

PC/Internet Penetration

Jordan has a number of personal computer (PC) financing programs currently underway either through large pension funds or financial institutions. Most of the current programs were initiated for pure financial reasons without any efforts analyzing and predicting their impact on raising PC/Internet penetration rates in the country. Other factors such as the average salaries of beneficiaries, cost of living index, standard of living as well as social implications and human development were also not taken into consideration during the design of such programs. The problems and challenges facing most of the current PC financing programs are not financial in nature but rather procedural mostly relating to:

- The Target Population
- Institutional Constraints
- Specifications & Configurations

PC/Internet penetration rates in Jordan are still relatively low. Part of this low penetration rate can be attributed to the high cost of average total cost of PC ownership (US\$ 700) when compared to the average per capita income (\$1,760 in 2002), and the absence of dedicated financing schemes that would make PCs affordable to a wider range of lower income groups.

The current rate of PC/Internet penetration in Jordan is between 3.7 - 4.0 % of population. One indicator on PC affordability in a given country is based on the ratio of Per Capita Income to the average PC cost in that country. In Jordan the PC affordability ratio is around (2.5) which is low by international standards. While the Jordan ratio is higher than Syria (1.7), it is substantially lower than Qatar (23.0). This, in addition to a number of other barriers hindering growth in PC/Internet penetration rates, restricts the ability of the average Jordanian to purchase a PC. Some barriers that need addressing are:

- Internet/Software Censorship
- The Daman Program
- Income Tax
- Sales Tax / Customs Duties

Increasing PC/Internet penetration rates in the country is an issue of national proportions and cannot be addressed and resolved solely by IT sector representatives. There is a need for a multi-championed national program with clear target rates to facilitate and promote a tangible and sustainable increase PC/Internet penetration rates. Such a program should be in line with the wider goal set by the leadership for Jordan "*to become the IT hub of the region*".