

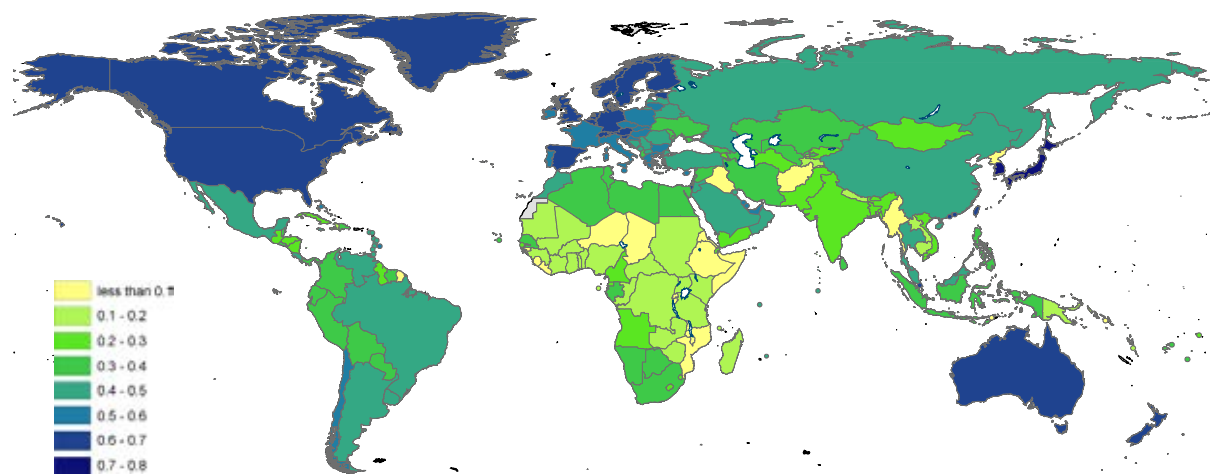
New Report Tracks Strong Gains in the Information Society Worldwide

Strong gains have been achieved in digital opportunity around the world, according to a new report from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The World Information Society Report is part of ITU's contribution to the 2006 session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is meeting in Geneva from 3rd to 28th July 2006.

The Asian economies of the Republic of Korea and Japan continue to lead in digital opportunity, due to their pioneering take-up of broadband and 3G mobile services. Nearly all Internet subscribers in the Republic of Korea are broadband subscribers, whilst Japan is the only market where Internet subscribers are most likely to access Internet over their mobile. Dramatic progress has been achieved by developing countries, however, which made the greatest progress in digital opportunity - notably India, where digital opportunity nearly doubled between 2001 and 2005, and China, which experienced remarkably strong gains in infrastructure. Different countries are following their own paths in telecommunication development, with some countries leveraging their investments in infrastructure more successfully than others.

In response to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) goals, the report tracks the changing dynamics driving the Information Society worldwide, with a new tool—the Digital Opportunity Index (DOI)—that evaluates the opportunity, infrastructure and utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for 180 economies worldwide. The Index monitors the mobile communications that promise to bridge the digital divide in many parts of the world, as well as more recent technologies such as broadband and mobile Internet access. The price of broadband continues to fall worldwide, by as much as twenty per cent a year over the last two years according to ITU's analysis, while broadband speeds continue to increase. These trends are not restricted to developed countries, however, with broadband now commercially available in 166 countries worldwide.

Digital Opportunity Worldwide, 2005



As part of the ITU's work in follow-up to the WSIS, the report is addressed to policy-makers and regulators. It shows how this new Index can inform the policy-making process in the critical areas of the digital divide, universal access, gender, and the development of broadband networks. The Report gives practical examples of how the DOI can be used, and highlights projects around the world that are working to meet the commitments made at the WSIS.

The DOI has been developed by a multi-stakeholder partnership (the Digital Opportunity Platform) comprising ITU, UNCTAD and KADO (the Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion) and which is open to other partners. It will be reported annually in order to track progress in reaching the WSIS targets, and building a diverse and inclusive Information Society, by 2015.

The full text of the World Information Society Report, and the executive summary, are available from the ITU website at www.itu.int/wisr. For more information, please contact Phillippa Biggs (phillippa.biggs@itu.int), Tim Kelly (tim.kelly@itu.int) or Youlia Lozanova (youlia.lozanova@itu.int).

ITU is the leading United Nations agency for information and communication technology issues, and the global focal point for governments and the private sector in developing networks and services. For more than 140 years, ITU has coordinated shared global use of the radio spectrum, promoted international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, worked to improve telecommunication infrastructure in the developing world, and established the worldwide standards that assure seamless interconnection of a vast range of communications systems.