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“ Jordan is a country where IT leadership and initiative from the very top has made a significant difference.”

—*Business analyst, Jordan*

“ Most human resources available are young graduates. What we need is people with advanced international leadership skills, who can lead organizations and transform them into world-class companies, able to compete internationally.”

—*Jordanian IT executive*

Jordan's national Networked Readiness strategy, the REACH Initiative, has tried to marshal the intellectual capital of Jordan's private sector and the cooperative will of key members of the government to identify underlying regulatory and infrastructure problems facing the ICT sector (Ranking in ICT as Government Priority: 6). REACH aims by 2004 to attract US\$150 million in cumulative foreign direct investment; achieve US\$550 million in annual exports; and create 30,000 jobs, all in the ICT sector.¹ Jordan ranks forty-ninth overall in Networked Readiness.

While the past decade has seen notable improvements in Jordan's Networked Readiness, many challenges remain. In addition to problems of enabling infrastructure and appropriate policy, there are difficult legacies such as inertia, awareness, income disparity, and entrenched attitudes toward telecommunications and competition.

The Telecommunications Law of 1995 opened all nonfixed-line services to the private sector (Ranking in Effect of Telecommunications Competition: 35). Jordan's ICT infrastructure has since developed rapidly to include mobile networks, two payphone networks, a paging service, a new, digital ATM backbone and several data service companies, offering either Internet access or private communication networks.² The law also created the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC).

Although Jordan Telecommunications (JT) was partially privatized in 2000, it will continue to be the monopoly provider and operator of basic telephone services until the end of 2004.

Jordan's fixed network has been largely converted to digital switching and transmission, and expanded to reach a teledensity of 9 percent in 2000, nearly double the penetration of the mid-1990s, but still below such Middle Eastern and North African countries as Lebanon and Tunisia.

An estimated fourteen out of 100 people in Jordan currently own mobile phones—the national mobile GSM network is operated as a duopoly by Fastlink and MobileCom (a subsidiary of JT).

The Internet is becoming popular in Jordan. However, personal computers are not generally affordable because of low average incomes, which remains a great impediment to the spread of Internet use, especially in homes. The nine ISPs and 170 Internet cafés serve an estimated 127,000 users who use the Internet for e-mail and chat services, the daily news, job vacancy advertisements, and other tasks.³ Authorities have been more tolerant toward online news and content than toward traditional media. Although voice over Internet is illegal, Internet telephony and callback services are popular, due to the high cost of international calls.

E-commerce activity is minimal in Jordan (Ranking in e-Commerce micro-index: 51); only a handful of local companies are capable of processing online payments. Although Jordan's national banks issue credit cards, they are reluctant to launch electronic banking services in general, primarily because of the absence of regulatory guidelines, but also because of the cost of implementing the required technology to support secure transactions in the local currency.

Jordan's labor pool is well educated, and ICT education is a top national priority—the curriculum has been revised at all levels to reflect a new and compulsory ICT focus (Ranking in Quality of IT Education: 37).

Many believe that the entire ICT sector would benefit from a greater government commitment to the role of independent regulation. The King's personal involvement in Jordan's planning for Networked Readiness is generally regarded as a very positive factor (Ranking in Effectiveness of Government ICT Programs: 9).

Key Facts

Population	6,670,300
Rural population (% of total population) 1999	26.36 %
GDP per capita (PPP)	US\$4,079
Global Competitiveness Index Ranking, 2001–2002	45
UNDP Human Development Index Ranking, 2001 (adjusted to GTR sample)	61
Main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants	9.29
Telephone faults per 100 main telephone lines	42.00
Internet hosts per 10,000 inhabitants	1.36
Personal computers per 100 inhabitants	1.35
Piracy rate	71.00 %
Percent of PCs connected to Internet	0.68 %
Internet users per host	140.37
Internet users per 100 inhabitants	1.91
Cell phone subscribers per 100 inhabitants	5.83
Average monthly cost for 20 hours of Internet access	US\$19.09

RANK

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Information Infrastructure 46

Hardware, Software, and Support 56

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