

The price of the world in your pocket: a price only some can afford

2024 Device Pricing

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Global Digital Inclusion
Partnership

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About Global Digital Inclusion Partnership

The Global Digital Inclusion Partnership is a coalition of public, private, and civil society organizations working to bring internet connectivity to the global majority and ensure everyone is meaningfully connected by 2030. GDIP advances digital opportunities to empower and support people's lives and agency, leading to inclusive digital societies.

The price of the world in your pocket: a price only some can afford

Device affordability remains an urgent concern for inclusive digital economies. As policymakers and industry work to bridge the device affordability gap, this research helps track progress towards universal and meaningful connectivity. Critically, a personal, internet-capable device like a smartphone is one of the four pillars of meaningful connectivity. **Without affordable devices, we will never reach our goals of scalable digital economies and sustainable digital transformation.**

Today, the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP) publishes reference prices for smartphones and feature phones in 171 markets. These markets span across all continents, sizes, and income levels to give as comprehensive a picture as possible of what prices consumers are paying in the market for a device. This data was collected through June 2024 according to the same methodology that maintains consistency with similar data collected in 2021 and 2022.

Key figures from the dataset:

- **The median price for a smartphone globally is US\$92.59.** The lowest regional median price is in Africa, at \$60.23, while the highest is \$101.88 in the Americas.
- **The median global affordability (defined as price as a percentage of average monthly income) for a smartphone is 11%.** Europe has the greatest regional affordability, at 4.5%, while Africa has the least, at 41%.
- **The median smartphone price among low-income countries is \$36.62,** rising in line between price and income groups, with the median smartphone price among high-income countries at \$121.49.
- **Feature phones offer a lower price point.** The global median price for an internet-capable feature phone is \$25, at 5.53% affordability.

This data is not a measure of all prices in all contexts. For example, we know that second-hand markets are thriving and typically offer lower prices than buying new devices. We also know that many retailers not affiliated with a mobile network will sell unlocked devices that are able to function on multiple networks.

However, given the widespread and consistent nature of operators selling phones through their website, this data assumes that the prices set by operators are not without context: they will be responsive to the competitive pressures of other retailers in the markets in which they operate. **While these prices are not definitive on what the cost of a smartphone is in each country, they are certainly indicative of the range of prices that customers have in several parts of the world.**



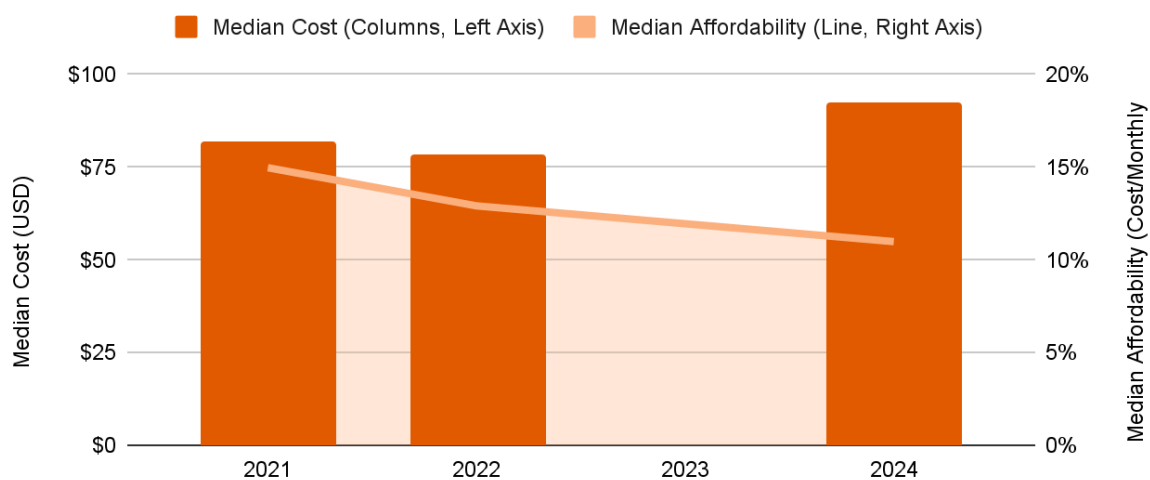
From this research, here's what we know:

- In most markets, smartphone prices have remained relatively stable. Set against rising average incomes from the post-pandemic economic recovery, this means devices are becoming more affordable.
- Common strategies for bridging the affordability gap for devices – original device manufacturers (ODMs) and feature phones – are increasingly infrequent across markets.
- Huge disparities remain in device affordability. This particularly affects those in low-income countries where production lines may be less stable, and consumers have less disposable income to spend on devices, especially marginalized groups such as women and those in rural areas, where average incomes are lower.

Stable prices, rising incomes: greater device affordability

Median Smartphone Cost and Affordability

Source: Global Digital Inclusion Partnership, 2024



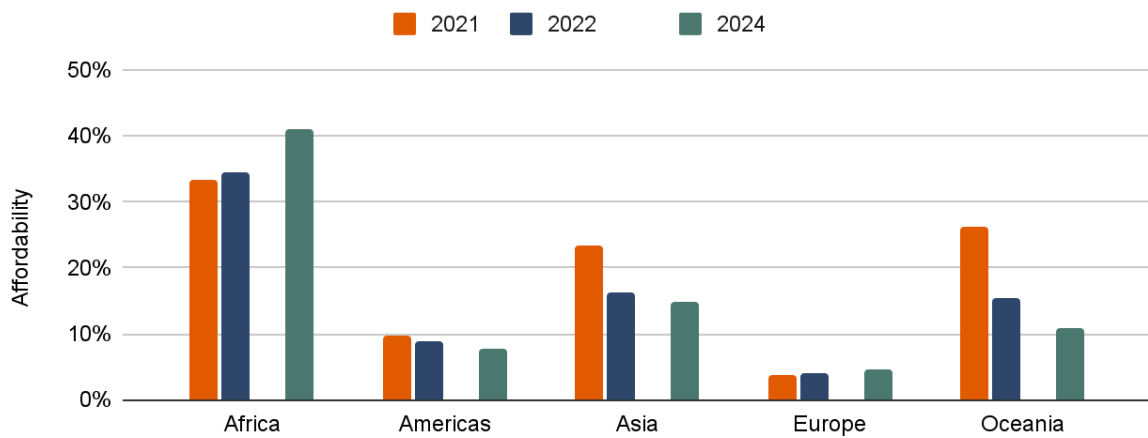
Across the three years of data collection, the median device price did not vary more than \$15 between each period. At the same time, device affordability grew, with the highest median price – \$92.59 in 2024 – corresponding to the greatest affordability at 10.99%.

This is because average incomes rose globally across these four years, meaning that while the price of the device might be similar as before, it represents, on average, a smaller fraction of how much someone has to spend from their income to afford it.

This trend, if it remains, will indicate continued progress towards greater affordability for all. However, the slow pace of progress means that devices will remain unaffordable for millions without responsive action from policymakers and industry.

Median Smartphone Affordability, by Region

Source: Global Digital Inclusion Partnership, 2024

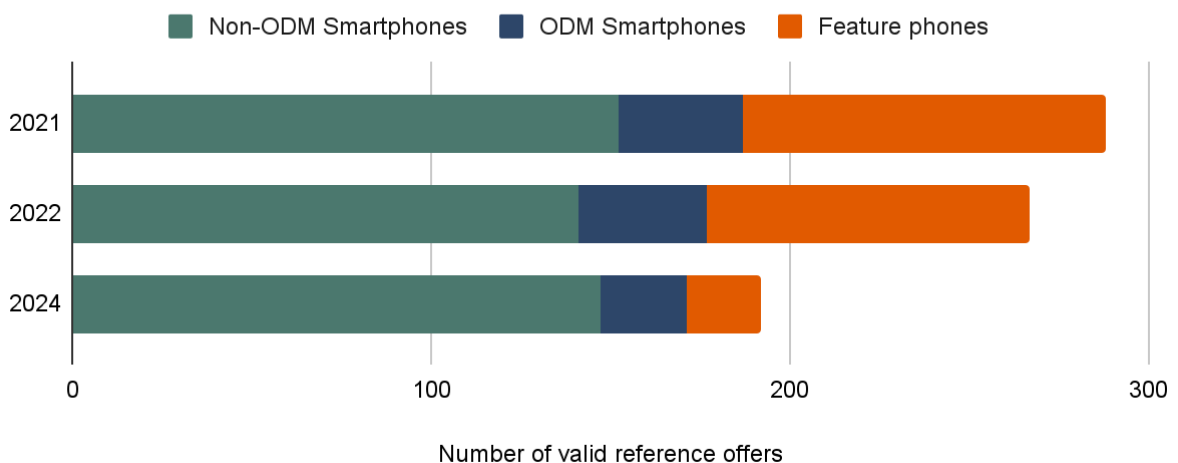


The situation is most dire across Africa – where median device prices have noticeably become less affordable each year of data collection. This is in stark contrast to affordability across Oceania, where it has become more than twice as affordable to buy a smartphone now as it was in 2021.

Smartphone or bust? Fewer alternatives on offer

Device Reference Offers, by Year

Source: Global Digital Inclusion Partnership, 2024



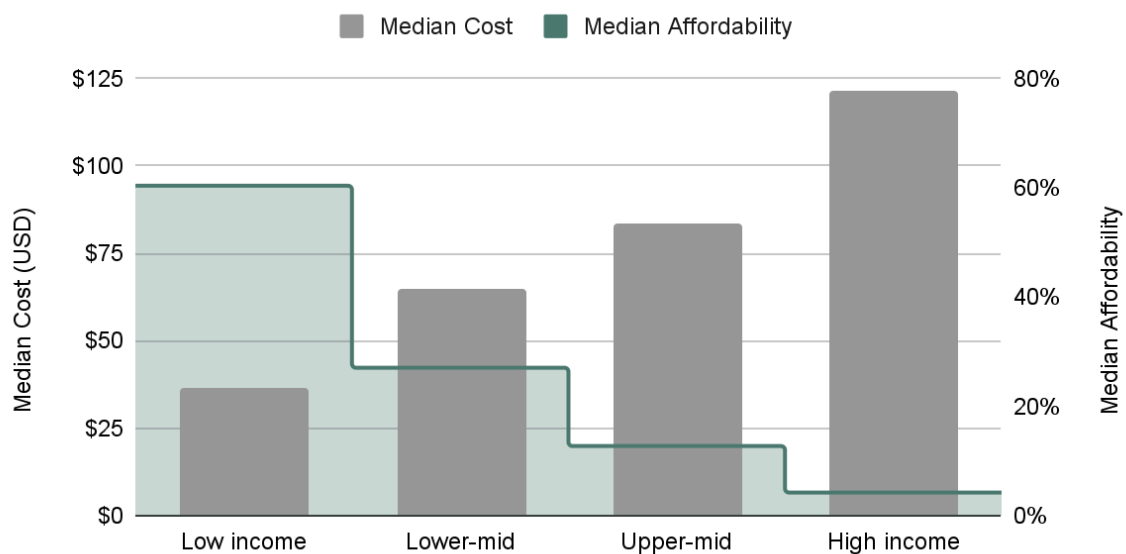
A big difference between datasets in 2021 and 2022 and now in 2024 is the number of valid reference offers for internet-capable feature phones and original device manufacturer (ODM) smartphones. In both cases, these device types were less frequent, while non-ODM smartphones maintained their popularity and global relevance.

This trend might indicate the increasing relevance of smartphones. As more of society and the economy move online, owning a smartphone with sufficient capacity is a critical factor for a person's continued participation. As such, consumers may be opting away from low-spec devices, such as feature phones and ODM smartphones, towards higher price points and greater capabilities.

Many still priced out, unconnected

Median Smartphone Cost and Affordability, by Income Group

Source: Global Digital Inclusion Partnership, 2024



In total, the picture of global device affordability indicates positive, gradual change. However, affordability remains a critical change in low-income and lower-middle-income countries, where the cheapest smartphone on offer in those countries represents over a week's worth of the average income in those countries. Policymakers looking to accelerate economic growth through digitalization need to take care of these foundations – such as device affordability – to ensure that all are able to participate and benefit from the transformations that these technologies may bear.

* For 2021 and 2022 pricing data, this research refers to work conducted by the [Alliance for Affordable Internet](#) and uses the same methodology to provide continuity.



Methodology Guide

GDIP Device Pricing Survey 2024¹

1. Prices should be collected from the website/s of any mobile network operator with a market share of no less than 20% of mobile-broadband-capable connections (based on data from GSMA Intelligence) for the latest available annual period. Preference should be given to the cheapest device among eligible operators rather than based on operator market share.
2. A price should be collected for the cheapest smartphone and the cheapest feature phone each. Basic phones and WiFi-only devices should be excluded. For the purposes of this exercise:
 - a. A feature phone will meet the minimum definition of an internet-capable mobile device (and will typically have a physical number pad); and
 - b. A smartphone is distinguished by having an operating system, the ability to download third-party applications, and a touchscreen of at least three inches. The operating system of the device should be recorded.
3. Prices should be collected in the currency they are advertised, including taxes. If prices are not advertised in local currency, a note should be added specifying the currency.
4. Only retail, non-enterprise, single-user prices should be collected. If prices vary by geography, prices applying to the largest city (in terms of population, first preference) or to the capital city (second preference) should be provided. When collecting the data, a screenshot of all relevant data (including any relevant terms and conditions, taxes, etc.) should be taken.
5. Preference should be given to devices on an unlocked basis (i.e., full cost and without commitment to also buy a mobile service contract). If no such device qualifies, devices only available on a contract, prepaid or postpaid, may also be considered only when there is a clear means to assess the value of the device separate from the contract.
6. Promotional pricing (advertisements that imply time-bound limitations to the offer), limited discounts (e.g., only a certain number of devices subject to the offer), or special user group pricing (e.g., exclusive to customers transferring to a new operator) should be excluded.
7. Prices should not include any additional accessories other than those already included at no additional cost.

¹ This methodology is based on the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) methodology, last used in 2022. More information: <https://a4ai.org/research/device-pricing-2022/>

Meaningful Connectivity for the **Global Majority**

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