

Fact-Checking Big Cellular’s Latest Attack on Wi-Fi & Competition

The “Big Three” cellular giants – AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile – continue to lose mobile market share to competitors that offer consumers lower prices and greater choice. These highly efficient competitors gain an advantage by offloading a larger share of their customers’ mobile traffic to more economical Wi-Fi and shared licensed spectrum.

Most would expect companies losing customers to the competition to step up their game by improving their offerings – lowering prices or investing in on-the-ground equipment needed to enhance their networks... but not the Big Three. They’d rather remove the competition altogether by encouraging their supporters in DC to kneecap them. The latest example? A bogus “study” that attacks Wi-Fi in pursuit of their end goal: denying competitors the unlicensed spectrum that Wi-Fi needs to keep up with growth.

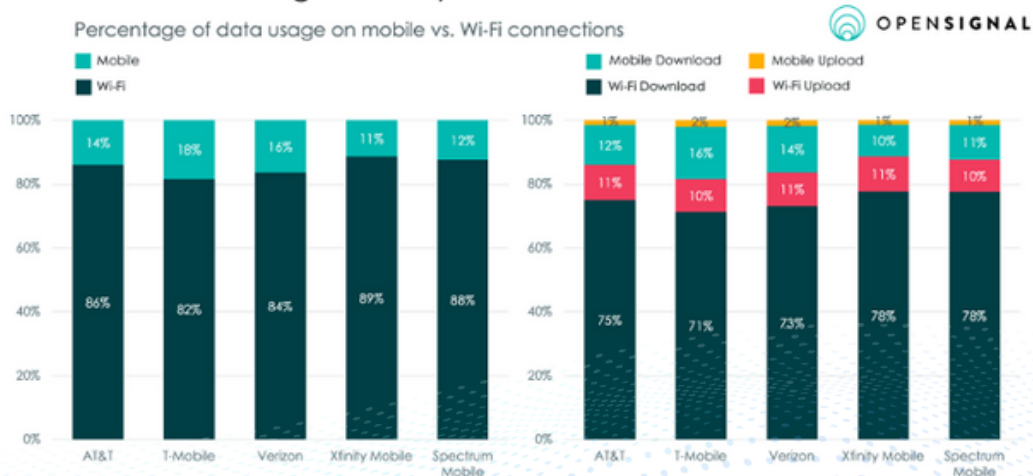
In fact, data traffic growth on cellular networks is declining even as Wi-Fi traffic continues to surge, with more than 19.5 billion Wi-Fi-connected devices now in use globally. As much as 89% of all data traffic on mobile devices – including those used by the Big Three’s customers – is carried over Wi-Fi.

CTIA’s criticism of Wi-Fi is nothing more than an attempt to distract from the fact that the big carriers’ rollout of 5G cellular has fallen far short of the carriers’ hype:

“It’s Not Just You, 5G is a Big Let Down”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Mobile users use significantly more data over Wi-Fi connections





Manufacturing a False “Spectrum Crisis”

CTIA has declared a “spectrum crisis,” claiming that “operators cannot engineer around severe spectrum scarcity.” However, top executives at CTIA member companies tell a very different story to Wall Street:

“With low band, mid-band and 1,700 MHz of millimeter wave spectrum, we have almost unlimited spectrum.”

SOWMYANARAYAN SAMPATH, VERIZON CONSUMER CEO

“We have only deployed a piece of our C-band so far. So we have quite a lot left... We bought spectrum for decades, not for the next 2 quarters or something like that. So we feel really good about it.”

HANS VESTBERG, VERIZON CHAIRMAN & CEO

“We are only using 60% of our mid-band spectrum on 5G today... We can also later deploy C-band... We can deploy that and add another layer in dense urban areas, increasing capacity even further.”

ULF EWALDSSON, T-MOBILE PRESIDENT OF TECHNOLOGY

In fact, T-Mobile has so much excess spectrum that it is attempting to offload licenses it holds in the 3.45 GHz and 800 MHz bands.



The Bottom Line: Wi-Fi Powers Competition and Innovation

New generations of wireless technology shouldn’t be handcuffed to the Big Three. Wi-Fi’s unlicensed framework ensures a level playing field where service providers and equipment makers can compete to deliver the best solutions for consumers.

Wi-Fi 7 is on track to achieve the fastest adoption of any Wi-Fi generation to date. To support this growth and keep up with surging data traffic, policymakers must ensure that Wi-Fi has access to the unlicensed spectrum it needs— and see through the Big Three’s disingenuous, self-serving attacks on this cornerstone of America’s wireless ecosystem.