Cover Note for I3 Technical Working Group Submission

Global Findex Database 2025

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Value to the Research Community

The Global Findex Database is the world's most comprehensive, publicly available source of demand-side data on how adults save, borrow, make payments, and manage financial risk. First launched in 2011, the database now spans five waves of data collection across more than 140 economies, representing close to 97 percent of the world's population. The 2025 edition — the focus of this submission — marks a significant methodological expansion beyond prior waves, introducing new survey modules on digital connectivity, digital merchant payments, and financial security that open new opportunities for research on innovation, entrepreneurship, and the digital economy.

The central contribution of the 2025 wave is its systematic effort to measure not just whether adults have financial accounts, but whether they have the digital infrastructure to use them — and whether they are using them safely. This positioning makes the 2025 Findex uniquely valuable for researchers studying how technological innovation interacts with financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and household economic behavior in low- and middle-income countries.

What the Presentation Would Focus On

New questions on digital connectivity. The 2025 report introduces new indicators of the digital foundations of financial inclusion. The survey now captures detailed data on mobile phone ownership (including smartphone vs. basic phone), internet access and frequency of use, and how adults use the internet for communications, information, and income. The data reveal that 84 percent of adults in low- and middle-income countries own a mobile phone, with three-quarters of those owning smartphones, and that 90 percent of internet users in these countries access it via their mobile phone. These connectivity indicators are foundational for understanding who can and cannot participate in the digital economy. For instance, the data show that women in low- and middle-income economies remain 9 percentage points less likely than men to own a smartphone, with affordability identified as the single largest reported barrier. For researchers studying the preconditions for digital entrepreneurship and innovation adoption, these variables offer an unprecedented cross-country, individual-level view.

Digital merchant payments. The 2025 wave introduces expanded indicators on digital merchant payments. The data show that 42 percent of adults globally made digital merchant payments in 2024, up from 36 percent in 2021, and that over 40 percent of adults in low- and middle-income economies now pay bills or purchase goods online. Digital payments acceptance can is key to accessing cash-low lending tied to payment flows, which can offer lenders real time visibility into sales, along with embed payments to reduce both credit and recourse risk. In addition, nearly half of adults in low- and middle-income countries, representing 80 percent of internet users, use social media platforms, about a quarter go online for educational purposes or to learn new skills, and 1 in

5 access government services or information. Six percent of adults report earning money online, including over 10 percent of adults in middle-income countries in East Asia and the Pacific.

Financial security and consumer protection. The 2025 report introduces new data on security practices and vulnerabilities that accompany the expansion of digital financial services — a dimension absent from prior waves. Among the 900 million adults in low- and middle-income economies using mobile money accounts, approximately a quarter do not have password protection on their phones, and half of mobile money account owners in Sub-Saharan Africa lack this basic safeguard.

Looking ahead to 2027. The presentation would also describe our plans for the 2027 Findex wave, which will expand in three areas of direct relevance to the I3 community. First, a new module on financial fraud and consumer protection will capture self-reported experiences with unauthorized account access, payment fraud, scams, and deceptive digital credit, helping measure the challenges that accompany rapid digital financial expansion. Second, new questions on artificial intelligence will examine awareness, use, and trust in AI, including how adults in low- and middle-income economies are interacting with AI-powered tools for agricultural, health, and financial advice. Third, expanded indicators on digital merchant payments will deepen the entrepreneurship and digitalization angle introduced in 2025 by tracking the share of payments that consumers make digitally, and whether people use different payment modes depending on the transaction amount. Sharing these plans with the I3 community at this stage would be an opportunity to gather feedback on questionnaire design and identify potential collaborations with researchers already working on adjacent topics.

Plans for Dissemination

The Global Findex 2025 microdata have been released as fully open-access data through the World Bank's Open Data platform and Microdata Library, consistent with all prior waves. Individual-level observations, country aggregates, and the full methodology appendix — including questionnaire documentation — are freely downloadable without restriction. The interactive data portal at globalfindex.worldbank.org allows users to explore and visualize indicators across economies and over time. We actively support use of the Findex by the academic research community.