In 1990 there were 516 million telephone mainlines worldwide. 63% of these mainlines were in Western Europe and North America; these regions and Japan were the only parts of the world where there were more than 4 mainlines for every 10 people living there. This equates to almost every family having access to a mainline telephone in these regions. In contrast, in Central Africa and Southern Asia there was less than 1 mainline for every 100 people living there, at this date.

In 1990 there were 141 million mainlines in the United States, Japan had the second highest count at 53 million mainlines, followed by Germany at 36 million.

Territory size shows the proportion of all telephone mainlines in 1990 that were found there.

“...universal access to basic communication and information services is a fundamental human right.”

Pekka Tarjanne, 1997