

Digital augmentation of the fan experiences at venues

Seven opportunities to enhance live event
experiences for professional sports & concerts

Fans' live experiences improve with digital augmentations, and 5G has become the primary way to connect fans at venues.

What is new: 6 years into the deployment cycle, 5G has matured into the primary wireless access at sports and entertainment venues, with the potential to scale further.

Why it matters: Deploying multiple 5G networks, plus a public 5G network at each venue, limits the potential for scaling.

Problem: Live sports and music events have high fan appeal, and ticket prices are surging. All fans visiting a venue have smartphones, and they expect organizers to elevate the digital experience. Fans today expect the live experience to be digitally augmented and to match what they pay for.

Target outcomes: The digital augmentation of the user experience varies between sports and concerts. All tickets are now digital. You can pick up an alternative view on your phone. Live sharing of pictures and videos on social media is widely adopted. Data, audio, and video overlays on your phone take experiences to the next level.

Solution innovations: Public 5G networks at large venues can now be dimensioned for very high concentrations of people and high capacity in both directions (downlink and uplink), using a combination of mid-band and mmWave access and spectrum. The fan zone extends beyond the venue itself into surrounding areas to support fan tailgating and in-transit activities in and out of the venue.



The annual football final has set the scene for innovations with potential to scale to major venues across the continent.

>100 5G venues: The annual football final in Miami was the first to offer public 5G services to connect fans in 2020. The scaling of public 5G has then occurred across major professional sports venues and today reaches more than 100 indoor and outdoor venues in the United States.

5G versus Wi-Fi: 5G and Wi-Fi have evolved in parallel, but at the annual football final in 2025, there was a shift in the traffic patterns where 5G continued to grow, but Wi-Fi dropped by 50%, resulting in a 3:1 ratio of 5G and Wi-Fi traffic. These are early indicators that investments could tilt to one of the two technologies in the future.

Performance assurance: Ericsson found that 4 in 10 eventgoers are prepared to pay a premium for connectivity with performance assurance at events. The premium that event-goers are willing to pay varies between 5% and 15% of the ticket price.

Room to grow: There are 246 sports venues in the US with more than 20,000 seats. The further scaling up of 5G at sports and entertainment venues is correlated to the reduction of multiple parallel wireless network infrastructures.

Bottom line: As 5G networks scale in sports and entertainment venues, they can become the primary access for fans.

>100 Public 5G today serves more than 100 sports and entertainment venues in the United States¹

3:1 The ratio between 5G and Wi-Fi data traffic at the football final in 2025²

40% Of event goers are prepared to pay a premium for network performance assurance³

246 There are 246 sports and entertainment venues in the US with more than 20,000 seats⁴

1.) Quarterly reports from US Tier 1 5G providers

2.) [New reality or anomaly: Super Bowl 59 Wi-Fi usage off dramatically](#), Stadium Tech Report, February 27, 2025

3.) [5G meeting consumer demands at big events](#), Ericsson ConsumerLab, November 5, 2024

4.) [List of U.S. stadiums by capacity](#), Wikipedia, March 23, 2026

Status Quo

A mixed bag of wireless networks at venues

One or several 5G networks for fan engagement, deployed by different service providers

Wi-Fi network for fan engagement deployed and upgraded by the venue owner

Wired networks, or operations-specific Wi-Fi networks, support the transformation of business operations at venues

Take a Step

Upgrade 5G to become the primary venue access

Venue networks are dimensioned to support the diverse needs and traffic patterns for both sports and music fans.

Multiple service provider-specific 5G solutions deployed at the same venue

Public Wi-Fi capacity investments capped

Build Momentum

Upgrade the 5G network to a neutral-host solution that serves all fans at the venue.

Upgrading the network to a 5G neutral host network at venues with the capacity to serve all fans and all their communication needs.

Enabling tailored connectivity tiers for different groups of fans (General admission, Bleacher seats, Corporate suites, and Sponsor representatives)

Public Wi-Fi is supported and maintained as a backup to the primary 5G services

Lead Change

Hybrid public/private 5G at venues

Adding virtual private cellular network capabilities to a single shared wireless network infrastructure, serving public use for fans and private use for business operations at the venue.



ERICSSON

<https://www.ericsson.com/en/5g/fan-experience-sports-entertainment>