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> " People in Trinidad and Tobago have a propensity to get certificates from short courses. As a result, with the rising hype of IT, many training institutes have grown overnight to provide IT education."
>
> ***—Business analyst, Trinidad and Tobago***

> " Although there has been a lot of talk about IT for the past few years, very little of the government rhetoric has been translated into action so far, and much of the private sector is still ignorant about the benefits of IT."
>
> ***—Executive of Trinidadian IT company***

Trinidad and Tobago's economy has historically been dependent on oil, gas, and chemical exports, which has caused the nation to become increasingly vulnerable to the volatility of global energy prices. As part of an effort to reduce this precariousness and to diversify the economy, the government has placed heavy emphasis on ICT to integrate the nation into the Networked World (Ranking in ICT as Government Priority: 56). The government has two main goals: to help build an export-oriented software sector and to increase efficiency in business and government by adoption of ICTs.[1] Trinidad and Tobago ranks forty-sixth overall in Readiness for the Networked World.

The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology was created in 2001 to support and, in some cases, lead ICT initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago. However, a coordinated effort has yet to emerge to put in place and implement a national ICT strategy among the private sector, the government, and academia (Ranking in Effectiveness of Government ICT Programs: 45).

Teledensity in Trinidad and Tobago has been increasing over the last decade at a slow but steady pace. Mobile telephone penetration increased dramatically between 1999 and 2000, but it remains significantly lower than fixed-line penetration. Significant challenges exist in the telecommunications sector: there is no independent regulator, and Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT), the local telecommunications provider, enjoys a virtual monopoly in the fixed-telephony sector. Liberalization and privatization efforts have become particularly challenging now that Cable and Wireless, a regional operator, holds a significant stake in TSTT. Local and national long-distance telephony costs are relatively high in Trinidad and Tobago (Ranking in Effect of Telecommunications Competition: 71).

Trinidad and Tobago has a small population with a fairly low percentage of Internet users. Cyber cafés are popular means of urban access to the Internet due to low household PC penetration. Internet access in academia is generally limited to universities, private schools, and some semiprivate high schools. Numerous ICT training institutes have popped up in the nation to satisfy the increasing demand for ICT education, although most of them have little quality control (Ranking in Quality of IT Education: 43).

E-commerce in Trinidad and Tobago has yet to take off (Ranking in e-Commerce micro-index: 53). There are several B2C e-commerce websites, but few online transactions are taking place in the country. One potential avenue for extensive B2C e-commerce use may be in tourism, a sector in which the island still lags behind most other Caribbean nations. B2B e-commerce currently is limited to large companies, mostly multinational energy companies. Under a program called Information Technology Policy for the Public Service, some government institutions have been targeted for networking to share information and databases. But citizen-government online interaction has yet to become a reality (Ranking in Online Government Services: 72).

The Trinidadian government is putting particular emphasis on building an export-oriented software and ICT services industry. The government has proposed development of a science and technology park to attract local and multinational ICT companies, and ICT training programs are being developed in universities and vocational centers. Some potentially advantageous factors for developing an ICT services industry include the nation's literate, English-speaking population, its proximity to the U.S., and its position as an "English commercial gateway" to Latin America.

Trinidad and Tobago

Key Facts

Population	1,294,368
Rural population (% of total population) 1999	26.38 %
GDP per capita (PPP)	US$8,771
Global Competitiveness Index Ranking, 2001–2002	38
UNDP Human Development Index Ranking, 2001 (adjusted to GITR sample)	38
Main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants	23.10
Telephone faults per 100 main telephone lines	75.00
Internet hosts per 10,000 inhabitants	50.96
Personal computers per 100 inhabitants	5.41
Piracy rate	NA
Percent of PCs connected to Internet	6.93 %
Internet users per host	6.48
Internet users per 100 inhabitants	3.30
Cell phone subscribers per 100 inhabitants	10.29
Average monthly cost for 20 hours of Internet access	US$15.30

	RANK
Networked Readiness Index	**46**
Network Use component index	**49**
Enabling Factors component index	**47**
Network Access	**56**
Information Infrastructure	57
Hardware, Software, and Support	54
Network Policy	**44**
Business and Economic Environment	29
ICT Policy	58
Networked Society	**43**
Networked Learning	48
ICT Opportunities	46
Social Capital	34
Networked Economy	**52**
e-Commerce	53
e-Government	69
General Infrastructure	35