Zimbabwe

Despite its landlocked situation in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe has a vibrant backbone market, with cross-border connections to several submarine cables.

Mobile services: Zimbabwe has long had competition in the mobile sector, with three operators. Net-One is the mobile arm of the incumbent, and launched in 1997. ECONET, a local company, successfully challenged the incumbent's monopoly to launch its GSM network in 1998. ECONET has since evolved into a mobile group, with headquarters in South Africa and operations in a number of countries. TELECEL launched in 1998; it has gone through several ownership changes and now is majority owned by a government investment holding. Household penetration is relatively high. In 2014, 89 per cent of homes had mobile phones, including 97 per cent of urban ones and 84 per cent in rural areas.[510] Mobile-broadband coverage has been growing, following the launch of 3G by all mobile operators. ECONET and Net-One also have LTE networks.

Fixed services: TELONE is the State-owned incumbent operator. It provides fixed-telephone service using copper landlines and CDMA wireless local loop. Though penetration is low, the number of subscriptions is high compared with other sub-Saharan African nations. TELONE offers fixed Internet through capped and uncapped ADSL, with speeds up to 4 Mbit/s, optical fibre with speeds up to 50 Mbit/s, and via satellite. There are several other fixed-broadband providers offering fixed wireless and fixed fibre-optic connections, as well as resell of TELONE'S ADSL. Backbone connectivity is a challenge for Zimbabwe due to its landlocked situation. There are several backbone operators in the market. The leading ones include TELONE, Liquid Telecom and POWERTEL, which have developed fibre-optic routes throughout the country and to the borders of neighbouring countries. POWERTEL is notable as a subsidiary of the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority, and it offers retail broadband services. The national fibre-optic backbone connections to Mozambique and South Africa enable access to the SEACOM, WACS and EASSy undersea fibre-optic cables.

Government policy: The Ministry of Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services is responsible for sector oversight.

Key indicators for Zimbabwe (2017)		Africa	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	1.6	0.9	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	85.3	74.4	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	41.3	24.8	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	78.2	62.7	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	34.7	28.4	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	*27.1*	22.1	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	*13.9*	8.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	*24.0*	19.4	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	10.7	11.2	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	1.1	0.6	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s	78.2	38.7	4.2
-2 to 10 Mbit/s	19.7	37.2	13.2
-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s	2.1	24.1	82.6

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

The importance of ICT for the Government is recognized in the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim-ASSET), identifying ICTs as one of the pillars for national socio-economic development. The Cabinet approved Zimbabwe's second National Policy for Information and Communication Technology in 2016. The overall objectives of the policy framework are to (a) use ICTs to facilitate delivery of Zim-ASSET and other national developmental goals; (b) enable and foster access to and increased use of ICT across all sectors of the economy; (c) bridge the digital divide and provide broadband for all; (d) manage challenges resulting from ICT development to ensure sustainability; and (e) lead, improve and adapt to the changing ICT environment through innovation and partnership. The Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe is the sector regulator, guided by the 2000 (and amendments) Postal and Telecommunications Act, as well as supporting regulations. The Authority is also responsible for managing the universal service fund.

Conclusion: Zimbabwe has long had a competitive mobile market, resulting in a relatively high level of access. More recently, a competitive backbone market has developed, lowering costs and facilitating access to cross-border submarine cables.