

## Mali

***This landlocked West African nation has achieved a high level of basic telecommunication access, despite limited competition in the mobile market. The Government is making efforts for further developing the ICT sector.***

**Mobile services:** There are two mobile operators: MALITEL, the mobile arm of the incumbent Telecommunications Society of Mali (SOTELMA), which launched services in 2000; and Orange, a subsidiary of Senegal's incumbent operator SONATEL, which entered the market with a global license (mobile, fixed and Internet) in 2003. Despite only two operators, competition has been fierce, particularly since the 2009 privatization of SOTELMA. As a result, there is widespread GSM coverage and high uptake, with the 2015 *Malaria Indicator Survey* finding that 90 per cent of households had a portable phone: 98 per cent in urban areas and 88 per cent in rural areas.<sup>299</sup> A third mobile license has been awarded to the Planor–Monaco Telecom International consortium, which will operate through the Malian company Alpha Telecom. Orange launched 3G in 2010, followed by MALITEL in 2012. Operators are waiting on licenses for the deployment of LTE networks.

**Fixed services:** The incumbent SOTELMA was privatized in 2009 following sale of 51 per cent of its shares to Morocco Telecom. It is the most active operator on the fixed-telephone market, offering service using copper lines and wireless local loop CDMA. In fixed Internet, it has deployed ADSL and fixed wireless broadband. Other operators provide fixed wireless broadband. Orange and SOTELMA have built out around 6 000 km of fibre-optic networks to neighbouring countries so that landlocked Mali can access undersea fibre-optic cables. Mali is surrounded by seven countries, of which five are sea-facing. The first connection was to Senegal, since at the time it was the closest neighbour that had submarine cables. Since then, fibre has been built out to all borders except one, and Mali has access to several undersea fibre-optic cables. The Government has also deployed over 3 000 km of fibre-optic cable to connect administration buildings throughout the country.

**Government policy:** The Minister of the Digital Economy, Information and Communication is the sector policy-maker. The Government has identified ICT as one of four key economic sectors,

Key indicators for Mali (2017)	Africa	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	1.2	0.9 13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	97.1	74.4 103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	26.6	24.8 61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	27.0	62.7 87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	0.0	28.4 76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	12.7	22.1 48.6
Households with a computer (%)	3.2	8.9 47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	10.6	19.4 54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	5.6	11.2 76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.4	0.6 13.6
<b>Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution</b>		
<i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>	76.1	38.7 4.2
<i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>	20.0	37.2 13.2
<i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>	3.8	24.1 82.6

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

along with agriculture, trade and education. One of the flagship government projects is the Digital Complex of Bamako, featuring a training institute, data centre, offices for ICT businesses, incubator and exhibition hall. The 2011 Ordinance Relative to Telecommunications and Information and Communications Technology is the relevant law guiding the sector. The Malian Authority for Regulation of Telecommunications/ICT and Posts is the independent administrative authority responsible for sector regulations, created in 2011, when it replaced the Telecommunications Regulation Committee. In addition to its regulatory duties, the Authority is also responsible for universal service and managing the country code top-level domain name (.ml). In 2015, the Government adopted *Plan Mali Digital 2020*, a national strategy of development of the digital economy, which aims to further develop ICT sector.

**Conclusion:** The landlocked LDC has made impressive gains in connecting the population to mobile phones. Through deployment of fibre-optic cables across the country and the adoption of a new digital strategy, the Government is making efforts to strengthen the ICT sector in Mali.