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According to the Ericsson Mobility Report 5G subscriptions will reach 1 billion by 2023, with 5G covering over 20% of the world population just 4 years after the first commercial 5G New Radio (NR) networks go live in 2019.



A number of perhaps predictable markets will get the first 5G deployments-- namely the US, S. Korea, Japan and China-- all based in dense urban areas. The forecast period also involves an 8X surge in mobile data traffic, reaching 110 Exabytes per month (or 5.5 million years of HD video streaming) per month.

The mention of streaming is relevant, since video is a main driver of mobile broadband traffic. Young millennials (in the 15-24 age bracket) stream 2.5X more than people over 45 years of age, and higher resolution and immersive 360-degree video will further impact data traffic consumption volumes.

Moving to current times, LTE is the dominant mobile access technology of 2017, and is expected to reach 5.5bn subscriptions and coverage of over 85% of the world population by end 2023. Voice over LTE (VoLTE) is available in over 125 networks in over 60 countries across all regions, and already finds use in smartwatches to allow voice calls without need for tethering to a smartphone.

“The latest report highlights trends in mobile subscription and data traffic growth, as well as the industry’s effort to tackle the increasing demands on mobile networks globally," Ericsson says. "In addition, the report examines the emergence of new use cases as network capabilities evolve-- smartwatches, IoT alarms, and augmented reality-assisted maintenance and repair, to name a few. As we prepare for 5G, these trends will continue to set the agenda for the mobile industry going forward.”

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