

COVID-19, Connectivity, & Learning Continuity

Considerations in access, reach, and equity

UNICEF ECARO Education Section

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COVID-19 impacts on education systems in Europe & Central Asia



18 countries
reporting nationwide
closures

More than
48 million children
affected



17 countries
made or making plans
for distance learning

At least 50% of ECA
countries using
television and/or
online learning...



...but transitioning to distance learning requires consideration of access, use, and equity.



Internet connectivity is both an important tool and a source of further and deepened inequity



In ECA, women are 4% less likely than men to use the internet.



Those living in rural areas are 26% less likely to use mobile internet than those in urban areas*.

Fast facts: Devices and internet use in ECA

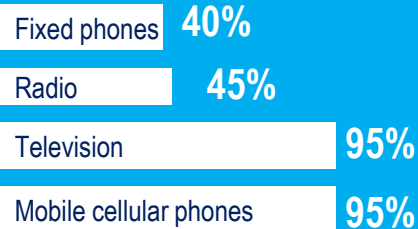


Approximately

48,246,487

children are affected by school closures in ECA as of 1 April 2020. This includes close to 5.5 million in pre-primary education, 15.8 million in primary education, and 27 million in secondary education.

Households with



Computers & internet



of households have internet access, but just 60% own computers. Among individuals, the rates are 67 and 63% respectively.

Social media access



Of social media access occurs via mobile phones.

Social media reach



of the population aged 13+ can be reached via Instagram, compared to 25% via Facebook, though rates change by country.

Web traffic by device



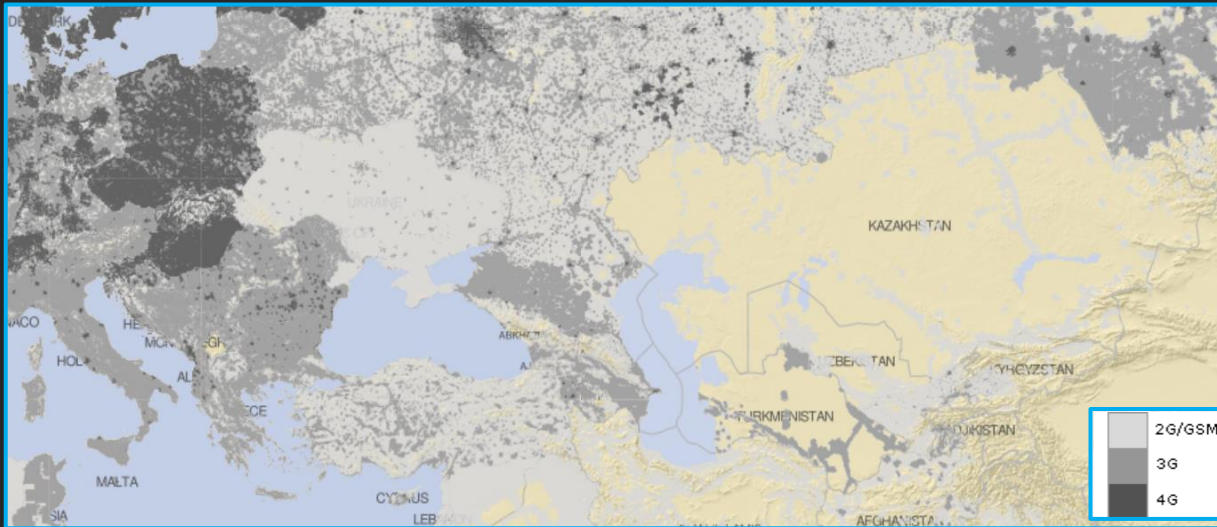
of web traffic on average in ECA is from computers, compared to 46% from mobile devices.

Urbanization

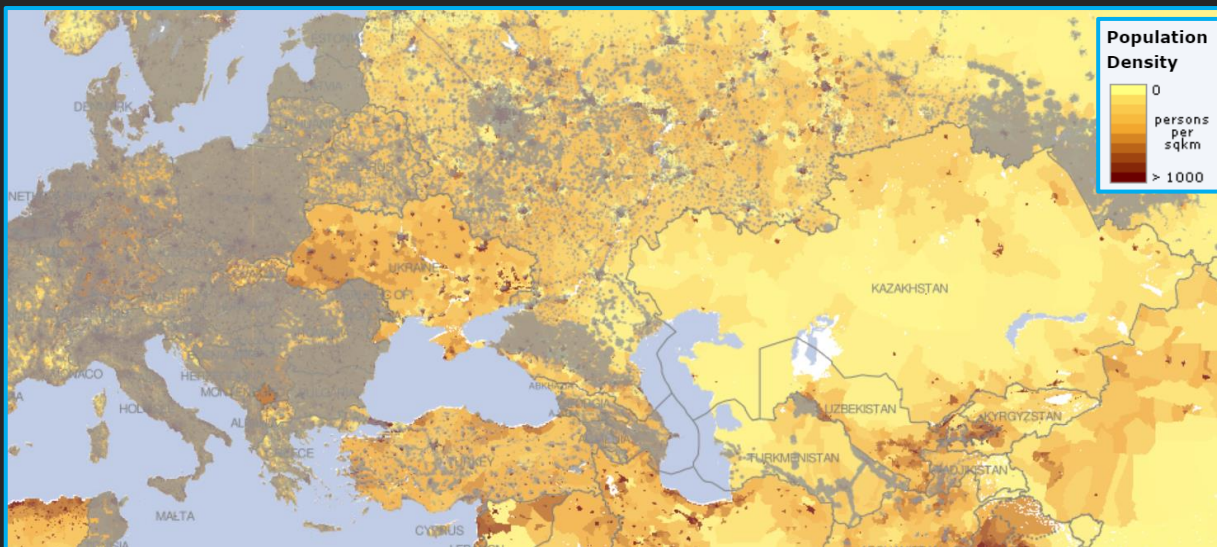


Average rate of urbanization across ECA countries with available data

Network access



- Mobile network coverage by type of network



- Broadband coverage (at least 3G) compared to population density (grey area = at least 3G coverage)

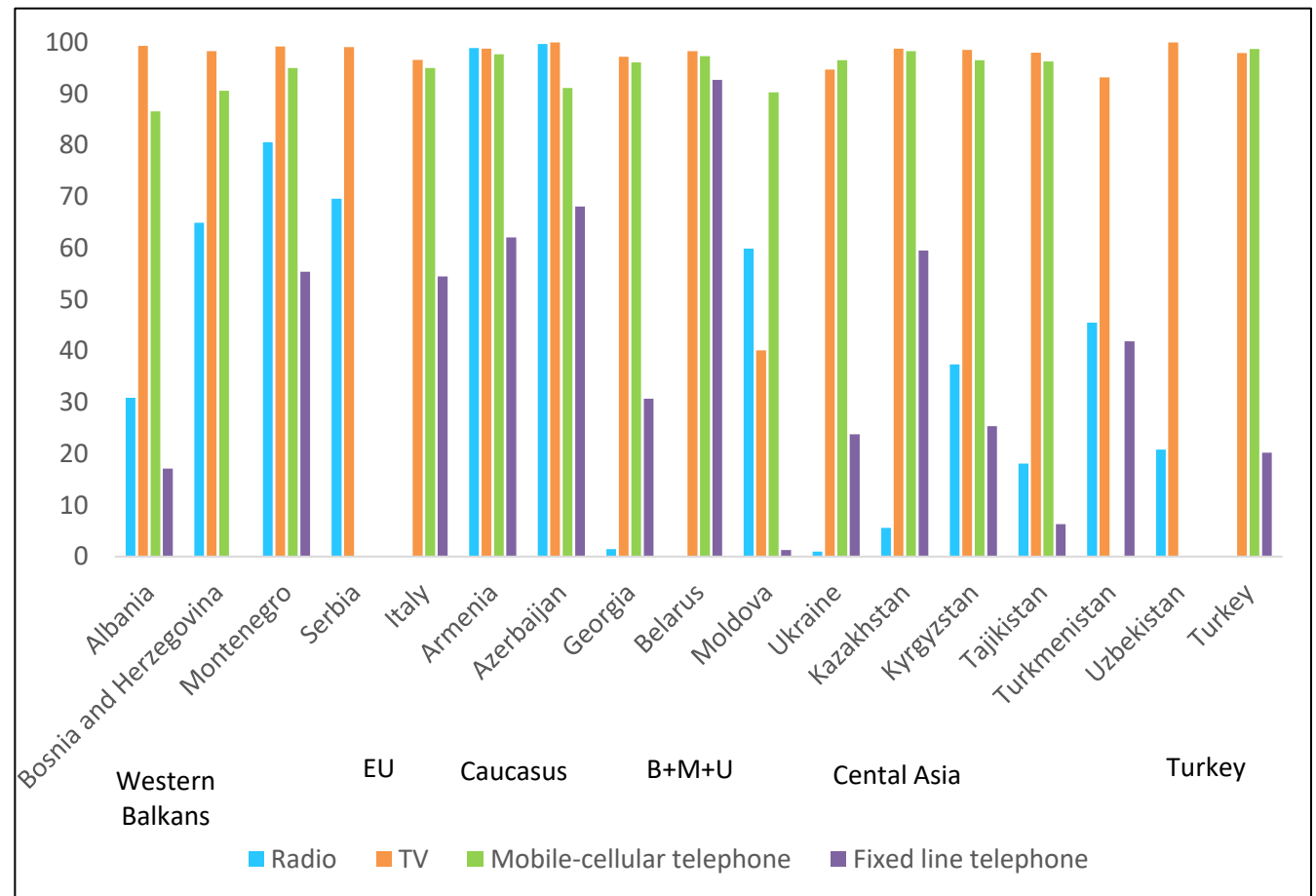


Household and individual possessions



Percentage of households possessing radio, television, mobile phones and telephones

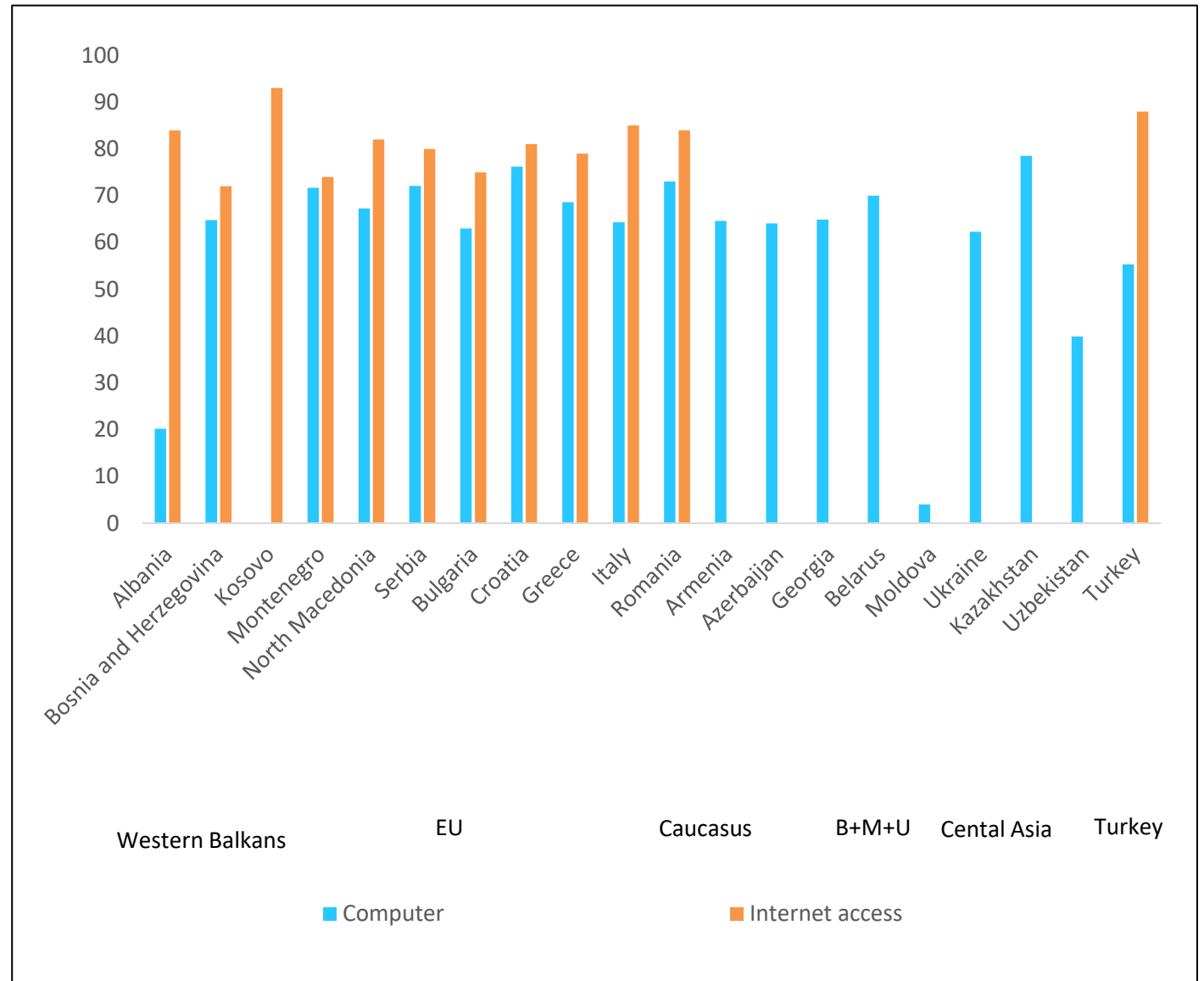
In most ECA countries, almost all households own televisions, but they less consistently own radios, mobile cellular phones, and fixed telephones



Source: ITU, 2018, with the exception of the following countries and data points: Albania radio data was supplemented from World Bank (DHS 2017-2018); Kyrgyzstan data from 2012 DHS; Tajikistan from 2017 DHS; Turkmenistan 2000 DHS; and Turkey TV data from DHS 2013.

Percentage of households with computers and internet access

While the percentage of households with internet access is often high, rates of households with computers are often lower.



Note: Missing data indicates data not available rather than a value of 0.

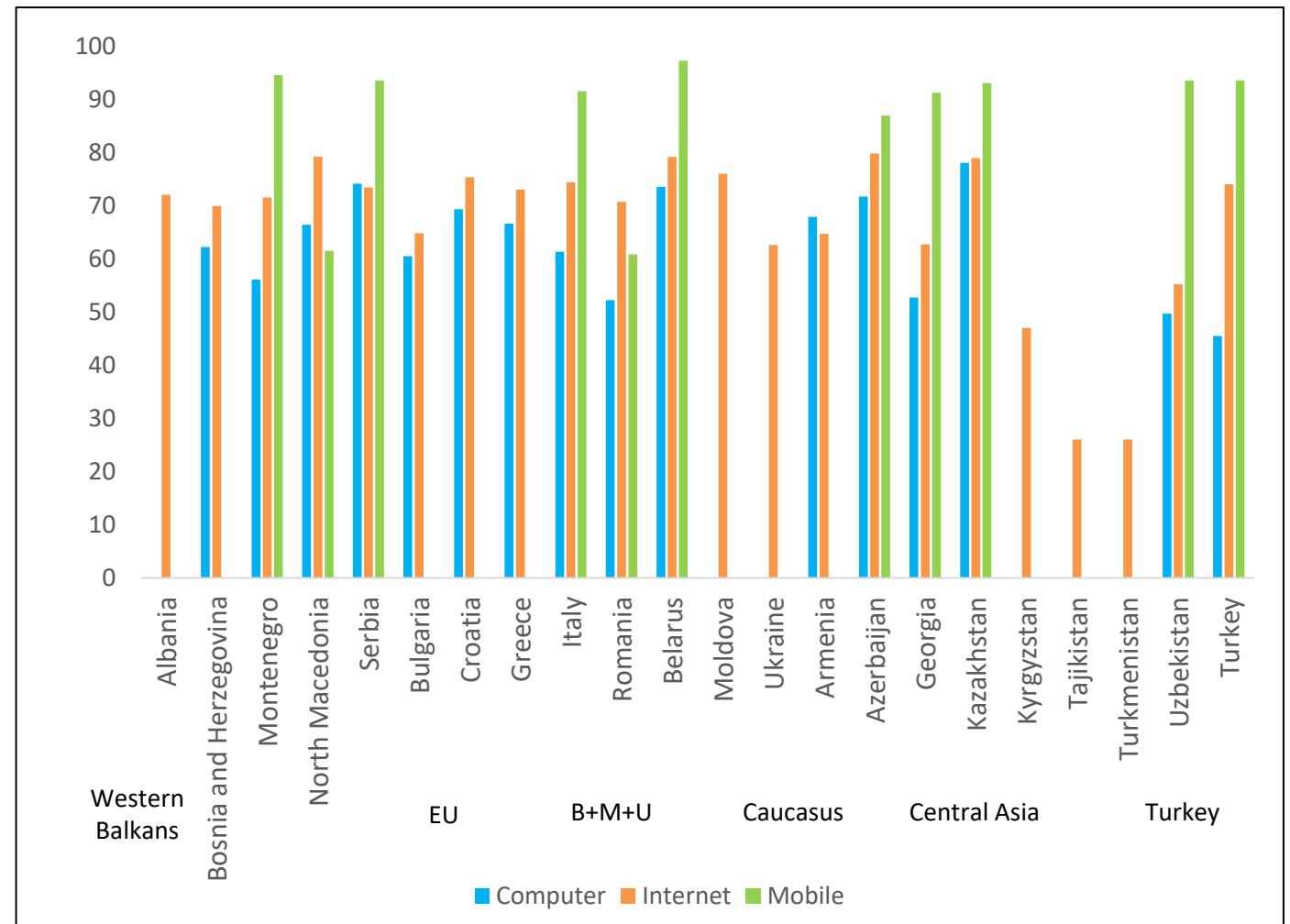
Source: Computer data: ITU, 2018. Internet access data: Eurostat, 2019.

Internet, computer, and mobile users (percentage of population)

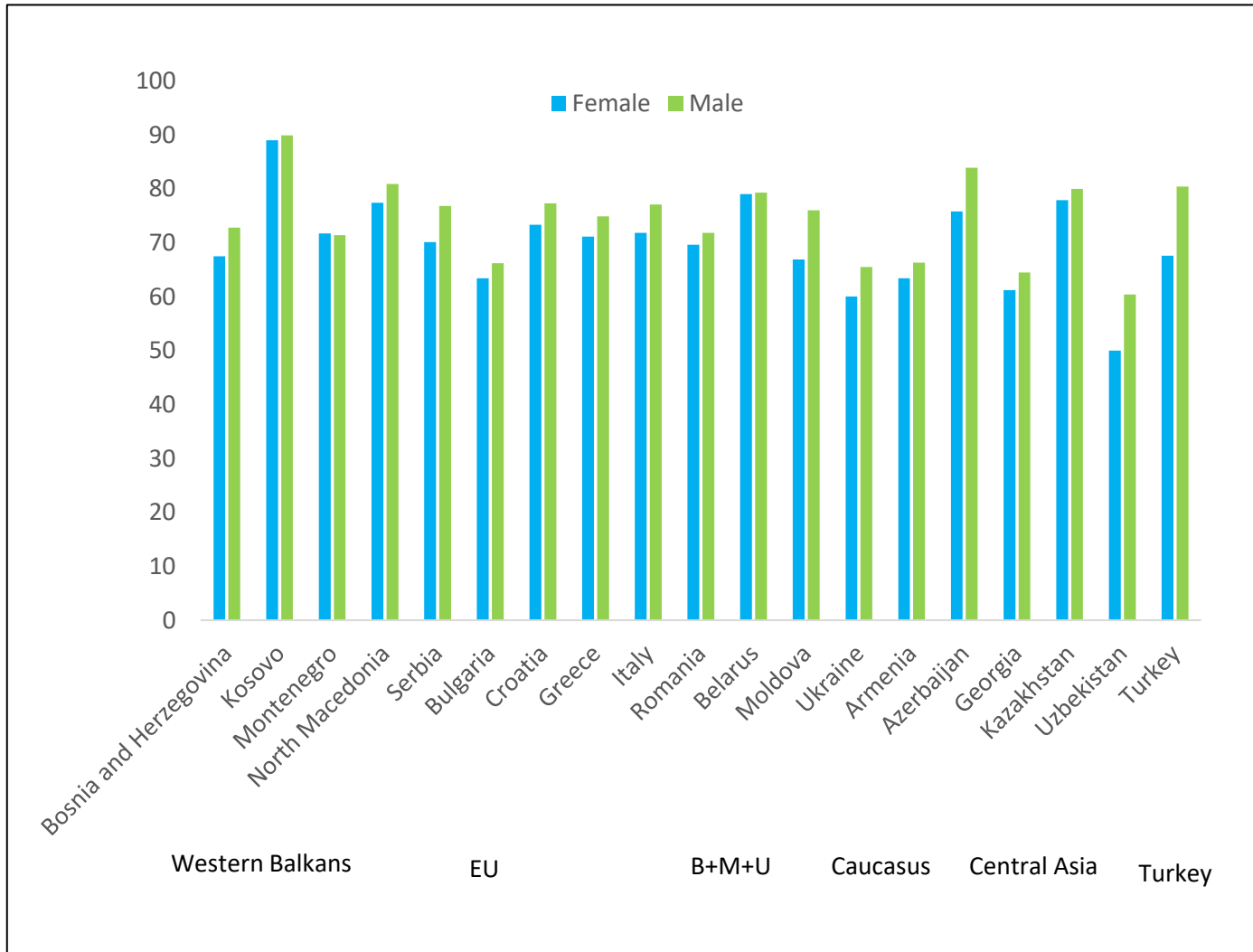
In most countries, the percentage of individuals who own a computer is lower than the household rate, sometimes considerably so.

- Can create challenges with multiple parents and children working or learning from home

Individuals are often more likely to own a mobile device than a computer.



Source: ITU, 2018, with the exception of the following internet user data, which was supplemented from Data Reportals, 2020: Albania, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan



Internet use by gender

In almost all ECA countries, the percentage of men accessing the internet is higher than women. On average regionally, the rate is 4 percentage points higher among men, but is much larger in some countries.

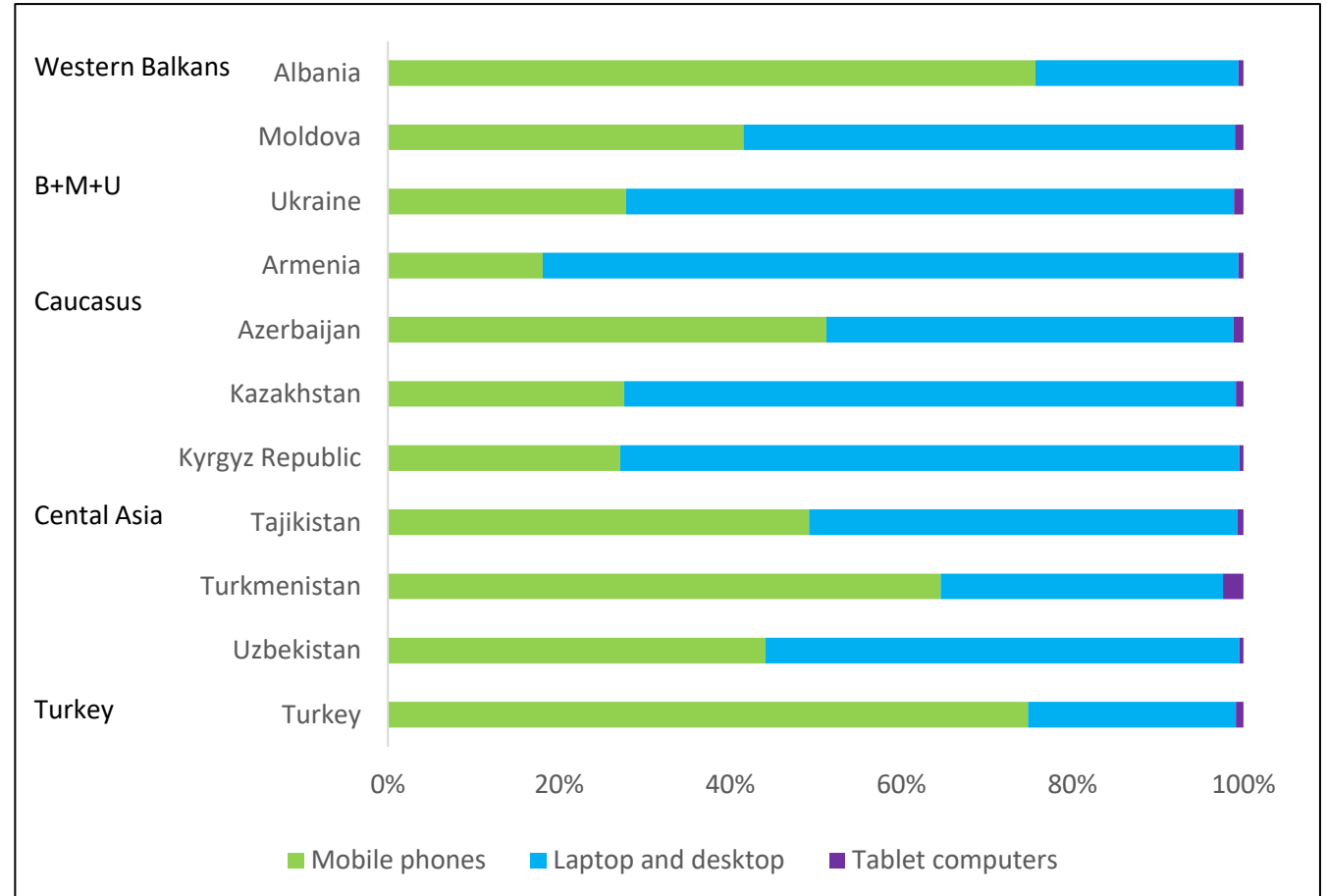
Note: Data is most recent available since 2016. Population source age range varies by country (see Appendix A)

Source: ITU, 2018.

Share of web traffic by device

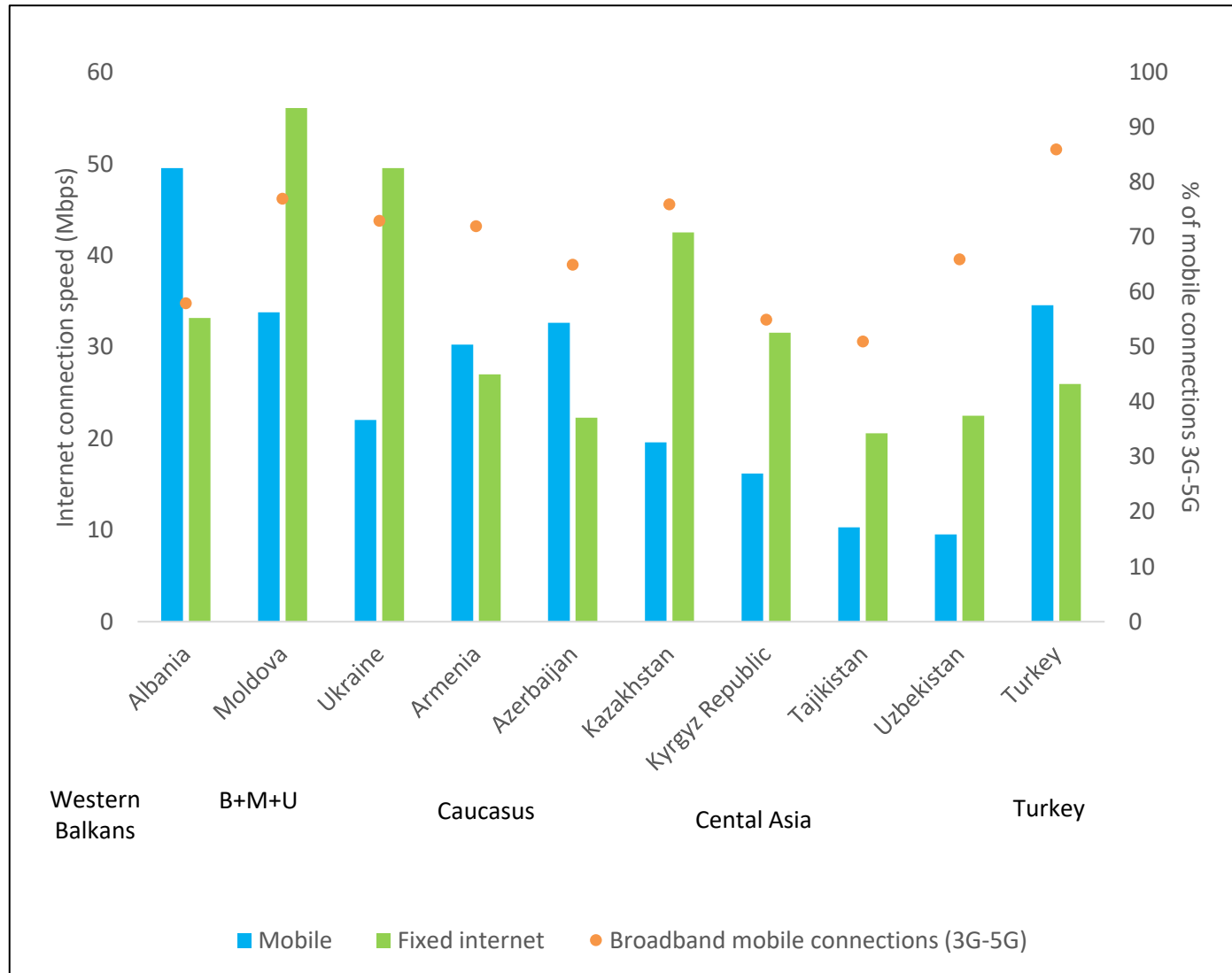
Household possessions, internet access, and gender inequality should be key considerations in choosing media of delivery for distance learning.

The share of web traffic by device type gives further information for making decisions about platforms and content formatting.



Source: Datareportal.com 2020 Country Reports

Mobile and fixed internet speed vs. the percentage of broadband connections



Internet speed

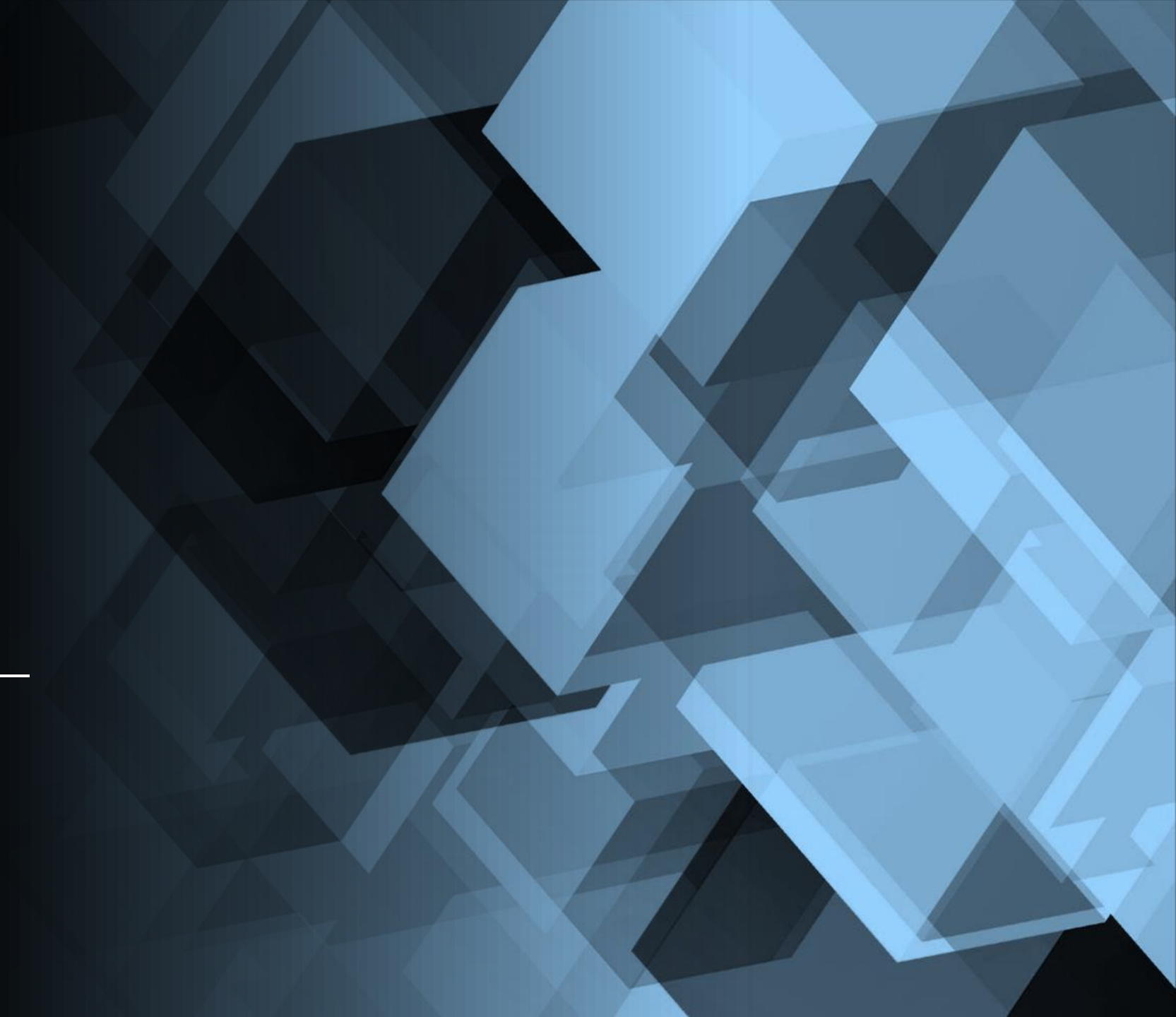
Internet speed varies greatly by country, as well as within countries, which can impact accessibility and learning quality, especially for videos or live streams.

Note: Not pictured is Turkmenistan, with no internet speed data available. Data for Turkmenistan show that 48% of mobile connections are broadband (3G-5G).

Source: *Datareportal.com 2020 Country Reports*

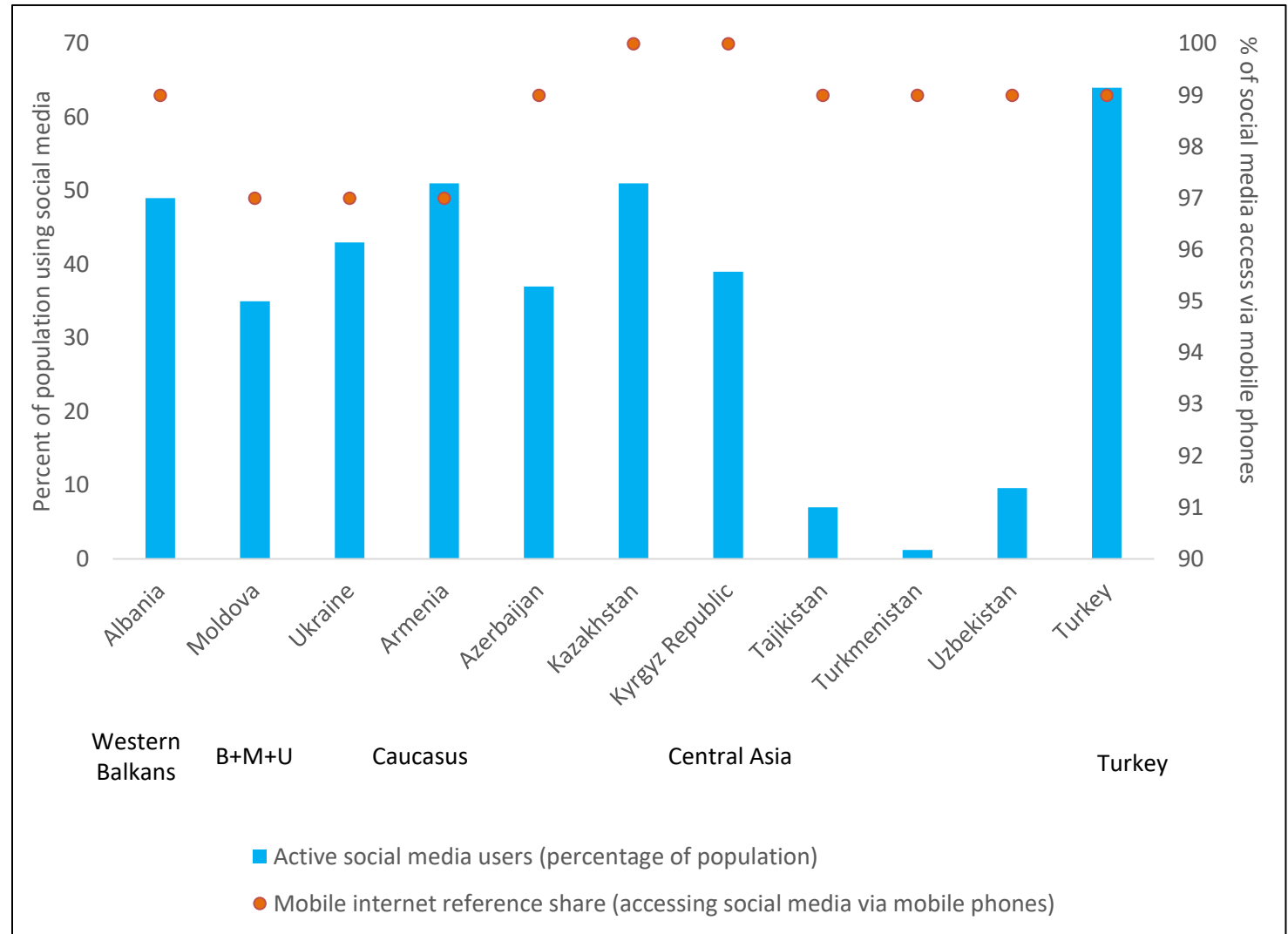


Social media for communication and learning

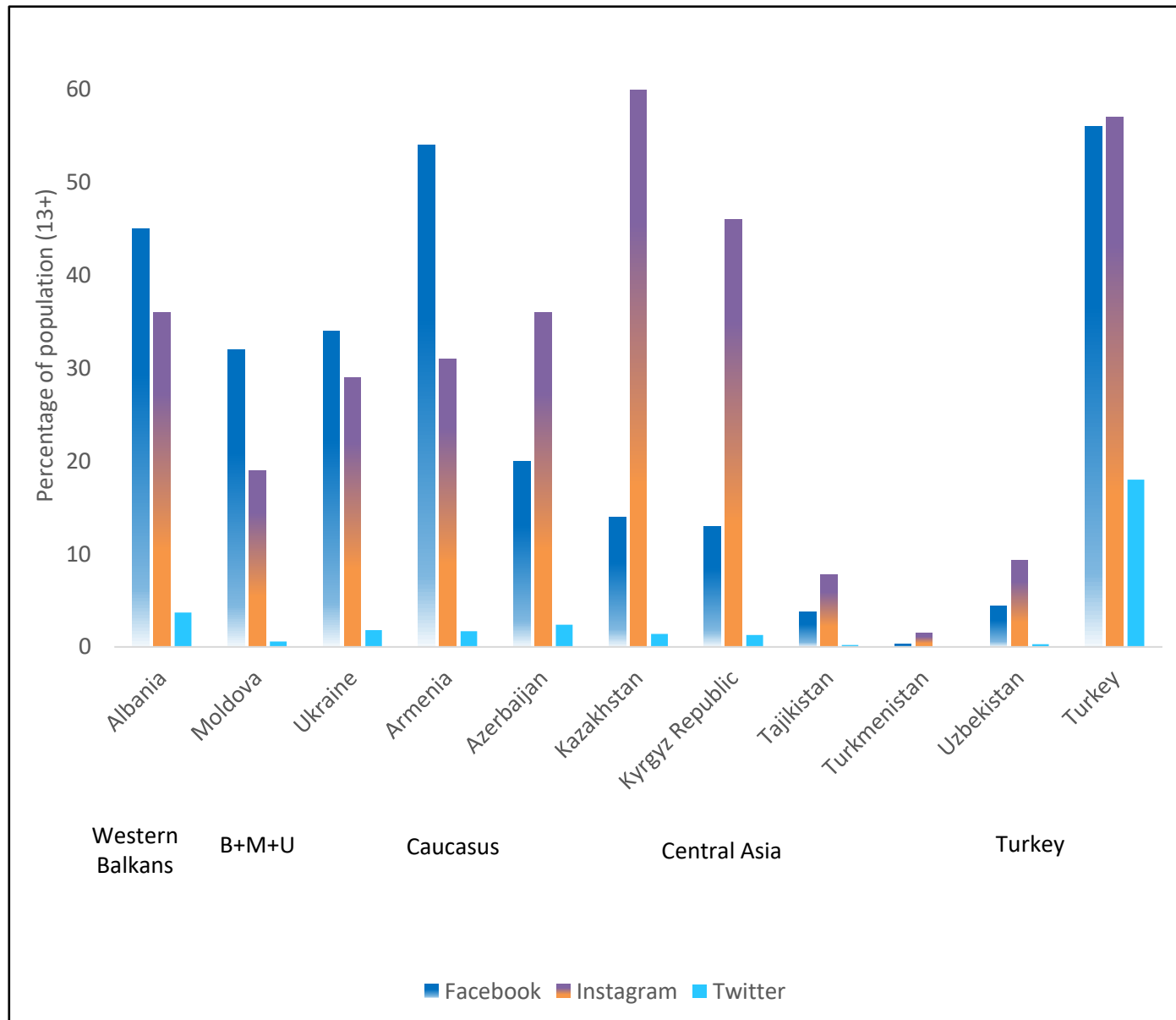


Active social media users compared to share of social media access via mobile phones

Social media may provide valuable platforms for communicating with families, not only in terms of general information related to health, safety, and education, but also to ensure continuity of learning, including those who may not otherwise engage with content.



Source: Datareportal.com 2020 Country Reports



Source: Datareportal.com 2020 Country Reports

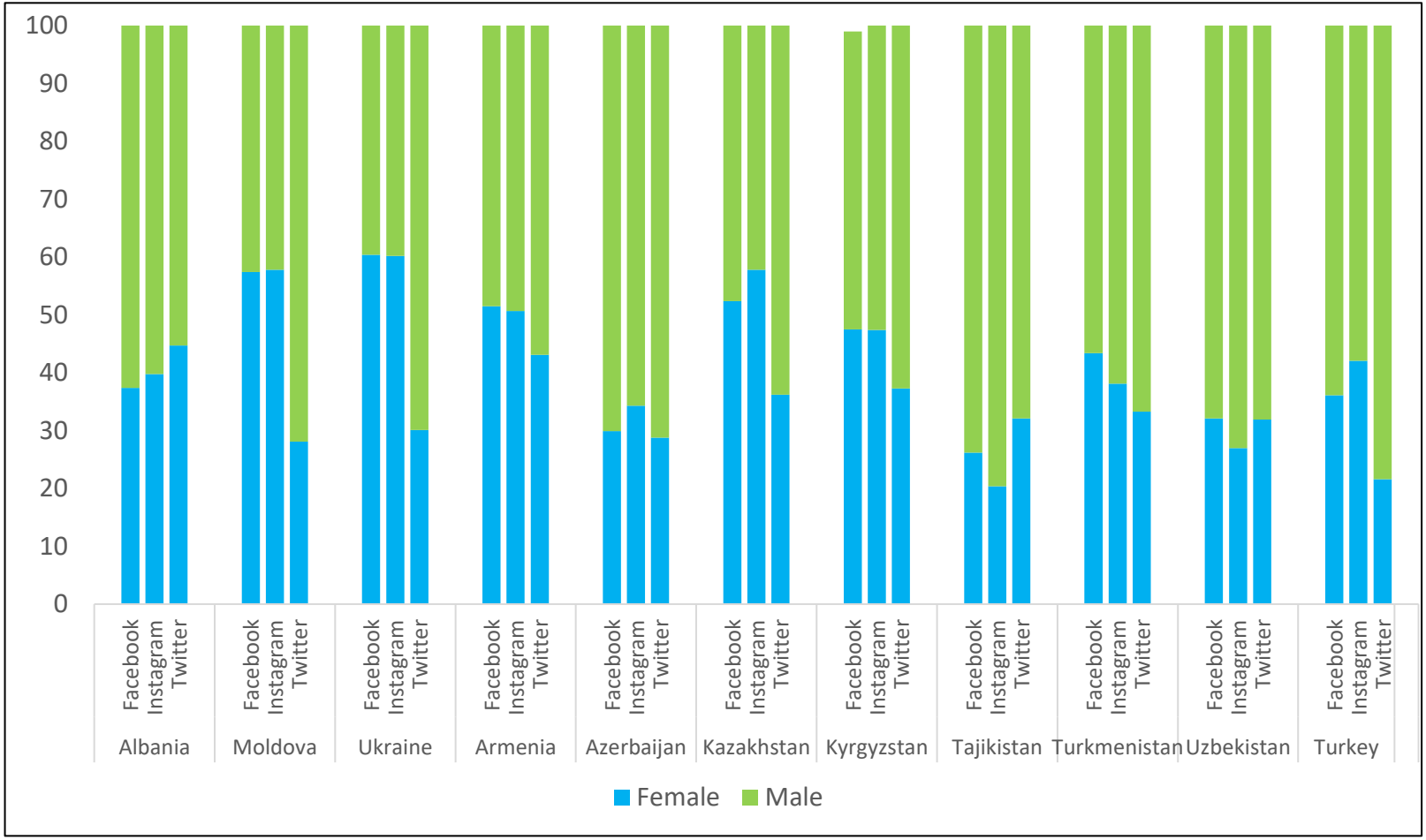
Reach of social media ads among population age 13+

Facebook is often—but not always—the furthest reaching social media platform.

Careful consideration must be given to choosing platforms that can reach the most families and learners.

Reach of social media does not necessarily imply equity. The percentage of social media audience members varies by gender, implying critical considerations for content reach.

Reach of social media ads by gender



Source: Datareportal.com 2020 Country Reports

Access and equity for vulnerable populations



How can populations in areas with less internet coverage, including rural populations, families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and ethnic and linguistic minorities, be included in plans for content delivery?



How can children from homes where parents have lower levels of ICT literacy or where parental support for learning is low be supported to access and meaningfully engage with content?



How can we ensure that girls—who access the internet at lower rates than boys, have lower perceived self-efficacy in ICT skills, and often express less interest and enjoyment with computers—are motivated and supported to engage with digital content?



Takeaways and further considerations



How many families have access to devices needed to access television, radio, and online content?

If online learning is used, is file size and definition compatible with the internet speeds in all areas?



How do families most often access the internet (and social media) and which format for content should be prioritized?

Do learners and parents/caregivers have the skills necessary to engage with content on unfamiliar platforms or in new formats? If not, how might this be mitigated?



Is content available in multiple formats to be accessible for users of different devices (e.g., formatted for both computers and smartphones)?

Within online content, are the platforms chosen equitable in terms of accessibility and reach?



Leveraging the COVID-19 response for progress toward SDG4



How can the current crisis be an opportunity for embedding digital skills development into distance learning, with careful attention to not further marginalize those who lack access?

How can widespread mobilization and engagement of stakeholders and partners in distance learning be an opportunity for accessibility and learning continuity for all, especially vulnerable and OOS populations, after the current emergency has passed?