

AT&T and Verizon delay 5G rollout due to airplane safety concerns

Article

The news: Wireless carriers **AT&T** and **Verizon** are postponing the planned December 5 rollout of the new 5G spectrum as concerns about potential interference with cockpit safety systems are addressed, per The Wall Street Journal.

What this means: The carriers said they would **delay planned 5G deployments until January 5** in response to the Federal Aviation Administration's warnings while disputing claims that the

cellular spectrum is potentially dangerous to nearby aircraft.

“Aviation safety and technology leadership are national priorities, and with today’s announcement, these companies have demonstrated their commitment to both,” the FCC and the FAA said in a joint statement issued last week.

Verizon, the country’s largest wireless company by subscribers, said it postponed its rollout “in the spirit of good faith.” AT&T said it would continue to work with the FCC and the FAA to understand their concerns. **Shares of Verizon fell 2.1%, and AT&T declined 1.5% Thursday.**

- The FAA is preparing to use official mandates that limit pilots’ use of certain automated cockpit systems that help planes land in poor weather. Those limits would aim to avoid interference from 5G wireless towers on the ground.
- The proposed limits could disrupt passenger and cargo flights in the **46 metropolitan** areas where towers are located, aviation industry officials said.
- Telecom industry officials are disputing the claims and the need for more safeguards, pointing to available evidence that doesn't show the proposed 5G signals can interfere with flight equipment. Further, carriers in other countries are using the frequencies in question.

The bigger picture: Years-long [supply chain delays](#) and [fiber shortages](#) have already complicated the update efforts for broadband and 5G infrastructure. The news that the C-band spectrum might compromise airplane cockpit systems could further taint consumer perceptions of 5G as well as push back expansion.

- 5G-enabled devices may be prolific, 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](#).

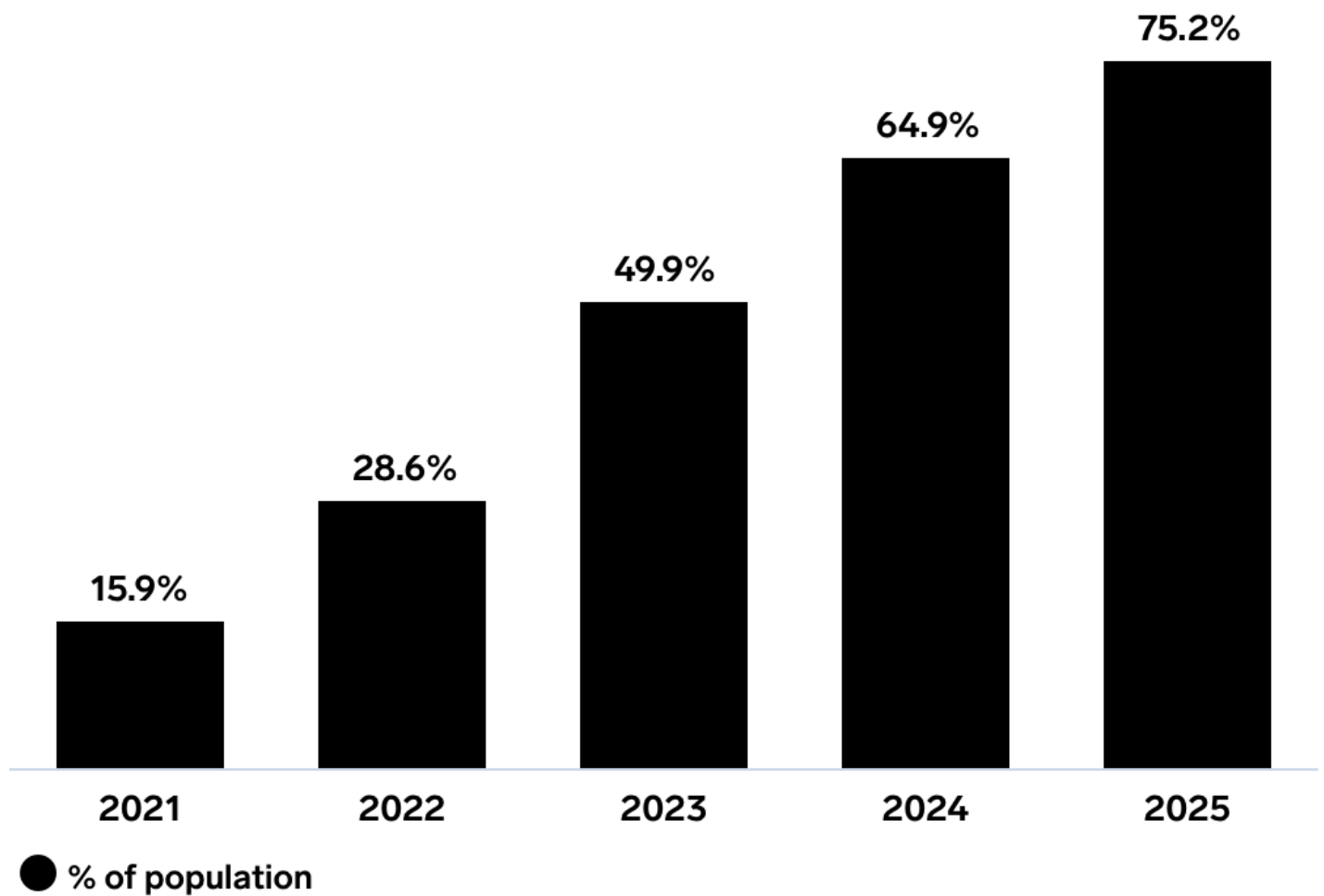
What’s the catch? A delay in the 5G-spectrum rollout could be extended as multiple agencies and companies involved await more concrete findings.

“A month doesn’t make that much of a difference,” said **Harold Feld, a telecom industry specialist at Public Knowledge**, a Washington-based tech advocacy group. “What makes a difference is when it starts to look indefinite. Then you get to a situation where a whole investment cycle gets blown up.”

Dig deeper: For more information on US 5G mobile networks as well as their potential for explosive user growth, read our [5G Technology Worldwide 2021 report](#).

5G Wireless Device Service Subscriptions

US, 2021-2025



Source: eMarketer, August 2021

eMarketer | InsiderIntelligence.com