

## Niger

***Despite the challenge of being a landlocked country, with the largest land area in West Africa, much of it covered by the Sahara Desert, Niger is striving to universalize access to ICTs through an evolving regulatory framework and high-level government backing.***

**Mobile services:** The mobile market currently has about 9 million subscribers shared between four operators: Airtel (owned by the Indian mobile group Bharti), the first operator to launch, in 2001, under the then CELTEL brand; Orange (93 per cent owned by Orange France); Niger Telecom (created in 2016 from the merger of the incumbent SONITEL and mobile operator SAHELCOM); and MOOV (90 per cent owned by Etisalat). Airtel has the largest market share of the mobile voice market, followed by MOOV. Despite four operators, penetration is relatively low due to the high proportion of people under the age of 15 (about 50 per cent of the population). The penetration rate of the population over 15 is 87.9 per cent. Penetration in urban locations is high. A 3G network was first launched by Orange in 2011, followed by Airtel in 2014 and MOOV in 2017. These three operators share a market of 3G subscribers of about 2.2 million, with more than 76 per cent held by Airtel. It is planned to launch LTE services in 2018.

**Fixed services:** Despite Orange's global license allowing it to provide any service except for LTE, Niger Telecom dominates the fixed-telephone line market, with wireless CDMA constituting a majority of subscriptions. Likewise, most fixed Internet is through fixed-wireless. Niger Telecom's national backbone consists of 3 812 km of fibre-optic cable, and connects to border crossings in Benin, Burkina Faso and Nigeria for access to undersea cables. Starting in December 2017, the African Development Bank began financing the roll-out of 1 007 km of optical fibre interconnecting Niger to Algeria, Chad and Nigeria (by a third interconnection at Magaria). Orange and Niger Telecom each has a metropolitan fibre-optic network in Niamey.

**Investments:** Over the last five years, the telecommunication sector has recorded investment of more than USD 548 million. Celtel's share of these investments is 44 per cent, followed by MOOV with 29 per cent, Niger Telecom with 19 per cent and Orange with 8 per cent.

**Government policy:** The Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Digital Economy is responsible for the ICT sector. The road map

Key indicators for Niger (2017)	Africa	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	0.5	0.9
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	40.9	74.4
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	4.0	24.8
3G coverage (% of population)	24.0	62.7
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	0.0	28.4
Individuals using the Internet (%)	10.2	22.1
Households with a computer (%)	8.6	8.9
Households with Internet access (%)	15.6	19.4
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	3.4	11.2
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.04	0.6
<b>Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution</b>		
-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s	94.6	38.7
-2 to 10 Mbit/s	5.0	37.2
-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s	0.5	24.1

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

for ICTs in the country is the 2012 Sector Policy Paper on Telecommunications and Information and Communication Technologies, with five main axes: (a) adaptation of the legal and institutional framework; (b) infrastructure development; (c) promotion of universal access to ICT services; (d) development of applications and content; and (e) strengthening ICT capacities. The 1999 Ordinance on Telecommunications Regulation, updated by a 2010 Ordinance, guides the sector regulatory framework. The Telecommunications and Postal Regulatory Authority is in charge of regulation, control and monitoring activities in the telecommunication and postal sectors. The Authority's Strategic Plan covering the period 2014–2018 has two focus areas: (a) enhancing effective and efficient regulation; and (b) improving its organization and management. The sector has recently been reorganized by the creation of the National Agency for Information Systems (ANSI) under the supervision of the presidency, replacing the High Commission for Computing and New Technologies of Information and Communication (HC/I/NTIC). In addition to the duties of the former HC/I/NTIC, ANSI will implement the universal access services.

**Conclusion:** In spite of geographic and economic challenges, Niger is gradually forging ahead to develop its information society. Ongoing liberalization of the ICT sector, legal and regulatory reforms, and strengthening of institutional capacity are driving this.