

KOREA: Internet fees not cheap any longer

Cost of broadband Internet access in Korea is significantly higher than the cost in other developed nations

[The Korea Times](#)

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By Cho Jin-seo

The honored title of the "most wired nation on the planet" is fading away for South Korea.

The nation ranked 23rd among 30 developed nations for its basic broadband service price, and was second in the number of virus-infected machines per capita, according to a recent report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The report said the average monthly price for entry level broadband services in Korea was \$35.51, more than three times as expensive as that of Sweden and Denmark. The price was \$15.93 in the United States and \$19.87 in Japan. The country with the most expensive entry point for broadband access was Mexico where people have to pay at least \$52 per month for 1 megabit per second of connectivity.

Korea was also found to be one of the most vulnerable nations to hacking attacks. About 25 PCs out of 100 were thought to be infected by "bots." Bots refer to malicious computer programs that enable attackers to steal information and to send spam e-mails from the infected PCs. Iceland was the only country that has more bot-infected PCs per capita than Korea.

South Korea was one of the pioneering nations in establishing a nationwide broadband network from the late 1990s, and once topped the rankings in broadband penetration rate. But it is currently ranked fourth by the OECD, after Denmark, the Netherlands and Iceland.

Some other researchers think the situation has become even worse when it comes to efficiency in investment. In a recent report from the Phoenix Center for Advanced Legal and Economic Public Policy Studies, Korea was the third worst nation in its Broadband Performance Index (BPI) among the 30 OECD nations, only better than Mexico and Turkey.

Unlike the OECD, the BPI measures whether the actual broadband penetration in a country meets its expected performance.

"Interestingly, countries often cited as broadband 'miracles,' like Korea and Japan, are average performers like the United States," the Phoenix report said. "Japan is roughly only living up to expectations, as is Korea, which has a far-reaching broadband industrial policy that involves substantial network subsidies."

The OECD report, however, confirmed that Korea is one of the most matured nations in terms of the top-end broadband network that provides speeds of over 100 megabits per second using fiber optic lines. As a result, it was found to have the lowest price for Mbit/s charge along with Japan, Finland and Sweden.

The range between the least and the most expensive broadband services was the smallest in Korea, too, as the most expensive subscription was \$57.07 here, while there were services that cost over \$800 in Mexico and \$191 in the United States.

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