

## Timor-Leste

**Access to telecommunications has been improving in the post-conflict island State, especially since the introduction of competition in the mobile sector.**

**Mobile services:** Timor Telecom launched GSM in 2003 shortly after the country's independence. Timor Telecom came into being following a tender to operate telecommunications in the newly independent country. Timor Telecom was majority owned by Portugal Telecom, whose stake was later purchased by Brazil's Oi. Competition was introduced in 2013 when two additional operators entered the market: the Vietnamese mobile group VIETTEL, operating under the brand TELEMOR, and TCELL, a subsidiary of Indonesia's PT Telkom. All three mobile operators launched 3G that same year. In 2015, 81 per cent of households had a mobile phone.<sup>451</sup> Given that the two new mobile operators deployed 3G at launch, population coverage is high and over a quarter of mobile subscriptions were for 3G during the first quarter of 2016.

**Fixed services:** Timor Telecom operates fixed-line telephone services. Fixed telephone lines are available mainly in urban areas and uptake is low. Similarly, fixed broadband is limited. Timor Telecom offers ADSL with a download speed of 2 Mbps. Fixed wireless broadband offerings include WiMAX and VSAT. There are several national backbone fibre-optic networks in the country, including cross-border links to the neighbouring Indonesian side of Timor island. Cable is generally installed overhead on poles. The Government has been deploying a fibre-optic backbone to connect all district offices. The country does not currently have a connection to regional undersea fibre-optic cables. There has been discussion about connecting to the submarine cable on the Indonesian side of the island or via a submarine cable to Australia but no decision has been made. Meanwhile Timor-Leste relies mainly on low-earth orbit satellites for international Internet connectivity. The Timor-Leste Internet Exchange was established in late 2016.

**Government policy:** The Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications is responsible for sector policy. The National Communications Authority is the regulator established by the *Telecommunications Decree-law No. 15* of 28 March 2012. Telecommunications is included as

Key indicators for Timor-Leste (2017)		Asia & Pacific	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	0.2	9.5	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	119.3	104.0	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	33.6	60.3	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	96.5	91.3	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	20.0	86.9	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	27.5	44.3	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	16.1	38.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	18.7	49.0	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	3.1	61.7	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.3	13.0	13.6
<b>Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution</b>			
<i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>	65.7	2.4	4.2
<i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>	27.8	7.6	13.2
<i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>	6.4	90.0	82.6

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

an important infrastructure sector in the country's *Strategic Development Plan (2011-2030)*. The plan led the way for liberalization of the sector. It set four mid-term targets to be accomplished by 2015: i) affordable mobile phone coverage for all Timorese people; ii) affordable high-speed Internet access available in all district capitals and surrounding areas; iii) all schools, health posts and health clinics connected to the Internet; and iv) a regulatory framework put in place to manage a competitive telecommunications market. Three targets were established for 2020: i) all citizens will have access to reliable, affordable and high-speed Internet; ii) all students and health professionals will have portable Internet access devices; and iii) Timor-Leste will be part of the technology-enabled world.

**Conclusion:** Post-conflict Timor-Leste has made notable progress of late in expanding mobile and mobile broadband coverage to its citizens. It needs to reach a decision on international undersea fibre-optic connectivity in order to take advantage of cheap international Internet capacity and establish the essential conditions for higher-speed broadband networks.