

# Ericsson Mobility Report: 5G subscriptions top three billion as uplink gains momentum

- 162 million 5G subscriptions added during the first quarter of 2026, bringing the total to 3.1 billion
- The number of commercial differentiated connectivity service offerings based on 5G SA network slicing from CSPs continues to grow globally
- Uplink traffic growing faster than downlink for many service providers - in some instances, significantly faster

Global 5G mobile subscriptions passed the three billion mark during the first quarter of 2026; 5G Standalone (SA) network slicing commercial offerings from communications service providers continue to grow significantly; while uplink mobile data traffic growth is already outpacing downlink for many service providers. All this and more features in the June 2026 edition of the Ericsson (NASDAQ: ERIC) Mobility Report (EMR).

The June 2026 report covers the same period (2025-2031) as the November 2025 edition, with updated statistics and forecasts.

The 162 million new 5G subscriptions added globally during the first quarter of 2026 brought the total past the three billion mark, to 3.1 billion subscriptions. This figure is expected to grow rapidly and is forecast to more than double (to 6.4 billion) by the end of 2031.

Some 390 service providers have launched commercial 5G services to date - more than 90 of which have launched 5G Standalone (SA). 5G networks handled 48 percent of all mobile data traffic at the end of 2025 - a figure expected to rise to 85 percent by the end of 2031. Western Europe, North America, North East Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are forecast to have 5G mobile subscription adoption close to, or above, 90 percent by the end of 2031.

The number of commercial differentiated connectivity service offerings based on 5G SA network slicing from service providers – with the ability to deliver guaranteed quality of service for use cases through securing slices of the network - continues to grow at pace. The total increased from 65 in the November 2025 EMR report to 84 across all regions in the new June edition - indicating that services based on differentiated connectivity are moving from early adoption to mainstream commercialization.

“With the upcoming transition to physical AI, traffic patterns will fundamentally shift as we move from centralized models in data centers to distributed, autonomous AI agents embedded across our device vehicles and cities, commonly connected by 5G,” Erik Ekudden, EMR publisher and

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CTO, Ericsson, says. "Mobile networks are no longer only about providing best-effort connectivity, they are becoming critical, intelligent infrastructure that meets diverse application needs. Reflecting part of this shift is the continued rise in new commercial service offerings based on 5G standalone network slicing and the number of communications service providers deploying 5G SA."

Speed-based tariff plans for fixed wireless access (FWA) also continue to appeal to service providers as a structured monetization strategy targeting different market segments. The share of FWA service providers offering the service over 5G has reached 71 percent - up from 57 percent in June 2025 - the largest annual increase in four years. Speed-based tariff plans are now offered by 57 percent of FWA service providers - up from 51 percent a year ago.

The diverse momentum is reflected in new 5G FWA launches in Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Morocco, Taiwan, Türkiye and Vietnam.

5G FWA connections uptake is strongest in North America, the Nordics, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and parts of Asia.

The appeal is broad, spanning markets with more than 95 percent fiber-connected homes to low-ARPU markets, such as India. However, growth in Latin America, Africa and parts of South East Asia remains limited, despite long-term potential.

Changing user behavior is also reflected in the June 2026 EMR network traffic statistics.

Uplink traffic is growing faster than downlink for most service providers - in some instances, significantly faster. The main current drivers are smartphone communication and collaboration apps, the sharing of user-generated content, and cloud storage.

Based on network traffic measurements conducted by Ericsson, 43 out of 55 service providers experienced a higher uplink growth rate than downlink, while 17 out of 55 service providers experienced more than 1.5 times higher uplink growth rate than downlink. Ericsson scenario modeling suggests additional AI traffic could result in uplink traffic being three times higher or more in 2031 compared to 2025.

Network data traffic (for both mobile and FWA) grew 22 percent year-on-year for the first quarter of 2026 compared to the same period in 2025 - exceeding expectations. This was driven mainly by continued strong growth in India and North America.

The report also reflects the increasing industry focus on 6G – with standardization discussions underway. Early expectations include full support for integrated sensing and communication (ISAC); seamless integration between terrestrial and satellite networks to reduce coverage gaps; and a strong focus on energy efficiency - all driven by AI-native 6G.

The first implementable 6G specifications are expected to be finalized by the end of 2028 or early 2029. The first commercial 6G services are expected to follow around 2030, with varying

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subsequent uptake between regions and countries. As with 5G launches, the US, China, Japan, South Korea and the GCC countries are expected to be early adopters.

Deep dive/partner use case articles in the June 2026 EMR include:

- A closer look at the growth of differentiated connectivity offerings from service providers around the world.
- The rise of uplink demand in AI-driven mobile networks.
- Why mobile connectivity is key to AI-driven enterprise transformation.
- Co-written with Qualcomm: A look at the evolution of AI-enabled XR in networks. AI is expanding into mobile experiences, with smart glasses and other wearables emerging as new complementary user interfaces that extend digital interactions.
- Co-written with SoftBank: Network slicing success at the 2026 Formula 1 Japanese Grand Prix.

Download the full Ericsson Mobility Report June 2026 [via this link](#).

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