

## Technology V13/S5 - Access to the Internet



It may be difficult to image your life without internet, but just 30 years ago most people had never even seen a website. Although early versions of the internet were around in the 1970s, it would take 20 more years for it to reach public use. The World Wide Web was invented in Switzerland by Tim Berners-Lee in 1989, which allowed for the creation of web pages. It was released into the public domain in 1993. Starting with about 130 websites, that number would grow to over 100,000 by 1996. By the mid-nineties, the internet was established, and more people began having access in their homes...but not every home.

People have not always had equal access to the internet. This is true based on various socioeconomic factors, even within a single city, but what does access to the internet look like on a global scale? From 1990 to 2001, North America had more internet users than any other continent. By the year 2000 almost half of the population in the US was accessing information through the internet. However, across most of the world, the internet had not yet had much influence. Only 6% were online in the East Asia and Pacific region, and less than 4% in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2000, Sub-Saharan Africa was still largely offline.

As of 2020, the World Bank estimates that over 90% of North Americans used the Internet in the last three months, although if you break it down by country, Iceland has the highest percentage with 99% of its population. Sub-Saharan Africa is still the lowest at 30%. In 2021, the United Nation's estimated that 2.9 billion people (37% of the world's population) have still **never** used the Internet.



There are groups and individuals working to change that. In January 2023, the US company SpaceX, headed by Elon Musk, announced that Starlink Internet service was available in Nigeria. Using Starlink's orbital satellites to provide high-speed internet was a first for the continent. It has also since become available in Rwanda and is set to be rolled out elsewhere in Africa in 2024.

Despite how instant and easy access to the internet may seem to you here and now, for many people, their access to the internet is just beginning, opening up the world for them in whole new ways.