

UN report: Internet users to surpass 2B in 2010

October 21 2010, By DANA WOLLMAN , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- If the Internet were a country, it would be experiencing explosive population growth.

According to a U.N. report released Tuesday, the number of people worldwide with access to the Internet has doubled within the past five years and is expected to surpass 2 billion by the end of 2010.

The report comes from the International Telecommunication Union, the Geneva-based telecommunications division of the U.N. It predicts that 71 percent of people in industrialized countries will have Internet access in 2010, with 65 percent of people in these countries getting online at home.

The ITU's report, released on World Statistics Day, suggests that the digital divide separating industrialized countries from developing ones remains intact.

In developing countries, where the bulk of Internet connections can be found in public places such as schools and libraries, only 21 percent of people have Internet access, and only 13.5 percent do at home.

Sixty-five percent of Europeans access the Internet, compared with 9.6 percent of Africans. Asia and the Middle East fall somewhere in the middle - 22 percent and 25 percent of its respective populations have Internet access.

It is in developing countries that Internet usage is expanding most rapidly. Of the 226 million new [Internet users](#) in 2010, ITU estimates that 162 million will be from developing nations.

ITU also found that [cell phone](#) access remains more prevalent than Internet access. Worldwide, 90 percent of the population lives within range of a mobile network and 68 percent of people in [developing countries](#) are covered.

Indeed, of the expected 5.3 billion [mobile phone](#) subscriptions in 2010, 3.8 billion are from developing nations. It was not reported how many of these phones can access the Internet.

The report added that 143 countries offer high-speed 3G cellular data service, up from 95 countries in 2007. Currently, 940 million people subscribe to 3G service, compared with 72 million in 2005.

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