



REPORT

Mobile Users in Africa Survey

January 2021

Key Findings:

- Africa's mobile users continue using WhatsApp, despite privacy concerns
- 62% of respondents are somewhat or very concerned about the new WhatsApp privacy policy
- Fewer than 1 in 4 companies have clear policies on the use of WhatsApp for sharing sensitive information, however 24% of respondents said they are no longer allowed to use WhatsApp for work
- 15% of South Africans respondents have or will cancel their WhatsApp accounts

62%

of African respondents
are concerned about
**WhatsApp's
privacy policy**

15%

of South African
respondents have
or will **cancel their
WhatsApp accounts**

24%

of respondents are
**no longer allowed to
use WhatsApp for work**

70%

are concerned or very
**concerned about getting
mobile malware or
malicious apps on
my mobile device**

The 2021 KnowBe4 Mobile Users in Africa report polled mobile users in Nigeria, Mauritius, Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Morocco and Botswana to determine responses to the changes in WhatsApp privacy and data policies. The report set out to explore whether mobile users had concerns about mobile risks, specifically what these concerns were, and whether these concerns would prompt them to change the messaging platforms they use. It also sought to establish whether employers had implemented policies on the sharing of sensitive corporate information via messaging platforms.

The results indicated that the majority of mobile users had concerns about various data theft and cybercrime risks associated with using mobile devices, but that the convenience of mobile messaging outweighed the risks. The results also exposed a lack of clear policies among employers on the sharing of sensitive data via mobile messaging platforms, which could present compliance risks and expose organisations to potential data theft.

The survey polled 772 mobile users over the age of 18, over 99% of whom used smartphones. Nearly 60% were male and just over 40% were female.

Response To Planned WhatsApp Data Privacy Changes

Only 7.77% of respondents said they had already, or planned to, cancel their WhatsApp accounts as a result of planned updates to the WhatsApp privacy terms.

For most, the convenience of the platform outweighed concerns about privacy risks; with over half saying they had concerns but would continue using WhatsApp, even though they may have signed up to use other messaging tools. Just over a quarter of respondents had heard about the planned privacy terms changes, but did not understand what the risks were; and 11.4% were not at all concerned about potential risks.

For those also using alternative messaging tools, Facebook Messenger was the most popular, with over 80% electing to use this platform too. Over 56% also used Telegram, over 12% also used Signal and 10% or less used Discord, Threema or other messaging platforms.

Which other messaging tools are you using right now?

Answers	Respondents (%)
Facebook messenger	80.70%
Signal	12.43%
Telegram	56.99%
Discord	10.36%
Threema	0.91%
Other	10.36%

On whether they were interested in moving to another platform, respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of continuing to use WhatsApp. Around half indicated that they planned to stay on WhatsApp, even if they used alternative tools too; while over a quarter said they would only move off WhatsApp if their contacts moved too. At the extremes, around 11% said they would not move to another messaging platform at all; with another 11% saying they had already moved or were very interested in moving from WhatsApp. In South Africa, 15% of respondents said they had already moved or planned to move.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very interested), how likely are you to move to another messaging platform?

Answers		Respondents (%)
1 - Not at all	■	11.92%
2 - Only if my contacts are moving off WhatsApp	■	25.13%
3 - Looking at alternatives, but will most likely stay on WhatsApp	■	23.58%
4 - I have already installed alternative tools and am using both WhatsApp and the alternative at the same time	■	27.85%
5 - I'm very interested in alternative platforms or have already moved	■	11.53%

Survey Highlights Gaps in Business Policy

The survey found that less than a quarter of respondents' employers had a clear policy on WhatsApp use, with 23.3% saying they were not allowed to use WhatsApp to share sensitive work information.

The majority of the respondents believe they can use WhatsApp for work, with nearly half saying they either had no workplace policy on WhatsApp use or were unsure if they did, and more than 28% saying they were allowed to continue using WhatsApp for work.

Mobile Users Voice Security Concerns

Despite their plans to continue using WhatsApp, 62% of respondents said they were somewhat or very concerned about the new privacy policy.

Only around 6% said they were not at all concerned about 'having their privacy rights infringed and personal data harvested by big companies like Facebook', while the majority of respondents said they were 'somewhat concerned' to 'very concerned'. Likewise, most respondents were concerned about the risk of getting mobile malware or malicious apps on their mobile devices, and the potential for falling victim to a phishing or social engineering attack or scam, which could result in them losing money, airtime or data. Identity theft was also a key concern, with over 99% of respondents saying they were concerned about this risk. Nearly 70% said they were 'very concerned' about the risk.

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very concerned), how concerned are you about: “Having my identity stolen”?

Answers	Respondents (%)
1 - Not at all concerned	3.11%
2 - A little bit concerned	6.87%
3 - Somewhat	6.35%
4 - Concerned	14.12%
5 - Very concerned	69.56%

A Changing Landscape









When compared with the 2019 and 2020 African Cybersecurity Research Reports by KnowBe4, the Mobile Users in Africa 2021 survey shows a pattern of increasing awareness of cybersecurity risk overall. In these reports, awareness and concern about cybercrime increased from 38% in 2019, to 48% in 2020, to 64% in 2021.

However, there remains limited awareness of how to avoid risk and the implications of data privacy terms and conditions. Users expressing concern about WhatsApp privacy but at the same time listing Facebook Messenger as an alternative tool, proves a limited understanding of the actual privacy implications. This indicates a need for further education and awareness initiatives to enlighten the public about risks on social media and messaging platforms.

KnowBe4’s 2020 African Cybersecurity Research showed that 85% of respondents used WhatsApp for work and 87% relied on email for work purposes. In their private lives, WhatsApp was the predominant communication channel (96%) more so than email (61%). The latest poll indicates that WhatsApp use for work may have dropped somewhat to around 76% and to around 86% for personal use.

> Contact us at KnowBe4 Africa for locally relevant training content and our award-winning integrated simulated platform to help you make your users more aware of mobile risk.

COUNTRIES INCLUDED IN SURVEY

	Botswana 89 11.53%		Egypt 98 12.69%		Ghana 98 12.69%
	Kenya 99 12.82%		Morocco 99 12.82%		Mauritius 77 9.97%
	Nigeria 107 13.86%		South Africa 105 13.60%		

Additional Resources



Free Phishing Security Test

Find out what percentage of your employees are Phish-prone with your free Phishing Security Test



Free Automated Security Awareness Program

Create a customized Security Awareness Program for your organization



Free Phish Alert Button

Your employees now have a safe way to report phishing attacks with one click



Free Email Exposure Check

Find out which of your users emails are exposed before the bad guys do



Free Domain Spoof Test

Find out if hackers can spoof an email address of your own domain



About KnowBe4

KnowBe4 is the world's largest integrated security awareness training and simulated phishing platform. Realizing that the human element of security was being seriously neglected, KnowBe4 was created to help organizations manage the ongoing problem of social engineering through a comprehensive new-school awareness training approach.

This method integrates baseline testing using real-world mock attacks, engaging interactive training, continuous assessment through simulated phishing, and vishing attacks and enterprise-strength reporting, to build a more resilient organization with security top of mind.

Tens of thousands of organizations worldwide use KnowBe4's platform across all industries, including highly regulated fields such as finance, healthcare, energy, government and insurance to mobilize their end users as a last line of defense and enable them to make smarter security decisions.

For more information, please visit www.KnowBe4.com



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