

US mobile users spend less than 25% of their time connected to 5G networks as device production outpaces 5G connectivity

Article

The news: Despite the wide availability of 5G-enabled devices, people in the US spend **less than 25% of their online time connected to 5G networks**, per Digital Trends. 5G device adoption is quickly outpacing 5G coverage, which means carriers are under pressure to cover their growing 5G customer bases.

How we got here: **14 million users subscribed to mobile 5G services** in the US last year, and IDC predicted that **7.4% YoY shipment growth** would be bolstered by premium 5G devices like **Apple's iPhone 13**, putting pressure on service providers and carriers to expand 5G coverage.

- On paper, most of the US has access to 5G coverage, but there's a lot of confusion regarding **5G mislabeling** and instances where carriers reporting 5G network access are actually just increasing 4G-LTE speeds.
- The 5G buildout was severely derailed by the pandemic—network upgrades were stalled and components like **fiber** and terminals grew scarce.
- The US fell out of the top 10 for fastest mobile speeds. Ookla, which runs the Speedtest service, found that the **US fell behind** in worldwide iPhone 12 5G speeds, with **New York City** ranking **14th out of 15 cities tested** globally.
- 5G-enabled devices may have proliferated, but mobile 5G subscriptions for general consumers are still lagging, per Digital Trends. The majority of US adults said they don't intend to upgrade to 5G, mostly because of **higher prices** and a **lack of interest** in the technology.

The problem: Despite marketing broad 5G availability and coverage, most carriers are still building out their standalone 5G networks—deploying networks that use 5G cells for both signaling and information transfer without piggybacking on earlier 4G-LTE networks.

- “A lot of the anticipated benefits that would occur from a fully functioning 5G network – minimal latency, network slicing, AR/VR apps, incredibly fast upload and download speeds, fully autonomous driving – won't happen until standalone 5G comes to fruition,” said Dr. Paul Carter, CEO and founder of Global Wireless Solutions, a wireless network testing and consumer research company.

