

THE AI DIVIDE: Bridging Digital Inequality Through Inclusive Internet Governance

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THE DIGITAL DIVIDE TODAY

2.2 Billion People Remain Offline

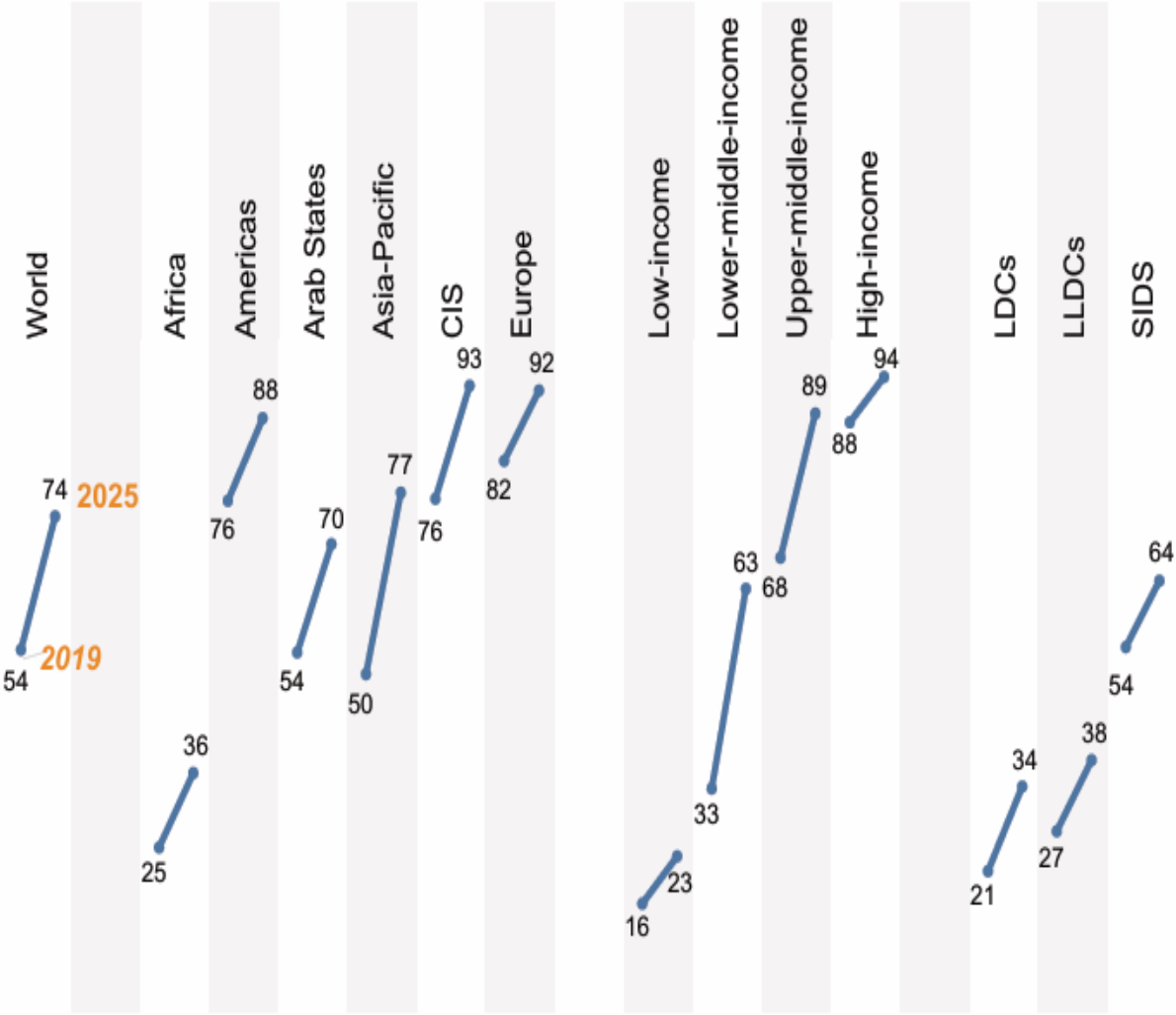
The Connectivity Gap

96% of the offline population lives in low- and middle-income countries - persistent infrastructure and affordability barriers limit basic Internet access

Beyond Connectivity

Millions online still face systemic barriers - platforms rejecting non-English identifiers lock users out of digital services and AI platforms

Percentage of individuals using the Internet by region, 2019 and 2025



Note: [Interactive chart](#).
Source: ITU

THE UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE CRISIS

Most websites and AI platforms reject internationalized email addresses and domain names

The Rejection Problem

Users with native-script addresses like `सिंथ@भारत.in` or `राम@भारत.gov.in` cannot register for major AI platforms and digital services

Why This Happens

Legacy validation code and ASCII-only email parsers cause systematic rejection of non-ASCII identifiers across applications and services

The Impact

Hundreds of millions are excluded from AI services, e-learning, and the digital economy due to lack of Universal Acceptance

You may sometimes see the domain `भारत` represented as `xn--s9brj9c`.

`.भारत`
India



Check availability

`.भारत` domains

Other domains ▾

Search for...

`.भारत` ▾

Search

`.भारत` Domain Fact Sheet



Suffix :	<code>.भारत</code>
CountryName :	India
Registry Terms & Conditions :	
IDN Capable ¹ :	Yes
Delete Protection Available ² :	Yes

FROM DIGITAL DIVIDE TO AI DIVIDE

Artificial intelligence depends on inclusive Internet infrastructure

1

INFRASTRUCTURE GAP

Limited connectivity and compute capacity in developing regions turns basic access gaps into AI capability deficits

2

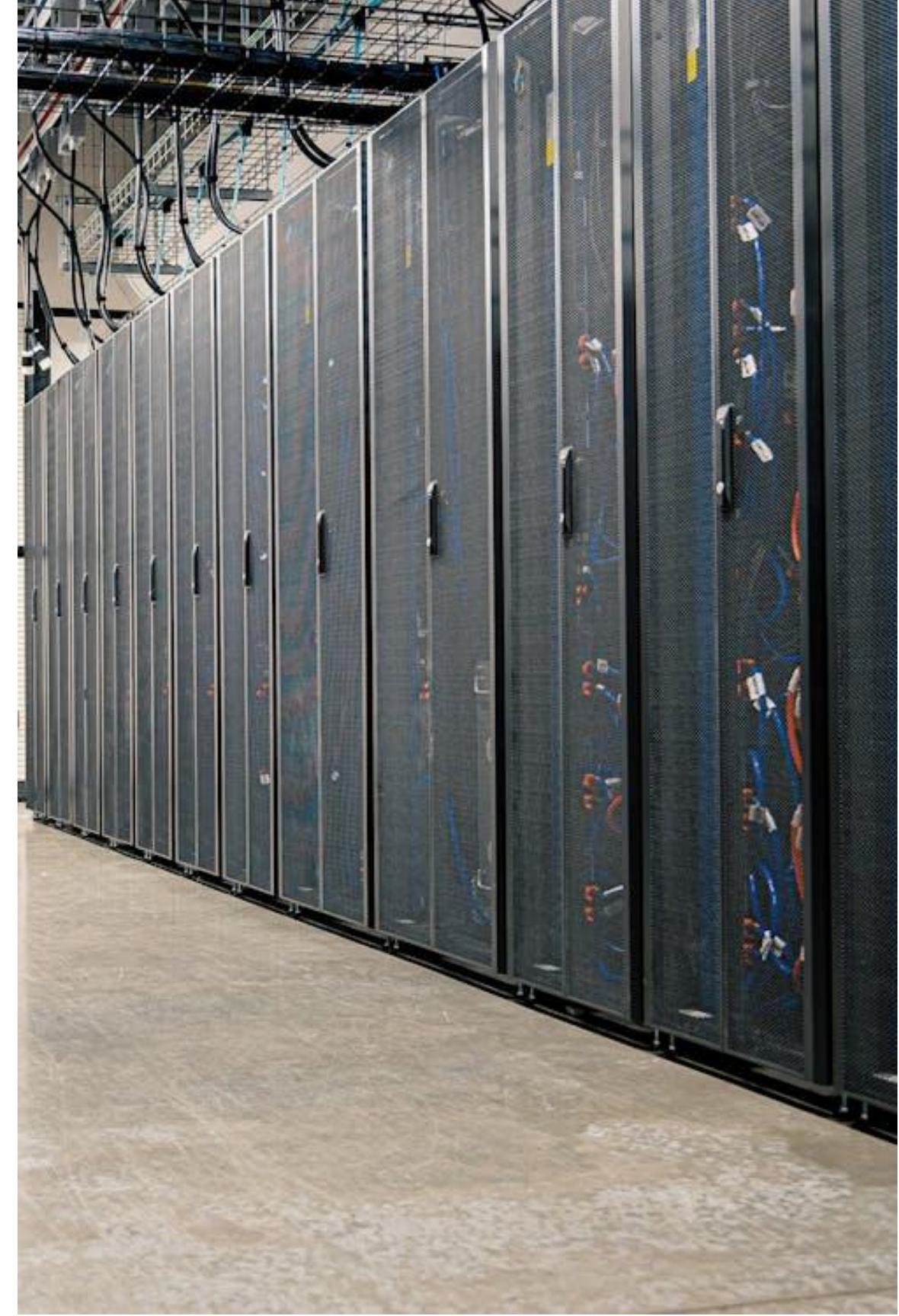
CAPABILITY GAP

AI resources and training data remain English-first, leaving regional languages underrepresented in models and tools

3

GOVERNANCE GAP

Underrepresentation in policy spaces means communities consume AI shaped externally without meaningful co-governance



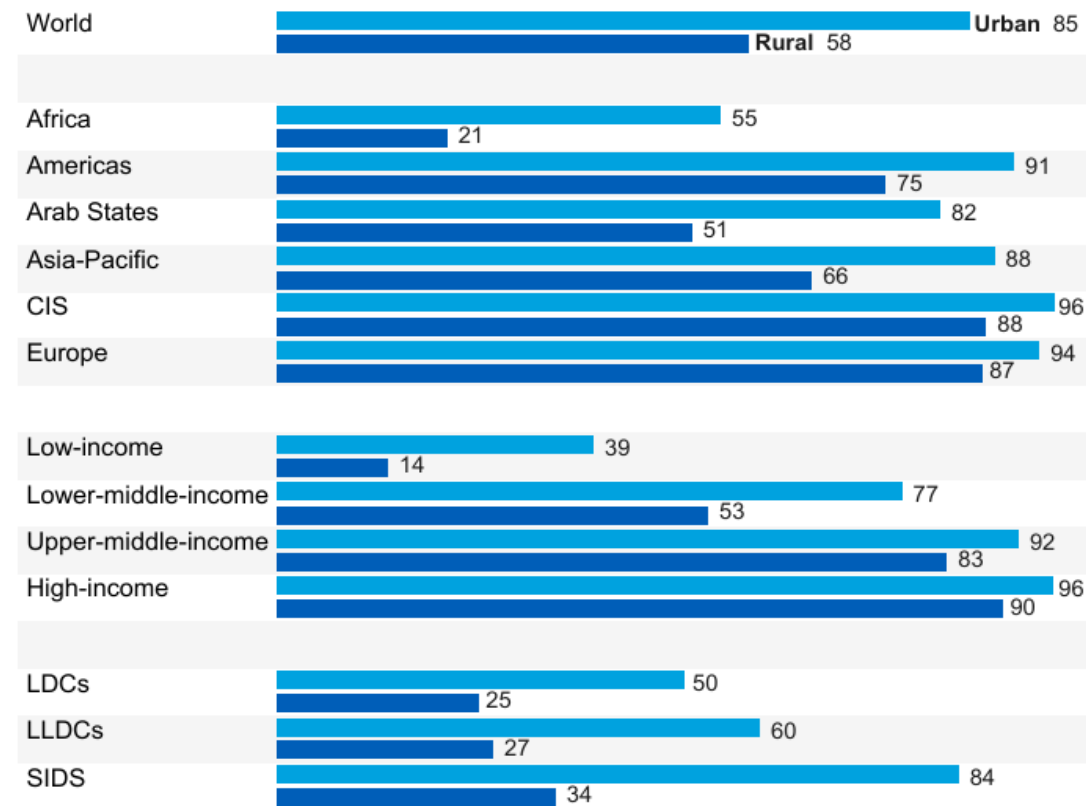
CASE STUDY — INDIA: DIGITAL PROGRESS MEETS PERSISTENT BARRIERS

Punjab and Tier-2 regions show 20–30% digital literacy gap despite national progress

Internet use in urban and rural areas

The urban-rural divide remains wide in regions with low penetration.

Percentage of individuals using the Internet in urban and rural areas, 2025



Note: [Interactive chart](#).
Source: ITU

Language Barrier

AI resources remain English-first despite 22 constitutionally recognized languages – ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਹਿੰਦੀ, தமிழ் speakers encounter limited local-language AI tools

Access Barrier

Users with Punjabi email addresses such as ਸਿੰਘ@ਭਾਰਤ.in are routinely excluded from registration and authentication workflows on major platforms

WHO GETS LEFT BEHIND IN THE AI ERA?

"Without Universal Acceptance, connectivity alone cannot bridge the AI divide"

Rural Communities

Access exists but identifier rejection and English-first platforms create secondary exclusion

Youth

Primary technology users with limited pathways into Internet governance and AI policy spaces

Non-English Speakers

AI models favor English; regional languages and scripts are underrepresented in training data

Women & Marginalized Groups

Higher barriers to digital participation compound into AI exclusion



UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE → CONCRETE SOLUTIONS

Building on UASG's foundation, ICANN's UA program provides these technical tools and global coordination

Technical Resources

- Free UA readiness testing tools
- Code libraries for developers
- Implementation guidelines
- Email validation frameworks

Capacity Building

- Global training campaigns
- Developer workshops
- Regional awareness programs
- Government partnerships

Multi-Stakeholder Action

- Youth participation through NextGen
- Tech company adoption
- Registry and registrar requirements
- Civil society engagement

CALL TO ACTION

1

ICANN Org : Test AI Platforms for UA

Add ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini to ICANN's UA quarterly evaluations - publish AI Platform Readiness Scores

2

ICANN Board: Add AI Equity KPI to FY27 Plan

Track "% of AI platforms accepting IDN emails" – correlate with ITU digital divide data

3

Developers: Use ICANN's UA Tools

Integrate free EAI validation libraries before launch – publish compliance status publicly

4

ICANN Community: Document on ICANNWiki

Create "AI Platform UA Status" page tracking acceptance/rejection with evidence

5

NextGen: Add UA Technical Track

Train participants on EAI validation and UA technical standards – build policy-tech talent pipeline

Universal Acceptance bridges the AI divide

LET'S CONNECT

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ਸਰਬੱਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ – Sarbat Da Bhala

Well-being for all - From Punjab's guiding principle to Global Internet Governance:
LET'S BUILD INCLUSIVE AI TOGETHER that serves every community, language, and person.