

## Fiji

**The small island developing state is a hub for international fibre-optic connectivity in the South Pacific.**

**Mobile services:** A GSM service was launched in July 1994 by Vodafone Fiji Limited, which at the time was co-owned by Vodafone UK (49 per cent) and Fijian Amalgamated Telecom Holdings (ATH) (51 per cent), a Fijian group. In 2014, Fiji's National Provident Fund purchased Vodafone UK's shareholding, making Vodafone fully locally owned. Until 2008 the company was the nation's only mobile operator. With the ending of Vodafone's exclusivity, Digicel Fiji Limited, a subsidiary of a privately held mobile group with operations in the Caribbean and the Pacific, entered the market. The year after Digicel launched, mobile penetration passed the 100 per cent mark. However actual mobile phone ownership is lower, with 76 per cent of the population aged 15 and older owning one and another 10 per cent reporting they used someone else's mobile.<sup>186</sup> Vodafone deployed a 3G network in November 2008 and has since then converted all base stations to support high-speed mobile technology, a feat accomplished in five years, compared to the 16 years needed to reach the same level of coverage for GSM. Vodafone launched an LTE network in December 2013 and coverage stood at 65 per cent of the population in 2016. Digicel deployed its 3G network in July 2011 and its LTE network in August 2014.

**Fixed services:** Telecom Fiji Limited (TFL), the incumbent owned by ATH, accounts for most fixed telephone lines in the country. Fixed telephone penetration is relatively high for a developing nation. Fixed broadband subscriptions are low and mainly limited to urban areas using ADSL or fibre. Fixed wireless penetration is higher and is being stimulated by the use of LTE for stationary Internet access as well as WiMAX. Telecom Fiji uses fibre-optic cable and microwave for its backbone network and is progressively converting to all-fibre. Digicel primarily uses microwave for its backbone network. Fiji became the first South Pacific nation to get access to an undersea fibre-optic cable when it connected to Southern Cross in November 2000. Access to Southern Cross Cable Network, which runs from Australia to the United States, has been a big attraction for other countries in the region, and Fiji has emerged as a regional hub for fibre connectivity. Submarine cables from

Key indicators for Fiji (2017)	Asia & Pacific	World	
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	8.4	9.5	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	114.2	104.0	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	55.7	60.3	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	96.0	91.3	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	96.0	86.9	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	50.0	44.3	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	44.6	38.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	35.9	49.0	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	39.4	61.7	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	1.3	13.0	13.6
<b>Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution</b>			
<i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>	36.2	2.4	4.2
<i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>	28.9	7.6	13.2
<i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>	34.9	90.0	82.6

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

Tonga and Vanuatu land in the country for onward transmission onto Southern Cross, with the Tui-Samoa cable under construction between Fiji and Samoa and slated for deployment in March 2018.

**Government policy:** The 2008 *Telecommunications Promulgation* led to the end of exclusivities in the telecommunication sector. The whole market was opened to competition from October 2008. Operators are now granted 15-year unified licences allowing them to provide any service. The Telecommunications Promulgation also called for the establishment of an independent regulator, the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji (TAF). The Fiji Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC) is responsible for monitoring unfair trade practices and introducing price controls when necessary. Responsibility for the ICT sector policy lies with the Ministry of Communications. The five-year National Broadband Policy was launched in 2011, the first in a Pacific Island developing nation. It aims to achieve 95 per cent population coverage with minimum Internet speeds of 2 Mb/s by 2016. The policy is part of the Government's intent to develop the ICT sector and strengthen its position as a regional hub.

**Conclusion:** Connection to the Southern Cross Cable Network has provided progressively cheaper and higher-speed international backbone capacity for development of the Internet. Introduction of competition in the mobile market has boosted penetration, brought down prices, expanded coverage and driven wireless broadband services.