

## Internet Fact Sheet: The basics of worldwide Internet usage

### Growth of connectivity

- » The number of people with Internet access has been growing rapidly. At the end of 1997, only 1.7% of the world's population – 70 million people – had used the Internet. A decade later, that number has risen to an estimated 1.2 billion, or more than one sixth of the world's population as of September 2007.
- » In 1997, nearly three-quarters of the world's population living in low-income and lower-middle income economies accounted for just 5% of the world's Internet users. Ten years on, they now account for over 32% of all Internet users.
- » The United States has the greatest number of Internet users (210 million, or 69% of the population) and China has 162 million, or 12% of the population. The other top-ten connected countries are Japan (86 million users, or 67% of the population), Germany (50 million, or 61%), India (42 million, or 3%), Brazil (39 million, or 21%), United Kingdom (37 million, or 62%), Republic of Korea (34 million, or 66%), France (32 million, or 53%) and Italy (31 million, or 52%).
- » In terms of fixed broadband subscribers to the Internet, the top 10 countries are the United States (64 million subscribers, or 21% of the population), China (48 million, or 3%), Japan (25.7 million, or 20%), Germany (16.1 million, or 19.5%), Republic of Korea (14 million, or 27.4%), United Kingdom (13.9 million, or 23.1%), France (13.6 million, or 22.3%), Italy (9.4 million, or 15.8%), Canada (7.6 million, or 23%) and Spain (7.5 million, or 16.7%). In addition, millions more people have broadband access to the Internet over their mobile phone (third generation, or so-called 3G).
- » A variety of “portable” Internet technologies are also available. One of the first was the wireless local area network (WLAN) such as Wi-Fi, originally designed for data transmission over short distances. However, in developing countries, WLANs are increasingly used as part of core telecommunication infrastructures. Wireless networks which are suitable for use over much larger physical distances are in development. WiMAX – a longer-range wireless technology – aims to offer laptops or mobile handsets broadband access, regardless of location. Internet access is also available through \*G networks in many countries.
- » Broadband service is currently commercially available in 170 economies, the most recent being Lesotho, which became connected in early 2007. Yet broadband remains relatively very expensive in low-income countries and is often unavailable outside urban areas.

### Measuring the information society

- » The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) produces a Digital Opportunity Index as a means of measuring the extent of development of each country's information society. It is a composite index comprising eleven separate indicators for the extent of ICT development in a country. The Republic of Korea tops the 2005-6 ranking, followed by Japan, Denmark, Iceland and Singapore. The United States is 20th, whilst Brazil is ranked 65th of 181 economies.



## Internet connectivity in Brazil

- » In 2006, there were more than 16.5 million Internet subscribers in Brazil; 8.87 per 100 inhabitants. Broadband subscribers alone accounted for over 5.9 million of these, or 3.14 per 100 inhabitants. The number of users – those who report that they have online access, but do not themselves subscribe – was far greater: some 39.1 million, or 21 users per 100 inhabitants.

**Sources:** ITU World Information Society Report 2007; ITU Internet Report 2006; International Data Corporation; Internet World Stats; Netcraft.

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