

Press Release: 4.6 billion mobile subscriptions by the end of 2009

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Latest ITU statistics reveal a thriving global ICT industry, driven by the mobile sector, but also highlight the digital divide

Geneva, 6 October 2009 — ITU's latest statistics, published in [The World in 2009: ICT facts and figures](#), reveal rapid ICT growth in many world regions in everything from mobile cellular subscriptions to fixed and mobile broadband, and from TV to computer penetration - with mobile technology acting as a key driver.

The brand new comprehensive data, forecasts and analysis on the global ICT market show that mobile growth is continuing unabated, with global mobile subscriptions expected to reach 4.6 billion by the end of the year, and mobile broadband subscriptions to top 600 million in 2009, having overtaken fixed broadband subscribers in 2008.

Mobile technologies are making major inroads toward extending ICTs in developing countries, with a number of nations launching and commercially offering IMT2000/3G networks and services. But ITU's statistics also highlight important regional discrepancies, with mobile broadband penetration rates still low in many African countries and other developing nations.

More than a quarter of the world's population is online and using the Internet, as of 2009. Ever-increasing numbers are opting for high-speed Internet access, with fixed broadband subscriber numbers more than tripling from 150 million in 2004 to an estimated 500 million by the end of 2009.

Rapid high-speed Internet growth in the developed world contrasts starkly with the state of play in the developing world. In Africa, for example, there is only one fixed broadband subscriber for every 1,000 inhabitants, compared with Europe where there are some 200 subscribers per 1,000 people. The relative price for ICT services (especially broadband) is highest in Africa, the region with the lowest income levels. The report finds that China has the world's largest fixed broadband market, overtaking its closest rival, the US, at the end of 2008.

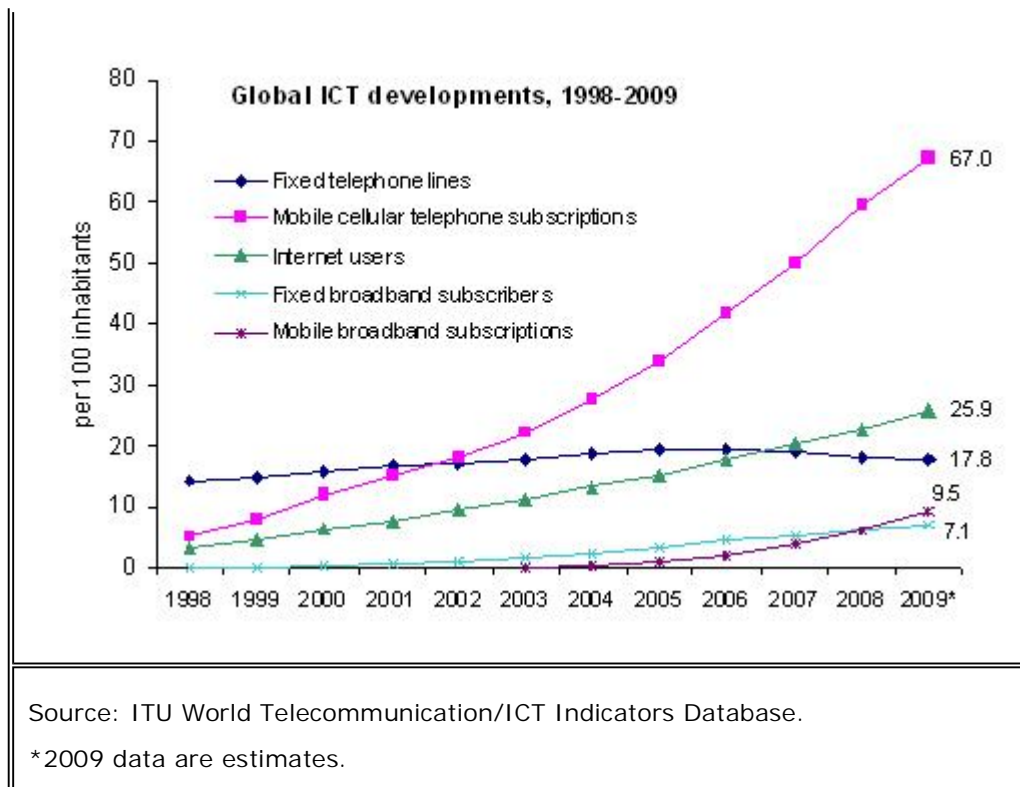
ITU estimates show that three quarters of households now own a television set and over a quarter of people globally – some 1.9bn – now have access to a computer at home. This demonstrates the huge market potential in developing countries, where TV penetration is already high, for converged devices, as the mobile, television and Internet worlds collide. Dr Hamadoun Touré, ITU Secretary-General says, "ICTs are vital within developing countries to ensure that ordinary people can fully participate in the knowledge economy of the 21st century. We have seen a positive impact on services such as health and education in markets where ICT growth has been strong."

Within the UN system, ITU is the main source of internationally comparable data and statistics on ICT. The [Market Information and Statistics Division](#) of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) collects, harmonizes and disseminates more than 100 telecommunication and ICT indicators from over 200 economies worldwide. Data are accessible online through the [ICT Eye portal](#), on CD and in print publications. The Market Information and Statistics Division regularly publishes analytical reports illustrating the latest trends in the sector. It also monitors the development of the digital divide and has developed widely used benchmarking tools, such as the [ICT Development Index](#) (IDI).

Sami Al Basheer, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, said, "We are encouraged to see so much growth across developed and developing regions, but there is still a large digital divide, and an impending broadband divide, which needs to be addressed urgently. Heads of State and industry leaders will collaborate at ITU TELECOM WORLD 2009 to identify the right policies and regulations to support and encourage future ICT growth worldwide. ITU, through its Development Sector, is working with all stakeholders to promote the development of ICT services for all segments of society in all regions of the world."

The World in 2009: ICT Facts and Figures





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