Gambia

A competitive mobile market has resulted in a high level of access in this small West African nation. The arrival of the ACE cable has created an enabling platform for enhancing broadband access.

Mobile services: There are four mobile networks operating in the country. The market leader is AFRICELL, a subsidiary of a Lebanese mobile group, which entered the market in 2001. Other operators include COMIUM, part of a Lebanese mobile group, which started operations in 2007; QCELL launched in 2009 and is privately held by Gambian investors; and GAMCEL, the mobile operator of the incumbent State-owned operator Gambia Telecommunications Ltd. (GAMTEL), which launched GSM in 2001. Mobile penetration is high, reflecting the competitiveness and straightforwardness of extending coverage in one of sub-Saharan Africa's smallest countries with a relatively high population density. In 2013, 91 per cent of households had mobile phones, with a small difference between urban (93 per cent) and rural areas (87 per cent).[199] QCELL was the only 3G operator from 2009 until AFRICELL launched its 3G network in 2012. This has spurred competition in the mobile-broadband market segment. QCELL launched LTE in 2017.

Fixed services: GAMTEL is the main provider of fixed-telephone services. It offers fixed-broadband service over ADSL, fixed wireless broadband and, for businesses, optical fibre. Several fixed wireless ISPs offer Internet access using WiMAX, fixed LTE and VSAT. The Government procured a loan from the Islamic Development Bank in 2001 to develop a fibre-optic backbone within the ECOWAS Regional Backbone initiative. GAMTEL has been deploying the backbone through a ring architecture to enhance redundancy. The arrival of the ACE submarine cable in 2011 has dramatically boosted the country's international Internet capacity. The Gambia Submarine Cable Company (GSC) manages the link. GSC is a consortium, with membership comprising all licensed telecommunication operators as well as some ISPs. The Serekunda IXP launched in 2014.

Government policy: The Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure is responsible for sector policy. Strategies for the ICT sector need updating to reflect the new broadband environment. The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, created in 2001, is the multi-sector regulator responsible for telecommunications as well as other utilities. The 2009 Information and Communications Act guide the Authority's telecommunication activities.

Conclusion: The competitive mobile market has resulted in a high level of basic access. The landing of the country's first submarine cable has provided a platform for expanding broadband throughout Gambia. Opening up of the international gateway will improve international access even further.

Key indicators for Gambia (2017)		Africa	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	*1.5*	0.9	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	*141.2*	74.4	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	*27.0*	24.8	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	*86.0*	62.7	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	*7.2*	28.4	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	*19.8*	22.1	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	*9.6*	8.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	*13.8*	19.4	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	*13.2*	11.2	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	*0.2*	0.6	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s	*96.8*	38.7	4.2
-2 to 10 Mbit/s	*3.2*	37.2	13.2
-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s	-	24.1	82.6

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