

# BROADBAND FOR ALL – PERCEPTION AND REALITY

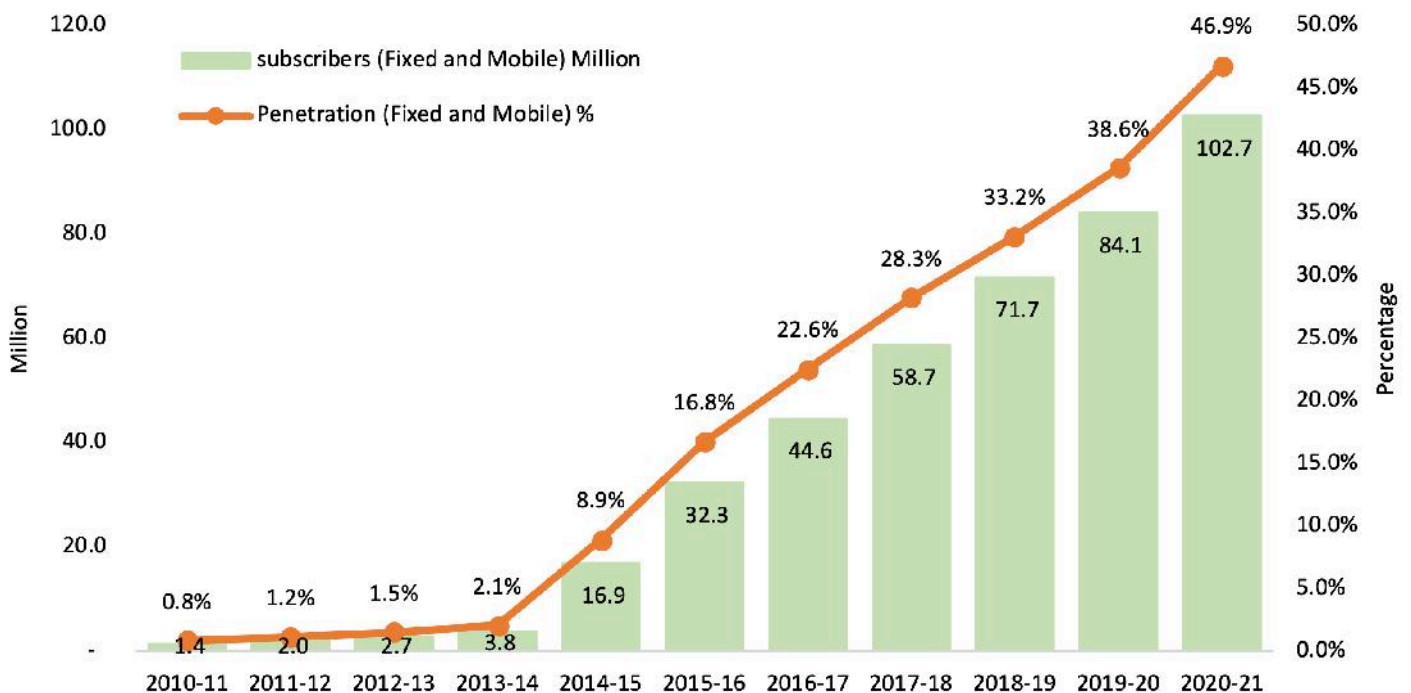
VC, PIDE

Broadband has become an absolute essential for people to participate in socio-economic activities. A decade ago there was a debate on digital divide between the ones who have internet and the ones who don't. Today with over 60% of the global population using the internet, the focus is now towards the quality and speed. The economic shift caused by the broadband across the globe is a testament of broadband revolution. The ITU research revealed that in least developed and landlocked countries, an increase of 10% in mobile broadband penetration yields an increase of 2.5-2.8% in GDP per capita, whereas an increase of 10% in fixed line broadband

penetration contributes to an increase of 2-2.3% to GDP per capita.

Pakistan started its journey into internet availability in 1990s and today stand as high speed broadband enabled country. We successfully passed through the early phases of digital era when global digital revolution was setting in. A shift from basic internet to high speed robust broadband in Pakistan in the last couple of years emphasized its significance in creating a knowledge-based economy by generating job opportunities and raising productivity.

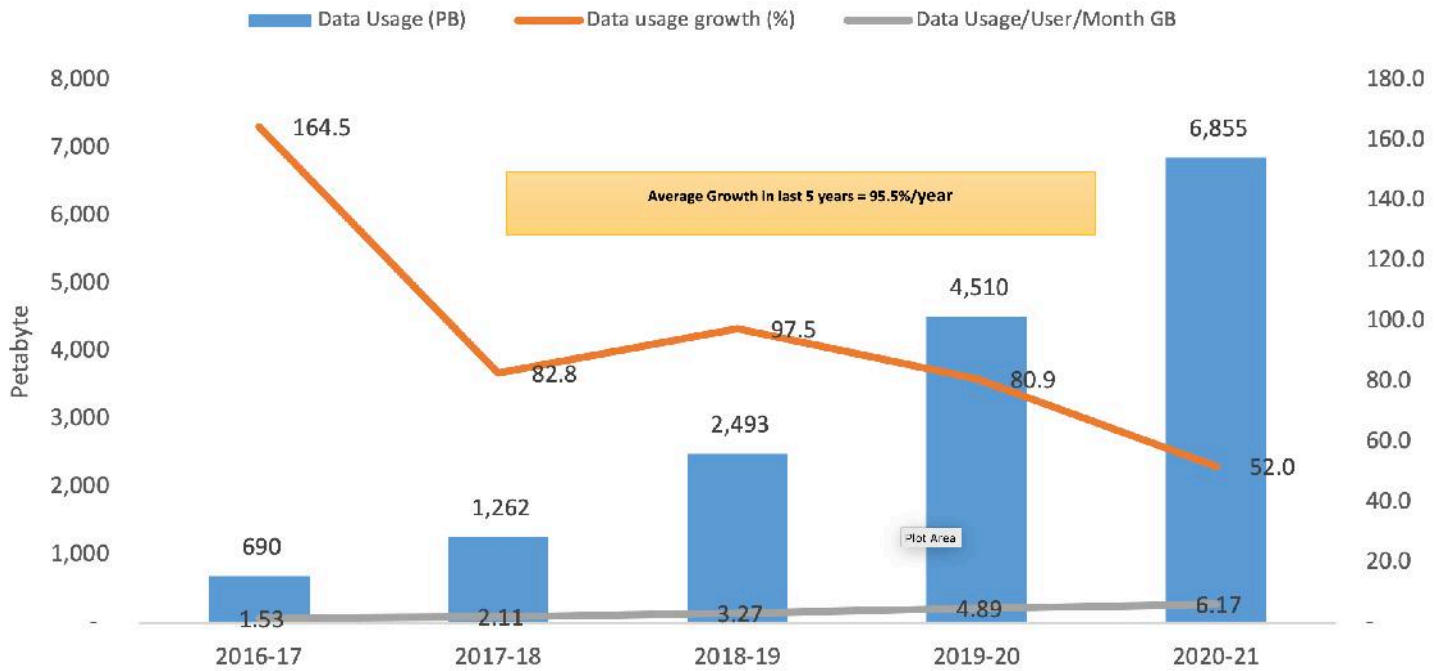
**Broadband Subscribers and Penetration**



The last ten years were phenomenal in terms of increased broadband penetration and subscriber base which showed almost 68% average annual growth rate over last ten years. Today we have a total broadband subscriber base of over 102 million with broadband penetration crossing 46%. The surge in subscriber base was witnessed right after the introduction of 3G services in 2014 when the subscribers grew by almost 350% in one year. The data usage also grew tremendously. The average annual growth in last 5 years was 95.5% and during

FY 2021 data usage reached at 6,855 PB. This shows a sharp rise in the data usage per subscriber which was around 1 GB per subscriber in 2017 and today stands at over 5 GB per subscriber. The operators have been investing in expansion of networks not only in urban area but the far flung under privileged areas have also been provided with the facility through Universal Service Fund. Today we have over 43,637 cell sites that are broadband enabled, five years ago there were less than 28,000 cell sites. Mobile broadband is available at lowest possible prices across the country.

## Data Usage, Growth and Data Usage/User/Month



According to the 'ICT Price Trends 2019' report of ITU 1.5 GB mobile data is being offered in Pakistan @US\$ 0.99 which is far lower than regional peers. Moreover, mobile data prices in Pakistan achieved the UN Broadband commission target, which recommends that prices should be less than 2% of the GNI per capita. In case of Pakistan, mobile data prices are only 0.70% of GNI per capita. Although Mobile broadband is growing immensely over a period of time, there is a lag in fixed broadband penetration in Pakistan which is around 1.5% and needs consideration. In Pakistan broadband usage is increasing tremendously, people from all segments of the society are now making use of the internet for social, economic and all other needs. Presence of Pakistani users on the social media platform is significant, whereby all channels are being used. Facebook, twitter, Instagram and Youtube are the most popular social platforms and only Facebook has over 50 million users in Pakistan.

Government of Pakistan through the Digital Policy of Pakistan envisions "to improve its citizens' quality of life and economic well-being by ensuring availability of accessible, affordable, reliable, universal, and high-quality ICT services." This vision can be achieved by creating a digital ecosystem that promotes the use of technology in education, health, agriculture, and

other key socioeconomic sectors. To this end, PTA is sparing no efforts to ensure the availability of quality ICT infrastructure and broadband services across the country at affordable rates. Ensuring that Pakistani users enjoy the best broadband experience at fastest speeds the regulator is all set to carryout spectrum auction for LTE & VoLTE this year and 5 G services by 2023. Issuance of Right of Way Policy is another major step towards enhanced broadband proliferation in the country which will be instrumental in increasing the fixed broadband penetration and improved backhaul network for mobile broadband services. PTA is actively pursuing the government of Pakistan and tax authorities to reduce the tax burden on telecom services in order to improve affordability and expansion /up-gradation in networks. Similarly the regulator is also working on active network sharing and national roaming so that broadband proliferation can be improved.

With enhanced broadband services, PTA will continue its efforts towards a digitally progressive Pakistan and make this country a preferred digital market in the world.

