About ITU Historical Statistics

Collecting, synthesizing and publishing telecommunications statistics has been a key part of ITU's mandate throughout its history. When the second International Telegraph Conference (Vienna, 1868) decided to create a permanent central secretariat for the Union, it specified preparing and publishing telegraph statistics as a primary responsibility for the Bureau (International Telegraph Convention (Vienna, 1868) – Article 61).

The new Bureau immediately set in place a rigorous procedure of gathering data from the national authorities using a uniform questionnaire, and following up as necessary to complete and harmonize the information. The first set of statistics was published in 1871 and included statistics from the "period when telegraph became a public institution [1849]" up to 1869 inclusive. Thereafter, statistics were published annually for the preceding year beginning with 1870.

Following the invention of the telephone, the 1885 International Telegraph Conference (Berlin) added the first regulations regarding telephone to the International Service Regulations. Subsequently, the Bureau attempted to get statistical information from the members about telephone services. The first set of telephone statistics, including data for 16 countries, was published in 1887.

Then, in 1906, following the first International Radiotelegraph Conference (Berlin), a radiotelegraph section was added to the Bureau and work began on a new set of statistics. The first radiotelegraph statistics were published in 1911.

In addition to the telegraph, telephone, and radio series of statistics, ITU published a series of telex statistics beginning in 1955. Only two sets of telex statistics were published as separate reports before data pertaining to telex services was incorporated into a section of the *General Telegraph Statistics* in 1957.

In 1968, the three series of statistical publications were combined into a single publication called the *Telecommunication Statistics*. It was published annually and included statistics for the preceding year. The single-year statistical publication was eventually replaced by the *Yearbook of Common Carrier Telecommunication Statistics*, a chronological series covering a 10-year period. The first edition, published in 1974, covered the period 1963-1972. This publication was produced annually and recapitulated the figures for the last 10 years.

Today, ITU produces the *Yearbook of Statistics* as well as a number of other statistical, analytical, and methodological publications. Additionally, the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) maintains the *ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators (WTI) Database* which contains time series data for the years 1960, 1965, 1970, and annually from 1975 to 2012 for around 140 telecommunication/ICT statistics.

ITU statistical publications timeline

TELEGRAPHY

1849-1869

Statistique générale de la télégraphie dans les différents pays de l'ancien continent

Published in one volume in 1871
published in French only

1870-1946

Statistique générale de la télégraphie

Published annually covering the statistics for one year
published in French only

1947-1967

General Telegraphy Statistics

Published annually covering the statistics for one year
published in English, French, and Spanish

TELEX

1954-1955

Telex statistics

from 1956 Telex statistics are incorporated into Telegraphy statistics
published in English, French and Spanish

TELEPHONY

1885-1891
Statistique des communications téléphoniques

1892-1947

Statistique générale de la téléphonie

Published annually covering the statistics for one year
published in French only

1948-1967

General Telephone Statistics

Published annually covering the statistics for one year
published in English, French, and Spanish

RADIO

1908-1930
Statistique générale de la radiotélégraphie

1931-1947

Statistique générale des radiocommunications

Published annually covering the statistics for one year
published in French only

1948-1967

General Radiocommunication Statistics

Published annually covering the statistics for one year
published in English, French, and Spanish

1968-1973

Telecommunication Statistics

All types of statistics are combined into one publication.
Published annually covering the statistics for one year
published in English, French, Spanish

1974-present

Yearbook of Statistics

Published annually recapitulating the figures for the last 10 years
1974-1996: published in English, French, Spanish
1997-present: published in English only