# Global telcos performance benchmarks

Autumn 2025

Twimbit is a research and advisory firm driven by a singular mission: to empower businesses that are making a difference. We specialise in providing invaluable industry intelligence to executives and teams, acting as a catalyst for innovation and growth.

Twimbit is a research and advisory firm driven by a singular mission: to empower businesses making a difference. We specialise in providing invaluable industry intelligence to executives and teams, catalysing innovation and growth.

# Table of Contents

# Executive summary

Global telecom operators entered Q3-2025 navigating a structural transition: moving from traditional connectivity economics toward digital platforms, AI-driven networks, and enterprise-centric growth. Across markets, three themes defined performance: **diversification, discipline, and disruption**, shaping how operators created value and where risks surfaced.

**Revenue growth remained steady at 3.6% YoY**, but its composition shifted decisively. Operators with meaningful exposure to fintech, cloud, ICT, and data-center businesses outperformed those anchored in mobile and fixed services. Players like E&, SoftBank, Zain, and Batelco showed that digital adjacencies are no longer optional; they are becoming the primary engines of growth and the clearest differentiator between scale-leaders and stagnating incumbents. Earnings outcomes reinforced this pattern. EBITDA resilience was strongest among operators with well-developed digital portfolios, while legacy-heavy operators faced margin compression and rising cost-to-serve pressures.

At the same time, the quarter exposed how **the sector is vulnerable to operational shocks.** A single cybersecurity incident pulled SK Telecom's EBITDA down nearly 35%, demonstrating that reputation, trust, and service stability now carry as much financial weight as network scale. Similar local disruptions dragged Telefonica's profitability, reinforcing that margin structures, even in diversified groups can be destabilised quickly.

**Capex trends revealed a clear divergence.** One group of operators accelerated investment in AI-native infrastructure, including cloud platforms, GPU compute and hyperscale data centers, positioning their networks for an AI-first future. Leaders such as SK Telecom, SoftBank, Airtel and NTT Docomo showed that telecom value is shifting toward digital infrastructure rather than traditional network expansion. In contrast, others adopted stricter capital discipline as 5G deployments peaked or margins tightened, redirecting spending to high-certainty, returns-focused assets like fiber and home broadband.

**ARPU trends showed limited momentum overall**, with only a minority of operators reporting growth. Monetisation succeeded where operators expanded customer value through 5G, convergence, data-led usage and digital bundles. Yet mature markets faced continued pricing pressure, and disruptions like SK Telecom's cyber incident and competitive intensity in Canada and Singapore highlighted the fragility of ARPU in saturated environments.

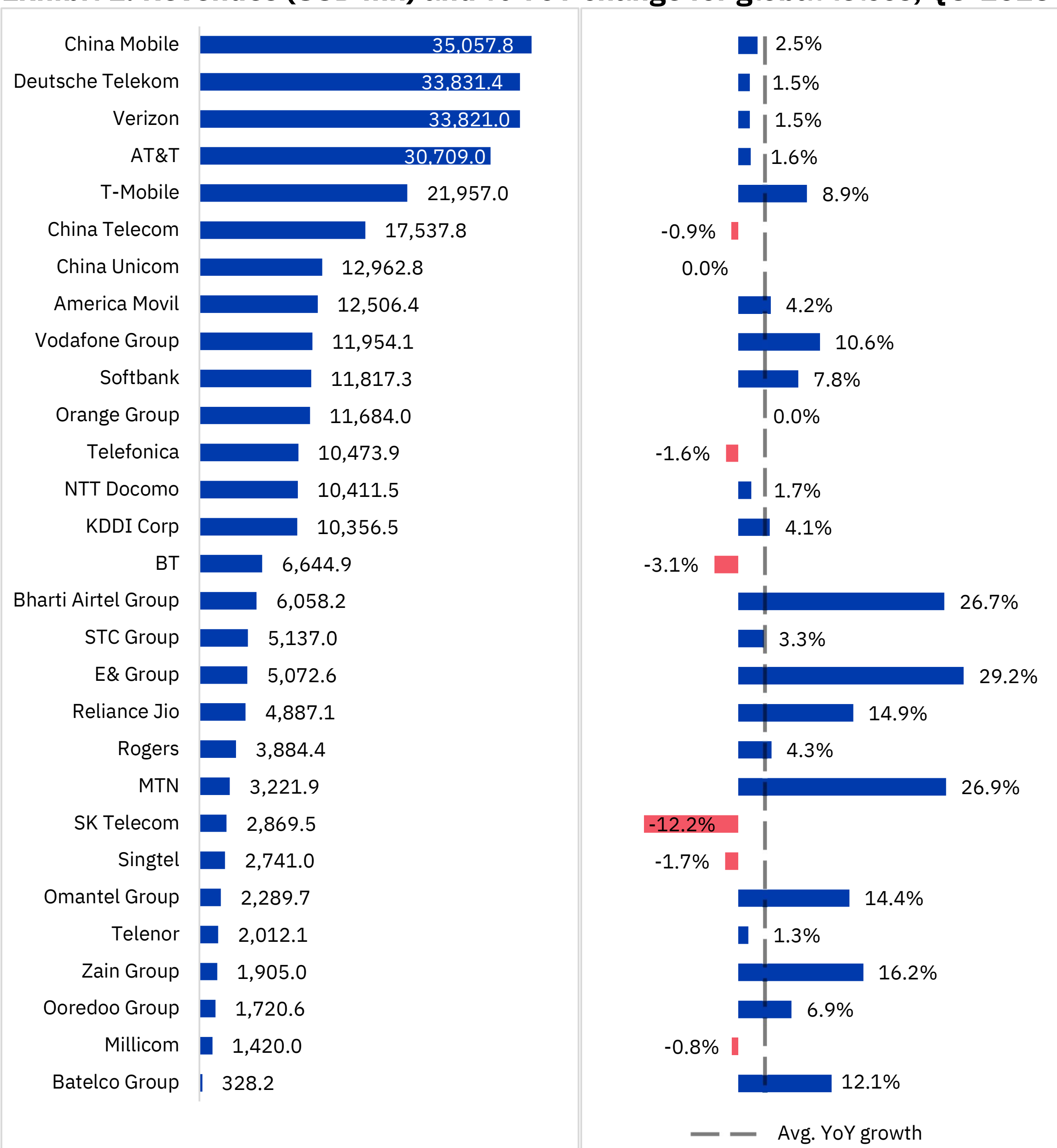
Looking forward, the industry's direction is clear: **connectivity alone no longer defines a telecom operator's economic trajectory**. Those that remain tied to legacy models face rising margin pressure, slowing ARPU, and reduced investment headroom. The next phase of global telecom leadership will be shaped by who successfully transitions from networks to platforms and who moves fast enough to capture the digital infrastructure opportunity already taking shape.

# Revenue analysis of global telcos: Q3-2025

**Average revenue growth for global telcos in Q3-2025 is 3.6% on a YoY basis.**

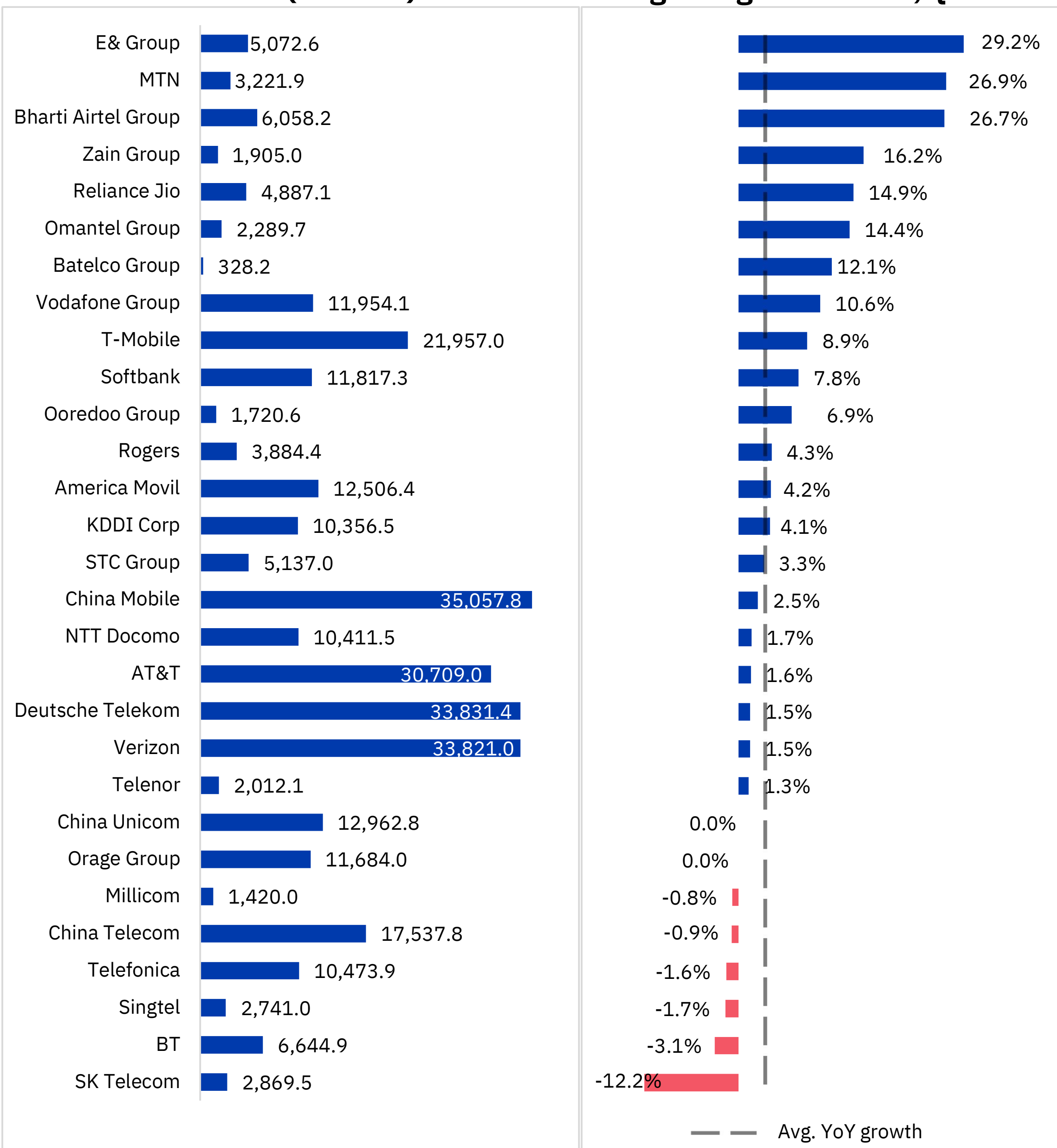
The 29 telcos achieved a combined revenue of USD 315.2 bn (YoY net new revenues of USD 11.0 bn) in Q3-2025. Only 6 of the 30 telcos analysed had a declining YoY quarterly revenue.

**Exhibit 1: Revenues (USD mn) and % YoY change for global telcos, Q3-2025**




Source: Telco financials, Twimbit Analysis

## Exhibit 2: Revenues (USD mn) and % YoY change for global telcos, Q3-2025




Source: Telco financials, Twimbit Analysis

### Growth is now driven by digital adjacencies, not connectivity

Operators with meaning exposure to fintech, cloud, ICT and data centres are decisively outgrowing peers still reliant on mobile or fixed revenues. These adjacencies are no longer marginal; they are becoming core contributors that materially lift topline performance and buffer operators from stagnation in traditional connectivity.

- **Zain Group:** Strong topline uplift came from diversification as Zaintech grew 74.0%, fintech grew 57.0%, and B2B revenue rose 9.0%, signaling that non-connectivity verticals are now central to group performance.
- **E& Group:** Topline surged with E& International growing 66.6%, enterprise up 21.9%, and E& Life up 33.7%, clearly showing that multi-vertical digital businesses, not telecom services, drove the quarter.
- **SoftBank:** Multiple engines contributed to total revenue. Cloud and sovereign AI services ramped up, media/EC revenues rose 5.9%, commerce grew 7.2%, and PayPay financial services expanded significantly, reflecting a deep pivot into digital ecosystems.
- **Batelco Group:** The strongest growth came from adjacent services like fintech, B2B solutions, government and corporate project work while traditional fixed-line and data communication circuits declined, indicating a structural reliance on digital offerings.

### Execution quality, not market maturity determined performance

The quarter showed that operators in saturated markets can grow when execution is sharp, while those in high-potential markets can still falter when strategy or operations slip. Performance diverged more on commercial effectiveness, pricing discipline, and customer management than on geography or market maturity.

- **T-Mobile:** Delivered an 8.9% revenue increase, led by 11.8% postpaid growth; prepaid declined but strong service and equipment performance reflect consistent commercial execution in a saturated US market.
- **Reliance Jio:** Delivered a 14.9% topline jump through rising ARPU, subscriber base expansion to 506 million, strong data traffic, and rapid Jio AirFiber uptake, highlighting disciplined market share and monetisation strategy.

- **Bharti Airtel Group:** Indian segment posted double-digit YoY growth; home services surged 30.2% with fiber and Xstream expansion, mobile revenues grew 13.2%, and African segment added higher ARPU with stable churn, demonstrating strong multi-market execution. Meanwhile, the overall group's topline grew by a significant 26.7% YoY for the quarter.
- **Vodafone:** Achieved 10.6% revenue uplift as Germany returned to service-revenue growth, UK saw strong broadband expansion and wholesale strength, and African operations supported the group despite selective ARPU pressure elsewhere**.**
- **SK Telecom**: Revenues fell 12.2% following consumer attrition from a cybersecurity breach, even though AI data-centre and AIX units grew 53.8% and 3.1%, execution failures outweighed strategic progress. This signifies the need for execution quality and operational checks to maintain the leadership in a fast changing industry.

**Corporate softness is driving a shift to steadier consumer and SME revenues**

Large-enterprise and wholesale revenues were volatile, often dragging topline growth. Operators compensated by leaning heavily on consumer fiber, postpaid, home broadband, and SME-focused digital solutions, segments that showed stronger stability, better monetisation, and insulation from the cyclical downturn in mainstream corporate and wholesale spending.

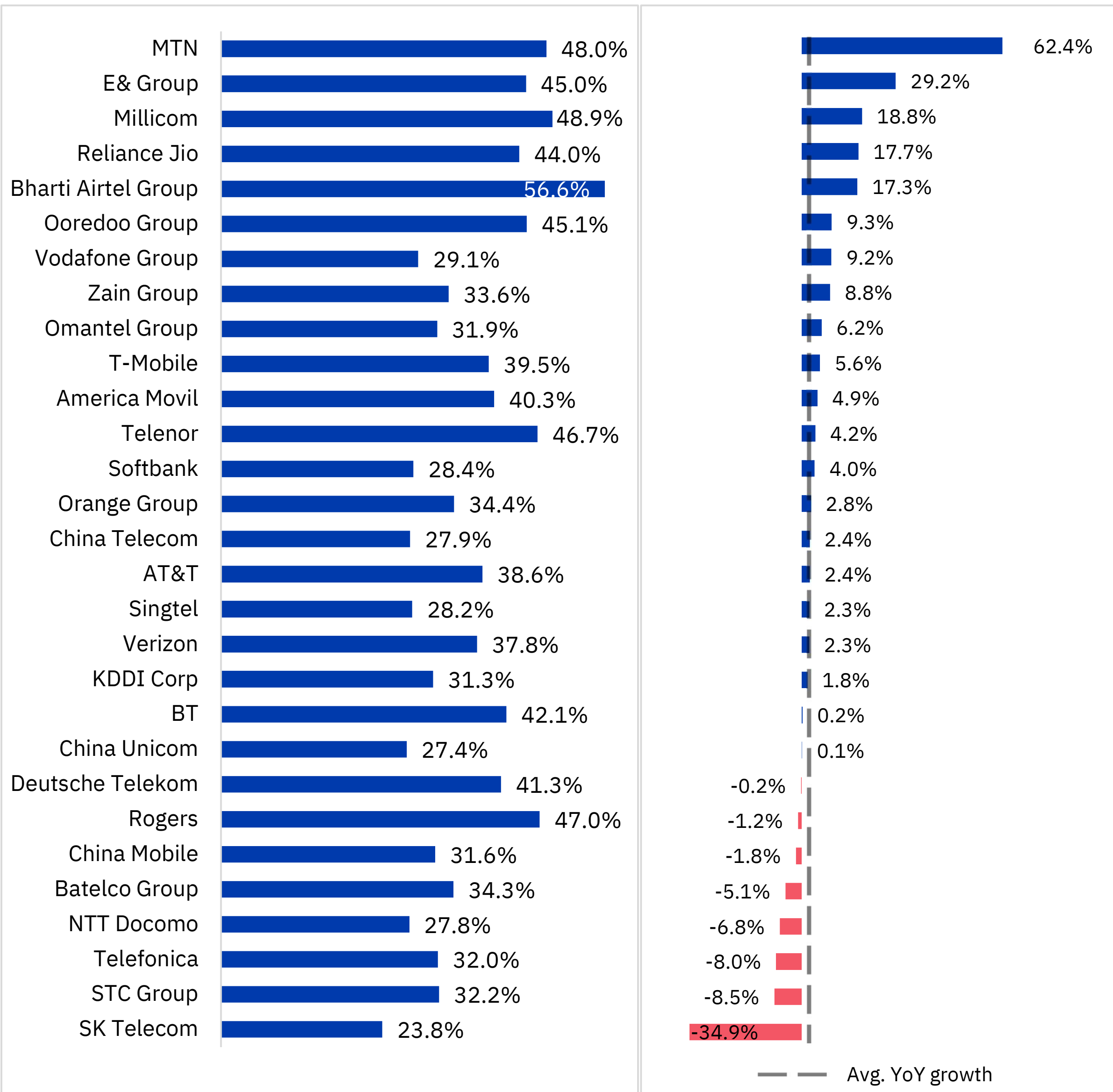
- **AT&T:** Business wireline dropped 7.8% YoY, but consumer wireline rose 4.1% with fiber revenue up 16.8% and convergence improving, demonstrating a clear volatility in enterprise demand.
- **Verizon:** Overall topline increased 1.4% YoY, as enterprise & public-sector revenues fell 6.4% and wholesale dropped 12.9%, fully offsetting consumer revenue growth; illustrates structural pressure in corporate-facing businesses.
- **BT:** Consumer, business, and international revenues all declined, driven by legacy voice erosion, softer handset trading, and international weakness; only Openreach's stronger FTTP mix offered partial stabilisation.
- **Singtel:** Australia's (Optus) wholesale and enterprise revenues declined due to lower satellite project activity; Singapore's mobile revenues fell from pricing competition and reduced roaming, making NCS's SME/government ICT contracts and home broadband more central to revenue stability.

# EBITDA analysis of global telcos: Q3-2025

**Average EBITDA margin for global telcos stabilised at 35.1% in Q3-2025.**

EBITDA trends showed a clear divide: operators with strong digital portfolios achieved resilient margin growth, while legacy-focused players faced pressure. At the same time, operational shocks and market disruptions highlighted how easily margins can be destabilised, even for operators with otherwise solid fundamentals.

**Exhibit 3: EBITDA margin and YoY trends for global telcos, Q3-2025**




Source: Telco financials, Twimbit analysis

### Digital segment advantage drives EBITDA growth

Operators that achieved scale in digital, fintech, cloud and ICT businesses delivered the strongest EBITDA outcomes. Their margin uplift came from structurally higher-yield segments that now constitute meaningful shares of group earnings, reducing dependence on low-margin mobile and fixed connectivity.

- **E&:** EBITDA rose 29.2% YoY to USD 2,283.2 mn, propelled by explosive growth in E& International (+68.8% YoY) and E& Enterprise (+56.3% YoY). These high-margin segments delivered far more margin growth than core telecom, demonstrating the financial power of diversified digital portfolios.
- **Reliance Jio:** EBITDA increased 17.7% YoY, with margin strengthening from 50.2% to 51.6%, driven by stronger product mix, and deeper monetisation of home broadband and AirFiber, showcasing importance of diversification for unlocking value.
- **Zain Group:** EBITDA grew 8.8% YoY to USD 641 mn; diversification played a major role as fintech revenue grew 57.0%, ZainTech grew 74.0%, B2B grew 9.0%, and EBITDA contributions from KSA (37.0%), Iraq (19.0%), Kuwait (18.0%) and Sudan (12.0%) reinforced margin strength. Digital diversification coupled with wide regional presence boosted the margins this quarter.
- **SoftBank:** EBITDA increased 4.01% YoY to USD 3,356.9 mn; margin support came from strong improvement in Media & EC and financial services, boosted by loan and card businesses and expanding digital revenue streams.

### Shock and seasonality signify the need for improvement, even for legacy segments

EBITDA outcomes proved highly sensitive to operational disruptions, especially those affecting customer trust. Sudden shocks such as cyberattacks, caused disproportionate EBITDA swings, demonstrating how fragile margin structures can be when compensation costs and churn accelerate.

- **SK Telecom:** EBITDA collapsed 34.9% YoY, with margin plunging from 32.1% to 23.8%. Cybersecurity breach fallout led to high customer attrition, loss of consumer trust, and USD 341.3 mn in customer-compensation payouts, not being compensated by overwhelming gains in AI DC and AIX segments.

- **China Telecom:** Although EBITDA rose 2.3% YoY, the operator showed clear vulnerability as even modest declines in legacy services materially constrained EBITDA improvement despite expansion of higher-margin digital services.
- **Telefonica:** Spain and Brazil remained the main EBITDA contributors, but sharp declines in Germany and Hispanic America pulled the overall margin down. The 8.0% YoY EBITDA drop reflects how market-specific disruptions in these regions were significant enough to offset gains elsewhere.

**Legacy slowdown dragged margins**

Operators still anchored in legacy mobile and fixed communications saw meaningful EBITDA pressure. Weak pricing power, slowing connectivity growth and the drag from legacy segments limited margin expansion, even in cases where digital or enterprise businesses showed improvement.

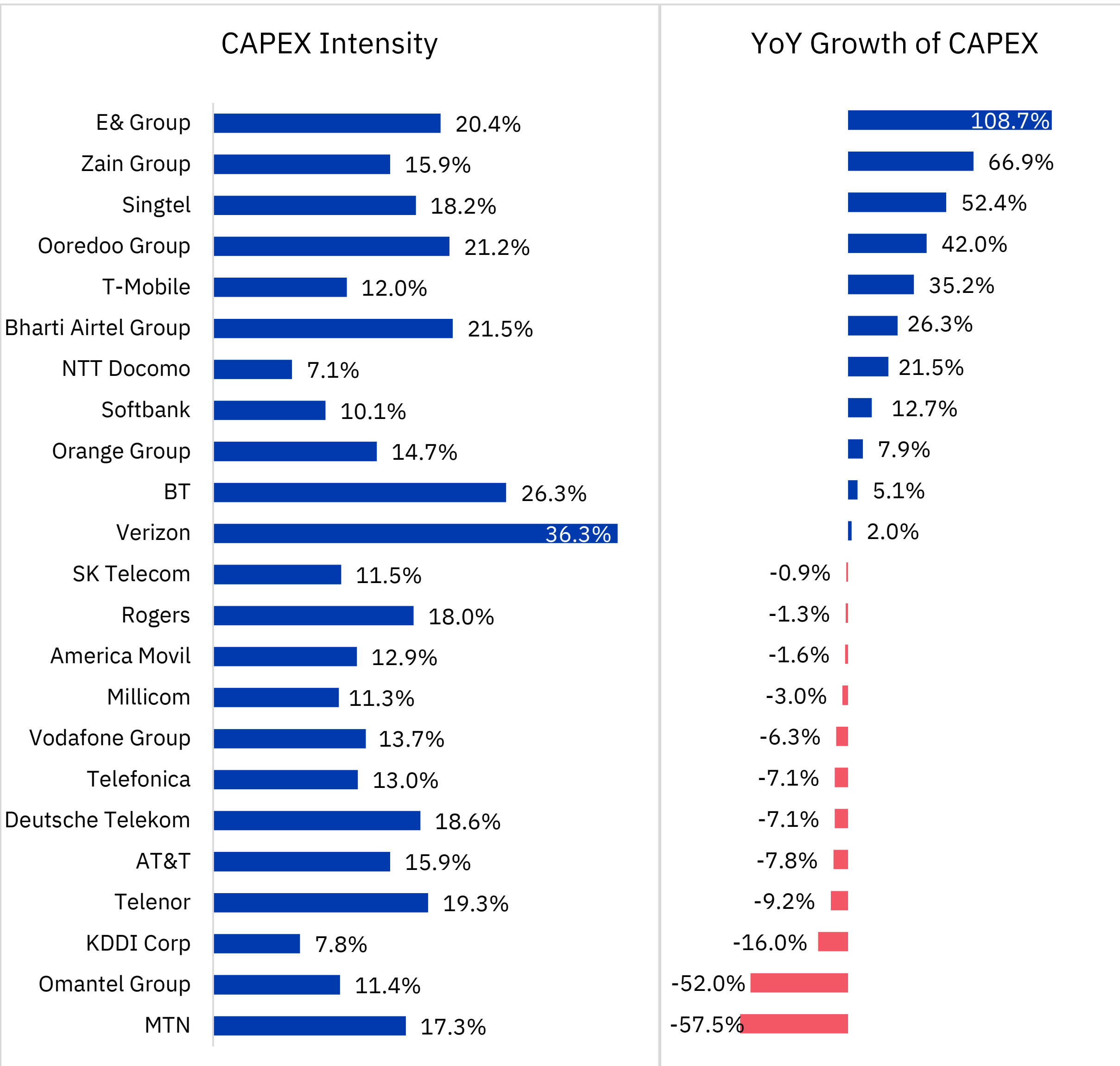
- **China Mobile:** EBITDA declined 1.7% YoY to USD 11,093.1 mn, with margin falling from 33.0% to 31.6%. The contraction reflects the slowdown in legacy connectivity services, which continue to dominate the revenue mix despite emerging AI-led services gaining traction. Limited growth headroom in core mobile voice/data remains the primary barrier to margin resilience.
- **NTT Docomo:** EBITDA fell 6.8% YoY to USD 2,890.7 mn, driven by a sharp drop in consumer communication EBITDA. While enterprise (+8.7% YoY) and smart life (+12.1% YoY) segments improved, they were too small to counterbalance the decline in traditional consumer services, highlighting ongoing dependence on maturing mobile revenues.
- **STC Group:** EBITDA fell 8.5% YoY to USD 1,655.6 mn, with margin contracting from 36.3% to 32.2%. Despite growth in data centers, cloud, cybersecurity and digital solutions, profitability was weighed down by softness in legacy telecom operations, which still form a large share of the revenue base. The operator’s rapid infrastructure investments have yet to fully translate into margin uplift.

# CAPEX analysis of global telcos: Q3-2025

**Average CAPEX intensity stood at 17.9%, while aggregate CAPEX grew only 0.5%.**

Capex trends revealed a strategic shift toward digital and AI-driven infrastructure, with operators prioritising data centers, cloud platforms and next-generation networks over legacy builds. At the same time, several players exercised tighter capital discipline, selectively deferring spending as margins tightened.

**Exhibit 4: CAPEX intensity and YoY trends for global telcos, Q3-2025**




Source: Telco financials, Twimbit analysis

### Fibre, 5G and home connectivity regain priority

Operators with strong broadband or mobile market momentum intensified capex to strengthen fiber footprints, accelerate 5G rollouts, and scale home-connectivity offerings. These investments underscore a renewed focus on fixed-mobile convergence, last-mile infrastructure, and home digital services as stable, high-lifetime-value growth engines.

- **T-Mobile:** CAPEX grew 35.1% YoY, reaching USD 2,639 mn, fueled by 5G upgrades, fiber rollout and the push to maintain network leadership. The investment translated directly into record customer additions, demonstrating tactical ROI alignment.
- **Zain Group:** CAPEX rose 66.9% YoY, driven by 5G footprint expansion, LTE enhancements, and subsea cable investments. Network modernisation supported strong data demand and improved service differentiation across key markets.
- **BT Group:** CAPEX up 5.1% YoY, primarily driven by record FTTH builds through Openreach. BT also partnered with Starlink to extend coverage to hard-to-reach areas, reflecting renewed emphasis on nationwide connection quality.
- **Orange:** CAPEX increased 7.8% YoY, with spending concentrated in African markets to boost network coverage, capacity and rural penetration. The investments aim to consolidate its leadership in high-growth emerging markets.

### AI-native network and digital platforms take the centre stage

A growing group of operators is redirecting capex toward high-return digital and AI infrastructure like data centers, cloud, sovereign AI, GPU compute, and fiber backbones, while reducing dependence on legacy network investment. This shift signals a structural repositioning: future growth will come from cloud, AI platforms and scalable digital ecosystems rather than traditional connectivity.

- **SK Telecom:** CAPEX remained stable YoY, but investments targeted AI DC expansion, enterprise AI agents, OpenAI partnership integration, and GPU-as-a-service. Capex reflects the operator’s transformation into a global AI-centric telco.

- **NTT Docomo:** CAPEX up 21.5% YoY, driven by a 24.0% increase in consumer-communications capex and ongoing development of AI-based network platforms. The operator is systematically lifting AI investment intensity to modernise network technology.
- **SoftBank:** A 12.7% YoY incline in capital expenditures on a YoY basis as significant spending on AI workloads, cloud buildouts, sovereign cloud services, and new data-center infrastructure reinforces its pivot to AI-enabled services.
- **Bharti Airtel:** For Q3-2025, CAPEX up 26.3% YoY, with a 96.7% surge in home-services capex and 70.3% increase in data-center and cloud investment. Strong focus on AI-ready data centers, cloud platforms, fiber and passive infra, marks a deliberate shift away from legacy DTH and toward high-capacity digital infrastructure.

### Capital discipline and selective spend deferral amid margin pressure

A parallel pattern emerged where operators pulled back capex to preserve cash flow, manage balance sheets or contain exposure in slower-growth or transforming markets. These cuts reflect careful capital discipline, scaling down nonessential network investments, sharpening prioritisation, and deferring large builds where commercial returns remain uncertain.

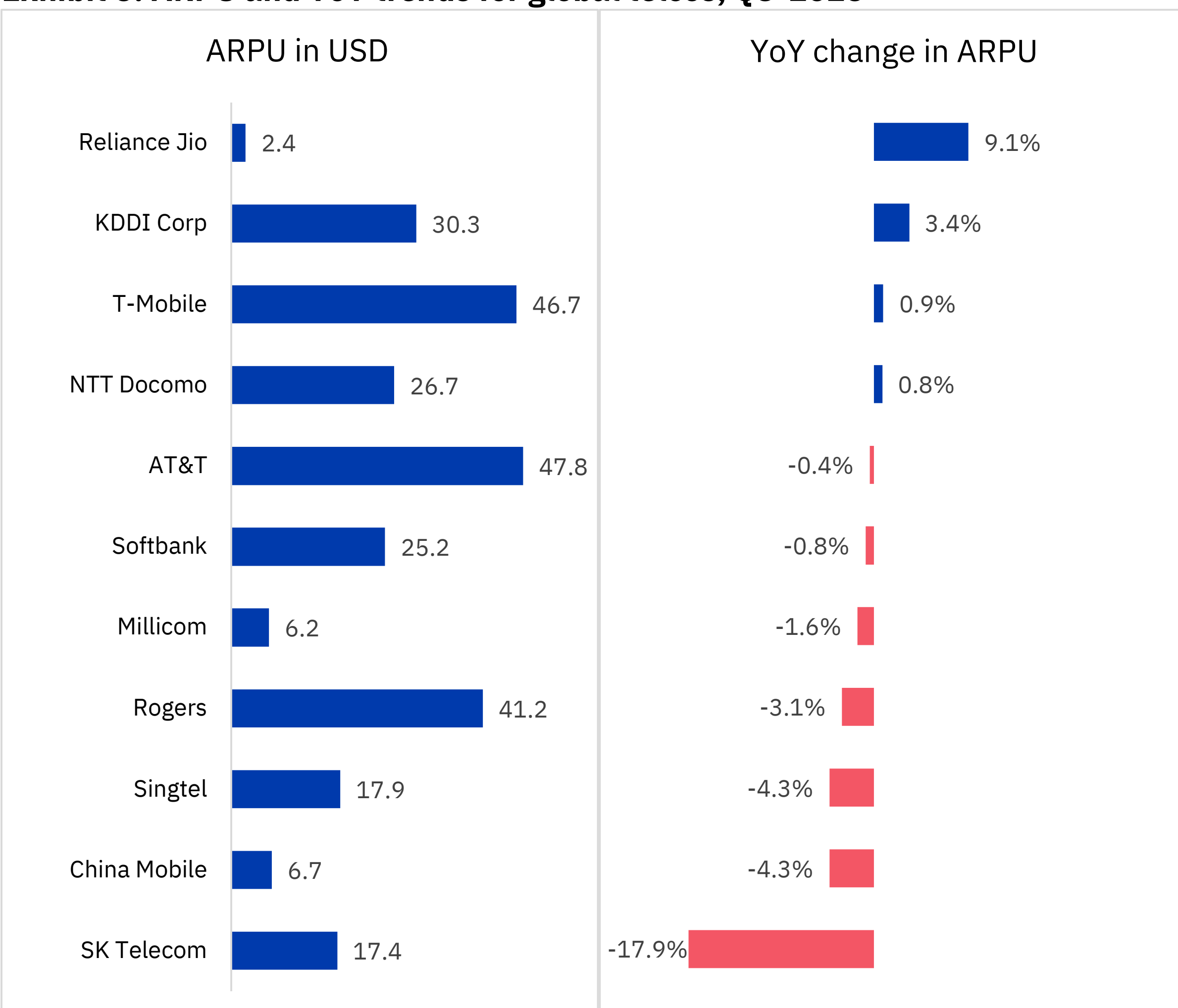
- **Telefonica:** CAPEX fell 7.1% YoY, with reductions across all regions except Hispanic America (+7.2% YoY). The operator completed the copper switch-off in Spain, reduced legacy network spend, and redirected capital toward 5G, FTTH quality, and AI-led modernisation under its “Transform & Grow” plan.
- **Vodafone:** CAPEX declined 6.3% YoY to EUR 1,400 mn. Germany reduced network capex while focusing on customer experience and OXG fiber rollout, UK prioritised 4G densification and 5G build, and Africa funneled selective capital to M-Pesa expansion, reflecting targeted, return-driven capital discipline.
- **Deutsche Telekom**: CAPEX fell 7.1% YoY, with US (-8.9%), Germany (-4.5%), and Europe (-2.0%) all reducing investments. The spend profile signals a shift from expansion to optimisation and modernisation, particularly in fixed and mobile networks.

# ARPU analysis of global telcos: Q3-2025

**ARPU stagnant with only 4 telcos out of 11 reporting growth in ARPU.**

ARPU trends highlighted a widening split between operators successfully monetising premium segments and those constrained by competition or market shocks. While 5G, convergence and digital services supported ARPU gains for some, others saw erosion from pricing pressure, macro disruptions or trust-related declines, underscoring the fragility of mobile monetisation in several markets.

**Exhibit 5: ARPU and YoY trends for global telcos, Q3-2025**




Source: Telco financials, Twimbit analysis

### Monetisation momentum in premium mobile segments

Operators with strong postpaid mixes, 5G monetisation and value-added service uptake delivered meaningful ARPU growth despite competitive pressure. These players demonstrated that disciplined pricing, device bundling and customer-value expansion, not subscriber volume, are becoming the primary levers of ARPU strength.

- **T-Mobile:** Blended phone ARPU surged 15.3% YoY, supported by 11.6% YoY growth in postpaid ARPU and a steady subscriber base. Postpaid revenue strength more than offset declines in prepaid ARPU, positioning T-Mobile firmly at the premium end of US monetisation.
- **Reliance Jio:** Blended ARPU rose 9.1% YoY to USD 2.4, driven by 5G-led monetisation, higher data traffic, improved device and service bundling, and price adjustments. Strong AirFiber uptake also contributed to better realised ARPU.
- **KDDI:** ARPU grew 3.4% YoY to USD 30.3, supported by 5G monetisation, higher customer lifetime value initiatives and consistent adoption of value-added services.

### Pricing power erosion in competitive and mature markets

In several mature or highly competitive markets, ARPU came under pressure as operators struggled to differentiate in commoditised mobile markets. Price competition, regulatory constraints and softer demand for premium plans limited operators' ability to sustain ARPU, even when churn reduction or subscriber growth was positive.

- **Rogers:** ARPU declined 3.1% YoY, despite lower churn and postpaid subscriber growth. Increased commoditisation of Canadian telecom services coupled with lower usage due to off-season of major league tournaments weakened pricing power despite operational improvements.
- **Singtel:** ARPU fell 4.3% YoY, reflecting intense price competition, reduced roaming revenue and limited ability to pass through higher costs in the Singapore market.

- **AT&T:** ARPU declined slightly (–0.4% YoY) to USD 47.8. Postpaid ARPU softened, although higher postpaid net adds partially offset the impact.

**Value expansion through data, convergence and digital services**

Where operators tied ARPU to convergence, home broadband, digital content or differentiated service bundles, ARPU showed stability or moderate growth. These players are successfully migrating customers into higher-value ecosystems, reducing dependence on pure mobile pricing and defending ARPU amid competitive intensity.

- **NTT Docomo:** ARPU stability benefited from smart-life and enterprise ecosystem engagement, demonstrating resilience even as consumer mobile communication revenue faced pressure.
- **KDDI:** Value-added services and financial products supported ARPU growth of 3.4% YoY, alongside mobile upgrades, illustrating how expanding the customer value stack improves yields.

# Frontier innovations shaping global telco trends

### Programmable 5G FWA via AirFiber (Jio)

Jio’s AirFiber is a fixed-wireless broadband platform that uses 5G instead of fiber cables to deliver high-speed home internet. It combines 5G radio, intelligent routing and a virtualised home-broadband layer to offer fiber-like speeds without physical last-mile infrastructure. By adding network slicing and home-service integration, it moves beyond traditional FWA models.

AirFiber can be rapidly deployed through dense 5G rollouts, plug-and-play customer devices and software-defined network control. For operators, it lowers capex, accelerates home-broadband expansion and opens new ARPU streams through bundled digital services. For the industry, it provides a scalable blueprint for mass-market broadband, especially in markets where fiber is slow or expensive to deploy.

### GPU-as-a-Service for Enterprises (SK Telecom)

SK Telecom’s GPUaaS is a cloud-based platform that allows enterprises to rent GPU compute for AI training, analytics and automation. Instead of buying expensive GPU hardware, businesses access shared GPUs hosted in SKT’s AI data centers. This creates a telecom-operated compute layer like hyperscaler cloud but optimised for AI workloads.

GPUaaS can be deployed through AI-native data centers, multi-tenant GPU clusters and direct enterprise network integration. It helps operators move into the AI infrastructure value chain, generating high-margin B2B services. For the industry, it democratises access to AI compute, reduces entry barriers for enterprises and positions telcos as credible alternatives to hyperscalers.

### Cloud-Native National Compute Fabrics (SoftBank + Airtel + Ooredoo)

A cloud-native compute fabric is a distributed network of data centers, edge nodes, GPU clusters and cloud platforms connected through programmable software. Unlike traditional operator infrastructure, it is designed to run AI workloads, enterprise applications and large-scale digital services across multiple locations with uniform performance.

Deployment involves integrating hyperscale data centers with regional edge clouds, GPU pools, AI orchestration software and high-speed fiber backbones. For operators, it creates a new digital infrastructure category, moving them from connectivity providers to compute and cloud platforms. For the industry, it introduces a telecom-led alternative to hyperscalers, strengthens digital sovereignty and enables AI-driven economic ecosystems.

# Research methodology and assumptions

- The "Global Telcos Performance Benchmarks - Summer 2025" report offers crucial insights into the performance of telecom companies. It analyses key financial indicators such as Revenues, EBITDA, CAPEX and ARPU for Q2-2025 (Apr - Jun 2025).
- This report utilises data collected from telecom firms and extensive secondary research. Twimbit follows a calendar year for its data analysis, with FY representing January to December.
- To maintain consistency and enable accurate comparisons, the report applies a constant currency conversion rate, reflecting the average USD exchange rate for July - September 2025.
- The report evaluates Revenue and EBITDA for 29 and 29 telecom companies, respectively. CAPEX and ARPU analysis cover data from 23 and 11 companies, respectively.
- Blended mobile ARPU has been incorporated wherever relevant for a more holistic view.
- The analysis offered is based to the disclosures made by the operators in their financial statement, no estimations have been made for any metric.

Innovating **experiences**

reachus@twimbit.com

www.twimbit.com