



Press release

ITU releases annual global ICT data & ICT Development Index country rankings

Denmark ranks in first place in global ICT Development Index (IDI)

Geneva, 24 November 2014 – Over three billion people are now online and information and communication technology (ICT) growth remains buoyant in just about every country worldwide, according to ITU's flagship annual *Measuring the Information Society Report*.

The report is widely recognized as the repository of the world's most reliable and impartial global data and analysis on the state of global ICT development, and is extensively relied upon by governments, financial institutions and private sector analysts worldwide.

Latest data show that Internet use continues to grow steadily, at 6.6% globally in 2014 (3.3% in developed countries, 8.7% in the developing world). The number of Internet users in developing countries has doubled in five years (2009-2014), with two thirds of all people online now living in the developing world.

Of the 4.3 billion people not yet using the Internet, 90% live in developing countries. In the world's 42 Least Connected Countries (LCCs), which are home to 2.5 billion people, access to ICTs remains largely out of reach, particularly for these countries' large rural populations.

"ICTs have the potential to make the world a much better place – in particular for those who are the poorest and the most disenfranchised, including women, youth, and those with disabilities," said ITU Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun I. Touré. "This important report is a critical part of the global ICT development process. Without measurement we cannot track progress, which is why ITU gathers ICT statistics for 200 economies across over 100 indicators."

In the mobile cellular segment, the report estimates that by end 2014 there will be seven billion mobile subscriptions, roughly corresponding to the total global population. But it warns against concluding that everyone is connected; instead, many users have multiple subscriptions, with global growth figures sometimes translating into little real improvement in the level of connectivity of those at the very bottom of the pyramid. An estimated 450 million people worldwide live in places which are still out of reach of mobile cellular service.

Encouragingly, the report notes substantial improvements in access to international bandwidth in poorer countries, with developing nations' share of total global international bandwidth rising from just 9% in 2004 to over 30% today. But lack of sufficient international Internet bandwidth in many of the LCCs remains an important barrier to ICT uptake in these countries, and often limits the quality of Internet access.

"It is precisely in poor and rural areas where ICTs can make a particularly significant impact," said Brahima Sanou, Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, which produces the report. "New analysis featured in this report shows that many of the indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) show significant correlation with the IDI, notably those related to poverty reduction and health improvement. The report also finds that progress in ICT development is linked to progress in achieving some of the MDGs. ITU has long been a vigorous champion of ICTs as a cornerstone of socio-economic development."

ICT Development Index country rankings

Denmark ranked Number One in ITU's ICT Development Index (IDI)*, a composite measurement that ranks 166 countries according to their level of ICT access, use and skills (Chart 1). It is followed by the Republic of Korea.

The IDI top 30-ranking include countries from Europe and high-income nations from other regions including Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Japan, Macao (China), New Zealand, Singapore and the United States. Almost all countries surveyed improved their IDI ranking this year.

In terms of regional comparisons, Europe's average IDI value of 7.14 remains well ahead of the next best-performing region, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS - 5.33), followed by the Americas (4.86), Asia & the Pacific (4.57), the Arab States (4.55), and Africa at 2.31.

The CIS and the Arab States showed the highest improvement in regional IDI averages over the past 12 months.

Dynamic performers

The report identifies a group of 'most dynamic countries', which have recorded above-average improvements in their IDI rank over the past 12 months. These include (in order of most improved): United Arab Emirates, Fiji, Cape Verde, Thailand, Oman, Qatar, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Georgia.

IDI values are on average twice as high in the developed world compared with developing countries.

Household and community access

By the end of this year, almost 44% of households globally will have Internet access at home, up from 40% last year and 30% in 2010. In the developed world, 78% of households now have home Internet access, compared to 31% in developing countries, and just 5% in the 48 UN Least Developed Countries.

Internet access in schools has made important strides forward over the past decade. In developed countries, the vast majority of schools now have broadband Internet, with many industrialized nations having already reached 100% school connectivity. In developing countries substantial progress has also been made, but access levels vary widely, not just from country to country, but also across different regions within nations.

The report notes that the potential for public libraries and post offices to service as public ICT access points has not been sufficiently exploited. Worldwide, only 10% of post offices offer public Internet access, despite the fact that 20% of post offices globally have a broadband connection. According to ITU's sister UN agency the Universal Postal Union, increasing the proportion of post offices offering public Internet services to 45% of all establishments would provide one third of all rural areas and towns worldwide with Internet connectivity.

Growing urban-rural divide

The *Measuring the Information Society 2014* report also warns of a growing divide between urban and rural ICT uptake, even in the world's richest nations. The difference is lowest in highly developed economies such as Japan and the Republic of Korea, where household Internet penetration is just 4% higher in urban zones than rural areas. But it widens markedly to as much as 35% in developing nations such as Colombia and Morocco, with the gulf estimated to be greater still in poorer nations, for which data is rarely available.

Overall, the report notes, rural access is growing much more slowly than urban access, and connecting rural households to broadband Internet should remain a key priority for policy-makers in every country.

Market competition & affordability

Broadband prices continue to fall; for the five-year period from 2008-2013 entry-level fixed-broadband prices dropped by 70% globally. Over the same period, the standard entry-level broadband speed has risen from 256kbps to 1Mbps.

Developing countries have witnessed the steepest price drop, with average prices declining 20% year-on-year. However, the report confirms that in most developing countries the cost of

a fixed-broadband subscription still represents more than 5% of Gross National Income per capita, the [affordability target set by the UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development](#). The report also finds that mobile broadband is six times more affordable in developed countries than in the developing world.

The report points to market competition and best-practice ICT regulation as the key drivers of affordable ICT services; new analysis featured in the report reveals that fixed-broadband prices could be reduced by up to 10% if competition and regulatory frameworks in developing countries improved.

New analysis on income inequality shows that national inequalities in household income and expenditure greatly influence the affordability of fixed-broadband services. Iceland shows the smallest difference, with entry-level fixed broadband only 3.5 times more affordable for the richest 20% of the population than the poorest 20%. At the other end of the scale, in countries including Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras and South Africa, prices are 20 times more affordable for the wealthy 20% compared to the poorest 20%.

The potential of 'big data'

This year's report features a special focus on the potential of 'big data' from ICT devices and applications to improve public services like healthcare, education and environmental management, with the increasing digitization of human activity making it possible to gather and analyse data from a huge range of disparate sources.

Big data from the ICT services industry area already being used to produce large-scale insights of relevance to public policy, such as mapping inequality of income levels (Box 5.1). In the future, big data collection could also provide valuable information for measuring the information society, through analysis, for example, of mobile subscription data to provide mobility profiles and understand the utilization of different kinds of services.

ITU is collaborating with the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and national statistical offices to identify ways of using big data to improve social and economic policy making.

Online content

The steadily growing number of Internet users has been reflected in a steep increase in the volume of online content. Social media applications are contributing significantly to driving Internet use, as more and more people create, share and upload content onto social sites.

According to the report, a handful of giants have emerged as major global content providers. For example, more than 100 hours of video content are uploaded every minute on YouTube, which is now the world's largest video file-sharing service with services in 61 countries and over one billion unique visitors every month, while Wikipedia, the largest and most widely used online encyclopaedia, now features over 30 million articles in 287 languages.

Developed countries dominate Internet content production, with domain-name registrations from the developed world accounting for 80% of all new registrations in 2013, and registrations from Africa accounting for less than 1%.ENDS

****Note to editors:***

ITU's IDI is widely recognized by government, UN agencies and industry as the most accurate and impartial measure of overall national ICT development. It combines 11 indicators into a single measure that can be used as a benchmarking tool globally, regionally, and at national level, as well as helping track progress in ICT development over time. It measures ICT access, use and skills, and includes such indicators as mobile cellular subscriptions, households with a computer, Internet users, fixed and mobile broadband Internet subscriptions, and basic literacy rates.

For more information and to view statistical charts from this year's report visit the [WTIS Newsroom here](#).

An Executive Summary of the Measuring the Information Society Report 2014 can be found at: www.itu.int/go/mis2014

Journalists wishing to receive a free copy of the full report in PDF format should contact Sanjay Acharya at the ITU Press Office at sanjay.acharya@itu.int.

Download the PowerPoint presentation at: www.itu.int/go/mis2014

Download images and photos of the launch at: www.flickr.com/photos/itupictures/collections/72157631727644317/

[Find more information on the WTIS Newsroom.](#)

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A full range of ITU statistics are available at www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/statistics

For more information contact:

In Geneva:

Sanjay Acharya

Chief, Media Relations & Public Information

Tel: +41 22 730 5046

Mobile: +41 79 249 4861

E-mail: sanjay.acharya@itu.int

In Tbilisi:

Monica Albertini

Communication Officer, BDT

Tel: +41 22 730 5317

Mobile: +41 79 808 6065

E-mail: monica.albertini@itu.int

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