

Kiribati

Difficult geographical and economic circumstances inhibit telecommunications development in this remote Pacific island country. Recent sector changes and the arrival of a submarine cable will lower costs and make the Internet more accessible.

Mobile services: Amalgamated Telecoms Holdings Kiribati Limited (ATHKL) is currently the only mobile operator. ATHKL was created in May 2015 when Amalgamated Telecoms Holdings of Fiji acquired the assets of the incumbent Telecom Services of Kiribati Limited (TSKL) on the islands of South Tarawa, Betio and Kiritimati. ATHKL is also operating TSKL assets which the Government retained on the outer islands pending the establishment of a public-private partnership. Expanding mobile coverage throughout the country is challenging, given the small population and the number of far-flung islands. In 2015, 35 per cent of households had a mobile phone.²⁷⁶ 3G was launched in 2013 and ATHKL launched LTE services in the capital Tarawa at the end of 2015. A project supported by the World Bank, Australia and New Zealand includes a component to extend mobile broadband services to remote outer islands.

Fixed services: ATHKL is the sole provider of fixed telephone services. The number of fixed telephony subscribers is limited. ATHKL offers LTE router service and are migrating all previous DSL subscribers to a new IPVPN service based on LTE data. VSAT is also used, particularly in remote locations. Several wireless ISPs have begun offering services using Wi-Fi. Kiribati's remote situation has hitherto precluded connection to undersea fibre-optic cable. Instead, it relies solely on satellite for international Internet connectivity, which has affected the supply and growth of the Internet market owing to high costs. A new international telecommunications service provider, Ocean Links, was awarded a licence and started Internet services operations mainly to business and government customers in September 2017. Mobile services are expected to commence in late 2017. A project is under way to establish a submarine cable connection that will link Kiribati to Nauru and extend to the Federated States of Micronesia, where it will link up with the HANTRU1 Cable System that extends to Guam, a major hub. Internet capacity will be sold by the wholesaler, which is a new and locally established company, on an open-

Key indicators for Kiribati (2017)	Asia & Pacific	World	
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	0.7	9.5	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	39.6	104.0	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	42.0	60.3	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	48.0	91.3	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	45.0	86.9	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	14.6	44.3	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	7.3	38.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	6.9	49.0	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	18.9	61.7	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.1	13.0	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
<i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>	13.2	2.4	4.2
<i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>	85.5	7.6	13.2
<i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>	1.3	90.0	82.6

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

access basis to ensure equal access for all fixed and mobile networks operated by local retailers on Tarawa and nearby islands, which account for more than two-thirds of the country's population.

Government policy: Sector oversight is the responsibility of the Ministry of Information, Communication, Transport and Tourism Development (MICTTD). The 2011 *National ICT Policy* recognizes the importance of affordable and reliable ICT services as a key input to economic growth, particularly for unserved and underserved remote areas, and helped to trigger the creation of the regulator and privatization of the incumbent. The policy is currently under review with the aim of incorporating new policy initiatives covering the wider ICT sector and areas such as cybersecurity, e-commerce, e-government and disaster information management. The *Communications Act* of 2012 liberalized the sector and led to the establishment in 2013 of the Communications Commission of Kiribati (CCK) as sector regulator, which is also responsible for managing the DOT KI (.ki) domain name.

Conclusion: This Pacific island country has recently privatized its incumbent operator and is looking to a public-private partnership to manage telecommunications in the remote outer islands. Forthcoming connectivity to an undersea fibre-optic cable should lower Internet costs dramatically.