

Congo (Democratic Republic of the)

There is a large untapped potential for the ICT market in this fourth most populated country in Africa. The spread of access will depend on political stability and commitment of the Government and operators to extend last mile access and backbones deeper into rural areas.

Mobile services: Following industry consolidation and exits, there were four mobile operators with nationwide licenses active in the country at the end of 2016: Vodacom DRC, a subsidiary of Vodacom, the South African mobile group; Orange DRC, a subsidiary of Orange, the French telecom group (Orange purchased TIGO'S operations in 2016); AIRTEL DRC, a subsidiary of Bharti Airtel, the Indian mobile group; and AFRICELL DRC, a subsidiary of Africell Holding, a Lebanese-owned mobile group. Coverage remains somewhat limited, as reflected in access statistics. In 2014, 39 per cent of households had mobile phones, with a large gap between urban (79 per cent) and rural (21 per cent) areas.¹⁴¹ All of the operators have launched 3G services and are waiting for the sale of LTE licenses, which is dependent on the freeing of frequencies from the transition to digital broadcasting. Mobile-broadband is by far the most prevalent form of Internet access in the country.

Fixed services: The State-owned Congolese Society for Posts and Telecommunications (SCPT) is the result of the reform of the Congolese Office of Posts and Telecommunications into a commercial company by law No. 08/007 of 8 July 2008. It is mainly focused on wholesale backbone and postal services, and does not offer fixed-telephone service. A few companies mainly using fixed wireless access offer broadband. Fixed broadband using optical fibre is primarily used by businesses. SCPT operates a national backbone with around 4 000 km of fibre-optic cable connecting some 45 locations across the country. Prospects for international bandwidth have improved, with connection to one undersea submarine cable, WACS. An IXP was launched in 2012, managed by the country's ISP Association. Located in Kinshasa, the IXP has 11 members.

Government policy: The Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications, New Information Technologies and Communications is responsible for the sector. The 2002 Law on Telecommunications is the relevant sector legislation. The Congolese

Key indicators for Congo (Democratic Republic of the) (2017)		Africa	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	0.0	0.9	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	43.4	74.4	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	16.2	24.8	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	40.0	62.7	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	0.0	28.4	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	8.6	22.1	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	3.1	8.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	3.2	19.4	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	0.5	11.2	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.001	0.6	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
<i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>	<i>60.9</i>	<i>38.7</i>	<i>4.2</i>
<i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>	<i>12.7</i>	<i>37.2</i>	<i>13.2</i>
<i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>	<i>26.4</i>	<i>24.1</i>	<i>82.6</i>

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

Authority for Regulation of Posts and Telecommunications is the sector regulator.

Conclusion: Wireless is the prevalent method of access in this LDC. Expansion of the national backbone network, triggered by the arrival of the submarine cable, should help to improve coverage in rural areas.