



REPORT

Africa Payment Preferences: Driving Toward Digital Transformation



ENTRUST

SECURING A WORLD IN MOTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Consumers across Sub-Saharan Africa are reshaping financial services with behaviors that reflect both deep reliance on mobile money and enduring attachment to cash and cards. Their preferences highlight the region's distinctive path to digital transformation – one that combines innovation with long-standing habits. For financial institutions, these insights connect directly to business priorities, including customer trust, acquisition, and fraud prevention.

Survey Results Reveal a Market in Transition

- ✓ **Ease, convenience, and security guide choices:** Consumers are pragmatic, valuing payment methods that are simple and safe. In Tanzania, security ranks even higher than convenience.
- ✓ **Cash remains significant:** In Ethiopia, nearly half of consumers (43%) still prefer cash.
- ✓ **Cards matter in certain markets:** In South Africa and Nigeria, physical debit and credit cards remain the most important payment tool.
- ✓ **Mobile money dominates:** It's the leading method for both offline and online payments, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania.
- ✓ **Account opening remains branch-heavy:** 54% of respondents opened their most recent account in-branch, compared to 36% via mobile app and 7% via website.
- ✓ **Growing demand for stronger safeguards:** While one-time passwords (OTPs), secure portals, biometrics, and two-factor authentication are already common, consumers increasingly expect stronger passwords, expanded biometrics, and real-time fraud alerts.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African banking landscape illustrates both opportunity and challenge. The continent is at the center of global demographic change, with its population **projected to grow** by 63% – reaching 2.5 billion people by 2050. This surge will expand Africa’s share of the world’s population to nearly 28%, fueling demand for financial services at a pace unmatched in most other regions. Mobile money has already enabled financial inclusion at scale, leapfrogging traditional infrastructure and making digital-first services the standard for many. At the same time, the continued importance of cash and cards highlights the need for hybrid solutions that serve all consumer segments.

For financial institutions, the path forward is clear: deliver faster, more convenient account opening, expand digital and physical payment choices that can be used everywhere, any time, and build trust through visible, industry-leading security. By doing so, banks can attract new customers, increase usage, and strengthen loyalty in one of the world’s fastest-evolving financial ecosystems.

About the Survey

This research is part of the Entrust ongoing voice-of-customer initiative to help issuers anticipate consumer needs and guide digital transformation. The Africa findings are based on a survey of 750 consumers across South Africa, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Kenya. Respondents were 18+ and held at least one bank account. The survey was conducted online by a third-party agency over three weeks, with the Entrust name not disclosed to participants.

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Financial Product Ownership

Most consumers across Sub-Saharan Africa hold basic banking products, but the uptake of more advanced services remains limited.

- ✓ Savings accounts are the most common, with 77% of respondents reporting ownership, followed by mobile money accounts (64%).
- ✓ Just 57% of consumers hold payment cards, with the highest adoption in South Africa and Nigeria.
- ✓ Checking accounts are relatively rare at 20%.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Products like savings accounts and mobile money are widely accessible, but card penetration and more advanced financial services remain uneven. For banks, this highlights both the challenge and opportunity of expanding product portfolios. By introducing more accessible card programs and cross-selling additional services, institutions can expand inclusion and strengthen customer relationships.



Just 57% of consumers hold payment cards.

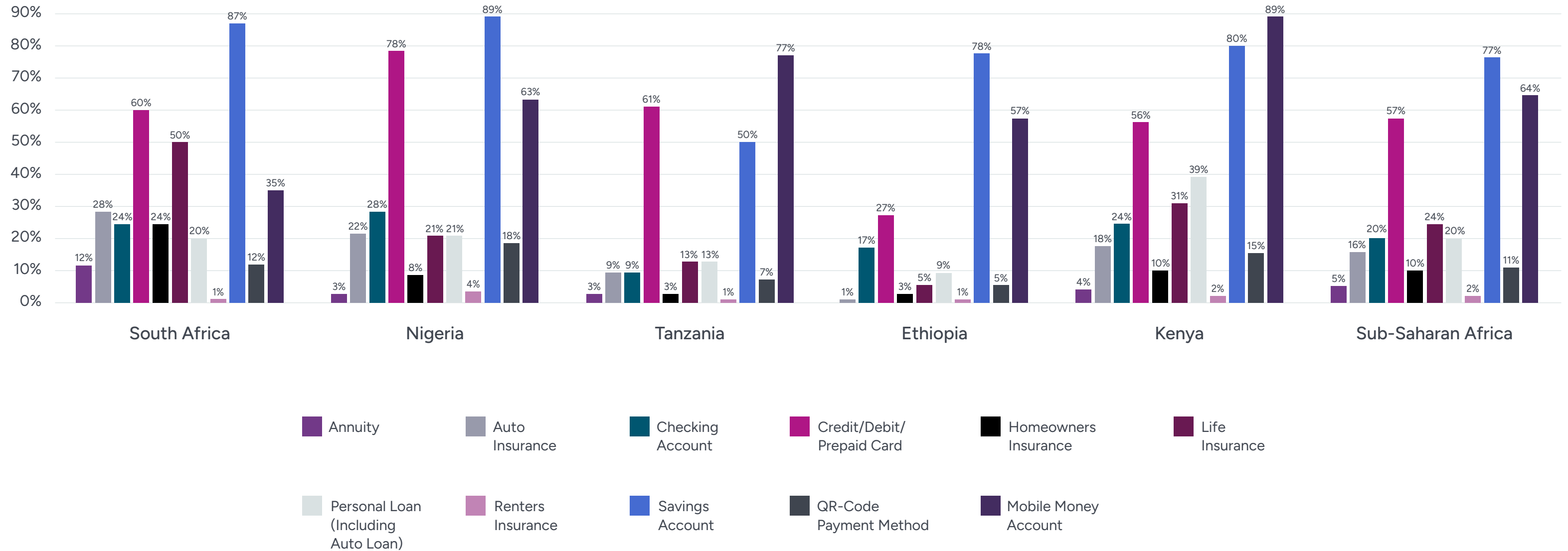


Checking accounts are relatively rare at 20%.



Financial Product Ownership

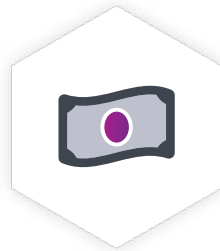
Do you hold any of the following financial products?



CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Payment Preferences

African consumers rely on a blend of mobile money, cash, and cards, with preferences shaped strongly by local conditions.



Offline Payments

Mobile money is the leading choice overall, favored by 31% of respondents, especially in Kenya (72%) and Tanzania (45%). Cash remains the top method in Ethiopia (43%), while physical cards dominate in South Africa (49%) and Nigeria (56%). Digital wallets on phones and wearables have limited traction (6%), reflecting the absence of Apple Pay and Google Pay in most parts of the region.



Online Payments

Mobile money again comes first (32%), followed by bank transfers (25%) and physical cards (20%). Digital wallets remain low at 8%, with usage constrained by limited third-party availability, though some banks are beginning to roll out their own wallet solutions (depending on country-availability).

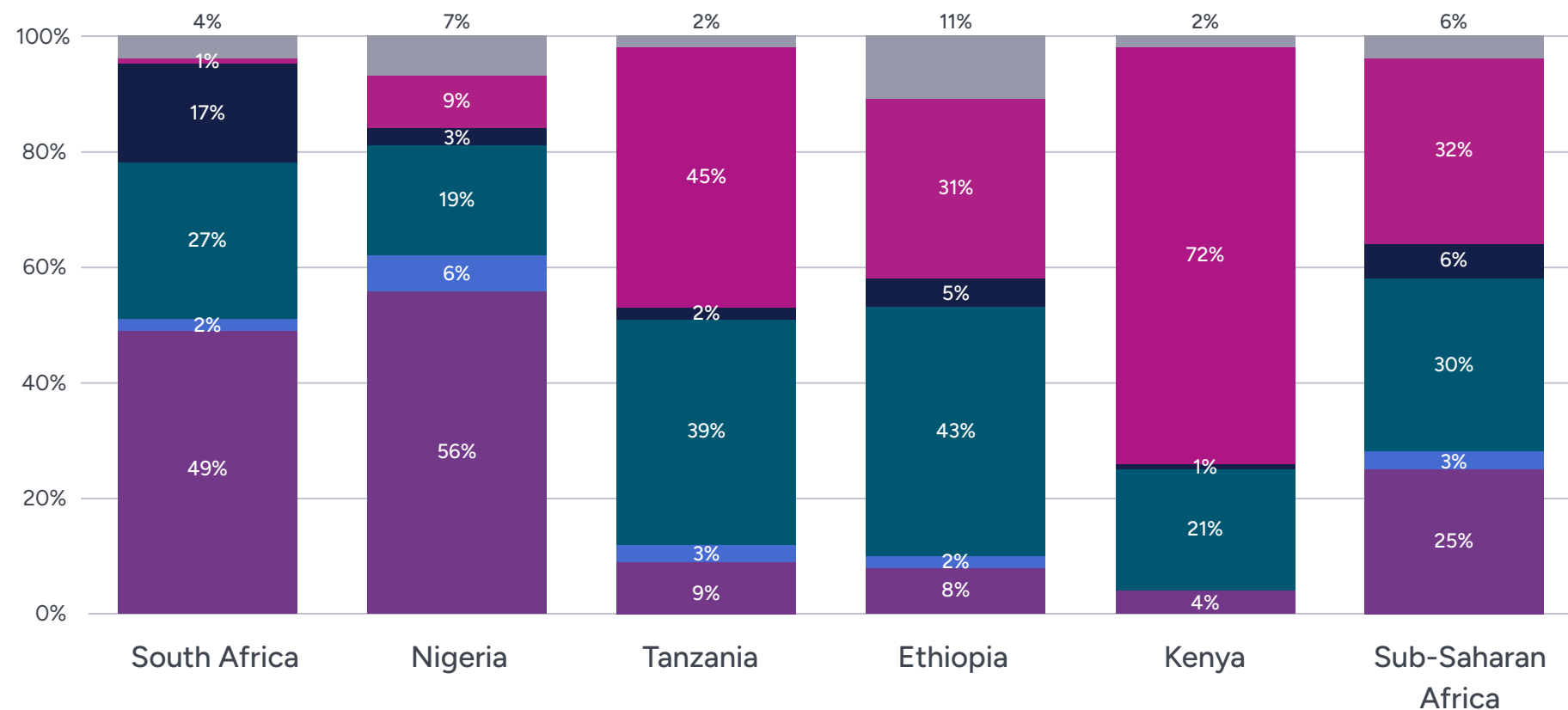


KEY TAKEAWAY

Africa's payments landscape blends innovation and inertia. Mobile money is indispensable for everyday transactions, but cash and cards remain anchors of the ecosystem. To succeed, banks need a hybrid strategy: support digital options to drive financial inclusion and maintain strong card programs in markets where they are preferred. At the same time, they should launch alternative digital payment options to keep the bank at the center of the customer experience and add value to the banking app.

Preferred Offline / In-Store Payment Method

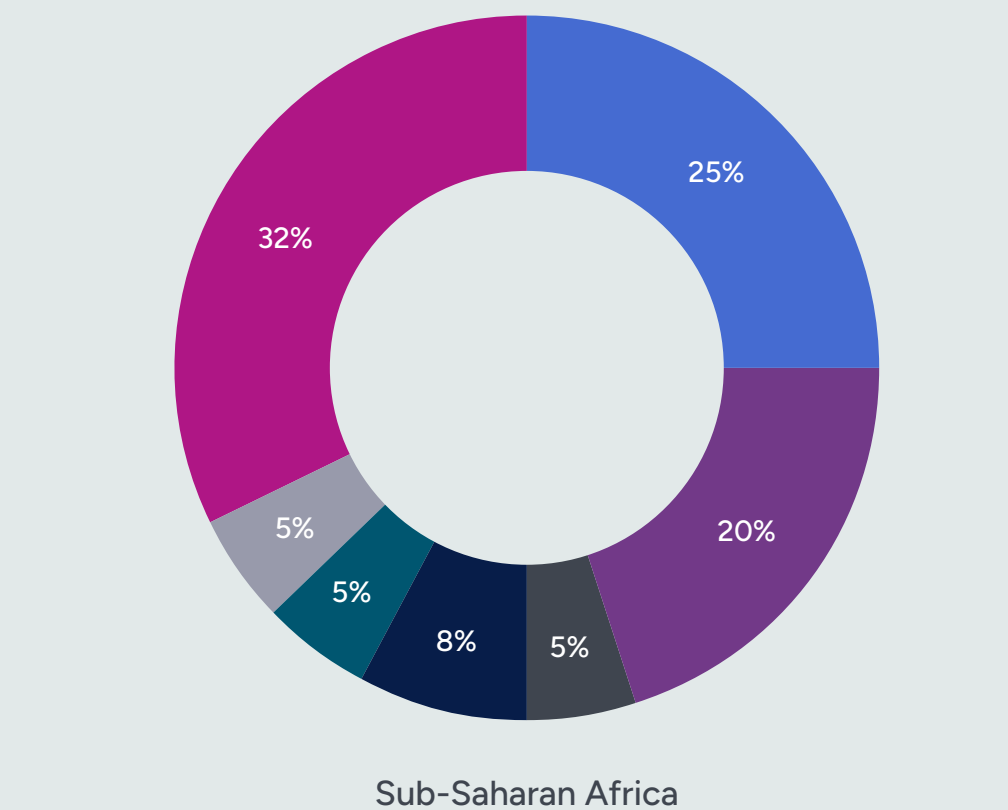
What is your preferred payment method for offline transactions?



Physical Debit or Credit Card
Prepaid Card
Cash
Digital Wallet on Phone or Wearable
Mobile Money Services (e.g., Airtel Money, M-Pesa, G-Cash, ...)
Other

Preferred Online Payment Method

What is your preferred payment method for online transactions?



Mobile Money Services (e.g., Airtel Money, M-Pesa, G-Cash, ...)
Bank Transfer
Physical Debit/Credit/Prepaid Card
Expedited Checkout With e.g. PayPal, Click-to-Pay
Digital Wallet on Phone or Wearable
Cash
Other

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Drivers of Choice

Consumers across Africa are pragmatic when deciding how to pay.



Ease of use and convenience are the primary drivers in most markets, with Kenya being the only country that considers convenience most important.



Security is important to consumers in all countries, but especially in Tanzania. Here, security (49%) outranks convenience (37%) but falls just behind ease of use (60%).



Digital wallets are valued mainly for their simplicity compared with other methods.



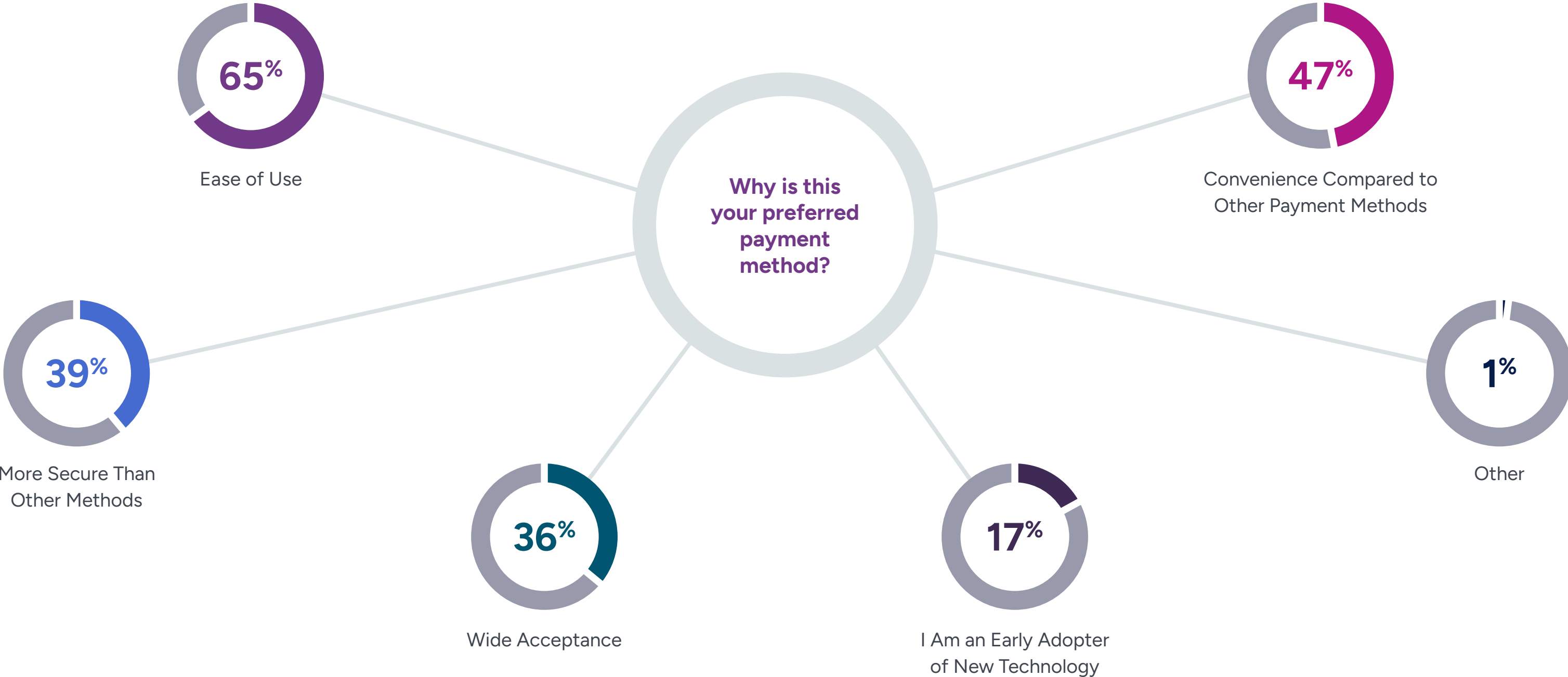
Early adoption of new technology is not a strong factor in consumer decision-making. In all regions, just 17% of respondents self-identified as early adopters.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Consumers adopt digital solutions not because they are new, but because they are accessible, convenient, and secure. For banks, this means positioning digital offerings as enhancements to the customer experience – complementing existing payment methods and helping to drive acquisition and loyalty.

Reasons for Preferred Payment Method in the Sub-Saharan Africa Region



CONSUMER INSIGHTS

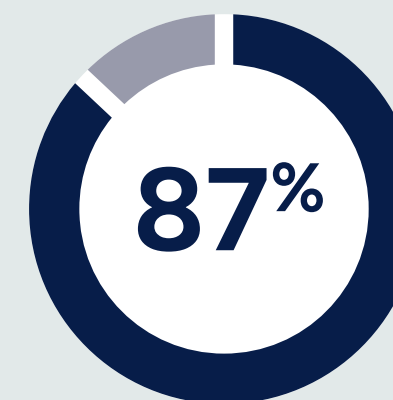
Account Opening

Despite the rise of mobile channels, most African consumers still open accounts in person.

- ✓ 87% of respondents opened a new account in the past three years.
- ✓ 54% opened their most recent banking account in a branch, compared to 36% via mobile app and 7% via a bank website. Kenya had the highest rate of in-branch openings (65%), while Ethiopia led in mobile app-based account openings (43%).
- ✓ 89% of respondents rated the process convenient or very convenient, though satisfaction is lower in Ethiopia (50%) compared with South Africa (89%) – the most satisfied of all countries.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Account opening in Africa is still largely branch-led, with the vast majority of consumers reporting that access to physical locations and ATMs is very important to their experience. Yet, mobile options are gaining traction. Financial institutions that simplify digital onboarding while keeping branch experiences consistent will be better positioned to acquire customers quickly and inclusively regardless of branch distance or preferred channel of interaction.



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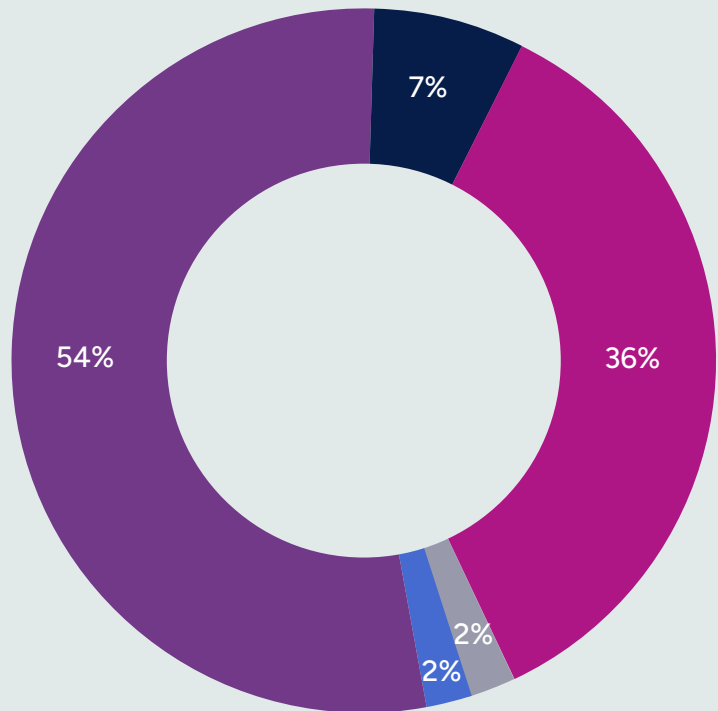


54% opened their most recent account in a branch.



Most Consumers Opened Their Account in Person in a Branch

If you opened a new banking account within the past 3 years, what was the primary method you used?

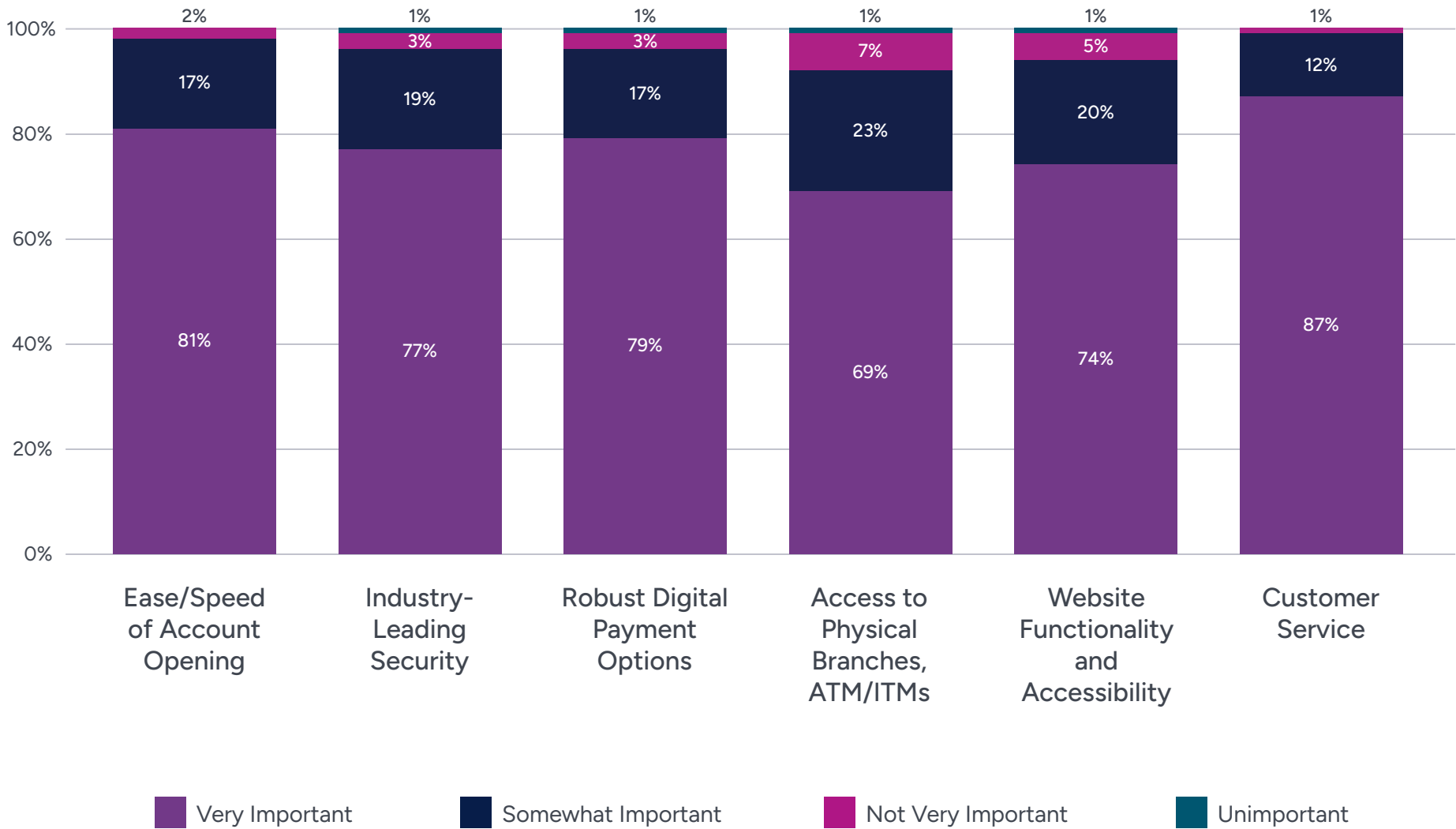


Sub-Saharan Africa



Importance of Different Factors for Account Opening (Sub-Saharan Africa Region)

Please indicate how important the following factors are when opening a new account at a financial institution:



CONSUMER INSIGHTS

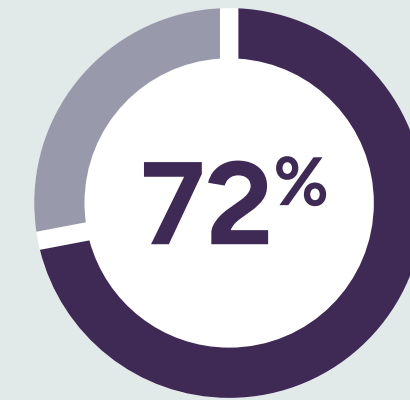
Bank Engagement

The mobile app is now the preferred way for consumers to interact with their financial institutions, after the initial account is opened, with more than half of bankers in Africa (54%) opening their most recent account in branch. According to the same survey, 72% of respondents across all nations prefer engaging with their bank via mobile apps, with Nigeria the highest at 82%. The combination of both in branch and digital engagement shows users' preferences for an omni-channel experience.

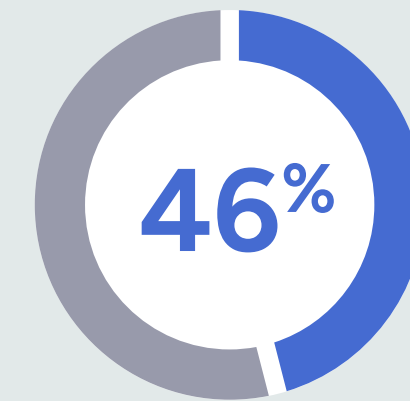
However, push-to-wallet features remain limited because Apple Pay and Google Pay aren't widely available in the region. At the same time, only 46% of consumers say their financial institution currently offers in-app payment functionality through the bank's own wallet, showing that even bank-led NFC payment solutions have room to grow.

KEY TAKEAWAY

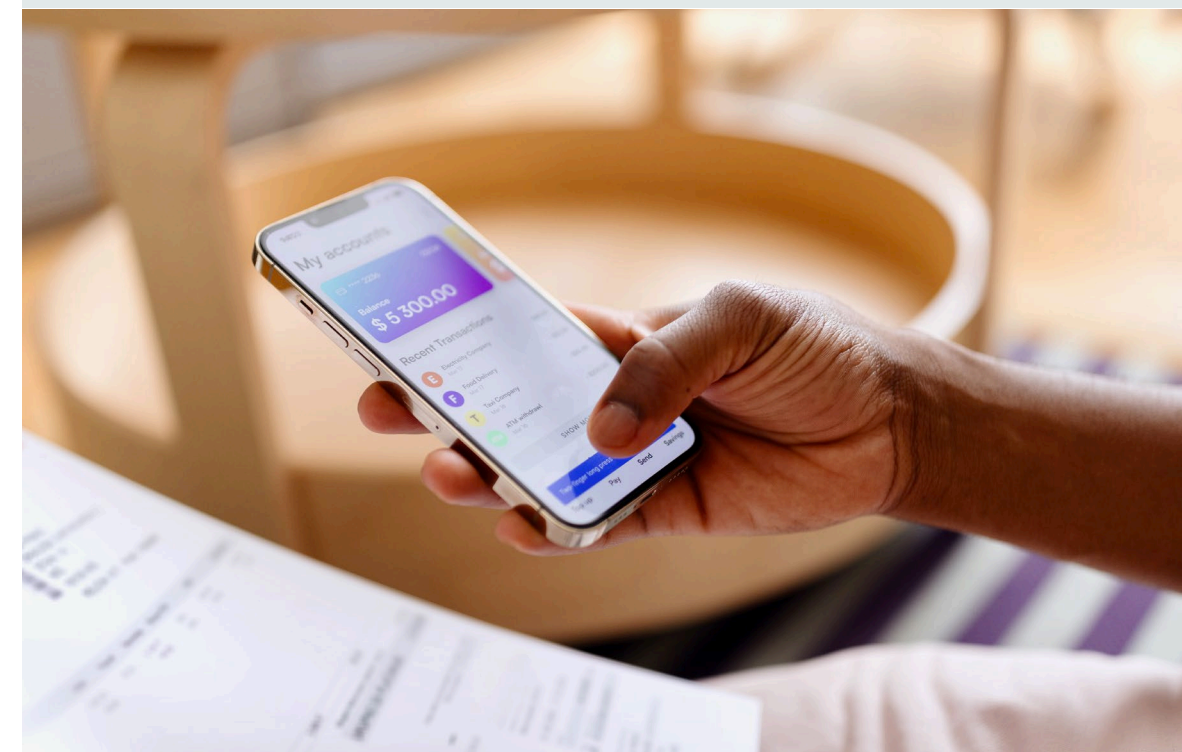
Banking apps are central to customer engagement in Africa, but functionality lags behind consumer expectations. Expanding in-app payment and card management features is a clear opportunity for banks to deepen relationships and boost usage.



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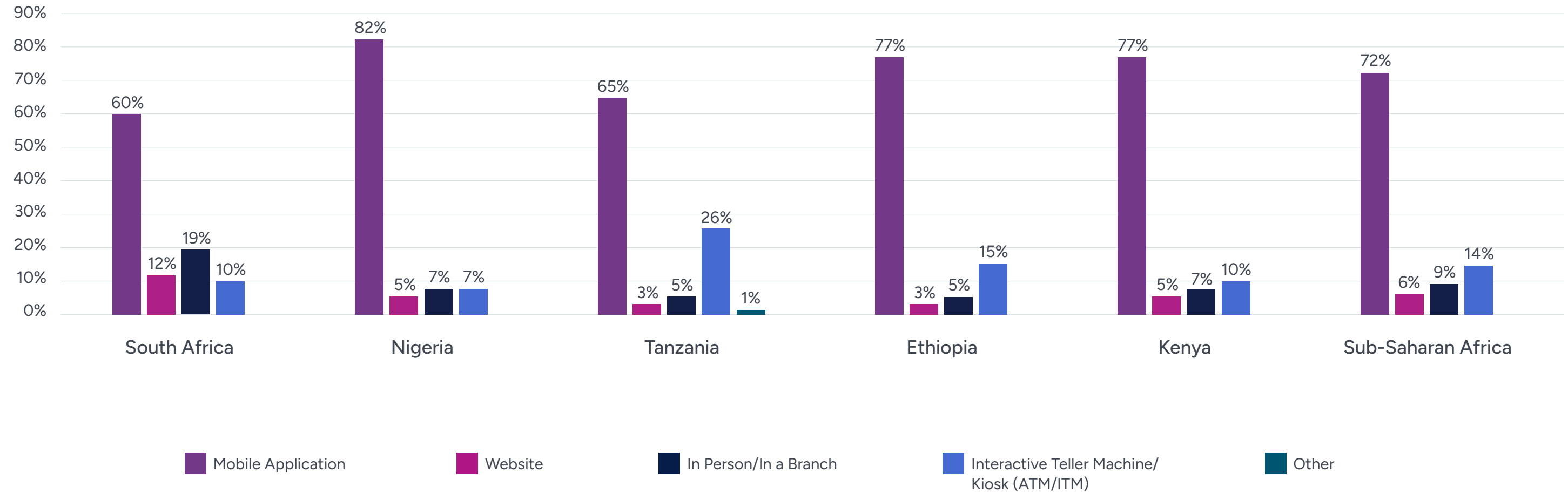


Only 46% say their financial institution offers in-app payment functionality through the bank's own wallet.



Bank Engagement

What's your preferred way of engaging/doing your daily banking with your financial institution?



CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Security Expectations

Security is already a strong part of the onboarding experience, but African consumers are asking for more. Currently, the most common security measures include:

- ✓ One-Time Passwords (OTPs, 58%)
- ✓ Secure online portals (20%)
- ✓ Biometric verification (56%)
- ✓ Two-factor authentication (63%)
- ✓ Physical verification (e.g., in-person document submission, 45%)

As for desired improvements, customers most often want stronger password protection, expanded biometrics, and proactive fraud detection and alerts.

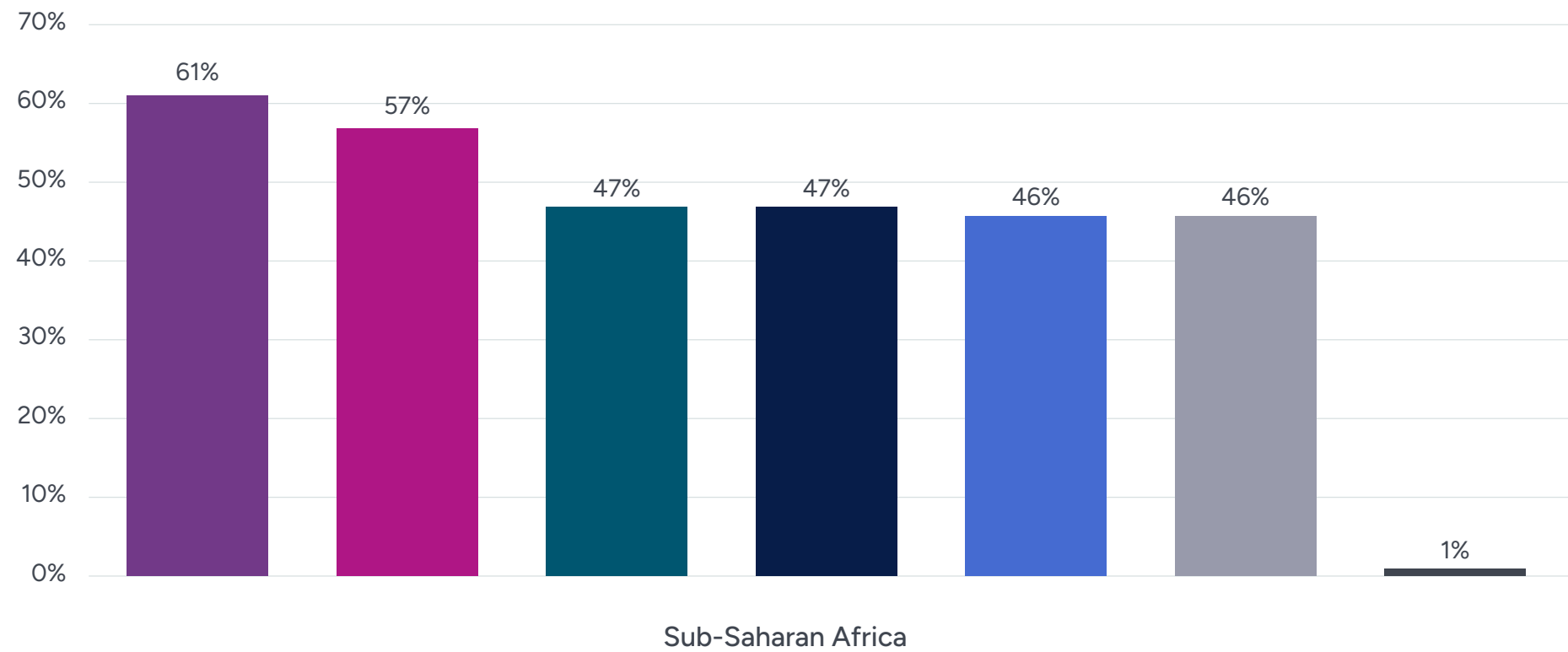


KEY TAKEAWAY

Security is both a baseline requirement and a differentiator. Banks that deliver visible, user-friendly protections will stand out in a competitive market and build the trust that drives loyalty.

Banks Have the Opportunity to Provide Stronger Security

What specific features or improvements would you like to see in your bank's security to feel more confident and secure in using their services?



Stronger Password Protection and Two-Factor Authentication

Enhanced Fraud Detection and Alerts

Biometric Authentication (e.g., Fingerprint, Facial Recognition)

Improved Privacy and Data Encryption Policies

More Transparency About How My Data Is Protected

Better Customer Support for Security-Related Issues

Other

Recommendations and Strategic Actions

Africa demonstrates both the promise and complexity of digital transformation. The region's mix of mobile-first innovation and traditional reliance on cash or cards shows why banks need flexible, hybrid strategies. To improve customer acquisition and build long-term loyalty, financial institutions must consider five strategic actions:



Increase Payment Options



Streamline Account Opening



Upgrade Banking Apps



Strengthen Security Measures



Educate Customers



RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1 Increase Payment Options

Consumers expect choice across markets where cash, cards, and mobile money each play critical roles. Banks should:

- Maintain strong support for cash and physical cards, which remain essential in South Africa, Nigeria, and Ethiopia.
- Expand creation of own in-app digital wallets and mobile money integrations, especially in Kenya and Tanzania.
- Use tokenization to securely enable new forms of digital payments through the Entrust Issuer TSP Hub (iTSP).

2 Streamline Account Opening

With 54% of consumers still opening accounts in-branch, onboarding is a major opportunity to modernize the customer experience. Banks should:

- Accelerate mobile-first account opening with clear, user-friendly steps.
- Provide instant access to digital payment credentials upon approval.
- Ensure consistency across channels, so customers have a positive experience whether in-branch or online.

With 54% of consumers still opening accounts in-branch, onboarding is a major opportunity to modernize the customer experience.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

3 Upgrade Banking Apps

Mobile apps are the preferred engagement channel for 72% of consumers, yet functionality lags behind expectations. Banks should:

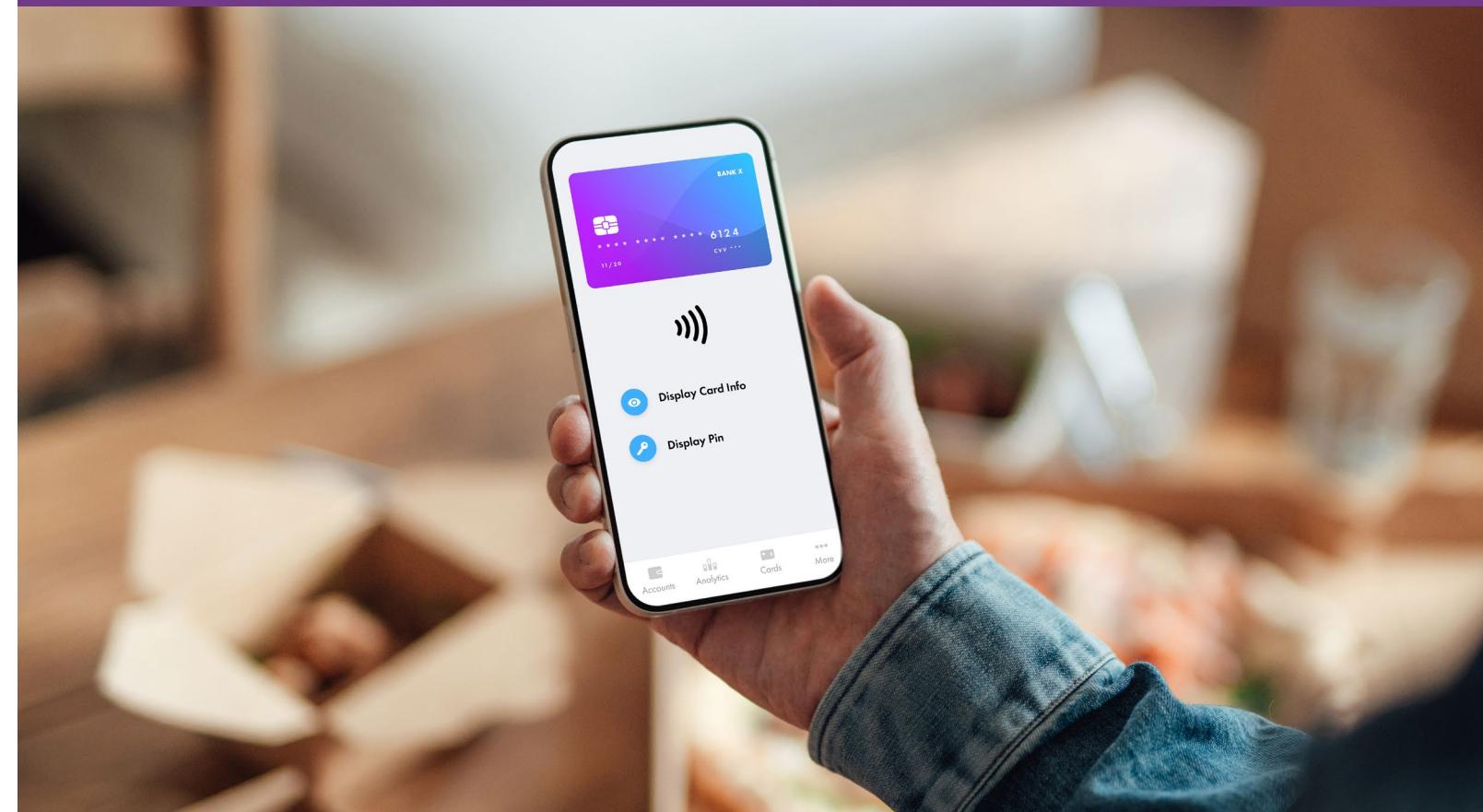
- Add more value to their apps through features such as NFC Issuer Wallet and secure card display to replicate global best practices.
- Expand management tools, including PIN view/change and token management.
- Offer account-based payments to allow payments without requiring a card (Pay by Account).

4 Strengthen Security Measures

African consumers demand visible and reliable safeguards. In response, banks can:

- Implement advanced authentication such as biometrics and multi-factor verification.
- Provide real-time fraud alerts and monitoring.
- Use tokenization and strong encryption to protect payments across channels.

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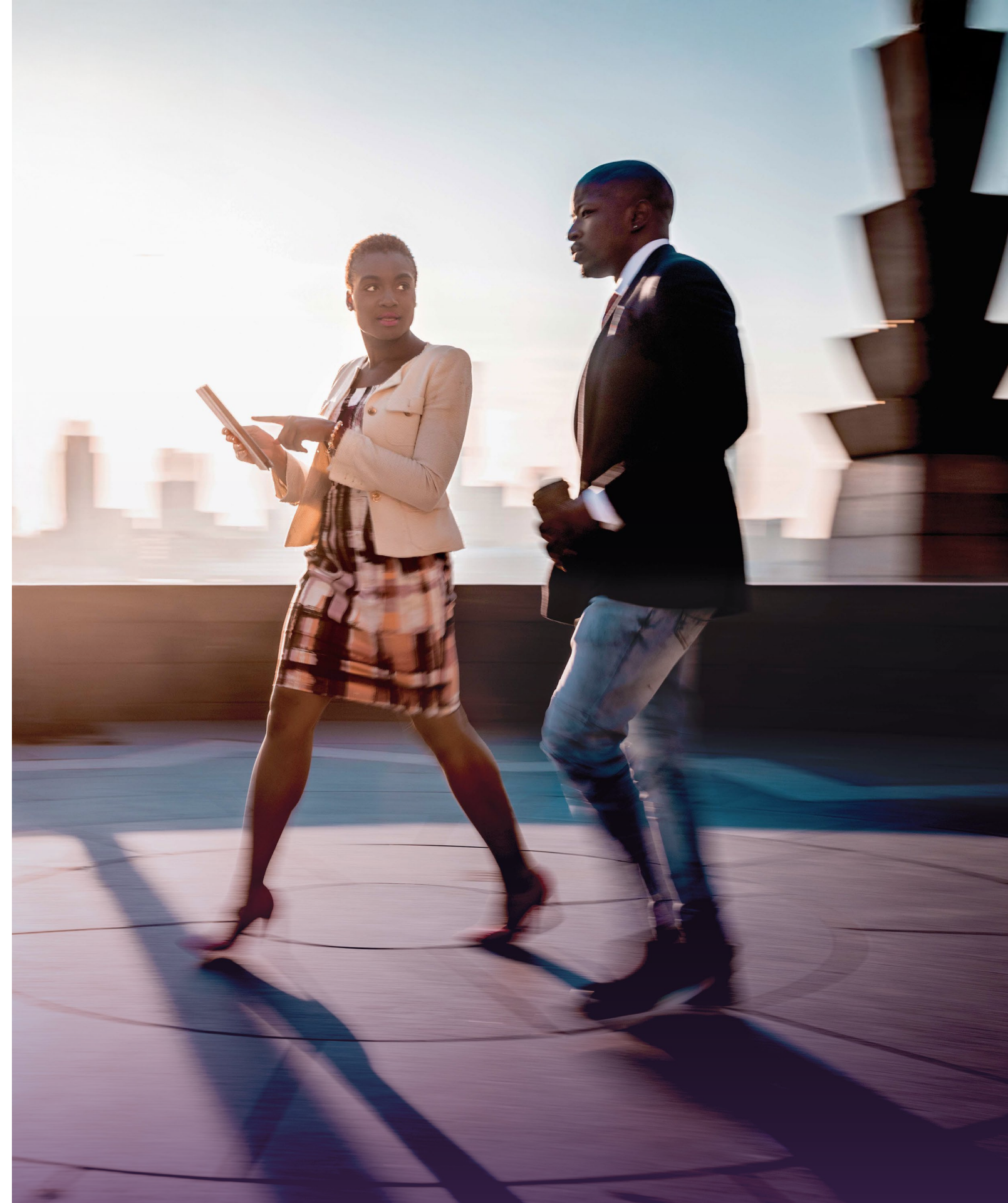
RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

5 Educate Customers

Many consumers may not be aware of digital payment options or trust them to protect their transactions. To educate customers, organizations can:

- Communicate the benefits and security of digital payments clearly.
- Provide guidance on how to use mobile apps and issuer wallets safely.
- Build trust by reinforcing convenience and showing consumers that digital services are not only secure but can be more convenient than cash or cards.

By expanding choice, simplifying onboarding, upgrading mobile apps, strengthening security, and educating customers, African financial institutions can accelerate digital adoption while meeting consumers where they are today. This balanced approach can help banks increase acquisition, card activation and usage, financial inclusion, and long-term customer trust.



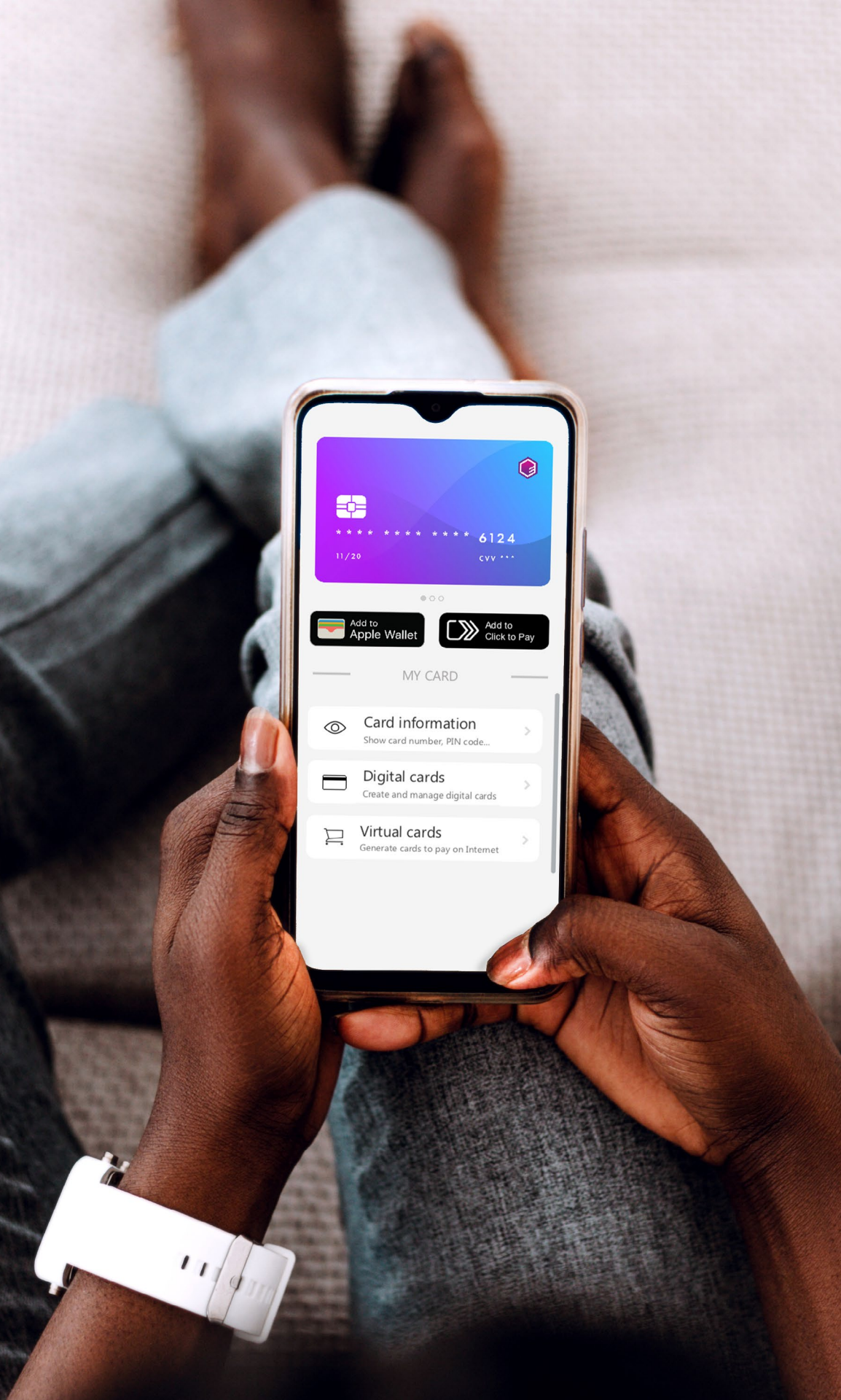
From Insight to Impact

African consumers expect financial services that are immediate, mobile-first, and secure. The rise of mobile money and digital adoption has transformed everyday transactions, while mobile onboarding is reshaping how people open accounts. Yet physical cards and branch networks still play an important role, underscoring the need for hybrid solutions that meet consumers wherever they are.

Security is equally central. From account opening to payments, consumers want visible safeguards such as biometrics, strong authentication, and proactive fraud alerts. Meeting these expectations not only reduces risk but also builds the trust that drives lasting loyalty.

Entrust helps banks and issuers to meet these needs with a connected portfolio of solutions:

- ✓ **Identity Verification and Account Opening:** Verify identities, issue trusted credentials, navigate KYC compliance, and prevent fraud across digital and physical channels with Entrust Identity Security solutions.
- ✓ **Digital Card Solution to instantly issue cards into the mobile app, leveraging tokenization:**
 - Issuer TSP Hub (iTSP) securely issues and manages digital cards across wallets and devices, Mastercard MDES and Visa VTS certified.
 - NFC Issuer Wallet to turn mobile apps into everyday payment tools.
 - Secure card display within the banking app.
 - Push provisioning into Apple Pay, Google Pay, Samsung Pay (where available), or Click to Pay.
 - Pay by Account enables customers to digitize and tokenize their bank accounts, allowing them to make secure in-person transactions – without the need to issue or process a physical card.





FROM INSIGHT TO IMPACT

- ✔ **Instant Financial Issuance (IFI) for physical cards that complement digital credentials:**
 - With Entrust Instant Financial Issuance, there's no reason for your cardholders to wait more than a few minutes to get their debit or credit cards. In today's world, instant access is a necessity for consumers, and this applies to their physical payment cards as well. Give your customers the freedom to pay anytime, anywhere, any way – with instant card issuance.
 - Whether it's for new accounts, replacing lost or expired cards, or reissuing following a security incident or breach, issuing cards instantly creates a positive customer experience. Instead of waiting for cards in the mail, consumers get the payment products they want on demand – and the issuer becomes the hero.
 - With the right technology, banks can produce high-quality cards personalized with custom artwork that appeals to even the most demanding consumers. Entrust Instant Financial Issuance supports in-branch and self-service issuance operations.
- ✔ **Entrust Central Issuance solutions offer efficient, high-volume card issuance and delivery solutions.**
- ✔ **Advanced authentication helps to ensure secure, user-friendly protection across every interaction.**

By integrating these capabilities, financial institutions can deliver seamless and secure customer journeys – from account opening through card issuance (physical and digital) and ongoing engagement – while reducing fraud and operational risk. Entrust serves as both a technology provider and a trusted adviser, helping banks modernize the entire lifecycle and strengthen customer relationships in one of the world's fastest-growing financial markets.

Learn more about how Entrust [Digital Card Solution](#), [Instant Financial Issuance](#), [Identity Verification](#), and [account opening](#) innovations can help your organization acquire more customers, increase card usage, and build lasting trust.

ABOUT ENTRUST

Entrust fights fraud and cyber threats with identity-centric security that protects people, devices, and data. Our comprehensive solutions help organizations secure every step of the identity lifecycle, from verifying identity at onboarding to securing connections and fighting fraud in everyday transactions. Ongoing monitoring supports compliance and safeguards keys, secrets, and certificates. With a foundation of identity-centric security, our customers can transact and grow with confidence. Entrust has a global partner network and supports customers in over 150 countries.

For more information, visit www.entrust.com.