



# Research Shows Skyrocketing Demand for Wi-Fi. Here's How U.S. Spectrum Policy Can Keep Up.


Wi-Fi has become integral to the functioning of the U.S. economy and a necessity in Americans' daily lives. Whether connecting at a coffee shop to work remotely, using smartphone data, enjoying AR/VR games at home, or leveraging emerging AI-driven applications, consumer appetite for more Wi-Fi-connected devices with data-intensive uses continues to grow.


[A new report](#) from ABI Research confirms the need for policymakers to allocate additional unlicensed spectrum to spur next-generation technologies, allow American consumers to realize the full benefits of broadband investments, and maintain U.S. global leadership.

## Consumer Demand for Existing and New Wi-Fi Uses is Booming:

 The number of 6 GHz-enabled Wi-Fi consumer devices shipped annually to North America is projected to grow from 95 million in 2024 to 367 million in 2029 – an increase of 288% in just five years.

 By the end of the decade, a majority of U.S. households will be served with access points that support multi-gigabit Wi-Fi speeds (configured to use the latest 320 megahertz-wide channels). Annual North American shipments will reach 4 million this year, rising to 66 million by 2030.

 Demand for next-generation consumer applications, like AI or wearable technology, is set to grow exponentially over the coming years. These technologies require 320 megahertz-wide channels to deliver enhanced speeds, greater capacity, and improved reliability.

 Wi-Fi Mesh networks that use spectrum more intensively to provide whole-home coverage represent the fastest-growing category of access points—growing at an 11.9% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) between 2024 and 2029 to annual shipments of nearly 20 million.

## The Problem:

The [unlicensed spectrum](#) of today will not be able to handle what consumers expect for the future: more devices that are more data intensive. In 2020, the FCC allocated additional unlicensed spectrum on the 6 GHz band—a reactive decision that provided much-needed relief to consumers from severe congestion on the 5 GHz band. With only three 320 megahertz-wide channels, the 6 GHz band simply cannot keep up with the rising demand identified in the ABI report.

## Policy Solutions:

- **To promote ongoing innovation and expansion of Wi-Fi technologies, policymakers should prioritize releasing additional unlicensed spectrum now.** The U.S. leads Wi-Fi innovation on the global stage, and the FCC's 6 GHz decision in 2020 strengthened this position by spurring advancements and creating tangible consumer benefits. Now, the U.S. has an opportunity to future-proof Wi-Fi usage and maintain leadership abroad.
- **Expanding unlicensed spectrum into the 7 GHz band is a uniquely smart solution,** as the 7 GHz band is well-suited for home networks and can connect to the 6 GHz band without disrupting existing wireless usage. This would allow for efficient sharing with federal incumbents, increase marketplace competition, and grow U.S. GDP by \$1.2 trillion by 2027, [among other benefits](#).