

# THE REAL ECONOMY BULLETIN

TRENDS, DEVELOPMENTS AND DATA

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## Briefing Note 2: Access to broadband in South Africa

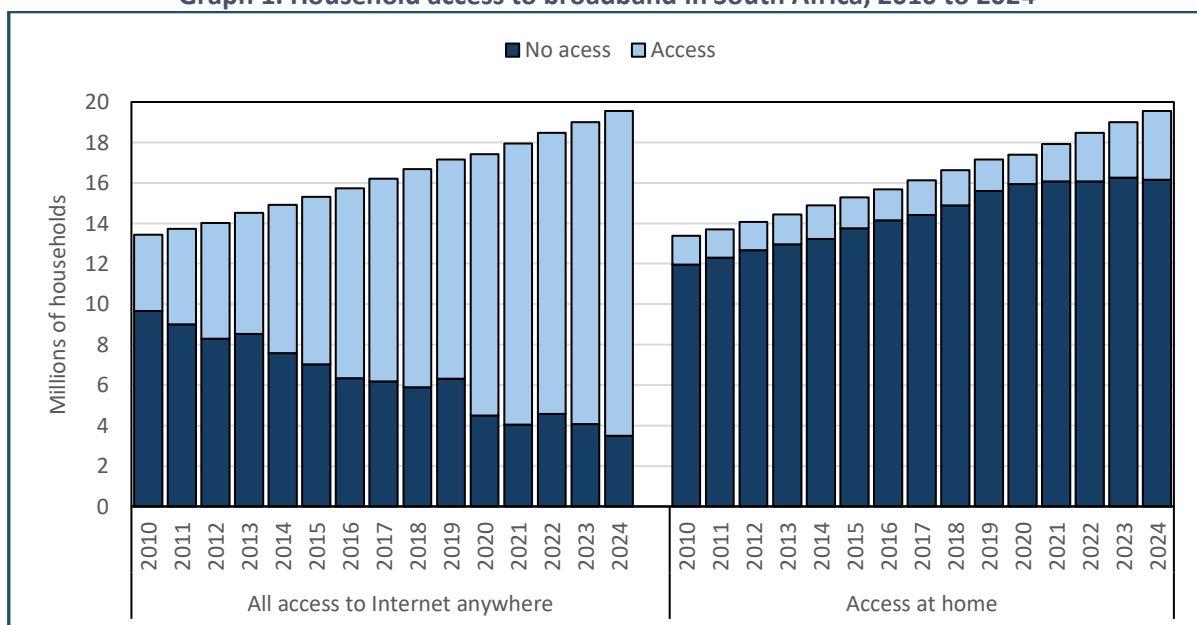
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*This briefing note draws on a TIPS study of logistics infrastructure study that evaluates South Africa's network industries, including road, telecommunications, rail and ports. The study is forthcoming.*

The South African telecommunications industry is shaped by unequal access at both business and household levels. Given the deep reliance of modern production systems on digital accounting and relationships of all kinds, this digital divide has become an important element in slow overall growth as well as persistent inequalities. Cellphone ownership, mostly now smartphones, is comparatively equitable, but access to home-based broadband remains both limited and comparatively expensive.

Graph 1 shows internet access in South Africa. In 2024, over 80% of South African households had some access to the internet, up from 20% in 2010. Most relied on their cellphones, however, with only a fifth having access to more powerful broadband connections at home. Less than 5% of households in the poorest 40% by income had broadband connections at home, compared to around 60% of households in the richest decile.

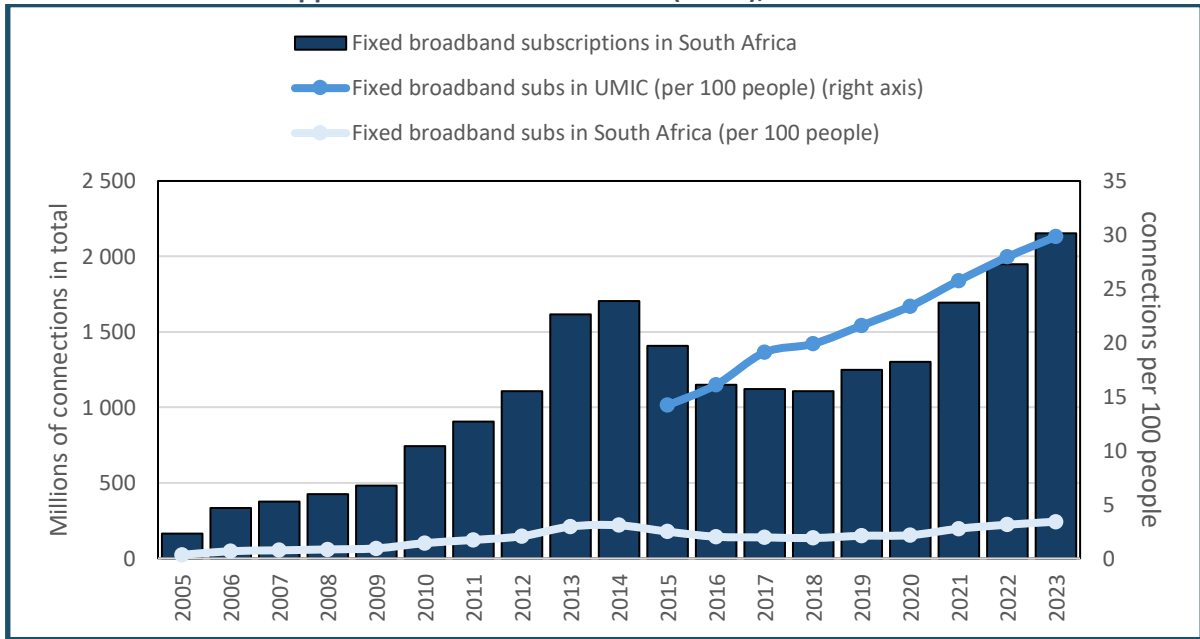
**Graph 1. Household access to broadband in South Africa, 2010 to 2024**



Source: Statistics South Africa. General Household Survey 2024. Excel spreadsheet: GHS 2024 Time Series of selected variables, 2002-2024. Downloaded from [statssa.gov.za](https://statssa.gov.za) in February 2026. Note: weighted by household

Access to broadband lags behind peer economies. In 2023, there were three active fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 people in South Africa compared to 30 in other upper-middle-income countries (Graph 2). The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), however, reported that fixed broadband subscriptions have grown rapidly in the past decade, almost doubling from 1.4 million in 2015 to 2.7 million in 2024.

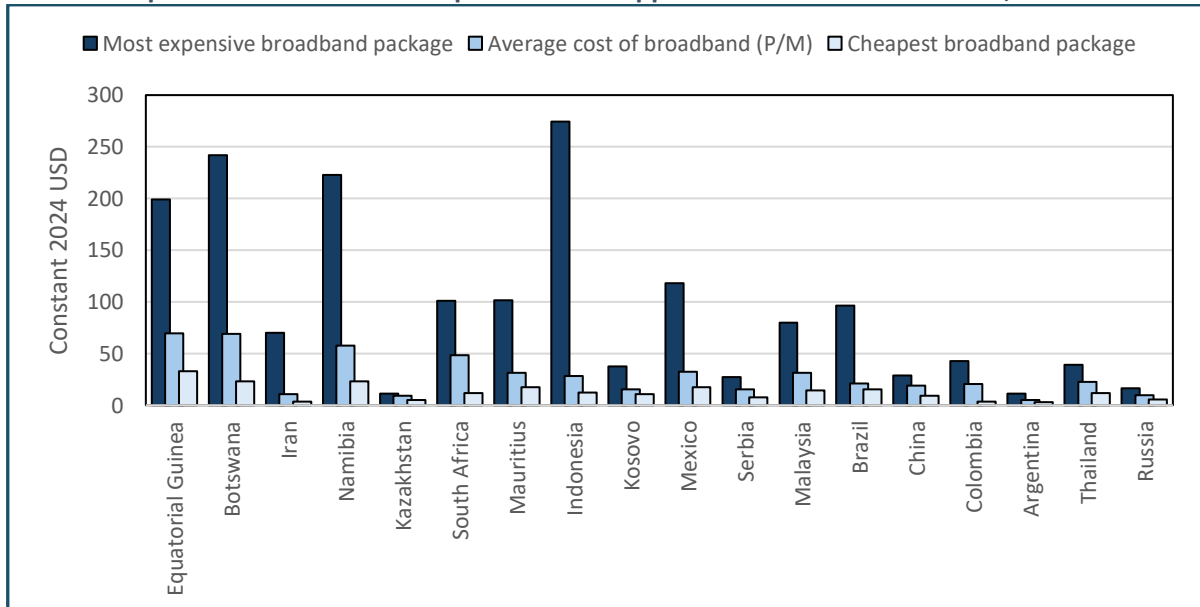
**Graph 2. Fixed broadband subscriptions in South Africa and upper middle-income countries (UMIC), 2005 to 2024**



Source: World Bank. World Development Indicators. Series on fixed broadband subscriptions. Downloaded from [databank.worldbank.org](https://databank.worldbank.org) in February 2026.

Qualitative assessments for both mobile data and broadband indicate that the cost of internet access is expensive in South Africa. Graph 3 compares the cost of broadband with other upper-middle-income countries. While South African broadband competes on price with African countries, it is significantly above most of Asia, Latin America and Europe. The cheapest broadband connection in South Africa was US\$12 (R215) in 2024, while in China it was \$9. The average broadband package in South Africa was R900 in 2024. That said, South Africa is not an outlier in terms of megabytes, with a megabyte per second costing R9.30 in 2024.

**Graph 3. Price of broadband per month in upper-middle-income countries, in 2024**



Source: Best broadband deals; Cable UK. Broadband price comparison data Excel spreadsheet. Downloaded from <https://bestbroadbanddeals.co.uk/broadband/pricing/worldwide-comparison/#resources> in February 2026. Note: prices were converted from local currencies into 2024 USD.