

Saudi Arabia - Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband - Statistics and Analyses

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Abstracts

Saudi Arabia entered 2018 on a positive note with the government announcement of its largest financial budget ever which will support the country's expansion and diversification plans as part of its Vision 2030 program. Generally speaking; the strategy will implement changes relating to improving the kingdom's economy through increases in taxes and fuel prices as well as encouraging investment and diversification away from its reliance on oil. It will also support the use of digital technologies for such uses as cloud computing and e-commerce as well as encouraging ICT development, including investments in broadband infrastructure.

Broadband is widely available in Saudi Arabia via DSL, fibre, and wireless. In 2018 DSL subscriptions still account for the largest proportion of fixed broadband subscriptions but are now in decline as consumers switch to mobile broadband or FttH/FttP services.

Internet penetration in Saudi Arabia has reached around 80%, well above the average for the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is committed to providing Internet services to its deprived rural areas and a special Universal Services project was established around ten years ago. The program is now over three quarters completed with thousands of localities provided access where it was not considered commercially viable for operators to do so.

The mobile operators have faced recent changes and challenges with the introduction of the biometric fingerprint law which saw subscriber numbers drop, as well as a shift away from pre-paid accounts.

A major competitive shake-up for the Saudi telecoms sector began in late 2016 when the Saudi government announced plans to award unified licenses to Zain Saudi Arabia

and Mobily, which would allow the operators to offer fixed line telephony and Internet services. In the past only STC was permitted to do so. In 2018 Go Telecom's request for the unified license was rejected however.

Further increasing competition in the mobile market was the recent lifting of OTT VoIP and messaging services bans, allowing providers such as Skype, Viber, Whatsapp and so forth to begin operations again.

This valuable report provides analyses, information, industry statistics and insights in the major players in Saudi Arabia's telecoms sector.

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