

Myanmar

The relatively recent liberalization of Myanmar's telecom sector has seen it leapfrog to the latest mobile technologies.

Mobile services: Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (MPT), the government-owned incumbent, was the sole operator that provided services in Myanmar's mobile sector until the sector liberalization that took place in 2013. As the Union Government began to reform its ICT sector, the Government introduced competition into all segments of the sector. Integrated Nationwide Telecommunications Licenses were awarded in 2014 to Telenor Myanmar Limited from Norway and Ooredoo Myanmar Limited from Qatar to compete along with MPT (partnering with Japan's KDDI Corporation and Sumitomo Corporation). The results have been remarkable, with a significant rise in teledensity in recent years. Both Telenor Myanmar Limited and Ooredoo Myanmar Limited deployed 3G mobile broadband services, and the rapid growth in mobile data use resulted in the deployment of LTE networks in 2016. The fourth License was issued to Myanmar National Tele and Communications Co., Ltd., a consortium of Myanmar companies, and Viettel from Viet Nam in 2017. Operators now offer a variety of telecommunication services to the public at affordable prices.

Fixed services: MPT is the main provider of fixed-telephone services and the leading fixed-broadband operator providing ADSL and optical fibre (with speeds of up to 100 Mbps) in urban areas. In addition to the mobile operators offering mobile broadband access, there are several ISPs providing fixed-wireless Internet and fibre-optic connections. The launch of new mobile networks has been accompanied by a flurry of activity in national fibre-optic backbone investment. Over 42,000 km of backbone fibre-optic network has been laid down nationwide. Myanmar's international Internet connectivity has radically improved, from around 30 Gbps before the start of sector reform to over 440 Gbps by April 2018. It has had a link to the SEAMEWE-3 submarine cable since 1999. In 2016, two other undersea cables landed in the country (Asia–Africa–Europe 1 and SEAMEWE-5), and a submarine cable to Thailand is under construction. Myanmar has cross-border terrestrial fibre-optic connections to China, India and Thailand.

Key indicators for Myanmar (2017)	Asia & Pacific	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	1.0	9.5
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	89.8	104.0
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	75.1	60.3
3G coverage (% of population)	90.5	91.3
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	29.5	86.9
Individuals using the Internet (%)	30.7	44.3
Households with a computer (%)	16.6	38.9
Households with Internet access (%)	28.3	49.0
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	6.9	61.7
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.2	13.0
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution		
-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s	7.9	2.4
-2 to 10 Mbit/s	5.0	7.6
-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s	87.2	90.0

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

Government policy: The 2013 Telecommunications Law triggered reform of the sector by liberalizing the market to a licensing-based regime. The Ministry of Transport and Communications (formerly Ministry of Communications and Information Technology) is both policy-maker and regulator (the regulatory function carried out by its Posts and Telecommunications Department). The Ministry is also preparing a Universal Service Strategy and United States Framework to connect the remaining part of the population that is unconnected. The draft Telecommunications Master Plan has the vision of Myanmar as a “mobile-first, digitally connected nation” with three enabling objectives: (a) create a Myanmar national broadband infrastructure asset; (b) develop communications and services for people in Myanmar; and (c) create an enabling institutional framework. As an important step for liberalization, the Ministry is also preparing for the establishment of an independent regulatory body named Myanmar Communications Regulatory Commission.

Conclusion: Myanmar's ICT landscape has been transformed since the adoption of a new telecommunication law in 2013 opening the market to competition. Myanmar has taken concrete steps to reform the country's telecom sector to develop an ICT sector. One result of the late market opening is that Myanmar was able to leapfrog straight into mobile broadband technologies. There has been an astounding increase in access to mobile networks over a short period.