

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 consists of four operators: AIRTEL (owned by the Indian mobile group), 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 (owned by Morocco Telecom). AIRTEL has the largest market share of the mobile voice market, followed by Orange. 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. In 2012, 83 per cent of urban households had telephones, compared with 44 per cent in rural areas.³⁴⁰ A 3G network was first launched by Orange in 2011, followed by AIRTEL in 2015 and MOOV in 2017.

Fixed services: Despite Orange's global license allowing it to provide any service except for LTE, Niger Telecoms dominates the fixed-telephone line market, with the majority of subscriptions wireless CDMA. Likewise, most fixed Internet is through fixed wireless, with 23,242 ADSL and 262 fibre-optic subscriptions at the end of 2016. Niger Telecom's national backbone consists of 1 500 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 (AfDB) will build 1,007 km of optical fiber to connect Niger to Algeria, Chad and Nigeria (by a third interconnection at Magaria). Orange and NIGER TELECOMS each have a metropolitan fiber network in Niamey.

Government policy: The Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Digital Economy is responsible for the ICT sector. The road map for ICTs in the country is the 2012 Sector Policy Paper on Telecommunications and Information and Communication Technologies with five main

Key indicators for Niger (2016)	Africa	World	
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	0.8	1.0	13.6
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	43.5	74.6	101.5
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.1	0.4	12.4
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	18.9	22.9	52.2
3G coverage (% of population)	32.4	59.3	85.0
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	7.5	25.7	66.5
Mobile-cellular prices (% GNI pc)	33.4	14.2	5.2
Fixed-broadband prices (% GNI pc)	154.4	39.4	13.9
Mobile-broadband prices 500 MB (% GNI pc)	10.4	9.3	3.7
Mobile-broadband prices 1 GB (% GNI pc)	20.8	17.7	6.8
Percentage of households with computer	2.9	9.6	46.6
Percentage of households with Internet access	3.1	16.3	51.5
Percentage of individuals using the Internet	4.3	19.9	45.9
Int. Internet bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	2.8	51.0	74.5

Note: Data in italics are ITU estimates. Source: ITU (as of June 2017).

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 telecommunications 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 System (ANSI) under the supervision of the Presidency, replacing the Haut Commissariat à l'Informatique et aux Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (HC/I/NTIC). In addition to the duties of the former HC/I/NTIC, ANSI will manage the Universal Access Fund.

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.