

Burkina Faso

The explosion of submarine cables on Africa's West Coast and the build-out of its national fibre backbone have diversified options for this landlocked country, increased bandwidth and lowered costs.

Mobile services: There are three mobile operators in Burkina Faso: TELMOB, the mobile arm of the fixed line incumbent ONATEL (National Office of Telecommunications), which is partially owned by Morocco Telecom; Orange Burkina Faso SA (owned by Orange Middle East & Africa (OMEA) and Orange Côte d'Ivoire Participation); and TELECEL FASO SA (owned by a local group, Planor Afrique). The market has been competitive since 2000. Mobile access is relatively high, with 86 per cent of households owning a portable telephone, of which 97 per cent are in urban areas and 82 per cent in rural areas.¹¹⁶ Licenses for 3G were issued in 2012 and mobile-broadband has since been growing rapidly. Operators have also launched mobile money services since 2013.

Fixed services: Although the fixed-telephone market is open and all operators have global licenses, ONATEL is the only provider of fixed-telephone services. It uses both copper wire and CDMA wireless local loop. ONATEL also provides ADSL fixed-broadband services. In 2005, 1 000 km of fibre-optic cable were laid from the capital to the Malian, Togolese and Côte d'Ivoire borders for transmission of traffic onward to the SAT3 undersea cable land points of the coastal countries and in 2012, 195 km of fibre-optic to connect the Niger border. The Government has embarked on the development of a full nationwide backbone with links to all provincial capitals and key border crossings. The Government has also adopted a licensing regime that ensures non-discriminatory access to infrastructure, with plans to develop a public-private partnership consortium to manage the national backbone. A link to Ghana became operational in 2016 enabling access to the international undersea cables. Since its recent market entry, Orange and ONATEL have developed a metro fibre ring around the capital Ouagadougou. In addition, Orange developed a 197-km fibre connection to Ghana. Burkina Faso's IXP was launched in 2015 and has eight members, including all of the leading operators.

Key indicators for Burkina Faso (2017)	Africa	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	0.4	0.9
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	93.5	74.4
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	28.8	24.8
3G coverage (% of population)	32.0	62.7
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	0.0	28.4
Individuals using the Internet (%)	15.9	22.1
Households with a computer (%)	6.4	8.9
Households with Internet access (%)	12.9	19.4
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	6.0	11.2
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.1	0.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution		
-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s	78.7	38.7
-2 to 10 Mbit/s	21.3	37.2
-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s	-	24.1

Note: Data in italics are ITU estimates. Source: ITU (as of June 2018).

Government policy: The Ministry of Digital Economy and Posts is in charge of ICT policy. There is an independent Regulatory Authority of Electronic Communications and Posts, and an ICT agency now in charge of the main ICT projects of the Government. The National Plan for Economic and Social Development 2016–2020 (PNDES) focuses on three main challenges translated into the following strategic directions: (a) institutional reforms and modernization of the administration; (b) development of human capital; and (c) stimulation of high-potential sectors to foster economic development and job creation. ICT is part of the PNDES and is seen as a key enabler and high-potential sector for the country's development. Commitments concerning ICTs include (a) connecting all public agencies, schools and healthcare facilities; (b) setting up a unique digital identification for each citizen and company; (c) improving education, health and rural development by developing and deploying e-services; and (d) developing a local digital industry, through investments in incubation, innovation and research and development.

Conclusion: Two decades of telecom sector reforms have resulted in notable improvements in Burkina Faso's ICT sector. The country has created a relatively competitive environment for telecommunication services and has been one of the leading countries in the region in terms of adopting Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ICT policies.