# Mauritania

*Mauritania ICT sector is witnessing great developments thanks to increased competition and high penetration of mobile cellular, mobile broadband, and increased Internet users. Fixed broadband and mobile-broadband service prices remain relatively high in Mauritania and affordability remains a major barrier.*

**Mobile services:** Mobile-cellular penetration levels are close to the Arab States region and global averages, however, mobile-broadband penetration lags behind these averages. This can be attributed to the difficulties in covering the large geographical area of the country. The level of competition is considered high in a mobile sector with three operators. The Post Office and Telecommunications (OPT) was in monopoly before 2000. After the dismantling of the monopoly of the OPT, the telecommunications and postal activities were separated. Competition started following the award of two GSM licenses granted in May 2000 to Mattel (owned by Tunisie Telecom) and in July 2000 to Mauritel (owned by Maroc Telecom), the latter comes from the former monopoly (OPT). In 2007, the third operator, Chinguitel (a subsidiary of Sudatel), launched its cellular and fixed services, thus ending the duopoly of Mauritel Mobile and Mattel. All three operators acquired technology-neutral licences. Chinguitel was the first operator to launch 3G services in 2007. Mauritel Mobile launched 3G services in 2009, and Mattel in 2011. All operators are providing 3G services in the 2100 MHz band. None of the operators have yet acquired an LTE licence.

**Fixed services:** The fixed-line penetration is low and in decline, due to high investment and replacement by mobile technologies. Mauritania mobile and fixed-wireless operators are providing fixed ADSL services in main cities. Mauritel launched ADSL services in 2006. Mobile and fixed-wireless operators are providing fixed services in rural areas, mainly through the national universal service fund or from international development banks, such as the World Bank. Extensive efforts are made to roll out fibre backbone infrastructure between major cities, and to cover rural areas with satellite broadband services.

**Government policy:** The Regulatory Authority is an independent public corporation, with financial and managerial autonomy, governed by a law of

| Key indicators for Mauritania (2017) | | Arab States | World |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab. | 1.3 | 7.9 | 13.0 |
| Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab. | 92.2 | 102.6 | 103.6 |
| Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab. | 30.3 | 53.9 | 61.9 |
| 3G coverage (% of population) | *42.1* | 88.0 | 87.9 |
| LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population) | 0.0 | 50.9 | 76.3 |
| Individuals using the Internet (%) | *20.8* | 48.7 | 48.6 |
| Households with a computer (%) | *5.3* | 47.1 | 47.1 |
| Households with Internet access (%) | *14.3* | 50.1 | 54.7 |
| International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s) | *11.7* | 65.3 | 76.6 |
| Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab. | 0.3 | 5.6 | 13.6 |
| Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution | | | |
| *-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s* | *57.6* | 30.7 | 4.2 |
| *-2 to 10 Mbit/s* | *23.8* | 33.8 | 13.2 |
| *-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s* | *18.6* | 35.4 | 82.6 |

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

2001. The Regulatory Authority is responsible for regulating activities and laws within the territory of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in the sectors of water, electricity, telecommunications, and postal services. The Regulatory Authority mission in each sector is to ensure continuity of service and to protect public interests that ensures effective, fair and healthy competition, economic and financial stability, and includes consultation with users and operators. The regulator has the power to impose sanctions in case of breach of their obligations under the laws, regulations and specifications.

**Conclusion:** The efforts made by the Government of Mauritania, and the three telecommunication operators over the past 15 years have improved connectivity and reduced the digital divide. Mauritania's recent plans include: to further develop countrywide high-speed networks by licensing LTE services, expand satellite broadband coverage, and roll out fibre-to-the-home network in the capital and main cities.