

# Financial Consumer Protection Survey (FCPS) Uganda 2025

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### Table of Contents

- 3 Executive Summary
- 10 Key Terms
- 12 Subgroups
- 13 Study Methodology
- 15 Sample Characteristics
- Digital Financial Service Usage and Consumer Choice
- 53 Challenges and Risks
- 94 Complaints Redress
- 106 Trust in Digital Financial Services

74%
61%
45%
27%
27%
34%
53%
62%
27%
31%
61%
9%

Challenges with agents	
Paid an extra fee in last agent transaction	8%
Experience agent discrimination sometimes, often, or always	22%
Complaints redress	
Sought redress in the last 12 months, among those that	27%
lost money due to fraud, unclear fees, or service quality challenges	
Of redress seekers, somewhat or very satisfied with last redress outcome	61%
Redress seekers changed, stopped, or reduced usage of DFS	
- Of redress seekers, <b>satisfied</b> with redress outcome:	16%
- Of redress seekers, <b>dissatisfied</b> with redress outcome:	36%
Trust	
Share of respondents who report full trust in each provider	
type (regarding privacy, fraud protection, and problem resolution):	
- Agents	26%
- Mobile money providers	56%
- Mobile loan providers	25%
- Mobile banking providers	56%

## Sample characteristics

- **Demographics:** 69 percent had completed at least some secondary education or more, similar to the 71 percent in the Findex 2025 survey, and more than half were between 26 and 45 years of age. 50 percent of interviewed respondents were female, and 50 percent urban (comparing to 19 percent of typical urban DFS users in Findex).
- **Smartphone usage:** Over half of respondents use smartphones, with urban, higher educated, middle-aged, and less poor consumers significantly more likely to own smartphones.
- SIM card registration: Nearly 40 percent use SIM cards not registered in their own names, particularly common among younger adults, less educated, and less financially literate individuals.
- Financial health challenges: Half of consumers would have difficulties accessing emergency funds equivalent to 1/20th of GNI per capita (USD 52) within 30 days. Younger adults, female, poorer, and less financially literate respondents showed the greatest difficulty meeting this financial health benchmark.

## Digital Financial Services Usage and Consumer Choice

- Services used: Mobile money was the most common DFS, with nearly all respondents using agents and 57 percent having taken mobile loans. Mobile banking remained low at 17 percent, while credit cards, overdraft services and buy-now-pay-later were rare.
- **Provider concentration:** Two providers dominate both mobile money and mobile loan markets with nearly 100 percent market share.
- **Provider choice:** 76 percent of users choose payment service providers based on easy and quick access rather than pricing, with 27-40 percent comparing prices across services. One third of users report barriers to comparing prices between different services.
- **Stopped using a service:** 47 percent of respondents had stopped using a payment service provider, primarily due to account access problems, while 69 percent had switched agents, mainly due to distance or business closure.

## Challenges and risks

- Fraud exposure: 85 percent of respondents experienced fraud attempts, with 61 percent targeted in the past year and 22 percent losing money due to fraud. The median loss in the last incident among fraud victims was USD 22, representing 23 percent of median monthly household income.
- Over-indebtedness: 45 percent of mobile loan users defaulted in the past year, with one third holding multiple active loans simultaneously. 31 percent reduced food expenditure and 22 percent experienced debt collector harassment to repay loans.
- **Price transparency:** Only 53 percent consistently knew fees before transactions, while 27 percent experienced unclear account deductions. Consumers rarely seek formal redress when problems occur, even when money is lost from their accounts.
- Service quality and agent reliability: 83 percent encountered any type of service quality challenge, with 74 percent experiencing poor network quality affecting DFS usage. 27 percent of agents lack visible price lists, and are not always able to complete transactions.

## Complaints redress

- Redress-seeking rates: Of respondents who lost money due to fraud, unexpected fees, or service quality challenges in the past 12 months, only 27 percent sought redress to resolve the issue. Male respondents were more likely to seek redress.
- Recovery of funds: While half of redress cases involved lost funds, only 20 percent of those who lost money recovered some or all of it. Older adults, higher educated, and more financially literate respondents were more likely to recover funds.
- Complaints resolution: Among redress seekers, 61 percent reported satisfaction with outcomes, and complaint resolution consistently took longer than expected. Nearly one fifth spent money averaging USD 4.32 on resolution processes.
- Impact on service usage: 23 percent of redress seekers changed their DFS usage patterns after their complaint experience. Dissatisfied complainants and those experiencing financial losses were more likely to reduce their DFS usage.

## Trust in Digital Financial Services

- Trust levels by provider: Consumer trust was highest in mobile money and mobile banking providers, with between 51 percent and 66 percent giving them full trust ratings. Only 23 percent to 28 percent trusted fully in mobile loan providers and agents.
- Help with challenges: Across all services, consumers were least confident in providers' ability to help them resolve challenges related to DFS usage, and most confident in their ability to keep money safe from fraud, with ability to keep information private between the two.
- Demographic trust patterns: Urban, female, higher educated, and middle-aged consumers tended to be less trustful, as measured by a trust index score constructed from all trust indicators.
- **DFS challenges and impact on trust levels:** Consumers who experienced DFS challenges show markedly lower trust scores, with particularly strong negative correlations for agent overcharging, customer care problems, and fraud experiences.

### **KEY TERMS**

## **Key Terms**

**BNPL:** Buy-now-pay-later, or installment payment services, allow users to purchase goods or services immediately and repay the cost later through deductions from their accounts over several weeks or months. These services are typically provided by a financial company instantly at the time of purchase.

**Credit card:** A credit card is a card that allows users to borrow money in order to make payments or purchases. The balance is repaid later.

**Debit card:** A debit or ATM card is a card connected to an account that allows users to withdraw money or buy things, and the money is taken out of the account immediately.

**DFS agents:** DFS agents provide cash-in (deposit) and cash-out (withdrawal) services for customers, acting as human ATMs. Agents may also support customers complete other types of transactions, open accounts for new customers, and help customers resolve problems.

**Digital credit:** financial service that enables you to obtain loans through digital rather than in-person channels, most often via a mobile phone.

**Digital financial services (DFS):** Financial services—such as deposits, payments, and credit—delivered through digital channels, most commonly via mobile phones.

### **KEY TERMS**

## **Key Terms**

**Mobile banking:** A service that allows users to access and manage their bank account via a mobile phone using USSD codes or a bank app. A bank account is required to use mobile banking services.

**Mobile money:** An electronic wallet service that uses a phone number as the account number, allowing users to hold money electronically, send and receive funds, and make payments without needing a bank account - just a phone number and ID are required.

**Overdraft services:** Overdrafts allow users to spend more than their account balance by automatically covering the cost of a purchase if it exceeds the account balance. This credit is repaid later.

**USSD:** Unstructured Supplementary Service Data. A communication service that enables customers to use mobile financial services (MFS) on nearly any phone, by sending instructions to the MFS provider along with their personal identification number (PIN) for authentication, while enabling MFS providers to send responses to clients and confirm transactions. Examples of usage includes making payments or sending funds with mobile money, checking account balances, and buying airtime and internet bundles.

### **SUBGROUPS**

## Subgroups

Throughout this report, segmentation analysis is conducted using the following six respondent characteristics:

**GENDER:** In our survey, respondents self-identified as either male or female.

**AGE:** Grouped into brackets of 18-25 years, 26-45 years, and older than 46 years.

**URBAN:** Respondents were automatically categorized as urban or rural. We sampled from the country's two largest cities by population size (urban) and randomly selected districts with a population density below the country median (rural)

**EDUCATION:** We grouped respondents into those who have completed primary education or less, those who have completed some level of secondary education, and those who have completed secondary education or a higher level. Higher levels includes diplomas and university education.

**POVERTY:** Our definition was based on the Poverty Probability Index (PPI®) score. Individuals were grouped into more and less likely to be poor, where more poor individuals had a poverty probability higher than the sample median

**FINANCIAL LITERACY:** We grouped respondents into less financially literate (scoring less than 3/4 questions correctly) and financially literate (scoring at least 3/4 questions correctly), based on Standard & Poor's global financial literacy survey

IPA ○ Financial Consumer Protection Surveys ○ Uganda 2025 ○ INTRODUCTION ○ Page: 12 ○ Back to ToC

## Study Methodology: Financial Consumer Protection Study

Summary: FCPS studies are conducted as in-person market intercept surveys targeting 1,000 DFS active customers (respondents who had used digital financial services in the past 12 months). By design, the samples include equal representation by gender as well as rural and urban locations. We present unweighted statistics.

**Sampling:** Our sampling methodology involves a multi-tiered purposive sampling process to select markets where intercept surveys are conducted. An equal number of urban and rural markets are selected, each with different sampling approaches:

**Urban locations:** We select the country's **two largest cities** by population. In each selected city, field teams identify five markets (where food, clothing, or other consumer goods are typically sold), one market in the city's central business district and one market in each cardinal direction from the central business district (with modifications based on geography as needed).

**Rural locations:** We select administrative units at the level with a count closest to 100 units, and randomly select **two administrative units**, subject to three constraints: (1) below median population density, (2) no safety and security concerns, and (3) no IPA or partner survey firm operational limitations. To sample markets, we **randomly generate ten geocoordinates** per administrative unit, excluding areas with high population density (>1,000/km²). Field teams then identify the **nearest market** within a 15km radius of these coordinates.

Respondent selection and recruitment: Enumerators station themselves in sampled markets, intercepting individuals to screen them for eligibility. Interviews are conducted until a total of 25 surveys have been completed in each market. Respondents must be at least 18 years old, and have used mobile money, mobile banking, or a DFS agent within the past 12 months. We sample an equal number of men and women.

## Study Methodology: The Uganda FCP Survey

**Sampled Districts:** In Uganda, we conducted the FCP survey in **urban markets** in **Kampala** and **Mbarara**, and in **rural markets** in **Kumi** and **Kibaale** districts.

Representation: Our survey is not representative of the population of DFS users in Uganda.

Our **purposive sampling approach** is designed to allow us to make comparisons across important consumer segments, without taking a resource-intensive, nationally representative sampling approach. As a rough assessment of representativeness, we present detailed sample demographics and compare them with those of DFS users in the nationally representative 2025 Global Findex survey.



Urban cities are displayed in dark green, rural districts in lighter green

## **Sample Characteristics**

Back to Table of Contents

18 Age and education

19 Households

20 Employment

21 Phone usage

25 Financial health

26 Financial literacy

28 Correlations

## **Key Findings**

- 1. Demographics: 69 percent had completed at least some secondary education or more, similar to the 71 percent in the Findex 2025 survey, and more than half were between 26 and 45 years of age. 50 percent of interviewed respondents were female, and 50 percent urban (comparing to 19 percent of typical urban DFS users in Findex).
- 2. Smartphone usage: Over half of respondents use smartphones, with urban, higher educated, middle-aged, and less poor consumers significantly more likely to own smartphones.

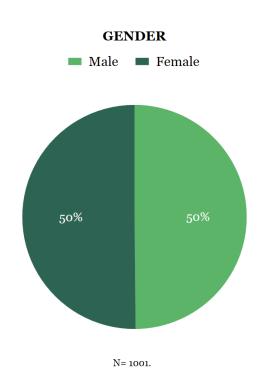
- 3. SIM card registration: Nearly 40 percent use SIM cards not registered in their own names, particularly common among younger adults, less educated, and less financially literate individuals.
- 4. Financial health challenges: Half of consumers would have difficulties accessing emergency funds equivalent to 1/20th of GNI per capita (USD 52) within 30 days. Younger adults, female, poorer, and less financially literate respondents showed the greatest difficulty meeting this financial health benchmark.

### **SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

## By design, our sample is balanced by gender and urbanicity.

We surveyed a total of 1,001 DFS users in Uganda.

Our survey sampled equal shares of men and women.



We surveyed 501 respondents in the two biggest cities, Kampala and Mbarara, and another 500 in two randomly selected rural districts, Kumi and Kibaale.

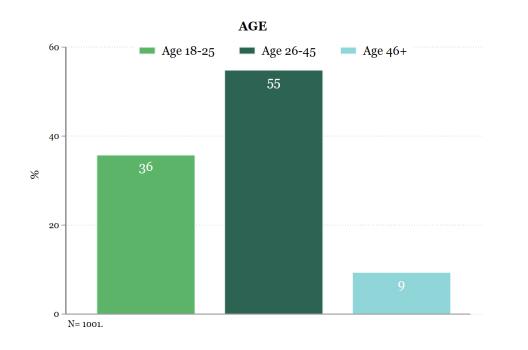


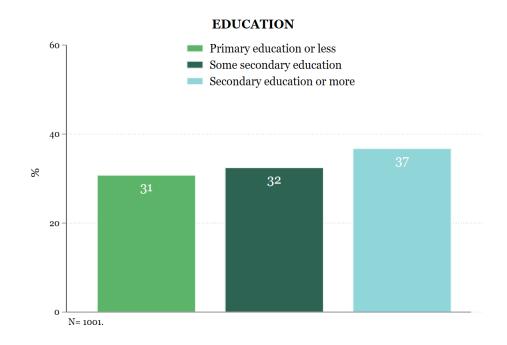
This compares to 47 percent female and 19 percent urban DFS consumers nationally in the Findex 2025 survey.

### AGE AND EDUCATION

## Surveyed DFS users are primarily middle-aged adults with at least some secondary education.

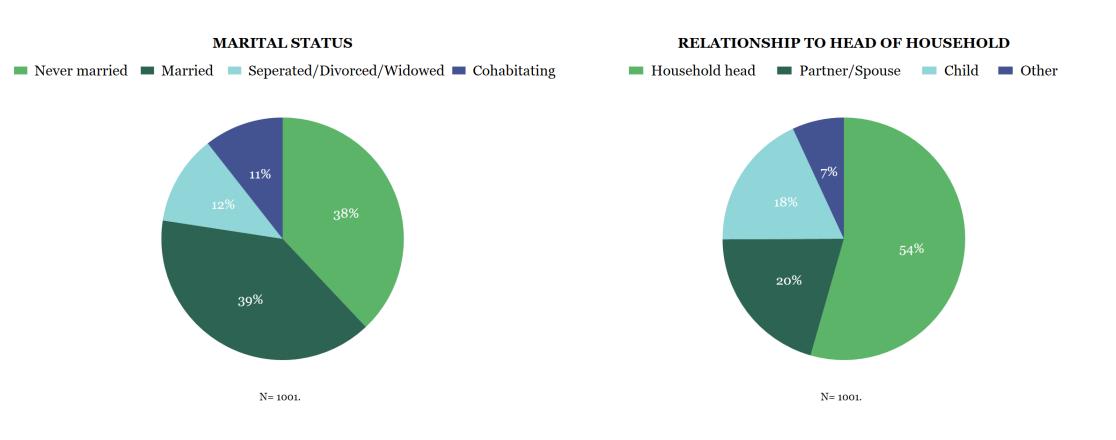
69 percent had some secondary education, similar to the 71 percent in the Findex data.





### **HOUSEHOLDS**

Half of surveyed DFS users were married or cohabitating, and most were the household head or their partner.



**IPA** 

## Most respondents were working and self-employed.

86 percent of respondents were working at least 20 hours a week.

Of those working for an employer,

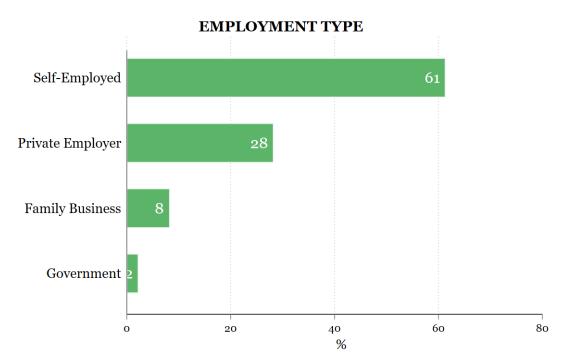
### 14 percent

had received wages into an account at a bank or similar financial institution.

### 27 percent

had received wages through their phone.

More than half were self-employed. Among all workers, 28 percent worked at a formally registered business.

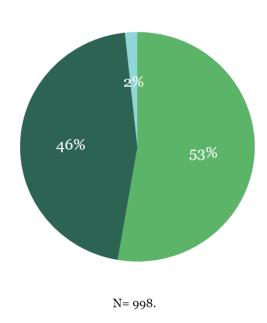


N= 863. Excludes 2 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

## Over half of respondents use smartphones.

### PHONE TYPE

- Smartphone
- Basic phone
- Feature phone



50 percent of typical DFS users in the Findex survey owned a smartphone.

> Urban, higher educated, middle-aged, and less poor respondents were more likely to use a smartphone as their primary phone.

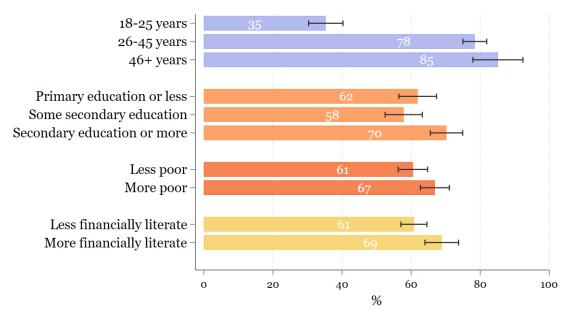
## SIM cards were frequently not registered in the respondent's name.

36 percent said the SIM card they used was not registered in their name.

Younger adults, those with less education, and less financially literate individuals were more likely to use phones registered in someone else's name.

The share is higher than it was in 2021\*, when 28 percent of consumers used SIM cards not registered in their name.

### PHONE SIM IS REGISTERED IN RESPONDENT'S NAME



 $N\!=\!998.95\%$  confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

<sup>\*</sup>The 2021 survey conducted by IPA interviewed active DFS consumers on phone in Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western region of Uganda.

### **PHONE USAGE**

**IPA** 

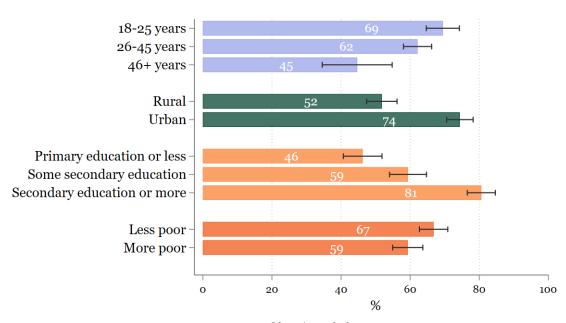
## Almost 40 percent of DFS users did not have a PIN or password on their phone to protect their accounts.

Older adults, rural, less educated and poorer consumers were less likely to have password protected phones.

Among respondents who had a PIN or password,

16 percent did not know how to change it.

### PHONE IS PASSWORD PROTECTED



N=998.95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

## Most consumers use their own phone, but one in three that use a PIN or password share it with others.

When respondents shared passwords, it was typically with their spouse/partner or another household member. Middle-aged adults, those with some secondary education, and female respondents were more likely to say that someone else knew their PIN or password.

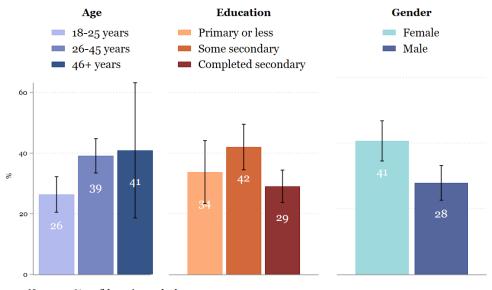


shared their phone with someone else.



of PIN/password users said that someone else knew their PIN or password\*

### SOMEONE ELSE KNOWS PHONE PIN OR PASSWORD

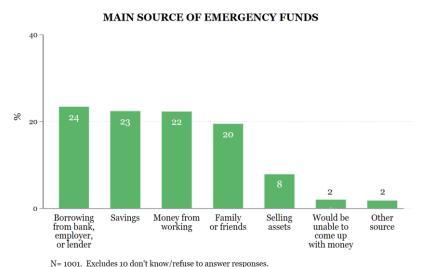


N=531.95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

\*Due to a survey programming error, PIN or password sharing was only asked of respondents who had a PIN/password and knew how to change it (N=531), instead of all respondents who had a PIN/password (N=630).

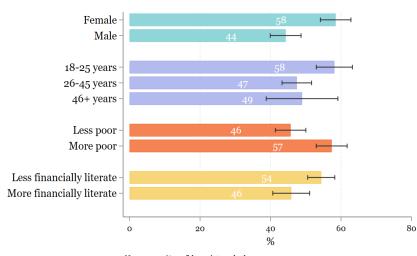
## Half of consumers found it difficult to meet a basic financial health benchmark: accessing funds equal to 1/20th of GNI per capita within 30 days in an emergency.

While half (51 percent) of respondents had difficulty coming up with emergency funds equivalent to 1/20th GNI per capita (USD 52) within a month, more than threequarters (78 percent) found it difficult to do so within a week.



Female, younger, poorer, and less financially literate respondents were most vulnerable to financial emergencies.

### DIFFICULT TO COME UP WITH EMERGENCY FUNDS (30 DAYS)



N= 1000. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

In Uganda, USD 50 or UGX 184,000 is equal to 1/20th of GNI per capita. The questions are taken from IPA's Financial Health Survey (2020)

## Financial Literacy.

In our study we relied on Standard & Poor's global financial literacy survey which is the world's largest global measurement of financial literacy. This measure probes knowledge of four basic financial concepts: risk diversification, inflation, numeracy, and interest compounding.

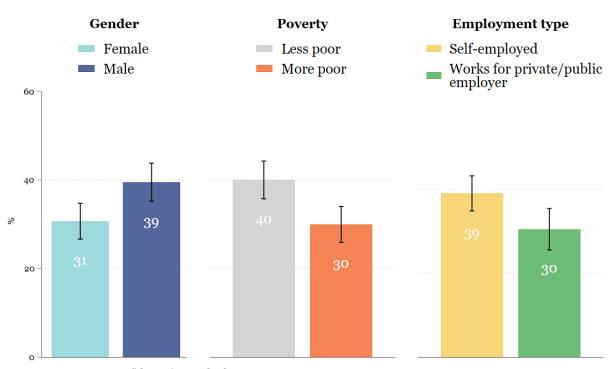
A person is considered financially literate if they answer three out of the four questions correctly.

### FINANCIAL LITERACY

## In our sample, 35 percent of respondents were financially literate.

Financial literacy is correlated with gender, poverty, and self-employment.

### FINANCIAL LITERACY

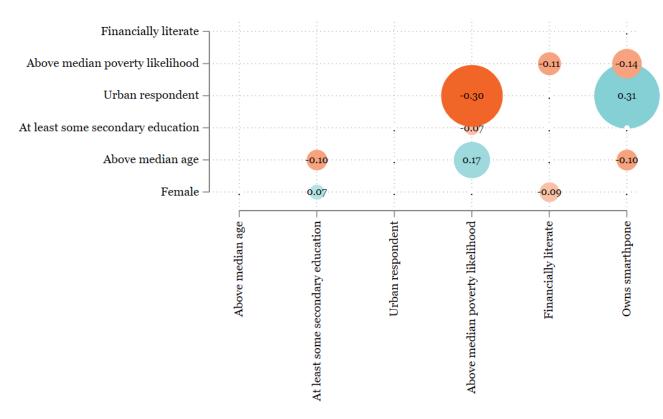


N= 1001. 95% confidence intervals shown.

Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

## Several key demographic characteristics of our sample are correlated.

### CORRELOGRAM OF RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS



Stronger relationships are shown as larger circles, in light blue for positive correlations and red for negative correlations.

Urbanicity, poverty, age, and smartphone ownership are most correlated.

Only correlations statistically significant at the 5%-level shown.

## Digital Financial Services Usage and Consumer Choice

Back to Table of Contents

31 Usage summary

33 User characteristics

35 Usage

38 Providers

Reason for using providers

42 Price comparison

Discontinued usage

47 Agents

48 Loans

IPA ○ Financial Consumer Protection Surveys ○ Uganda 2025 ○ DFS USAGE ○ Page: 29 ○ Back to ToC

## **Key Findings**

1. Services used: Mobile money was the most common DFS, with nearly all respondents using agents and 57 percent having taken mobile loans. Mobile banking remained low at 17 percent, while credit cards, overdraft services and buy-now-paylater were rare.

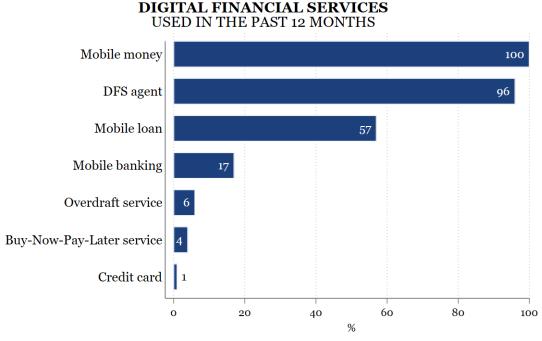
2. Provider concentration: Two providers dominate both mobile money and mobile loan markets with nearly 100 percent market share.

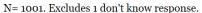
- 3. Provider choice: 76 percent of users choose payment service providers based on easy and quick access rather than pricing, with 27-40 percent comparing prices across services. One third of users report barriers to comparing prices between different services.
- 4. Stopped using a service: 47 percent of respondents had stopped using a payment service provider, primarily due to account access problems, while 69 percent had switched agents, mainly due to distance or business closure.

### **USAGE SUMMARY**

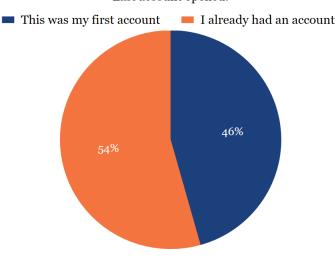
## Among DFS users, mobile money is the most used service, and agents are nearly universally used.

Almost all DFS users (96 percent) had used an agent, and over half (57 percent) had taken out a mobile loan. Mobile banking is much less common, used by 17 percent of DFS users. Other credit services – Overdraft, buy-now-pay-later (BNPL), and credit cards are relatively uncommon.





### FIRST-TIME PAYMENT ACCOUNT USER Last account opened:

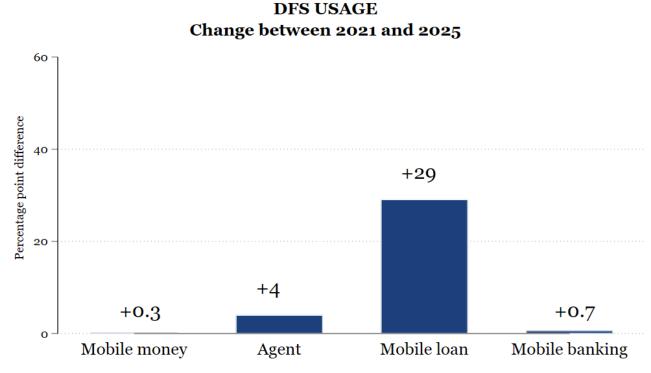


N= 1001. Excludes 2 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

### **USAGE SUMMARY**

## Mobile loan usage has increased since 2021

While usage of mobile money, mobile banking, and agent services has remained largely stable over time, 28 percent said they had used mobile loans in 2021, compared to 57 percent in 2025.

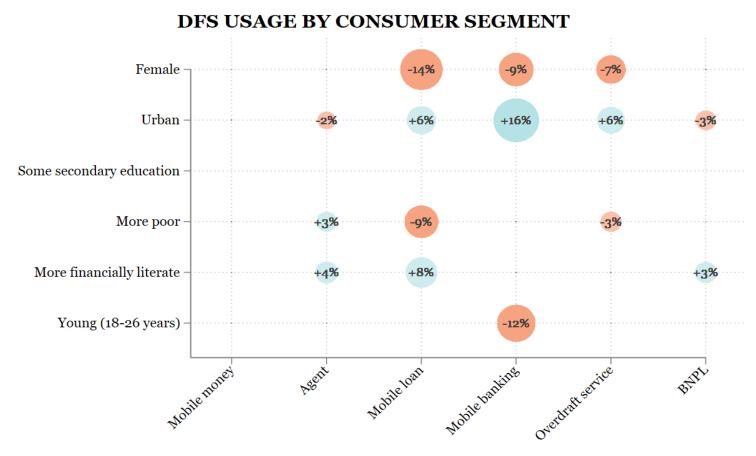


2021: N= 829, 2025: N= 1001
The 2021 survey asks about services ever used, the 2025 survey about services used in the past 12 months.

### **USER CHARACTERISTICS**

## The type of services used differed by consumer segment.

Urban and socioeconomically advantaged consumers tended to use banking and debt services to a greater extent.



Percentage point difference in usage. Only differences statistically significant at the 5%-level shown.

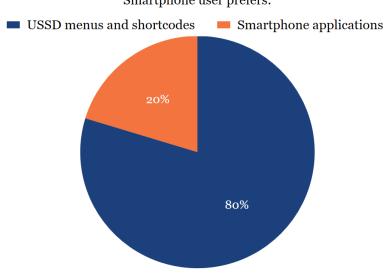
### **USER CHARACTERISTICS**

## The majority of smartphone users preferred USSD menus over apps for digital transactions.

Mobile banking and non-mobile banking users were equally likely to prefer USSD menus.

### PREFERENCES FOR USSD AND APPS

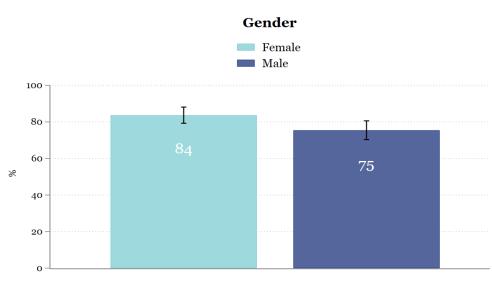
Smartphone user prefers:



N= 543. Excludes 1 don't know/refuse to answer response.

Female smartphone users were more likely to prefer USSD menus.

#### PREFERS USSD MENUS OVER APPS



N=  $543.\ 95\%$  confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

### **USAGE**

DFS consumers use multiple agents, and have typically used two payment service providers.

### NUMBER OF DIFFERENT PROVIDERS OR AGENTS USED LAST 12 MONTHS



Payment services: N= 1001, Mobile loans: N= 569, Agents: N= 961.

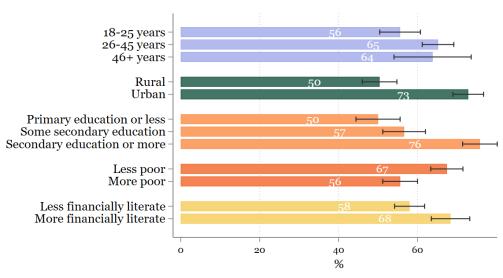
38 percent had only used one payment services provider, 83 percent had only used one mobile loan provider, and 5 percent had only used one agent.

Urban respondents used more agents than rural respondents, averaging 8.3 compared to 6.4 agents (with a median of 5 for both).

### **USAGE**

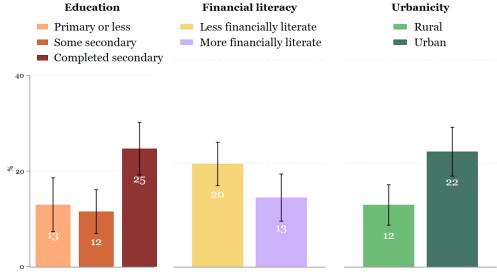
## Older adults, male, urban, higher educated, less poor, and more financially literate respondents used a greater number of providers on average.

### USES MULTIPLE PAYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS



N= 1001. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

### USES MULTIPLE MOBILE LOAN PROVIDERS



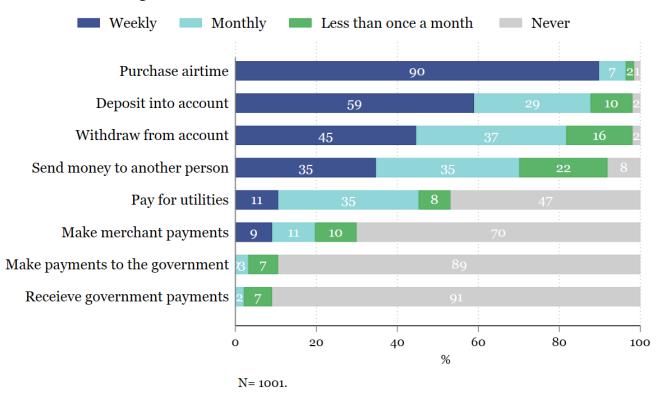
N= 569. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

#### **USAGE**

# The majority of respondents used their DFS account to deposit, withdraw, or send money at least monthly.

90 percent of respondents purchase airtime weekly. Payments for utilities are relatively common, while merchant payments remain relatively rare.

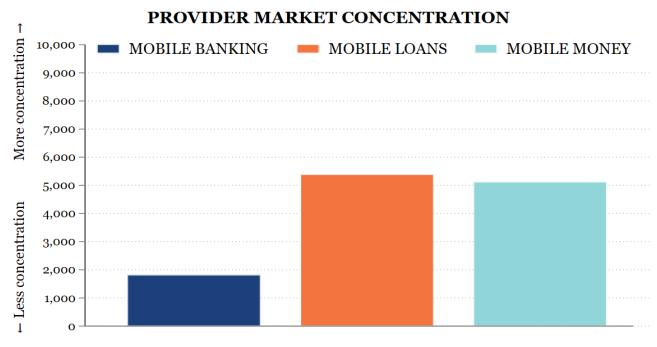
#### FREQUENCY OF MOBILE PHONE TRANSACTIONS



IPA ○ Financial Consumer Protection Surveys ○ Uganda 2025 ○ DFS USAGE ○ Page: 37 ○ Back to ToC

#### **PROVIDERS**

Mobile money and mobile loan markets are highly concentrated, each being dominated by two providers with nearly 100 percent of the market.



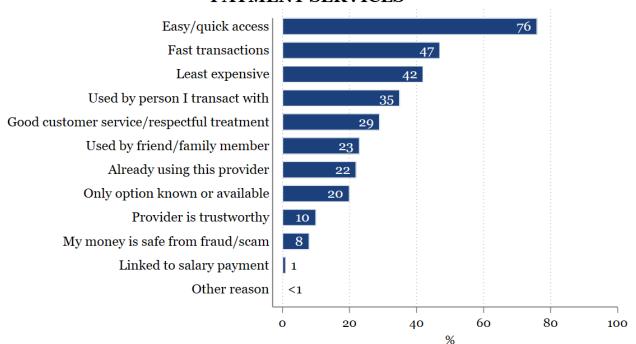
Y-axis shows the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI). The HHI is a measure of market concentration, calculated by summing the squares of the market shares of all the financial services providers used by respondents in our data within mobile money, mobile banking, and mobile loan services, respectively. Lower values indicate less market concentration and higher values suggesting greater market concentration.

#### REASON FOR USING PROVIDERS

## Expediency and price are the main drivers of payment service provider choice.

76 percent of respondents said they chose to use their most used provider due to easy and quick access.

#### **REASON FOR USING PROVIDER:** PAYMENT SERVICES



Multiple selections possible. N= 1001

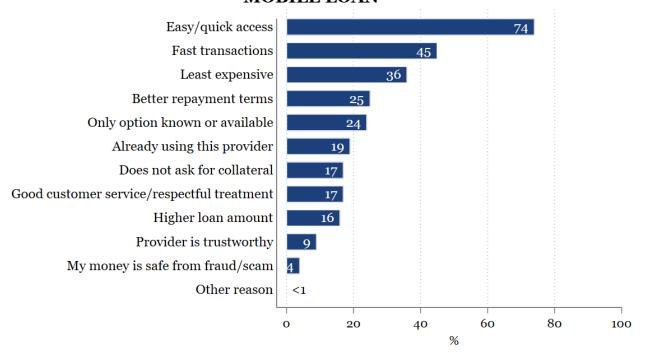
Network effects also play a significant role: consumers often choose providers recommended or used by others.

Rural, less educated, and poorer respondents were more likely to cite access or lack of choice as a motivating factor.

#### REASON FOR USING PROVIDERS

Similar to payment services, the primary reason for choosing a mobile loan provider was ease of access.

#### **REASON FOR USING PROVIDER: MOBILE LOAN**



Multiple selections possible. N= 569

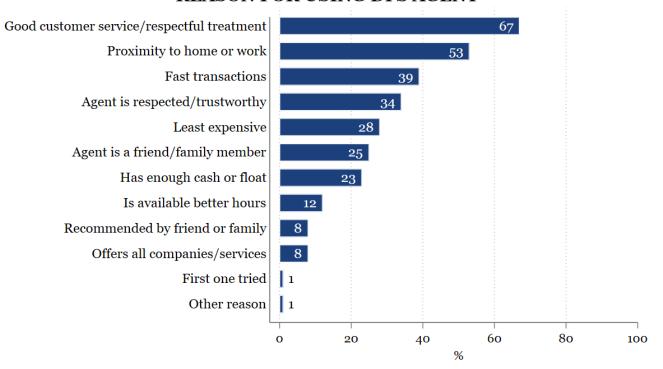
Repayment terms was mentioned by a quarter of respondents.

Mobile loan users prioritize an easy and fast experience over pricing when selecting a provider.

#### REASON FOR USING PROVIDERS

# Respondents choose agents based on their quality of customer service and proximity.

#### REASON FOR USING DFS AGENT



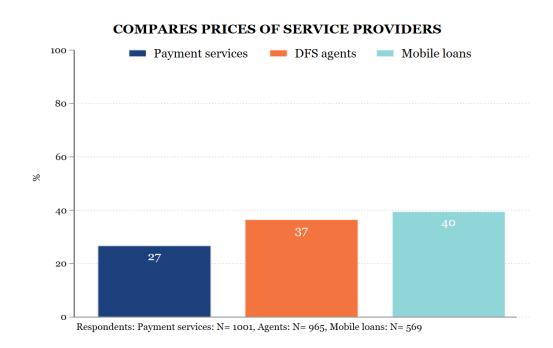
Multiple selections possible. N= 965. Excludes 1 don't know response.

Over a third of respondents said they chose agents based on trust.

Higher educated respondents mention cost and customer service more often, while older, more financially literate, and less poor respondents are more likely to cite trustworthiness. Older adults, more financially literate and rural respondents are more likely to mention liquidity.

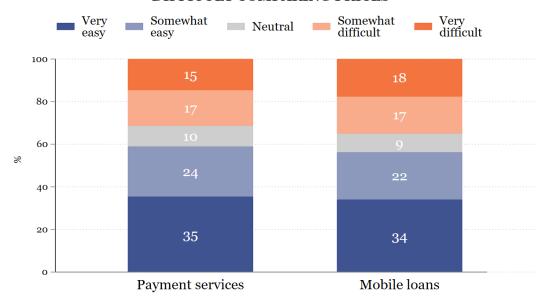
### Relatively few consumers compare prices.

Between 27 and 40 percent compared prices, depending on the service used. Urban and higher educated respondents were more likely to compare prices and services across different DFS.



There are barriers to price comparison: 31 percent of payment services users and 35 percent of loan users said it was somewhat or very difficult to compare prices.

#### **DIFFICULT COMPARING PRICES**



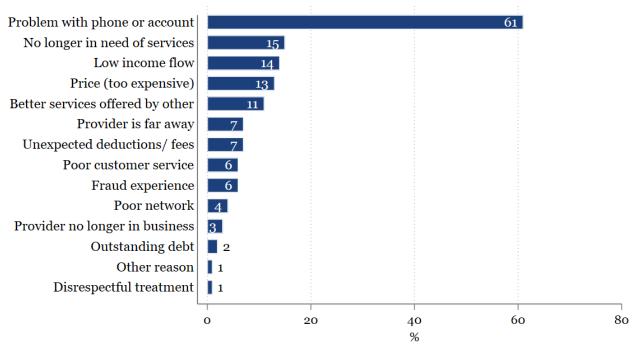
Payment services: N= 990. Mobile loans: N= 558. Excludes 22 don't know/refuse to answer responses across both variables.

#### **DISCONTINUED USAGE**

# 47 percent of respondents had stopped using a payment service provider in the past.

The majority did so due to problems with their account, for example because they lost access to their account, forgot their password, or lost their phone or SIM card.

### REASON FOR DISCONTINUED USAGE PAYMENT SERVICES PROVIDER



Multiple selections possible. Respondents: N= 467

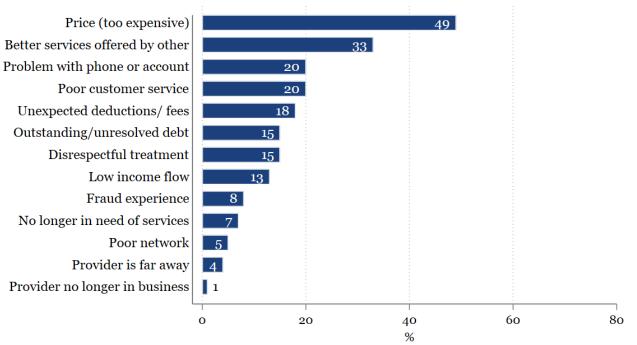
Older adults, urban, and male respondents were more likely to have stopped using a payment services provider.

#### **DISCONTINUED USAGE**

# 15 percent of respondents had stopped using a mobile loan provider in the past.

Most did so because of cost, or because they switched to another provider with a better services offer.

#### REASON FOR DISCONTINUED USAGE MOBILE LOAN PROVIDER



Multiple selections possible. Respondents: N= 85

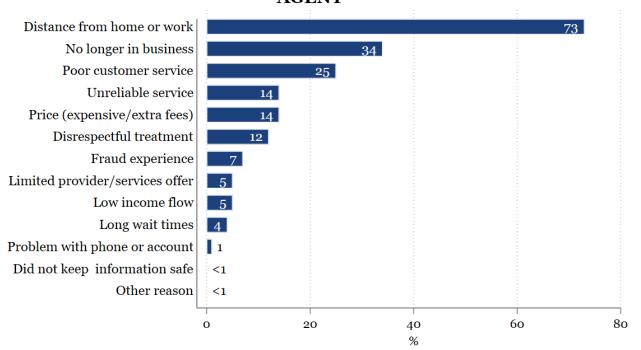
Older adults and less poor respondents were more likely to stop using a mobile loan provider.

#### **DISCONTINUED USAGE**

### 69 percent of respondents had stopped using an agent in the past.

Most switched agents due to distance from their home or workplace. Over a third said their agent had gone out of business, and a quarter cited poor customer service.

#### REASON FOR DISCONTINUED USAGE **AGENT**



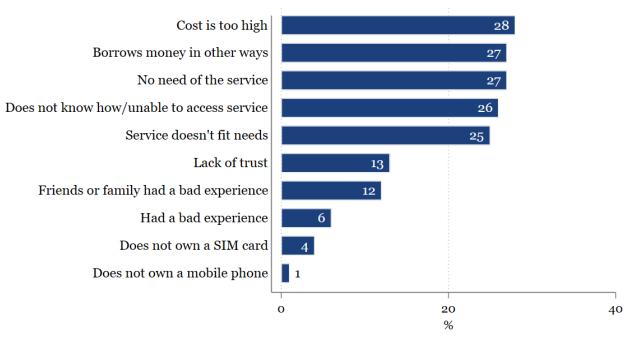
Multiple selections possible. Respondents: N= 669

Higher educated respondents were more likely to stop using an agent.

#### REASON FOR NOT USING SERVICE

Respondents cited high costs, alternative borrowing options, and lack of need for the service as reasons for not using mobile loans.

#### REASON FOR NOT USING SERVICE **MOBILE LOANS**

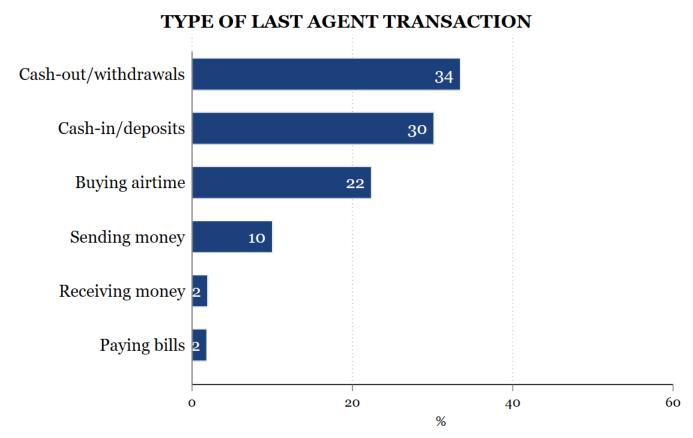


A quarter said that the service does not fit their needs, and 13 percent cited lack of trust.

Multiple selections possible. Respondents: N= 432. Excludes 10 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

#### **AGENTS**

### DFS users primarily rely on agents for cash-in / cash-out services.



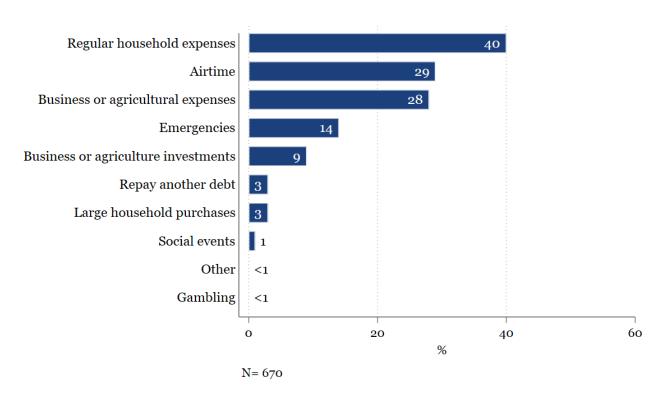
N= 965. Excludes 1 don't know/refuse to answer response.

#### **LOANS**

## 67 percent of DFS users had borrowed money from any source in the past 12 months.

Loans were much more commonly used for regular household or business expenses than investments or emergencies.

#### **USE OF LAST LOAN**

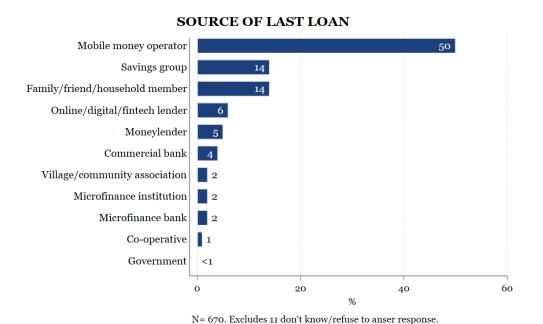


#### **LOANS**

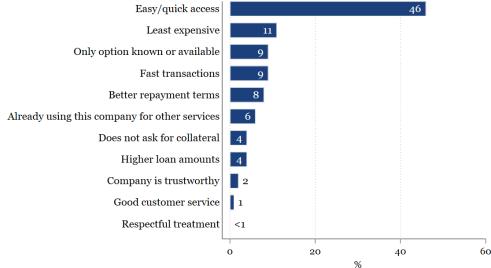
**IPA** 

### Half of all borrowing was done through mobile money operators.

Only 7 percent of most recent loans came from a microfinance or commercial bank.



### PRIMARY REASON FOR USING LOAN SOURCE



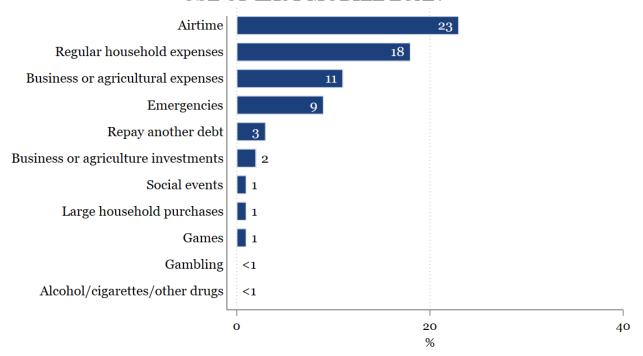
N= 670. Excludes 11 don't know/refuse to anser response.

#### **MOBILE LOANS**

## Mobile loans are mostly used for airtime and routine household and business needs—not investments.

16 percent used it to cover emergency expenses, and 5 percent to repay other debt.

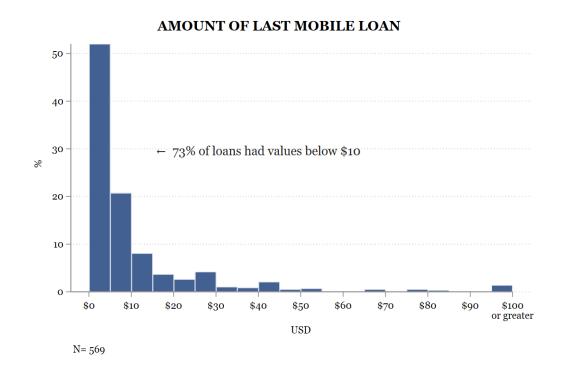
#### **USE OF LAST MOBILE LOAN**



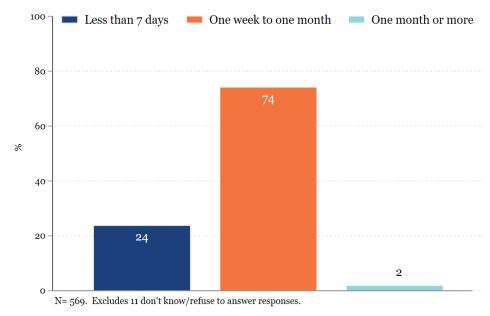
Multiple selections possible. Respondents: N= 1001. Excludes 16 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

#### **MOBILE LOANS**

### Mobile loans are typically low value and short tenure.



#### REPAYMENT PERIOD OF LAST MOBILE LOAN



### Early repayment is common, but it doesn't usually reduce fees.

### 56 percent

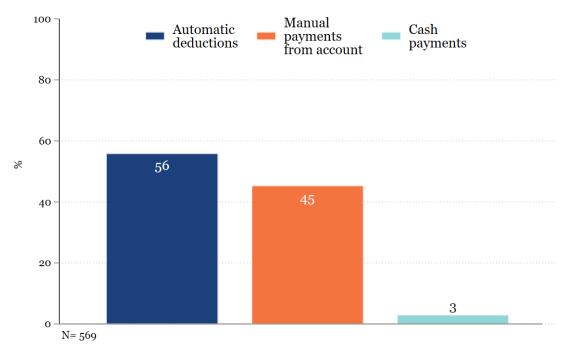
of loan users repaid their last loan before the due date.

Amongst those that did,

### 23 percent

reported paying less in fees or interest because of it.

#### MOBILE LOAN REPAYMENT MODE



# **Challenges and Risks**

Back to Table of Contents

Lack of price transparency

62 Fraud

75 Over-indebtedness

82 Challenges with agents

Other types of financial loss

90 Service quality challenges

93 Financial abuse

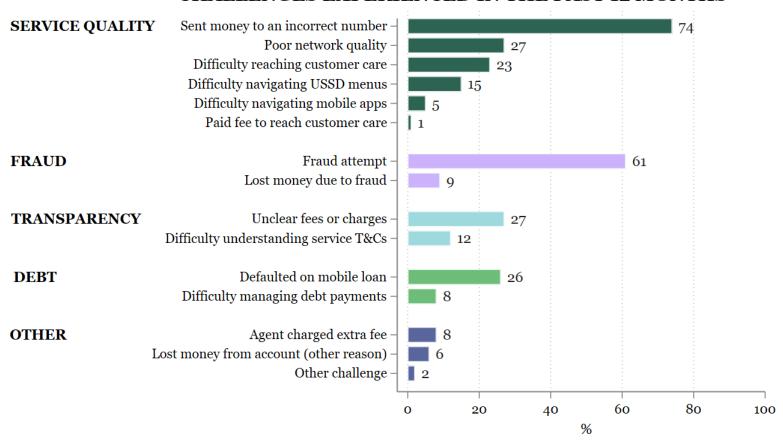
IPA ○ Financial Consumer Protection Surveys ○ Uganda 2025 ○ CHALLENGES AND RISKS ○ Page: 53 ○ Back to ToC

## **Key Findings**

- 1. Fraud exposure: 85 percent of respondents experienced fraud attempts, with 61 percent targeted in the past year and 22 percent losing money due to fraud. The median loss in the last incident among fraud victims was USD 22, representing 23 percent of median monthly household income.
- 2. Over-indebtedness: 45 percent of mobile loan users defaulted in the past year, with one third holding multiple active loans simultaneously. 31 percent reduced food expenditure and 22 percent experienced debt collector harassment to repay loans.
- 3. Price transparency: Only 53 percent consistently knew fees before transactions, while 27 percent experienced unclear account deductions. Consumers rarely seek formal redress when problems occur, even when money is lost from their accounts.
- 4. Service quality and agent reliability: 83 percent encountered any type of service quality challenge, with 74 percent experiencing poor network quality affecting DFS usage. 27 percent of agents lack visible price lists, and are not always able to complete transactions.

### Challenges experienced in the past 12 months.

#### CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS



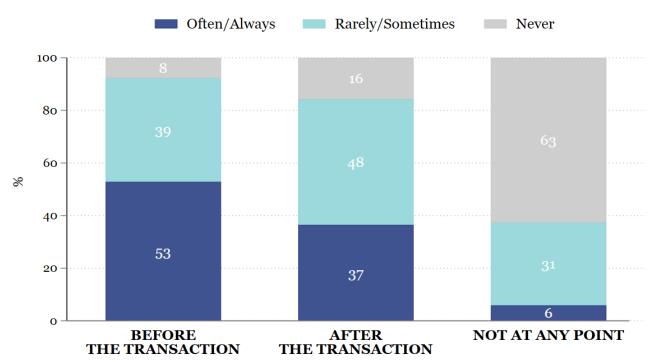
N=1001. Multiple selections possible. Unconditional values.

#### LACK OF PRICE TRANSPARENCY

### Half of respondents consistently knew fees before completing transactions.

6 percent said they did not learn prices at any point.

#### WHEN CONSUMERS LEARN TRANSACTION FEES



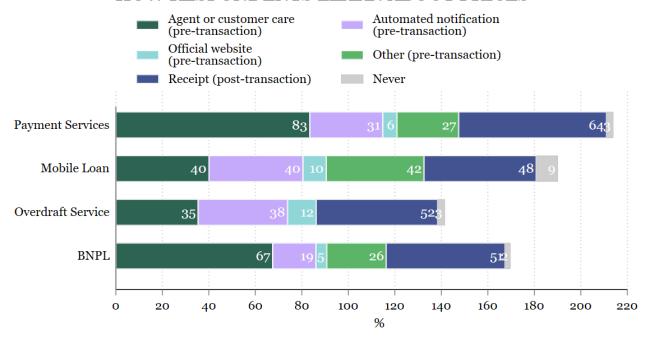
N= 1001. Excludes 5 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

#### LACK OF PRICE TRANSPARENCY

# Most respondents learned about prices at agent locations or from receipts after the transaction had been completed.

Only 8 percent usually looked up prices online.

#### HOW RESPONDENTS LEARN ABOUT PRICES



Respondents: Payment services: N=1001, Mobile loan: N=569, Overdraft service: N=65, BNPL: N=43. Totals may add to greater than 100% because respondents could select more than one source of pricing information. Credit card omitted due to small sample size (N=6).

# In our sample, 27 percent of respondents had ever experienced a fee or deduction on their account that they did not understand at first.

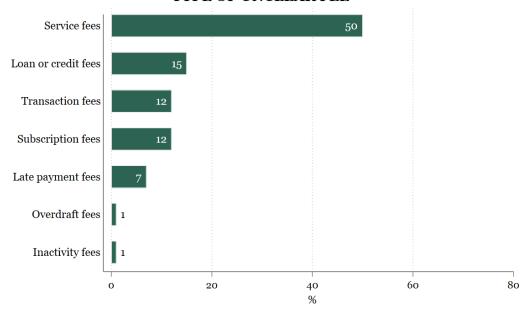
25 percent had experienced such a fee in the past 12 months. This is an increase from 21 percent in 2021.

#### AMOUNT PAID IN UNCLEAR FEES LAST 12 MONTHS



Among consumers who later identified a provider fee as the cause of an unclear deduction, service fees were the most common type.

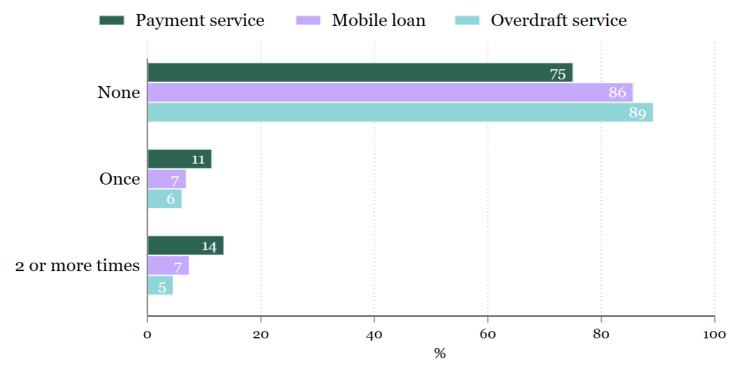
#### TYPE OF UNCLEAR FEE



N= 74. Excludes 1 don't know/refuse to answer response.

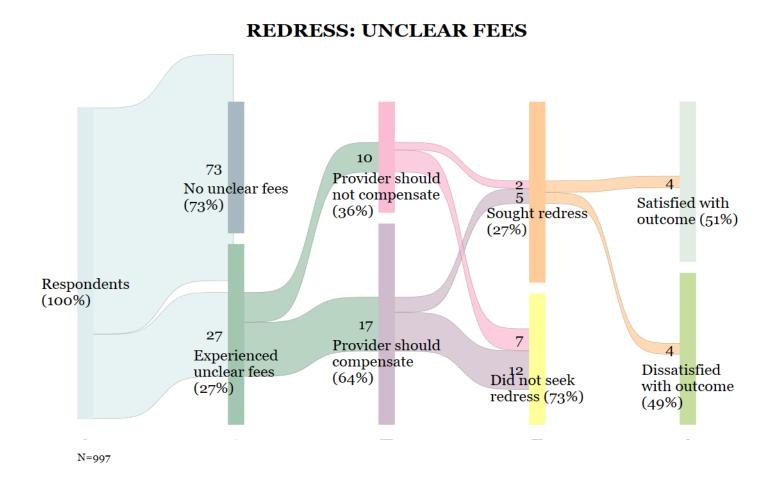
Users of payment services reported more frequent incidents of unclear fees compared to other types of DFS.

#### TIMES UNCLEAR FEES OR CHARGES WERE EXPERIENCED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Payment services: N= 990, Mobile loan: N= 565, Overdraft services: N= 65. Excludes 3 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

### Few consumers seek formal redress for issues involving unclear fees.



## 32 percent of consumers never found out the cause of the unclear fee.

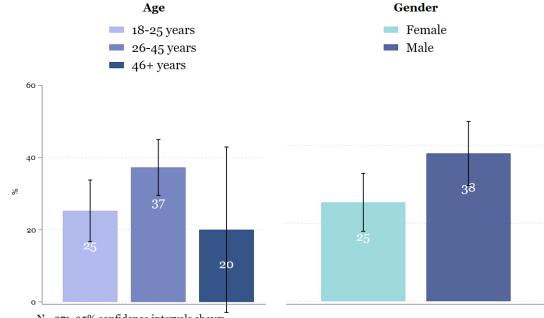
Middle-aged adults and male respondents were somewhat more likely to find out the cause.

The fee was usually charged directly by the provider (in 88 percent of cases) as opposed to a payment or transfer made to another person or business

### 37 percent

believed that this charge was not allowed under their account's rules

#### FOUND OUT WHAT CAUSED THE UNCLEAR FEE

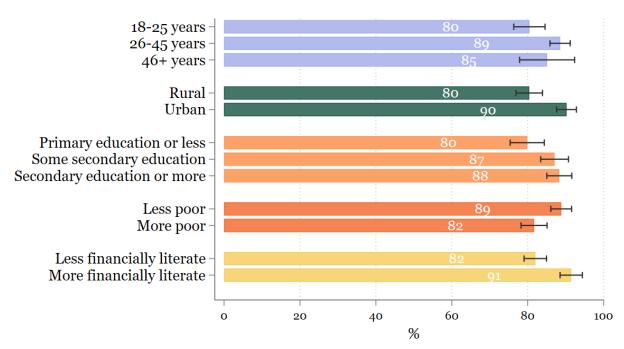


N= 271. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

### The vast majority of respondents had experienced a fraud attempt.

85 percent said they had been contacted by someone attempting to deceive them into sharing personal financial information or authorizing a transaction, and 61 percent said that it had happened in the past 12 months.

#### EVER EXPERIENCED A FRAUD ATTEMPT



N= 1001. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

Middle-aged, urban, higher educated, less poor, and more financially literate consumers reported higher incidents of fraud attempts.

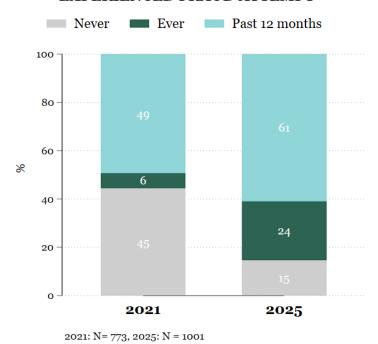
We did not observe any significant differences in reported fraud attempts by gender.

### Incidents of fraud increased by 12 percent between 2021 and 2025.

In 2021, 49 percent of surveyed DFS consumers said they had experienced a fraud attempt in the last 12 months, compared to 61 percent in 2025.

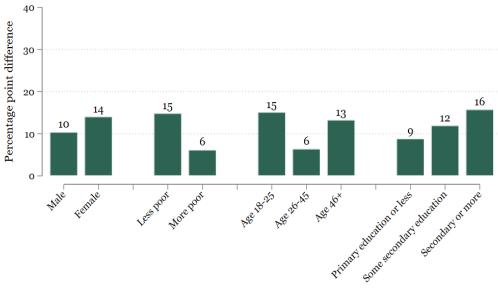
While fraud attempts became more common across consumer segments, the greatest increase was reported by younger, less poor, and higher educated consumers.

#### **EXPERIENCED FRAUD ATTEMPT**



#### EXPERIENCED A FRAUD ATTEMPT IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



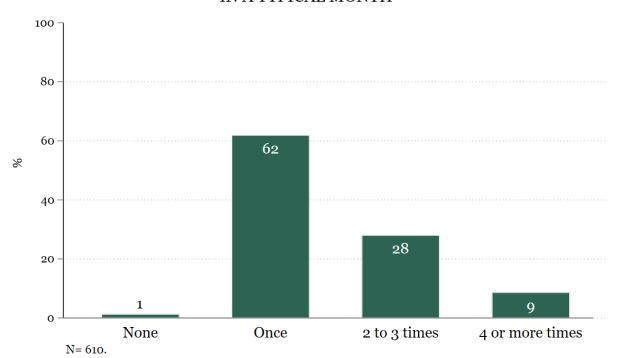


2021: N= 773, 2025: N= 1001

### Fraud attempts happen once in a typical month.

#### FREQUENCY OF FRAUD ATTEMPTS

IN A TYPICAL MONTH



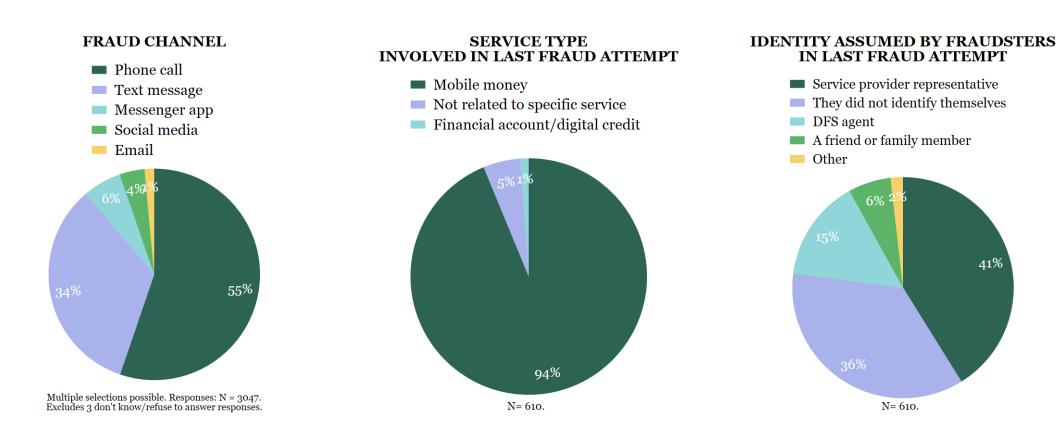
### 37 percent

of respondents were typically targeted more than once a month.

Female respondents were significantly more likely to experience fraud attempts more than once a month compared to male respondents.

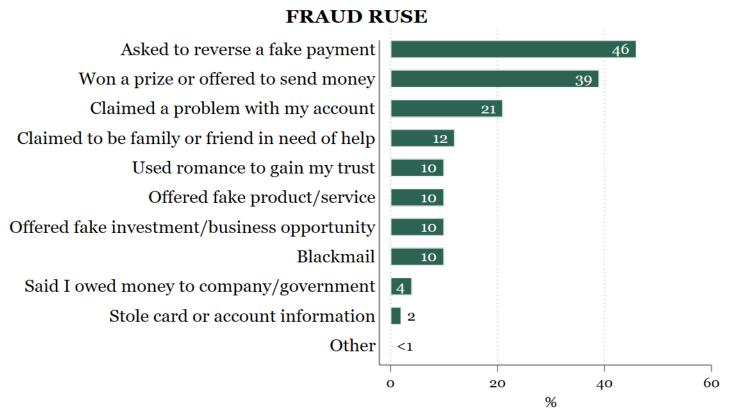
**IPA** 

### Most fraud attempts occur by phone or SMS.



All graphs refer to the last fraud attempt experienced, except for fraud channel which due to a survey error refers to fraud attempts experienced in the last 12 months, and allows for multiple selections.

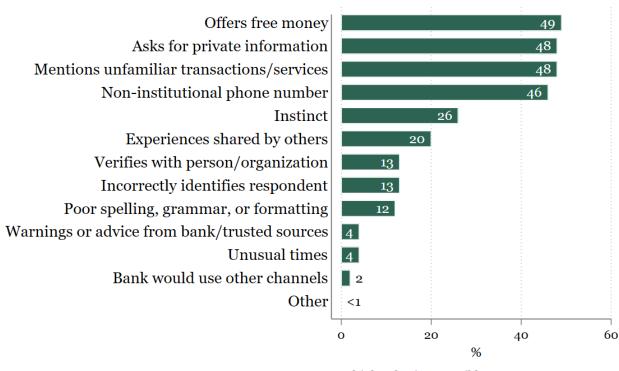
Fraudsters most commonly try to trick respondents into reversing a payment, or offer them free money.



Multiple selections possible. N= 610. Excludes 15 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

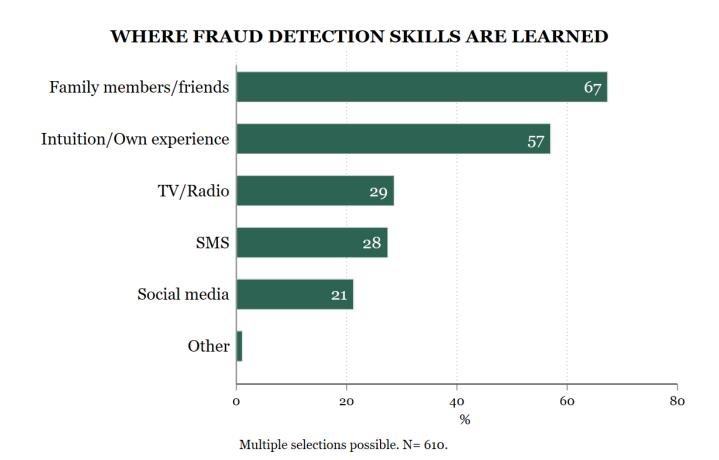
Nearly half of respondents report that they identified scams by four common suspicious behaviors: offers of free money, requests of private information, references to unfamiliar transactions, and calls from regular numbers.

#### HOW THE FRAUD ATTEMPT IS DETECTED



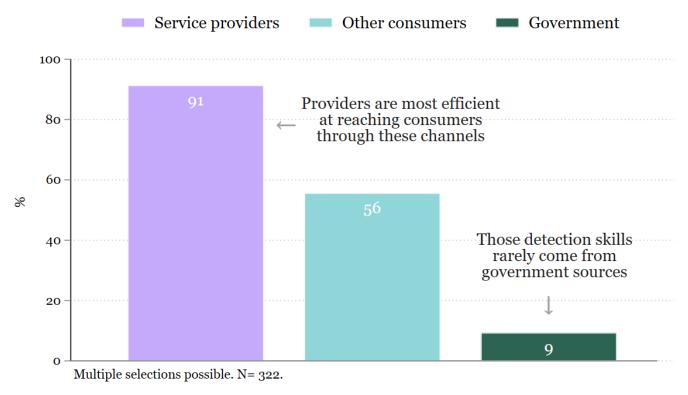
Multiple selections possible. N= 610

Respondents often learn to detect scams based on own experiences or those of their social network.



When fraud detection skills are learned through social media, TV, radio, or SMS, the source is often service providers.

### SOURCE OF FRAUD DETECTION SKILLS SOCIAL MEDIA, TV/RADIO, OR SMS



## Only 22 percent formally reported the last fraud attempt they experienced.

The majority of respondents warned friends and family. 41 percent took no action at all.



Multiple selections possible. N= 610. Excludes 7 don't know/refuse to answer responses..

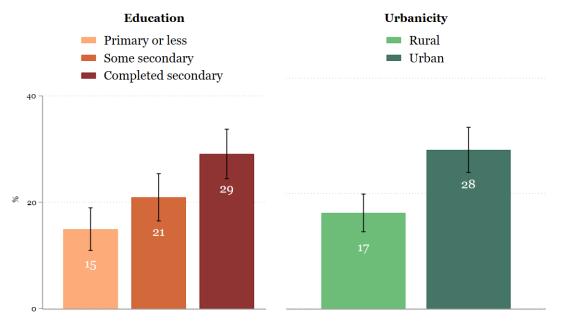
#### SUCCESSFUL FRAUD

### More than one in five DFS users had lost money due to fraud.

22 percent of respondents had ever lost money, and 9 percent had lost money in the past 12 months.

Higher educated and urban consumers were more likely to say that they had been defrauded.

#### EVER LOST MONEY DUE TO FRAUD



N= 1001. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

### 3 percent

of respondents had lost money specifically due to fraudulent fintech smartphone applications in the past 12 months.

#### SUCCESSFUL FRAUD

### The median respondent lost \$22 the last time they were defrauded.

This corresponds to 23 percent of median monthly household income in our survey regions.





Median annual financial loss due to fraud among fraud victims in our sample

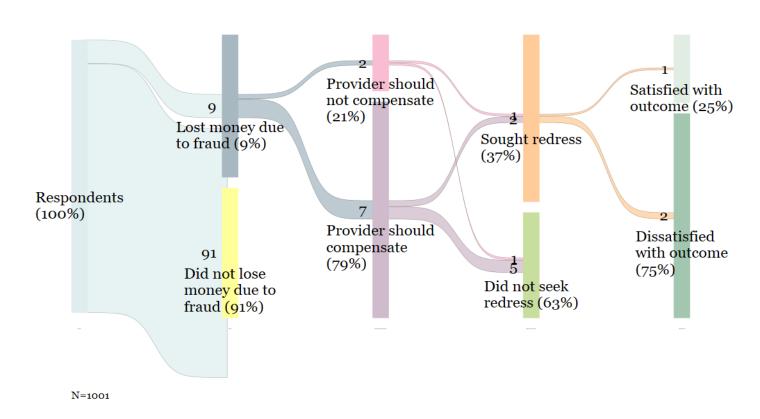


Estimated total annual loss due to fraud among all Ugandan DFS users.\*

<sup>\*</sup>Calculated by multiplying the mean amount lost due to fraud across our entire sample (including those who did not lose money to fraud) – \$5.54 - by the total number of Ugandan DFS consumers (reported by Findex 2025) - 19,094,484.

When consumers lose money due to fraud, they rarely seek redress.

#### **REDRESS: LOST MONEY DUE TO FRAUD** IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



#### SUCCESSFUL FRAUD

# Fraud victims become more cautious, reduce their DFS usage, and experience negative impacts on their well-being.

Female, rural, less financially literate and younger respondents were more likely to experience negative psychological impacts.

#### **IMPACTS ON DFS USAGE**

88%

became more cautious or vigilant when making transactions

45%

changed their PIN or password

10%

decreased their DFS usage across all services

9%

stopped using the service provider

7%

stopped using the service entirely

#### **IMPACTS ON WELL-BEING**

93%

felt anxious or worried

100%

felt angry or frustrated

72%

lost confidence

75%

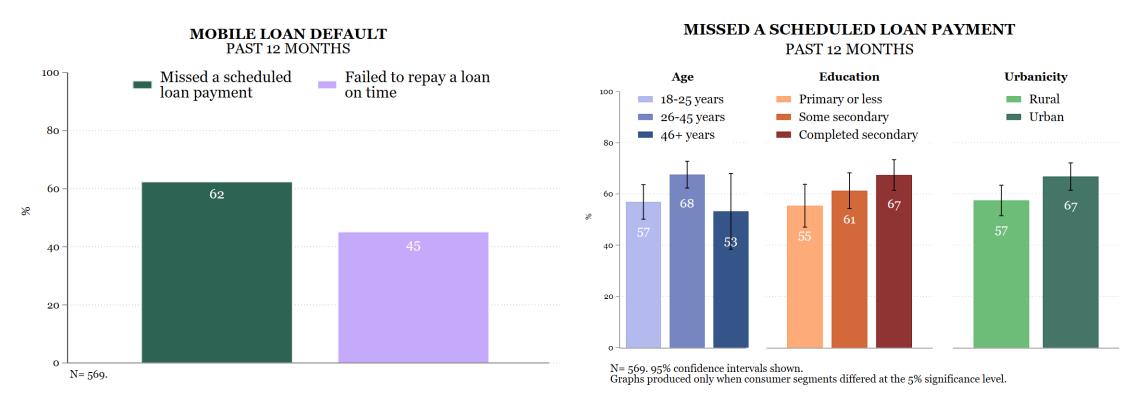
felt helpless or vulnerable

70%

felt embarrassed or ashamed

# 45 percent of mobile loan users reported failing to repay on time in the last year.

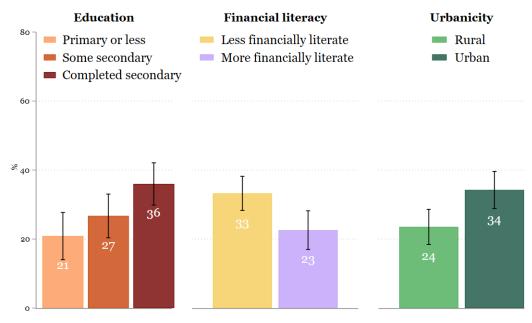
Middle-aged, higher educated and urban consumers were more likely to miss a loan payment.



## One in three mobile loan users had multiple active loans.

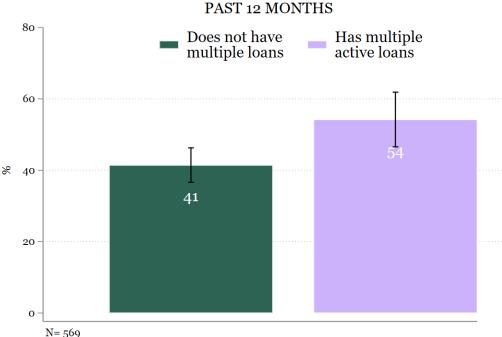
Higher educated, less financially literate and urban consumers were more likely to have multiple loans. Consumers with multiple loans were significantly more likely to have experienced loan default.

#### HAS MORE THAN ONE ACTIVE MOBILE LOAN



N= 569.95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

#### FAILED TO REPAY A LOAN ON TIME



Credit cards, overdraft services, and buy-now-pay-later remain relatively rare forms of credit.

#### **CREDIT CARDS**

had used a credit card in the past 12 months.

of credit card users had missed a scheduled credit card repayment.

#### **OVERDRAFT SERVICES**



had used overdraft services in the past 12 months.

1 in 5

overdraft users were enrolled without their knowledge.

#### **BUY-NOW-PAY-LATER**



had used buy-now-pay-later in the past 12 months.

of BNPL users were charged an unexpected fee for the service

Signs of over-indebtedness are relatively common among users of mobile loans, credit cards, overdrafts, and buy-now-pay-later services.

Proportion of debt services users reporting in the last 12 months...

27%

...regretting taking on debt.

15%

...using a loan to repay another debt.

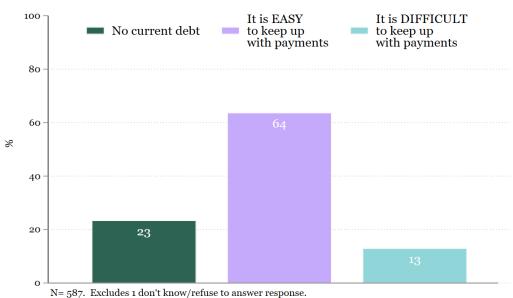
22%

...losing access to one of their accounts due to unpaid debt.

Among respondents that used debt services in the past 12 months, 13 percent found it somewhat or very difficult to keep up with their debt

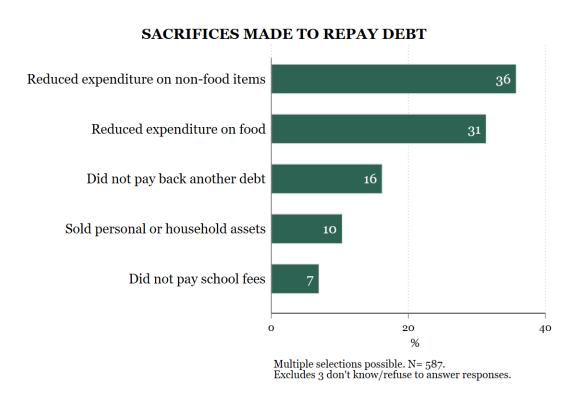
payments.

#### CURRENT DEBT SITUATION



Among users of mobile loans, credit cards, overdrafts, and buy-now-paylater services, a third of respondents had cut back on food expenditure to repay their debt in the past 12 months.

Older adults are significantly more likely to make a sacrifice to pay back a loan. Poorer respondents are more likely to sell assets and not pay school fees.



#### 32 percent

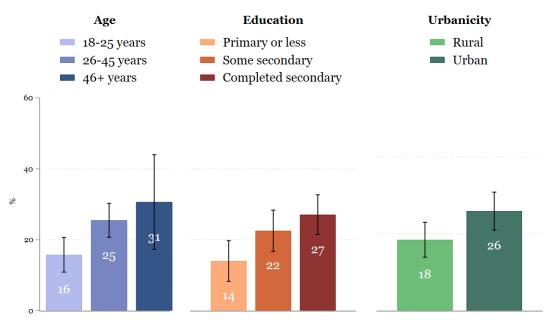
of debt users used two or more strategies to cope with their debt situation.

17 percent used three or more coping strategies.

## Users of mobile loans, credit cards, overdrafts, and buy-now-pay-later services commonly experience harassment by debt collectors.

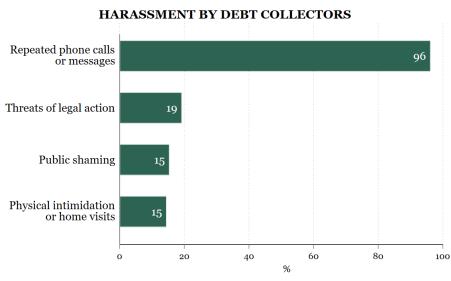
22 percent had experienced harassment by debt collectors. Middle-aged, more educated, and urban consumers were more likely to have experienced harassment.

#### EXPERIENCED HARASSMENT BY DEBT COLLECTOR



N= 587. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level. The most common form of harassment was through phone calls or text messages.

15 percent had been publicly shamed or physically intimidated.



Multiple selections possible. N= 131. Excludes 2 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

**IPA** 

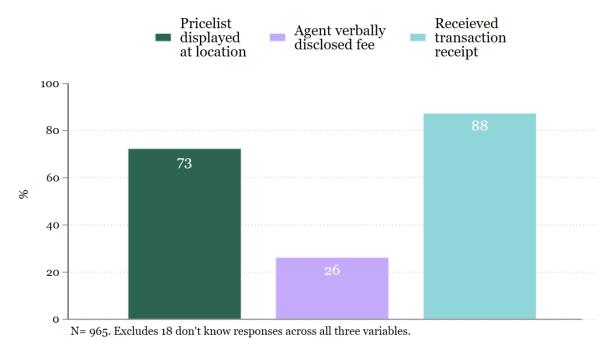
Consumers identified the negative consequences a borrower might face if they default on their debt.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF DEBT DEFAULT Property /asset seizure Stress/anxiety Arrest/police involvement Forced payments More expensive future loans Impact on future borrowing Harassment by debt collectors Public humiliation Account/service blocking Credit bureau listing ← Impact on future borrowing 80 O 20 40 60

Less than half of mobile loan users mentioned impacts on future credit (see more expensive future loans and credit bureau listing).

# Agents typically do not disclose prices and 27 percent do not have price lists visible to consumers.

## LAST SUCCESSFUL AGENT TRANSACTION: PRICING TRANSPARENCY



Most consumers stated that they received transaction receipts.

Rural and poorer respondents were significantly less likely to report seeing pricelists at agent locations.

Rural and male respondents also reported significantly lower rates of fee disclosure.

A separate mystery shopping study\* found that agents disclosed fees verbally 4 percent of the time, price lists were displayed 58 percent of the time, and customers received receipts 99 percent of the time, suggesting that respondent recall may lead to overestimates of some of these outcomes.

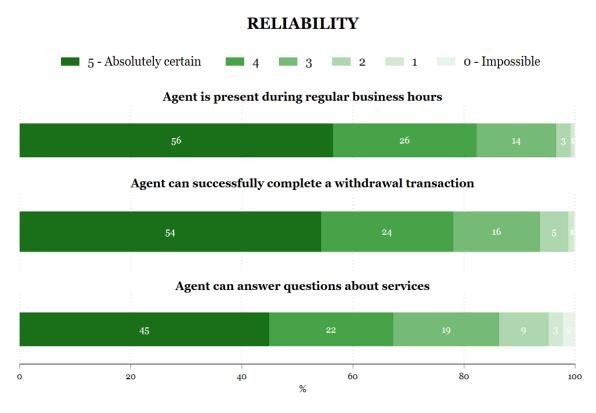
0

<sup>\*</sup>IPA (2025) conducted mystery shopping visits at agent locations in rural and urban markets in Uganda.

#### **CHALLENGES WITH AGENTS**

## Agents do not always provide reliable service.

Agents are not always present or able to complete transactions successfully. Less than half of respondents were absolutely certain that an agent could help them answer questions related to their services.

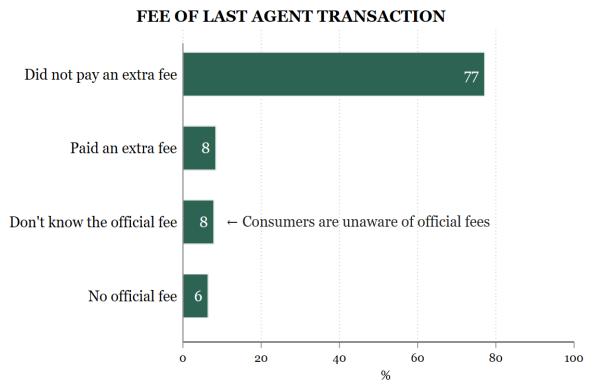


N= 965. . Excludes 12 don't know responses across all three variables.

#### **CHALLENGES WITH AGENTS**

## When agents overcharge, consumers rarely seek redress.

Few sought formal redress after having been overcharged, even if they thought the provider should be held accountable.



N= 965. Excludes 5 don't know/refuse to answer responses.

Amongst the respondents that were overcharged,

53% thought that the provider should compensate them for the money that was lost

18% would know how to seek formal redress

4% sought formal redress for the issue

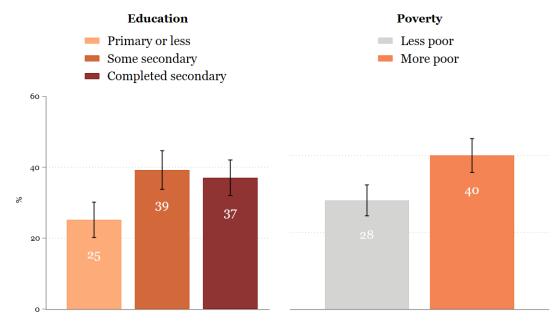
#### **CHALLENGES WITH AGENTS**

## 8 percent of respondents said that agents often or always treat them differently because of their gender, age, ethnicity, or religion.

Poorer consumers and those with some secondary education were more likely to report experiences of discrimination. There were no differences by gender.

## AGENT DISCRIMINATES BASED ON GENDER, AGE, ETHNICITY, OR RELIGION Never Rarely/Sometimes Often/Always 8% N= 965. Excludes 1 don't know/refuse to answer response.

#### EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION BY AGENT

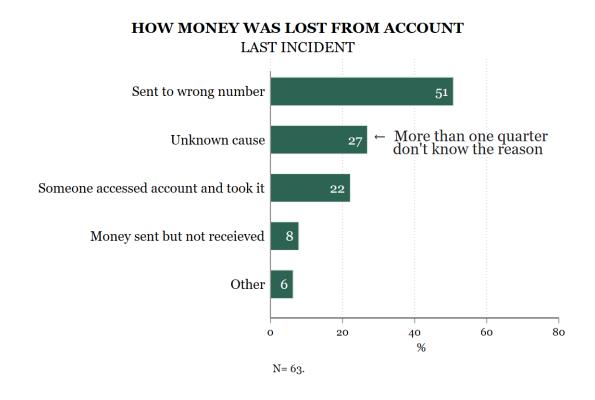


N= 964. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

#### OTHER TYPES OF FINANCIAL LOSS

## In the last 12 months, 6 percent of respondents lost money from their account for reasons other than fraud, unexpected fees, or agent overcharging.

More than a quarter of affected respondents could not say what caused the disappearance of funds. Half of respondents that lost money from their account had sent money to the wrong number.



#### OTHER TYPES OF FINANCIAL LOSS

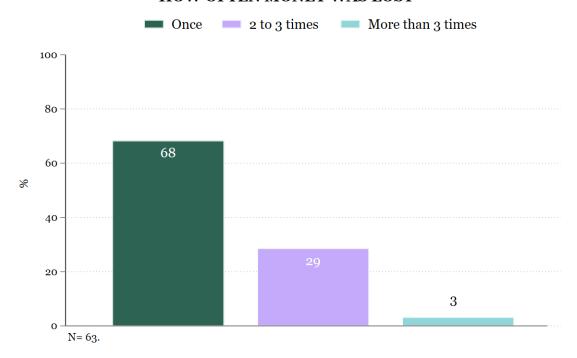
When money was lost for reasons other than fraud, unexpected fees, or agent overcharging, typically it happened once in a 12 month period.

#### AMOUNT LOST FROM ACCOUNT LAST INCIDENT

AVERAGE \$10.95 **MEDIAN** \$5.40 MINIMUM \$0.54 MAXIMUM \$37.80

In 32 percent of cases, it happened two times or more.

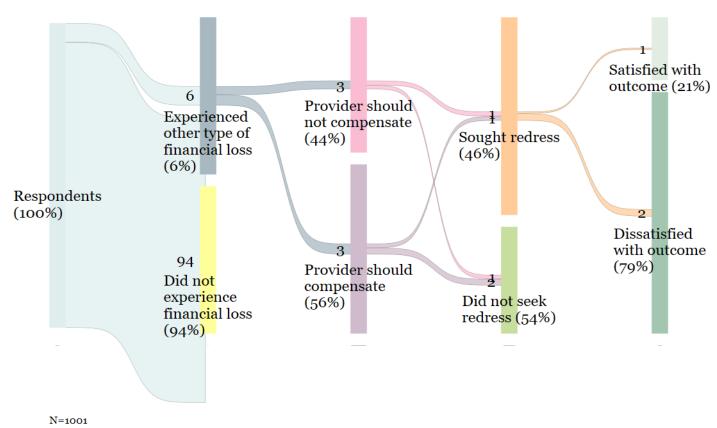
#### HOW OFTEN MONEY WAS LOST



N=63

Less than half of consumers sought redress when money was lost from their account.

#### **REDRESS: OTHER TYPE OF FINANCIAL LOSS**



#### SENT MONEY TO WRONG NUMBER

Despite safeguards, sending money to the wrong number is common. Most are not able to recover the funds.

81 percent of respondents said that there was an extra verification step they had to complete before sending money to a new phone number. Nonetheless,

#### 27 percent

of payment services users had ever sent money to a wrong number. Of those,

#### 42 percent

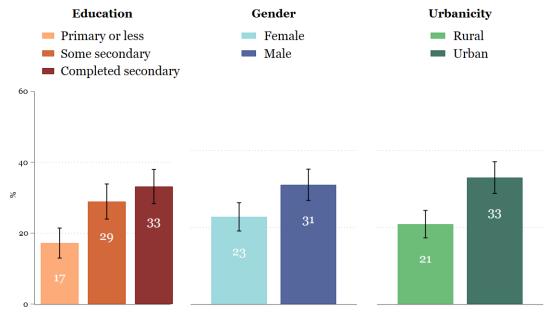
were not able to recover the money.

The share of DFS consumers that incorrectly sent money in the **last 12 months** in 2021 was **17 percent**.

**IPA** 

Higher educated, male, and urban respondents were more likely to experience the challenge.

#### EVER SENT MONEY TO INCORRECT NUMBER



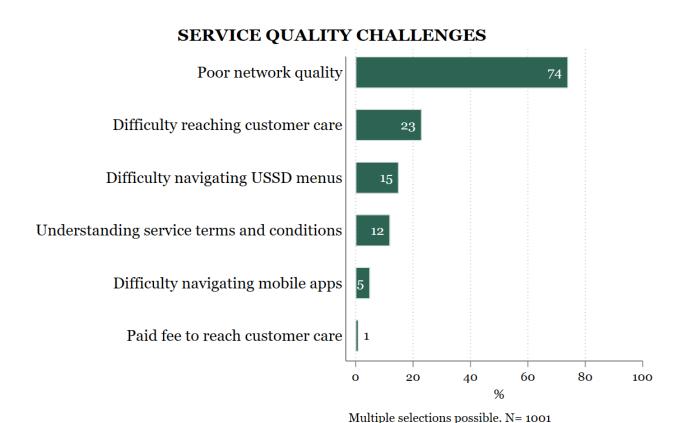
N=1001. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

#### **SERVICE QUALITY CHALLENGES**

**IPA** 

## Most consumers encounter challenges related to the quality of a service.

83 percent had experienced such a challenge in the past 12 months.



The vast majority had experienced poor network quality that impacted their usage of DFS. More than one in five had struggled to reach customer care when needed.

The share of consumers that find it difficult using USSD menus or mobile applications has increased:

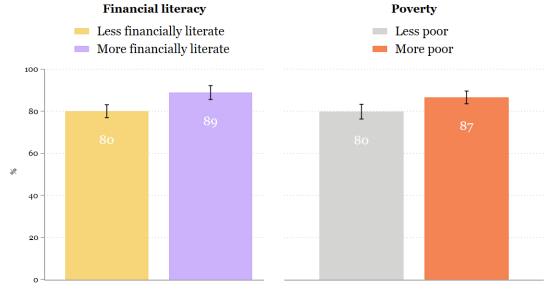
10 percent said they had ever experienced this challenge when asked in 2021, compared to 18 percent in 2025 that had done so in the last 12 months.

#### **SERVICE QUALITY CHALLENGES**

## Poorer and more financially literate respondents were more likely to report having experienced any type of service quality challenge.

#### EXPERIENCED A SERVICE QUALITY CHALLENGE

IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS



N= 1001. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level. Urban and less financially literate respondents reported significantly higher rates of **not** understanding a service or how to use it.

Among all respondents experiencing these difficulties.

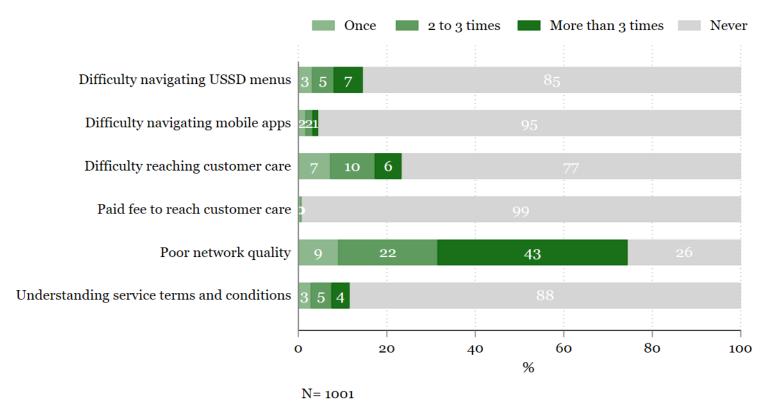
#### 6 percent

lost money as a result, losing on average \$2.32.

## Some types of service quality challenges were encountered frequently.

#### FREQUENCY OF SERVICE QUALITY CHALLENGES

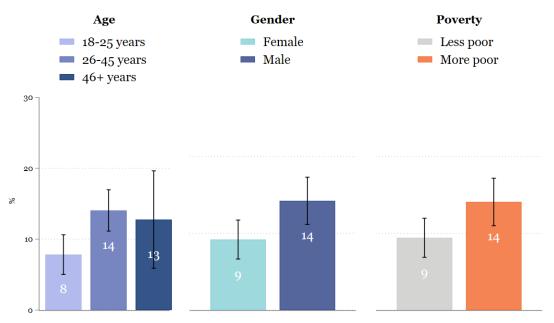
IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



## 12 percent had experienced a financial disagreement with a partner or household decision maker, a potential indicator of financial abuse.

Middle-aged, male, and poorer respondents reported higher rates of intra-household financial conflicts.

#### FINANCIAL CONFLICT WITH PARTNER



N= 1000. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

#### 4 percent

said that a spouse or decision maker had accessed their financial account without their permission.

#### 3 percent

had been prevented from using money stored in their account.

#### 3 percent

said a spouse or decision makers had taken out a loan in their name without their permission.

## **Complaints Redress**

Back to Table of Contents

96 Seeking redress

100 Complaints resolution

104 Impact on usage

IPA ○ Financial Consumer Protection Surveys ○ Uganda 2025 ○ COMPLAINTS REDRESS ○ Page: 94 ○ Back to ToC

## **Key Findings**

- 1. Redress-seeking rates: Of respondents who lost money due to fraud, unexpected fees, or service quality challenges in the past 12 months, only 27 percent sought redress to resolve the issue. Middleaged were more likely to seek redress compared to younger adults. Male respondents were more likely to seek redress.
- 2. Recovery of funds: While half of redress cases involved lost funds, only 20 percent of those who lost money recovered some or all of it. Higher educated, older adults, and more financially literate respondents were more likely to recover funds.

- 3. Complaints resolution: Among redress seekers, 61 percent reported satisfaction with outcomes, and complaint resolution consistently took longer than expected. Nearly one fifth spent money averaging USD 4.32 on resolution processes.
- 4. Impact on service usage: 23 percent of redress seekers changed their DFS usage patterns after their complaint experience. Dissatisfied complainants and those experiencing financial losses were more likely to reduce their DFS usage.

## Respondents rarely sought redress for a DFS challenge.

#### 19 percent

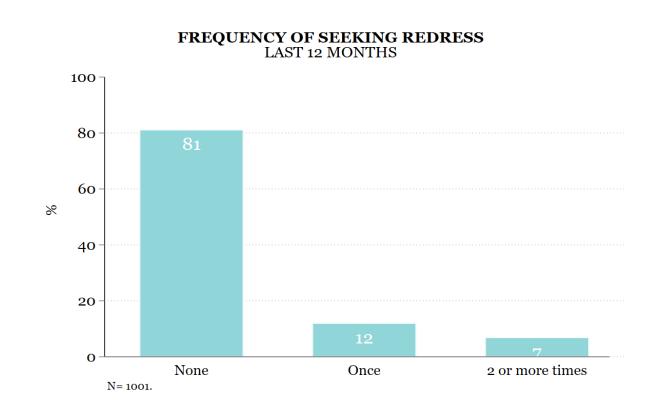
of all respondents had sought redress for an issue in the past 12 months.

#### 7 percent

had sought redress for an issue more than one time in the past 12 months.

#### 27 percent

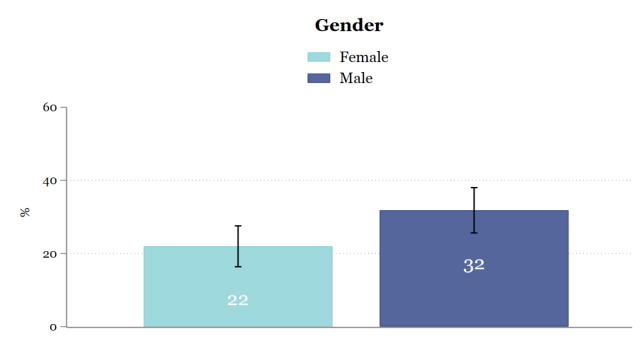
of respondents who had lost money due to fraud, an unexpected fee, or a service quality challenge had sought redress in the past 12 months.



Of those that lost money due to a DFS challenge, male respondents were more likely to seek formal redress.

#### SOUGHT REDRESS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

LOST MONEY DUE TO FRAUD, SERVICE QUALITY CHALLENGE, OR UNCLEAR FEES

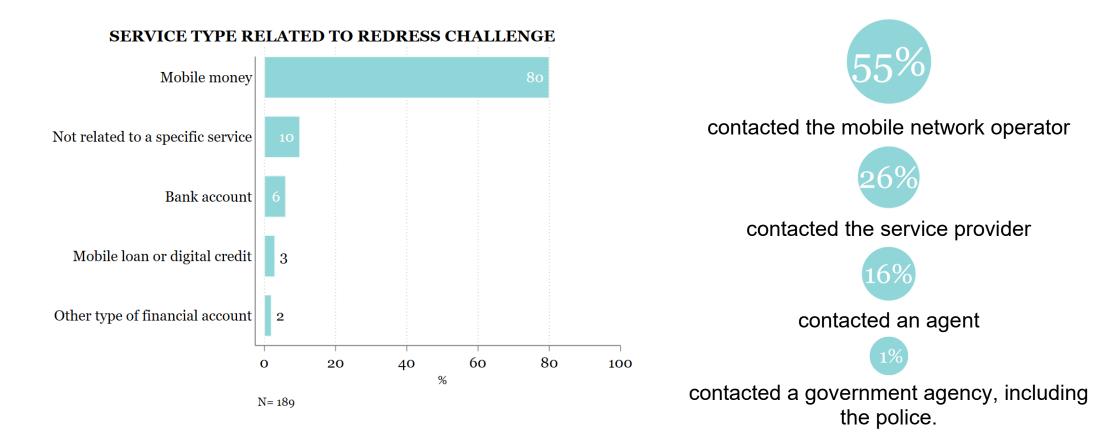


N= 434.95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

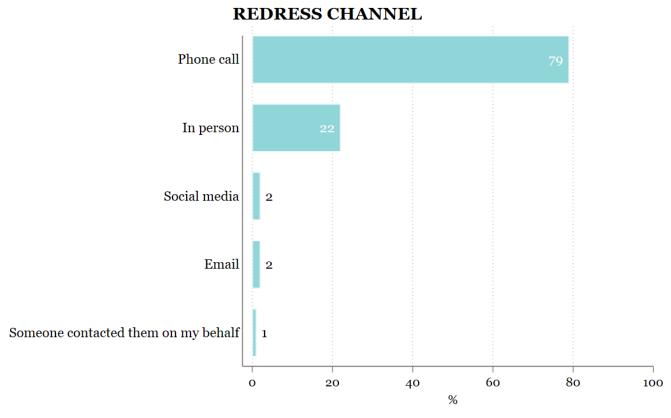
#### **SEEKING REDRESS**

**IPA** 

Mobile money was usually involved in the last challenge for which redress was sought.



## Phone call was the most common mode of seeking redress.



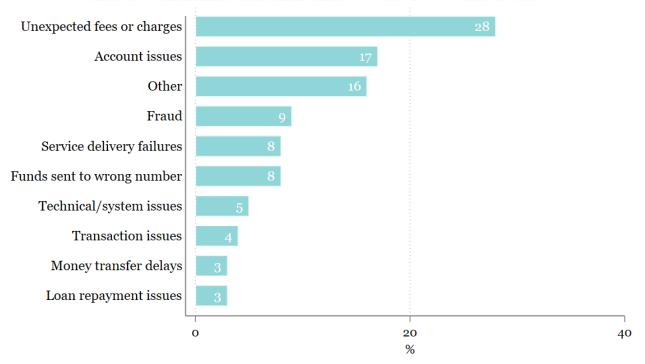
Poorer respondents were more likely to seek redress in person and less likely to use phone call.

Female respondents sought redress more frequently by phone compared to males.

Multiple selections possible. N= 189. Excludes 3 don't know responses.

## Unexpected fees was the most common issue for which redress was sought.

#### LAST CHALLENGE REDRESS WAS SOUGHT FOR



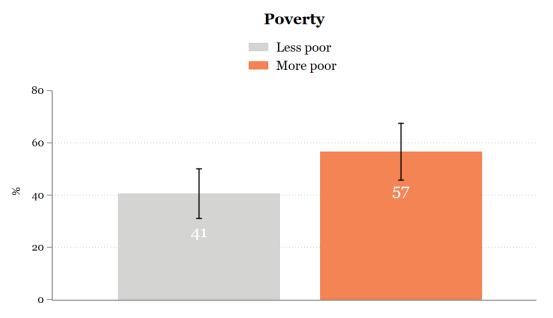
Less educated respondents were more likely to have sought redress for issues relating to unclear fees and charges, while more financially literate respondents sought redress for transaction issues to greater extent, and urban respondents for service requests.

Categorized ex-post from text describing the redress issue. N=189

### Half of redress cases involved loss of funds.

Poorer respondents were more likely to seek redress for issues concerning loss of funds.

#### REDRESS INCIDENT INVOLVED LOSS OF MONEY



N=189.95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.



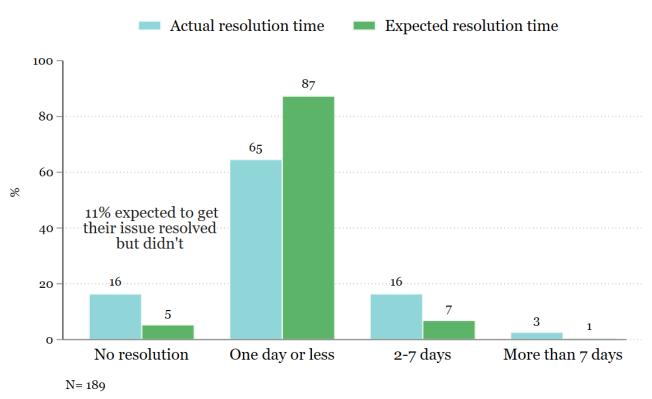
of respondents that lost money were able to recover some or all of it.

Older adults, higher educated, and more financially literate respondents were significantly more likely to recover some or all of the money that was lost.

## Resolution times are longer than respondents expected.

Nearly one in five respondents spent money to resolve their issue, for example in airtime fees or travel expenses when reports were made in person. On average, they spent \$4.32 on the resolution.

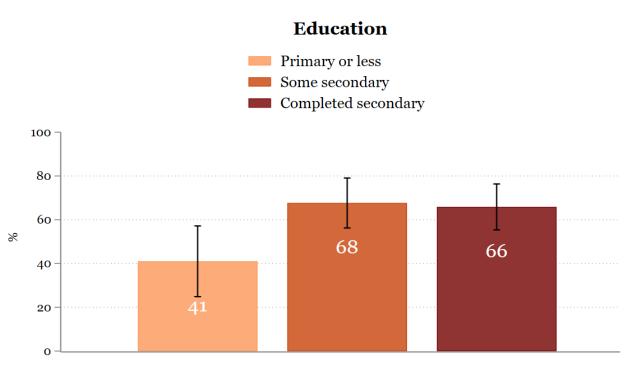
#### RESOLUTION TIME OF LAST REDRESS INCIDENT



## 61 percent were somewhat or very satisfied with the redress outcome.

Lower educated respondents were less likely to be satisfied with the outcome.

#### SATISFIED WITH REDRESS OUTCOME

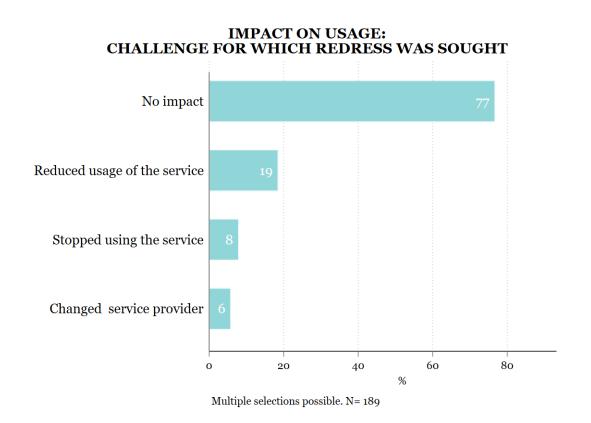


N= 189. 95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

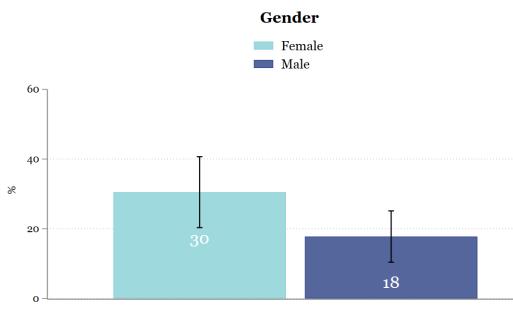
#### EFFECT ON DFS USAGE

## Amongst redress seekers, 23 percent made a change to their DFS usage as a result of the challenge they had experienced.

Female respondents were more likely to make a change.



#### REDRESS INCIDENT HAD ANY IMPACT ON USAGE



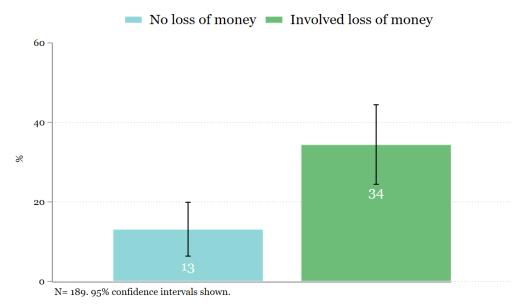
N= 189.95% confidence intervals shown. Graphs produced only when consumer segments differed at the 5% significance level.

## Complainants reporting lost money or dissatisfied with the redress process tend to reduce their DFS usage.

Respondents were more likely to reduce their DFS usage when the challenge involved loss of funds.

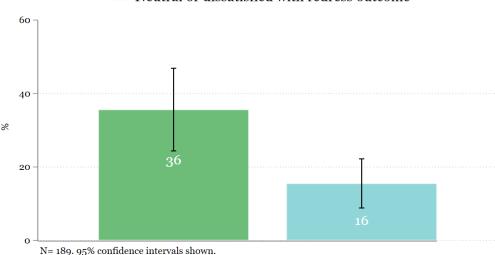
#### Those dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint were also more likely to reduce their DFS usage.

#### INCIDENT HAD ANY IMPACT ON USAGE



#### INCIDENT HAD ANY IMPACT ON USAGE

- Satisfied with redress outcome
- Neutral or dissatisfied with redress outcome



## **Trust in Digital Financial Services**

Back to Table of Contents

108 Trust in DFS

109 Trust by consumer segments

110 Impact of challenges on trust

IPA ○ Financial Consumer Protection Surveys ○ Uganda 2025 ○ TRUST IN DFS ○ Page: 106 ○ Back to ToC

## **Key Findings**

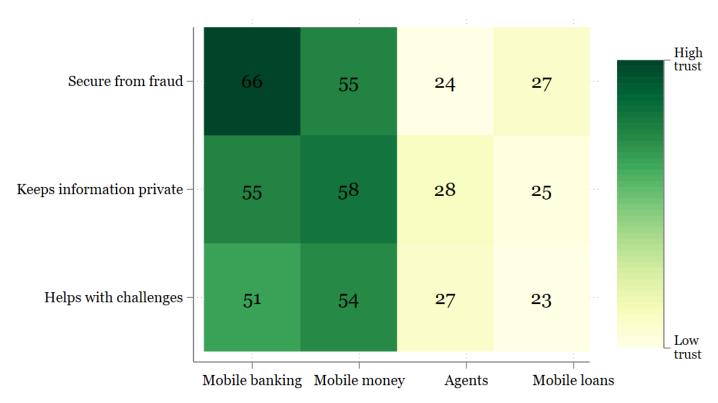
- 1. Trust levels by provider: Consumer trust was highest in mobile money and mobile banking providers, with between 51 percent and 66 percent giving them full trust ratings. Only 23 percent to 28 percent trusted fully in mobile loan providers and agents.
- 2. Help with challenges: Across all services, consumers were least confident in providers' ability to help them resolve challenges related to DFS usage, and most confident in their ability to keep money safe from fraud, with ability to keep information private between the two.

3. Demographic trust patterns: Urban, female, higher educated, and middle-aged consumers tended to be less trustful, as measured by a trust index score constructed from all trust indicators.

4. DFS challenges and impact on trust levels: Consumers who experienced DFS challenges show markedly lower trust scores, with particularly strong negative correlations for agent overcharging, customer care problems, and fraud experiences.

## Consumer trust is highest for mobile money and mobile banking services.

#### TRUST IN DIGITAL FINANCIAL SERVICES

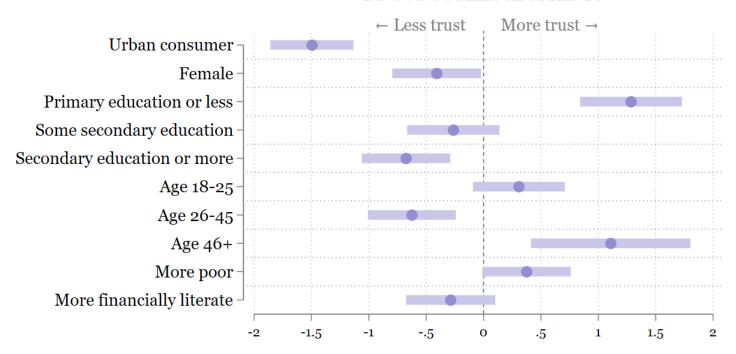


N= 1001. Graph shows the percentage of respondents who gave the highest trust rating to statements related to security from fraud, privacy, and help with challenges.

## Trust in DFS providers varies by consumer segments.

Urban, female, higher educated, and middle-aged respondents are more mistrustful.

#### TRUST IN DFS PROVIDERS BY CONSUMER SEGMENTS

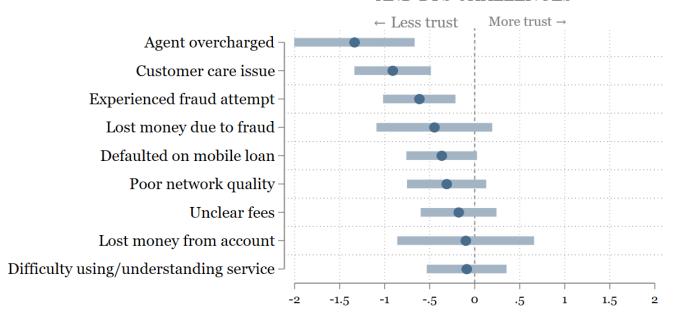


N= 1001. Linear bivariate regression results. Dependent variable is trust in DFS providers (composite index using principal component analysis of indicators related to trust in mobile money, mobile banking, and mobile loan providers and their ability to protect money from fraud, help with challenges, and keep information private). Coefficients on the demographic indicator shown. Separate regressions run for each challenge. 95% confidence intervals reported.

# Consumers who have experienced DFS challenges tend to have lower trust in DFS providers.

Most challenges experienced are associated with lower levels of trust. Provider trust is particularly strongly correlated with issues related to agent overcharging, customer care challenges, and fraud.

## TRUST IN DFS PROVIDERS AND DFS CHALLENGES



N= 1001. Linear bivariate regression results. Dependent variable is trust in DFS providers (composite index using principal component analysis of indicators related to trust in mobile money, mobile banking, and mobile loan providers and their ability to protect money from fraud, help with challenges, and keep information private). Coefficients on the challenge indicator shown. Separate regressions run for each challenge. 95% confidence intervals reported.



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