HOW THE INTERNET WORKS · PART 5 OF 9 · AGES 11–16

The Internet by the Numbers

How many people are online, how data crosses oceans, and how many addresses the internet has, with the year of every figure.

6 billion

people used the internet in 2025: 74% of the world's population

Up from 5.8 billion in 2024, according to ITU estimates.

2.2 billion

people were still offline in 2025

94% of people in high-income countries are online, but only 23% in low-income countries (ITU).

Over 99%

of international data travels through undersea cables

Satellites carry only a very small share of the data that moves between continents (ITU; TeleGeography).

1.5 million km

of undersea internet cable was in service in early 2026

Enough to go round the Equator about 37 times. TeleGeography tracks over 600 active and planned cables.

~200

undersea cable faults happen each year

About two-thirds are caused by fishing boats and ships dragging anchors (TeleGeography, 2026).

~79,500

separate networks (autonomous systems) make up the internet

Counted in the global routing table on 1 October 2026 by the CIDR Report.

4.3 billion

possible IPv4 addresses: 2^{32} = 4,294,967,296

The central pool of unused IPv4 addresses ran out on 3 February 2011.

3.4×10^{38}

possible IPv6 addresses: 2^{128}, about 340 trillion trillion trillion

On 29 September 2026, about 46% of Google's users reached it over IPv6.

Check the year

Internet figures change fast. User numbers are estimates for 2025, cable counts are for 2026, and network counts are a snapshot from 1 October 2026. Always quote the year with the number.

NEXT IN THE SERIES

6. Timeline of the Internet: From ARPANET to Today

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