

There will be 4.55 billion internet users worldwide this year, but growth is slowing

Article

The forecast: The internet will have **4.55 billion** users worldwide this year, up **2.6%** over 2021. This amounts to **57.4%** of the general population (including all ages).

Dive deeper:

- Growth in internet penetration is slowing overall after hitting a **7.7%** growth rate in 2020, the highest since 2015. This massive growth was largely due to the pandemic shifting in-person settings to remote—and as internet use has saturated, growth has slowed.
- Internet use will grow the fastest in the Middle East and Africa, at **4.0%** this year, where there is the most room for growth. In 2022, just **29.8%** of the region's population will be online, compared with **89.2%** in North America.
- Mobile phone use is higher worldwide than internet use, hitting **64.8%** of the general population this year. That said, smartphone penetration is significantly lower, at **44.8%** in 2022. Smartphones will reach just **14.2%** of the general population in the Middle East and Africa, while mobile phones will reach **36.6%** of the population there.

Looking ahead: Overall, growth rates show a lot of variety across regions, with the most room for growth in the Middle East and Africa. Worldwide, there will be **4.88 billion** internet users in 2026, for a total of **59.4%** of the general population.