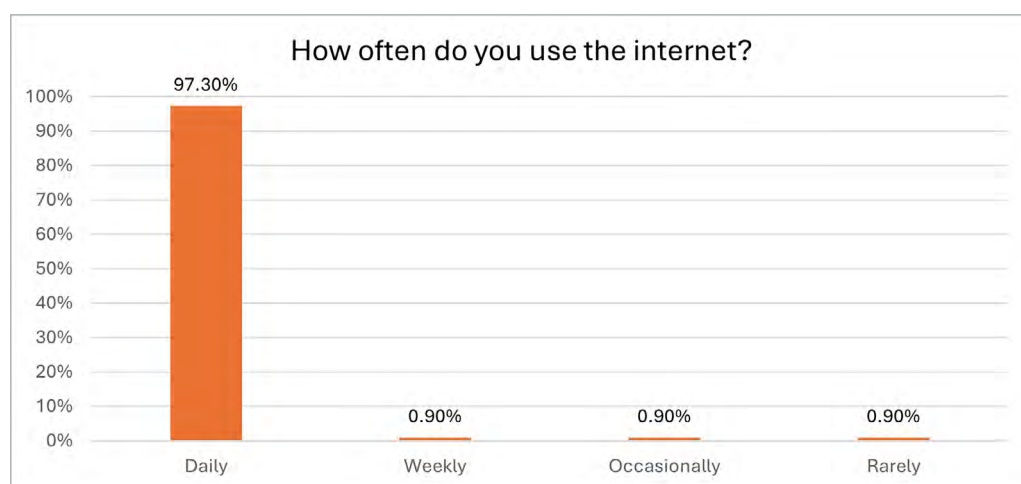


Fig. No. 5

The data shows that internet usage is overwhelmingly frequent among respondents, with 97.30% reporting daily use. This highlights the internet's deep integration into their everyday lives. A very small percentage use the internet weekly (0.90%), occasionally (0.90%), or rarely (0.90%). (Fig. No. 5)

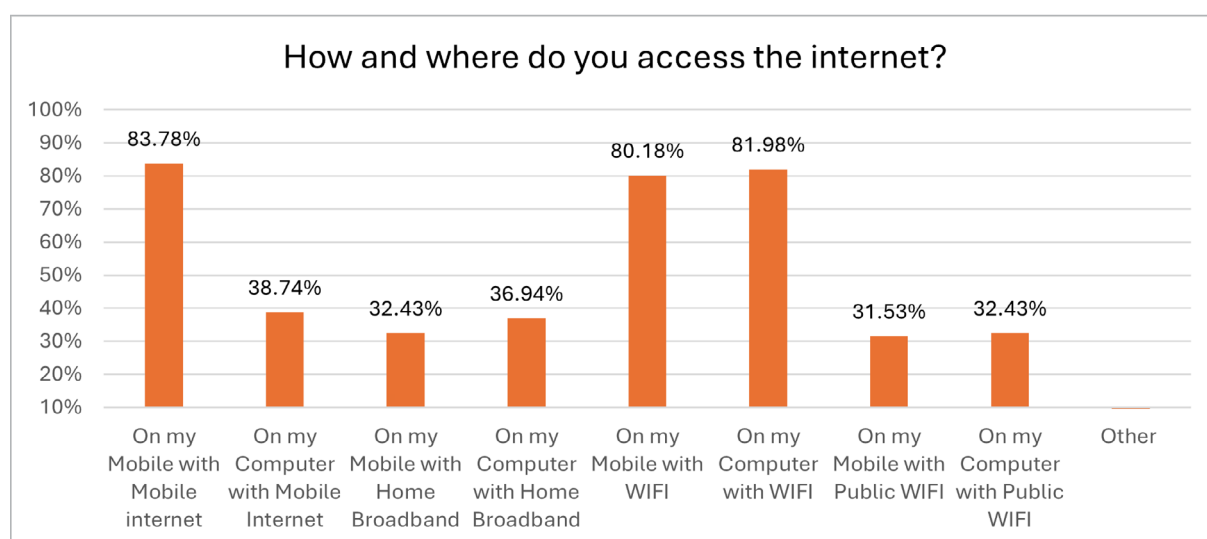


Fig. No. 6

The majority of respondents access the internet primarily through their mobile devices, with 83.78% using mobile internet and 80.18% connecting via mobile Wi-Fi. Computer usage is also significant, with 81.98% accessing the internet using Wi-Fi on their computers. Mobile and computer connections through home broadband stand at 32.43% and 36.94%, respectively, indicating a good portion of users rely on fixed broadband at home. Mobile internet access on computers is used by 38.74%, while public Wi-Fi usage is somewhat lower but still notable, with about 31.53% using mobile devices and 32.43% using computers to connect via public Wi-Fi. A small percentage (1.80%) reported other² means of internet access. (Fig. No. 6)

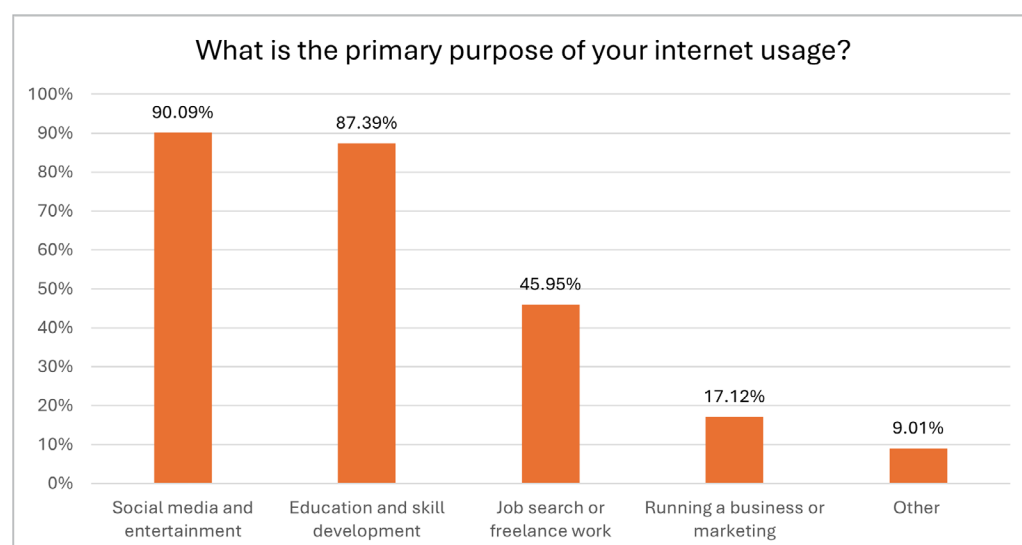


Fig. No. 7

Most respondents use the internet primarily for social media and entertainment, with 90.09%. Education and skill development are also a major use, chosen by 87.39% of users, highlighting the internet's role as a key resource for learning. Nearly half of the respondents (45.95%) use the internet for job searching or freelance work, indicating its importance in professional opportunities. A smaller portion, 17.12%, uses the internet to run a business or for marketing purposes. Additionally, 9.01% indicated other³ purposes for their internet use. (Fig. No. 7)

² On my Computer with the university's WIFI, Office Computer with Office WIFI

³ For Job, University work, Conduct desk research as part of Job, Internships and live projects.

Generating Income through Internet

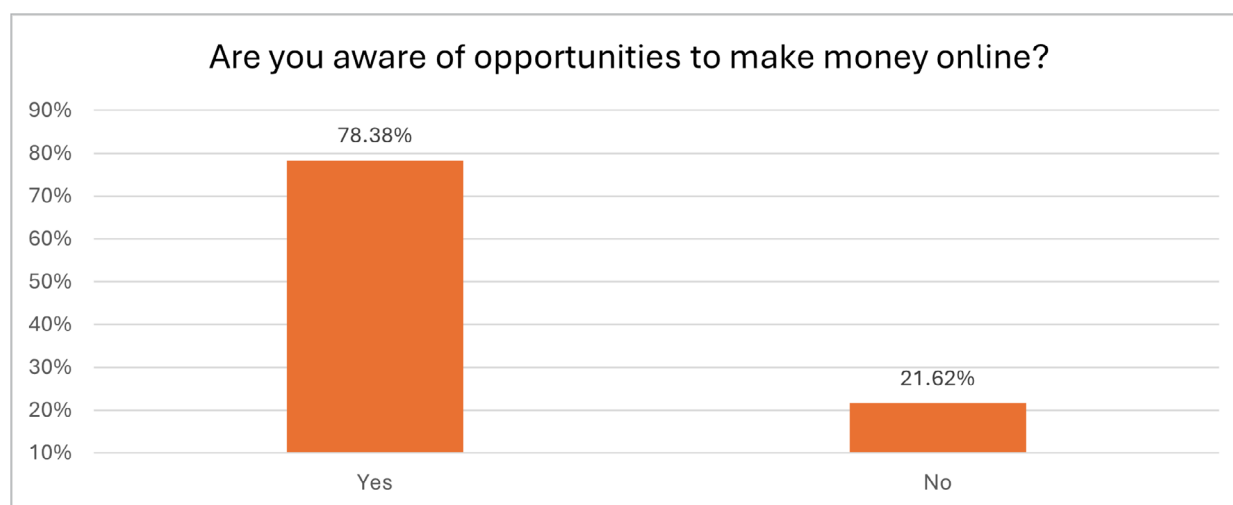


Fig. No. 8

A significant majority of respondents (78.38%) reported being aware of opportunities to earn money online. This indicates a growing recognition of the internet as a platform for income generation. However, 21.62% of respondents are still unaware of such opportunities, suggesting a gap. (Fig. No. 8)

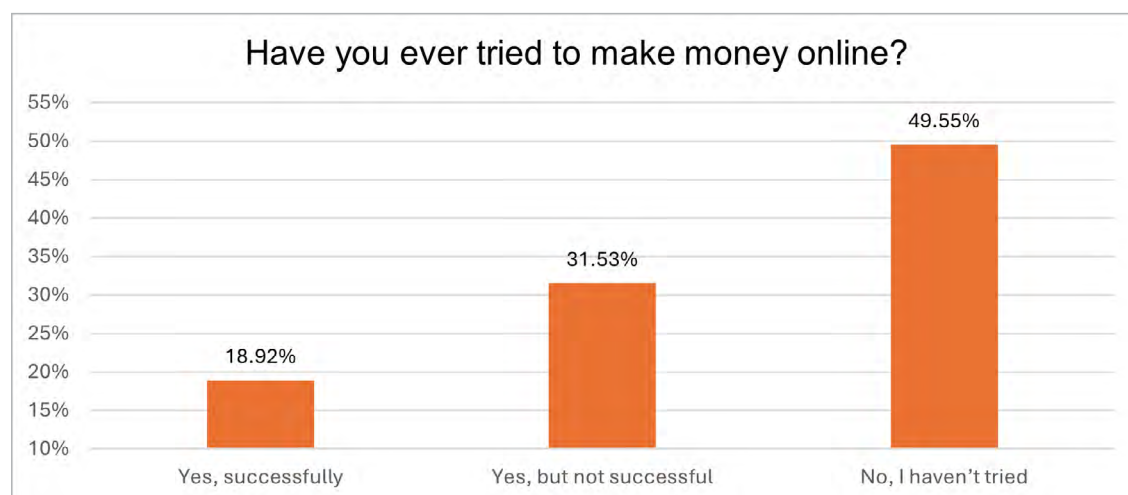


Fig. No. 9

Nearly half of the respondents (49.55%) have never attempted to earn money online, indicating a large segment that may need more exposure or confidence to explore digital income avenues. Among those who have tried, 31.53% reported being unsuccessful, highlighting possible barriers. Only 18.92% have successfully made money online. (Fig. No. 9)

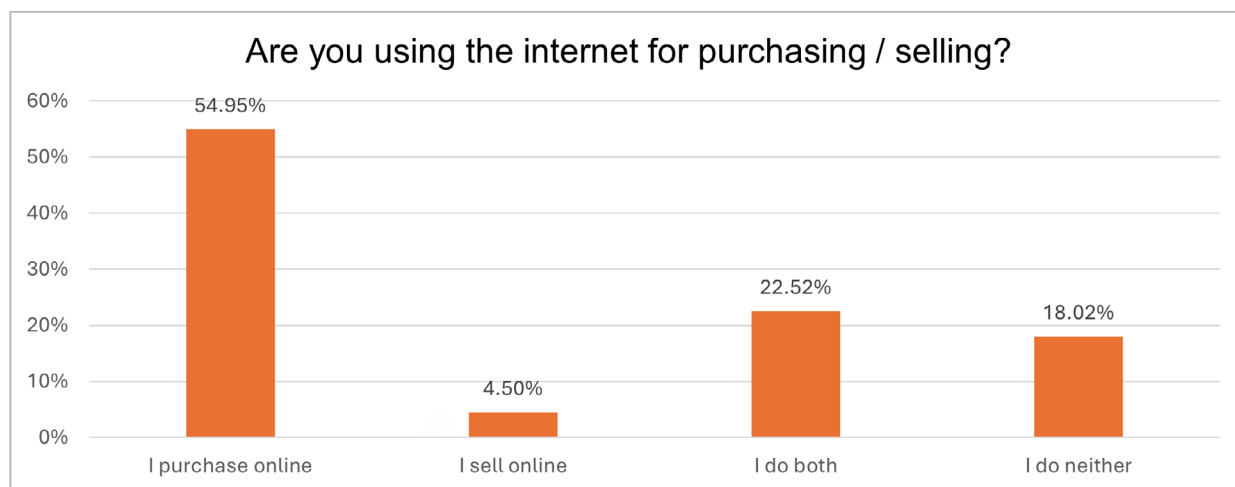


Fig. No. 10

More than half of the respondents (54.95%) use the internet primarily for purchasing goods or services. A smaller group (4.50%) engages in selling online, while 22.52% actively participate in both buying and selling. Interestingly, 18.02% of respondents do not use the internet for either purpose. (Fig. No. 10)

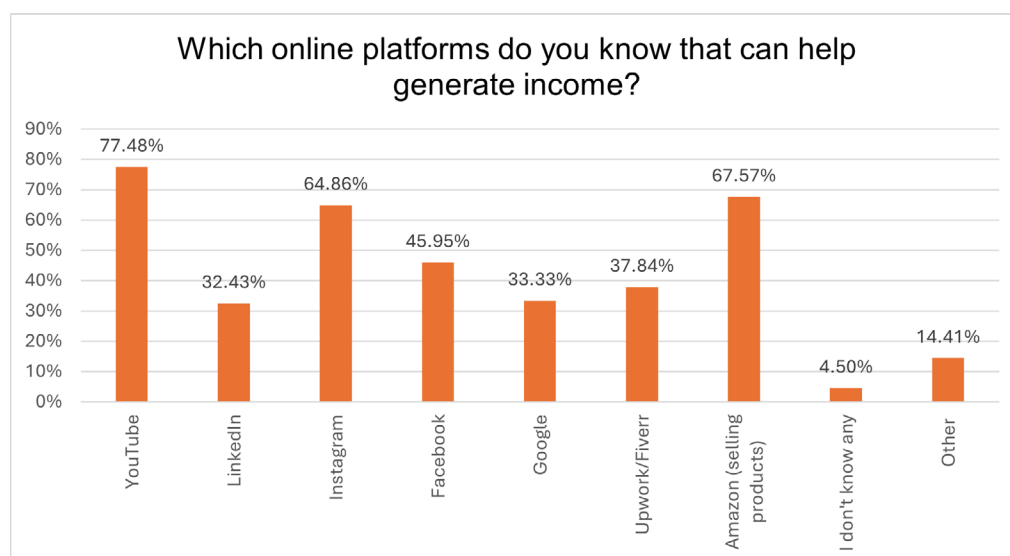


Fig. No. 11

YouTube is the most recognized platform for generating income, known by 77.48% of respondents, followed by Amazon at 67.57%, indicating strong awareness of content creation and e-commerce opportunities. Instagram (64.86%) and Facebook (45.95%) also rank high. Professional and freelancing platforms like Upwork/Fiverr (37.84%) and LinkedIn (32.43%) are less widely known but still significant. Google is known by 33.33%. Notably, only 4.50% of respondents reported not knowing any income-generating platforms, while 14.41% mentioned other⁴ platforms outside the listed options. (Fig. No. 11)

⁴ eBay, Depop, Vinted, Sellpy, WhatsApp, Etsy, Topmate, Nas.io, iCliniq, GeeksforGeeks, Shopify, vinted, Vestiaire, Tiktok, Discord, Prolific

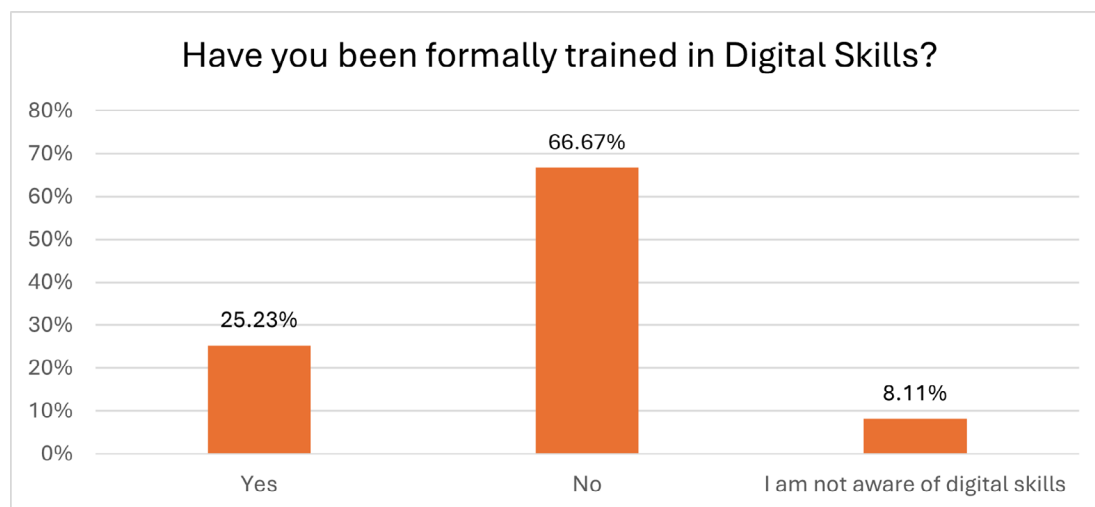


Fig. No. 12

The majority of respondents (66.67%) have not received any formal training in digital skills, suggesting a significant gap in structured digital literacy. While 25.23% have undergone formal training, a notable 8.11% are not even aware of what digital skills entail. This highlights the need for increased awareness and access to digital education to enable broader participation in the digital economy. (Fig. No. 12)

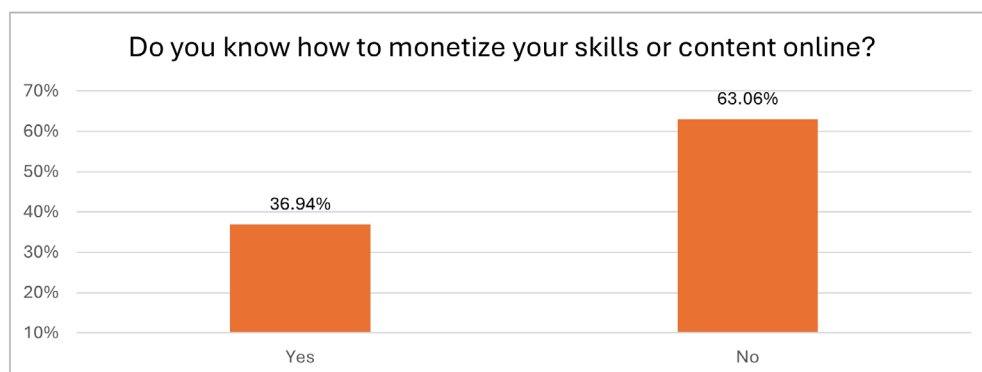


Fig. No. 13

A majority of respondents (63.06%) do not know how to monetize their skills or content online, indicating a significant awareness and knowledge gap. Only 36.94% of participants reported understanding how to generate income through their talents or digital content. (Fig. No. 13)

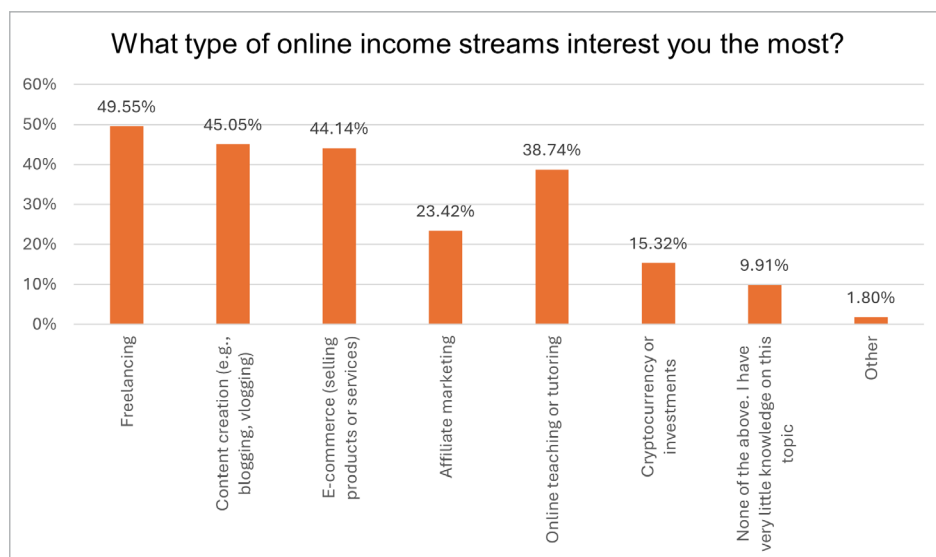


Fig. No. 14

Freelancing emerged as the most preferred online income stream, with 49.55% of respondents expressing interest, followed closely by content creation (45.05%) and e-commerce (44.14%), indicating strong enthusiasm for flexible and creative digital work. Online teaching or tutoring also garnered significant interest at 38.74%. Affiliate marketing (23.42%) and cryptocurrency or online investments (15.32%) were less popular, possibly due to their technical complexity or perceived risk. Notably, 9.91% of participants reported having very little knowledge of any of these income streams, and 1.80% indicated other⁵ areas of interest not listed in the options. (Fig. No. 14)

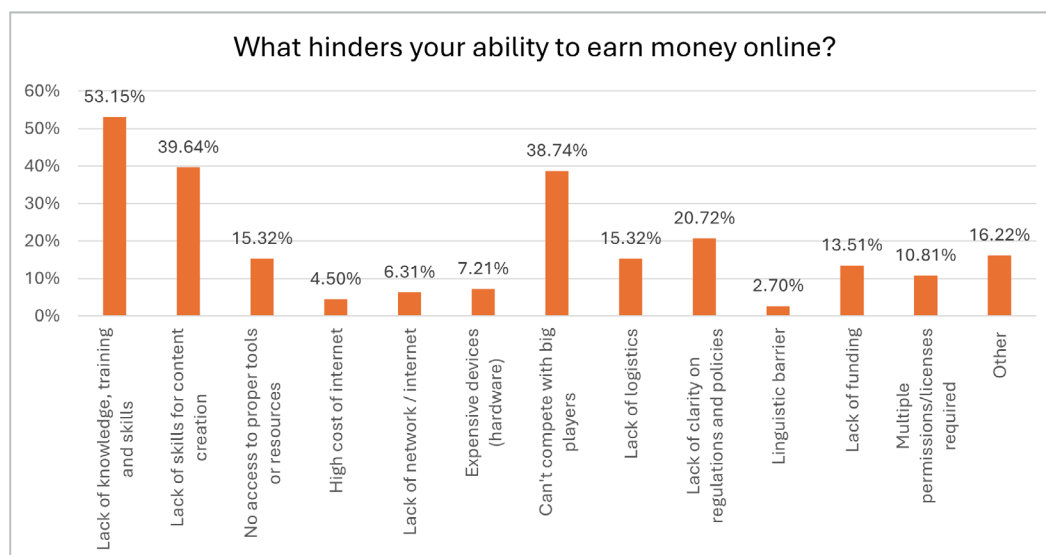


Fig. No. 15

⁵ Selling digital artwork, Running a small business, Working for an online company.

The most commonly cited barrier to earning money online is a lack of knowledge, training, and skills, affecting 53.15% of respondents. This is followed closely by a lack of content creation skills (39.64%) and the perception that individuals can't compete with big players in the digital space (38.74%). Several respondents also pointed to unclear regulations and policies (20.72%) and lack of access to proper tools or resources (15.32%) as limiting factors. Other notable obstacles include lack of logistics (15.32%), lack of funding (13.51%), and the need for multiple permissions or licenses (10.81%). Infrastructure-related issues like expensive devices (7.21%), poor internet access (6.31%), and high internet costs (4.50%) were less frequently mentioned. A small proportion cited linguistic barriers (2.70%), and 16.22% selected other⁶. (Fig. No. 15)

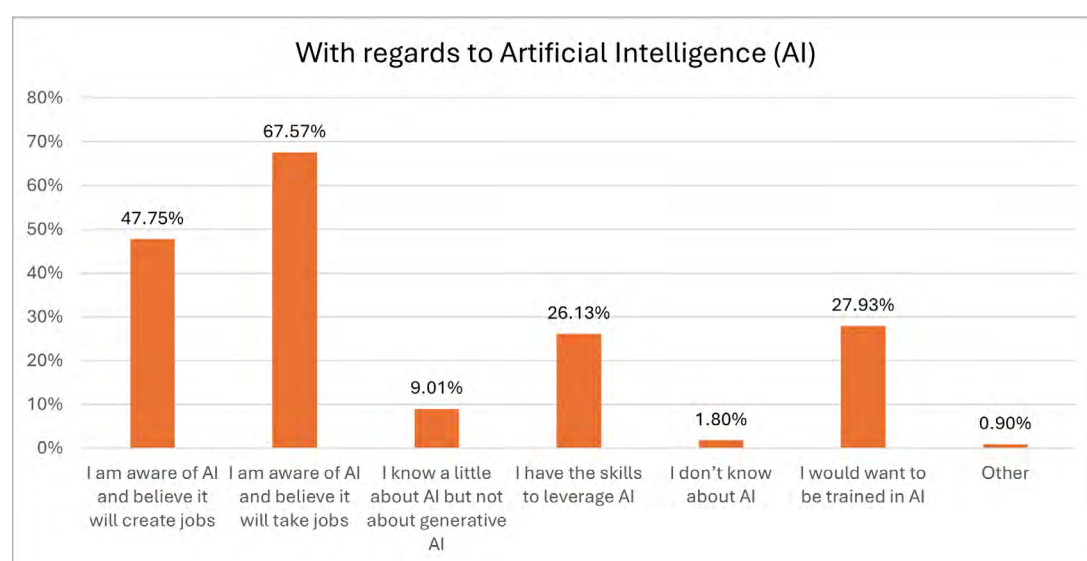


Fig. No. 16

A significant majority of respondents (67.57%) believe that AI will lead to job displacement, while 47.75% also recognize its potential to create new employment opportunities. About 26.13% of participants feel they already have the skills to leverage AI, and 27.93% expressed a desire to be trained in AI. Meanwhile, 9.01% are aware of AI but lack familiarity with generative AI specifically. Very few respondents (1.80%) admitted to not knowing about AI, and only 0.90% selected Other⁷. (Fig. No. 16)

⁶ Lack of time, Skepticism about the authenticity of the opportunities, want to avoid investing too much time on social media, Parents discouragement, No interest in earning money online, No need due to well-paid job, Anxiety, Lack of passion, Full time job, Lack of job opportunities

⁷ Although AI may take current jobs, this gives more scope for job creation in other areas

Support and Resources Needed for Online Income Generation

Many respondents highlighted the need for structured guidance and skill development to begin earning online. Key support mechanisms included comprehensive online courses, certifications, and tutorials, particularly on platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and Skillshare—covering areas such as freelancing, digital marketing, content creation, and e-commerce. Several mentioned the value of clear, step-by-step guides and real examples of legitimate income strategies. There was a repeated emphasis on the importance of mentorship, beginner-friendly training, and access to practical tools like Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, or Canva. Others stressed the need for more time, better pay, and lower barriers to entry. Some individuals also sought help with building portfolios, navigating legal aspects, and differentiating themselves in saturated markets. In addition, participants expressed a desire for AI-driven support, live assistance, financial literacy resources, and clear institutional frameworks to facilitate online work. A few respondents noted skepticism toward online income due to perceived scams or oversaturation, and some shared they were not currently interested in online work due to full-time jobs or lack of time. Overall, the responses reveal that people are open to earning online but seek practical, trustworthy, and well-supported pathways to get started.

Next Steps: Recommendations for Action

The survey results reveal both strong interest and significant challenges in leveraging the internet for income generation across a diverse, global group of mainly young and female respondents. While many are aware of digital opportunities, gaps in formal training, practical skills, and access to resources limit their ability to succeed online. There is also a clear appetite for learning, especially around emerging technologies like AI. To address these needs and unlock the full potential of digital income streams, a comprehensive approach is required—one that combines education, awareness, support, and infrastructure improvements tailored to different regions and user groups. Based on these insights, the following recommendations can help create a more inclusive and enabling digital ecosystem:

1. Develop accessible and affordable digital skills training programs focused on freelancing, content creation, e-commerce, and AI.
2. Launch awareness campaigns with real success stories and practical guides to encourage more people to try earning online.
3. Provide clear, localized information on starting online work and using various income-generating platforms.
4. Create structured support systems like online bootcamps, mentorships, and access to content creation tools.
5. Establish community digital hubs with internet access and devices to overcome resource barriers.

6. Offer micro-financing options and guidance on regulations and licensing to help digital entrepreneurs.
7. Integrate digital economy skills into education curricula and provide internship or micro-job opportunities for youth.
8. Design gender-inclusive initiatives, especially to support women in flexible and safe digital income opportunities.
9. Provide beginner-friendly AI training and promote the use of AI tools to prepare users for future job market changes.
10. Translate training materials and campaigns into local languages to increase reach and accessibility.
11. Build global and country-specific partnerships to implement scalable, targeted digital economy initiatives.



We are living in the Digital age, and increased technology adoption should lead to job creation. Still, we see mass layoffs across the tech industry, and this will continue, which brings to the fore the biggest challenge of 'job creation' for countries, more so, for the LMICs (Low- and Middle-Income Countries) – which have huge populations to serve, but lack the financial wherewithal, and the increased digital divide, with nearly 2.7 billion of the world are out of the internet era.

We can reverse this by creating decentralized technology models around individuals and communities to ensure 'Internet for All & Livelihood for All'. We need to engage multiple stakeholders (Academia, Government, Industry, Multi-lateral bodies & Civil Society) to come together with a goal to:

1. Bridge the digital divide by connecting everyone to the internet.
2. Create a tech-enabled ecosystem to provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to everyone.

We believe that Internet technologies can create a tech-enabled ecosystem that can connect the world seamlessly and provide a pathway for ensuring 'Livelihood for All' through 'Internet for All.' Hence the Project CREATE.





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