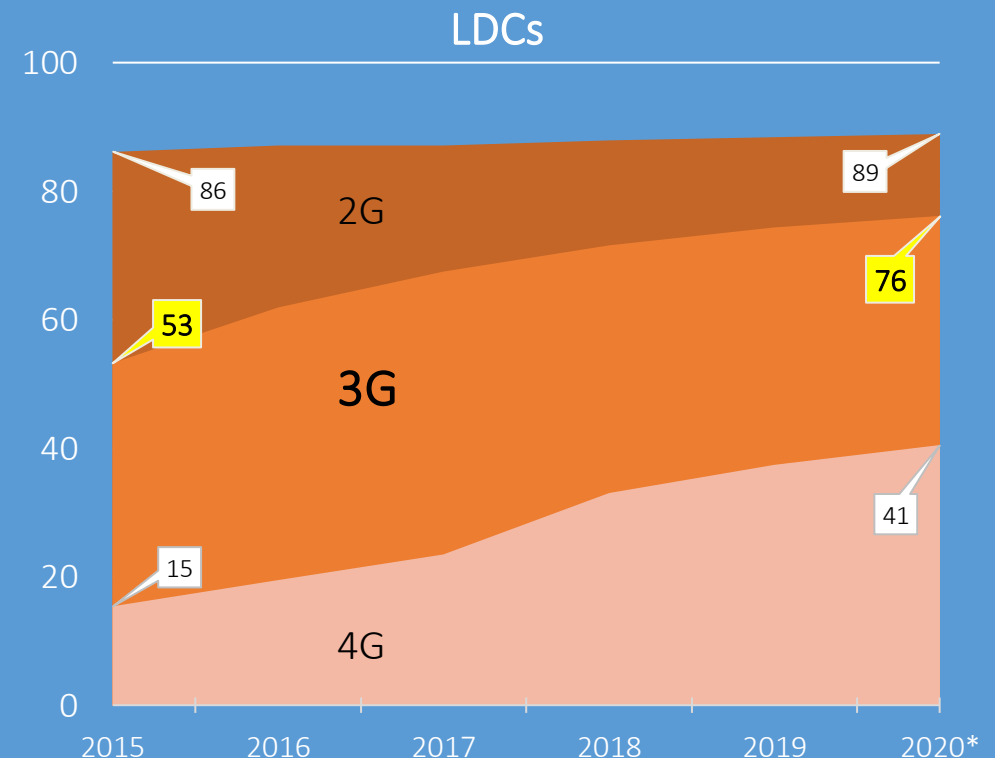
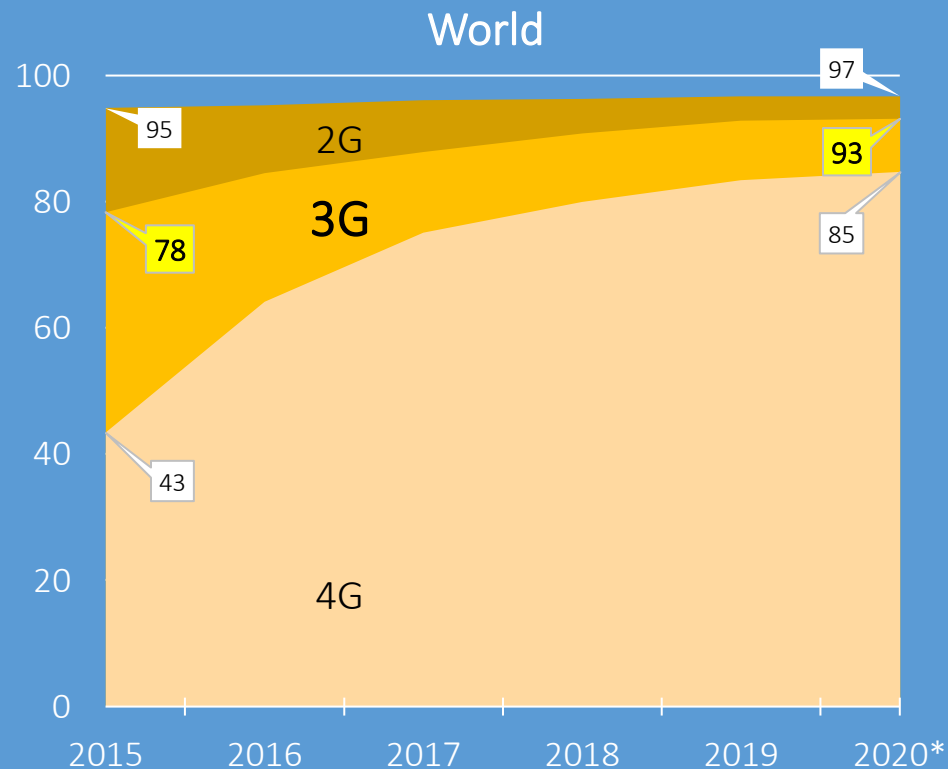


# Target: 9.C Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

## Indicator 9.c.1 Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology



\*Estimates

Source: ITU (October 2020)

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- For assessing progress on target 9.c.1, notably in the context of the UN's *Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2020* ITU, ITU now uses 3G technology, compared with 2G previously. 3G is the first generation of mobile technology with broadband capability, thus offering a gateway to the Internet, which is the goal of target 9.c
- It is estimated that approximately 93% of the population was covered by a 3G network at the end of 2020, the world is close to the target of 98%. For LDCs, estimated coverage for 2020 is 76%, up 2 percentage points from previous year and 23 percentage points since 2015.
- 41% of the population in LDCs is covered by 4G signal, but coverage has grown on average by 17% annually since 2015
- It is hard to predict the net effect of COVID-19 on progress towards universal coverage. Strong demand for more connectivity should encourage investment, despite all the uncertainty and fluid economic conditions, which would normally affect supply.

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- As for regions, figures for 2019 reveal that Sub-Saharan African and Pacific small island developing states (SIDS) remained relatively far from target with respectively 74% and 68% of their population covered by 3G. The rest of the world has reached 90% or more coverage, with Eastern and South-Eastern Asia having already met the target with a coverage of 99%.
- Since 2015, progress has been achieved in all regions. Sub-Saharan Africa has achieved substantial progress having grown at a annual rate of almost 10% between 2015 and 2019, albeit from a low base. Over the same period, thanks to annual growth of 8%, coverage in Central and Southern Asia surged from 69% to 93% of the population.
- Progress is expected to slow down in regions close to universal coverage, which is normal for technology diffusion.

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- 3G coverage (or newer technology) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for Internet use. Estimates for 2020 show that only half of the world population (51%) and as few as 19% of population of LDCs is online
- More than ever, in the current context, connectivity is a ‘lifeline’ and an enabler for all the goals.
- Mere access is not sufficient. To boost connectivity in the Decade of Action, need to focus on the enablers of connectivity: quality of access, affordability, skills, content availability and accessibility.
- Big data ideal complement to official statistics to monitor progress on target and related aspects of connectivity. Big data delivers more timely, more granular, and in some cases more accurate information to design better and more effective intervention. ITU about to release the *Handbook on the use of mobile phone big data for measuring the information society*. This guide builds on the ITU’s pioneering work on big data and pilot studies conducted in ten countries. It will offer the framework, tools, and methods for countries to forge public-private partnerships and leverage big data from telecom operators.