

More than one in eight of broadband customers around the world are now connected via fibre. But fibre is still third to DSL over copper — with almost two thirds of connections — and cable TV for internet access.

China pulls ahead of US in broadband connections



George Dobrowski: broadband expansion is not limited to the top industrialised countries, but is a key factor in assisting developing nations to gain a foothold in today's tough market

The research shows that China has increased its lead over the number two country, the US, in the past 12 months. There are now 93.5 million broadband homes in China — 17.7 million ahead of the US. A year ago the difference was just 1.3 million.

From the first to the second quarters of 2009, China's lead over the US increased still further: China put on 3.6 million broadband homes and the US just 2.2 million.

George Dobrowski, chairman and president of the Broadband Forum, commented: "While broadband adoption is not immune from the state of the world economy, the technology continues to move forward and I believe this year has shown that broadband expansion is not limited to the top industrialised countries, but is a key factor in assisting developing nations to gain a foothold in today's tough market."

The figures come from the Broadband Forum, which has commissioned Point Topic to collect and analyse the industry figures.

A separate survey by the Communications Workers of America — with 700,000 members — says that the average download internet speed in the US

has increased by only 1.6 megabits a second in the past two years.

According to the Point Topic figures, global broadband grew by 12.9 million lines in the second quarter of 2009 to reach 445 million, while IPTV growth remained strong at 11% of the total, now reaching 26.9 million homes.

Japan was third, followed by Germany, France, the UK and South Korea in that order.

Broadband subscriptions in Europe grew 13% in the past year, to reach 135 million, which included a growth of 29% in the eastern European territories.

IPTV in Europe has grown 51% in a year, but North American IPTV grew even faster, at 84% in the same period, and growth in south and east Asia was 74%.

The fastest IPTV growth — though from a small base of just 14,000 in 2008 — was Latin America, which grew 278% in 12 months to 53,000.

The figures show that 64% of customers receive broadband by DSL, with 21% by cable and 13% by fibre.

The US union says that "it will take the US 15 years to catch up with current internet speeds in South Korea, the country with the fastest average internet connections".

The survey says the average download speed was 3.5 megabits a second in 2007 and is now 5.1 megabits.

"Every American should have affordable access to high-speed internet, no matter where they live," said CWA president Larry Cohen, who is using the survey to lobby for stronger US government action in developing broadband services.

"This is essential to economic growth and will help maintain our global competitiveness. Unfortunately, fragmented government programmes and uneven private sector responses to build out internet access have left a digital divide across the country."

The CWA's survey was based on aggregated data from more than 413,000 internet users who took the online test between May 2008 and May 2009. It shows that only 20% of those who took the test have internet speeds in the range of the top three ranked countries — South Korea, Japan and Sweden.

The CWA adds: "Even more alarming, 18% do not even meet the FCC definition for current-generation broadband as an always-on internet connection of at least 768 kilobits a second downstream."

Cohen added: "I applaud the Obama administration and Congress for their commitment to develop a national plan that restores US leadership in high-speed internet policy. Improving broadband deployment, connection speeds, and adoption will help facilitate job and business growth. By continuing these efforts we can make sure that America benefits from the information age." ■

TOP 50 IN BROADBAND

Country	Q1, 2009	Q2, 2009
1. China	89,888,000	93,549,000
2. US	83,974,547	86,227,582
3. Japan	30,666,900	31,085,500
4. Germany	23,729,350	24,086,250
5. France	18,009,500	18,324,300
6. UK	17,661,100	17,838,200
7. South Korea	15,706,466	15,876,992
8. Italy	12,595,533	12,855,463
9. Brazil	10,065,200	10,469,755
10. Canada	9,527,500	9,618,107
11. Spain	9,062,767	9,166,427
12. Russia	8,023,082	8,773,500
13. Mexico	8,051,323	8,615,962
14. Australia	6,887,500	7,230,500
15. India	6,112,091	6,668,073
16. Turkey	6,069,200	6,076,200
17. Netherlands	5,813,500	5,828,800
18. Taiwan	4,969,000	4,977,000
19. Poland	4,367,967	4,502,460
20. Argentina	3,173,500	3,256,900
21. Belgium	3,030,500	3,088,500
22. Sweden	2,982,302	3,033,602
23. Switzerland	2,712,200	2,769,900
24. Romania	2,640,018	2,746,900
25. Vietnam	2,282,900	2,512,500
26. Hong Kong	2,262,654	2,306,654

Country	Q1, 2009	Q2, 2009
27. Colombia	2,041,192	2,133,519
28. Czech Republic	2,012,200	2,084,000
29. Denmark	2,052,797	2,054,097
30. Austria	1,853,100	1,911,800
31. Greece	1,752,276	1,881,977
32. Portugal	1,735,704	1,783,784
33. Israel	1,703,000	1,714,000
34. Norway	1,660,300	1,706,900
35. Malaysia	1,650,000	1,700,000
36. Finland	1,600,400	1,614,800
37. Hungary	1,489,070	1,544,787
38. Chile	1,396,087	1,445,292
39. Peru	1,303,900	1,385,500
40. Philippines	1,136,288	1,269,490
41. Ukraine	1,024,000	1,119,500
42. Saudi Arabia	1,050,000	1,070,000
43. Venezuela	1,040,500	1,054,000
44. Singapore	1,007,550	1,045,500
45. Ireland	958,000	995,000
46. New Zealand	888,500	974,000
47. Thailand	835,993	843,735
48. Egypt	795,000	839,727
49. Indonesia	722,500	822,500
50. South Africa	714,000	763,250

Source: Point Topic via Broadband Forum