

Superfast mobile 3G networks boom: UN telecoms agency

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Office workers in Bangkok use their mobile phones during a break. Superfast third generation (3G) mobile phone networks have expanded nearly tenfold in four years, outstripping fixed line broadband, the International Telecommunications Union has said.

Superfast third generation (3G) mobile phone networks have expanded nearly tenfold in four years, outstripping fixed line broadband, the UN's telecoms agency said on Wednesday.

The International Telecommunications Union predicted that 3G -- which allows users to watch TV and access the Internet from their phones --

would exceed 900 million subscriptions worldwide by the end of this year as the pace of expansion continued to accelerate.

At the beginning of 2010, 3G capacity could accomodate 667 million subscriptions worldwide, compared to 73 million four years earlier, the ITU said in a statistics survey.

"While these aren't all necessarily active subscriptions, the growing number highlights the vast potential wireless technologies hold," it added.

"ITU has set a clear target by recommending that at least half the world's people have access to broadband by 2015."

Over the same period, global fixed line broadband subscriptions rose from 216 million to 479 million.

Third generation now accounts for 14 percent of all mobile telecoms subscriptions compared to three percent in 2006.

But poor nations appear to be left out, as penetration rates for fixed or [mobile broadband](#) remain very low in developing countries, just above three percent of inhabitants, according to the ITU.

The fixed broadband figure is barely higher than the agency's estimate three years ago.

"Tremendous achievements have been made over the past five years in bringing broadband access to millions of people around the world -- but much more needs to be done," the ITU said.

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