

Wi-Fi 8:

**The Shift from Speed to
Reliability in Wireless
Networking**



Dr. A.Shaji George



Wi-Fi 8: The Shift from Speed to Reliability in Wireless Networking

Dr.A.Shaji George

Independent Researcher, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract – Wireless connectivity has evolved over several generations, each with greater and greater data speeds. Wi-Fi 8, also known as IEEE 802.11bn, does not follow this trend and puts reliability over speed. This article will explore the technical characteristics, societal impacts and economic aspects of Wi-Fi 8, as per publically available specifications, industry documentation and technical literature. The standard introduces multi-access point coordination, enabling multiple access points to cooperate and operate instead of each point operating independently, thus reducing interference and increasing coverage in dense environments. Power management mechanisms are used to dynamically reduce capabilities of access points when considering energy consumption. Spectrum utilization is used to support different bandwidth devices coexisting on a single network. The standard also enhances the compatibility with other wireless technologies on neighbouring frequencies. These characteristics make Wi-Fi 8 an ideal choice for environments where reliability is paramount, such as healthcare institutions, manufacturing environments, extended reality applications, and public spaces with many people present. Draft specifications for chipsets are anticipated to be available for market in late 2026, and the IEEE amendment is expected to be ratified around 2028. This article highlights areas of research that are currently lacking, such as real-world performance validation, deployment economics, and how it integrates into cellular infrastructure. The results will help guide the efforts of researchers, network managers, policymakers, and technology planners who will need to implement this transition.

Keywords: Wi-Fi 8, IEEE 802.11bn, multi-access point coordination, wireless reliability, spectrum utilization, network power management, wireless local area networks, coordinated beamforming.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today wireless local area networking is as integral as electricity or plumbing in buildings around the world. What started off in the late '90s as a convenience for laptop owners is now carrying video conferences, industrial sensor data, medical telemetry and billions of messages every day. Every iteration of the IEEE 802.11 standard has come accompanied by a new claim 100 Mbps, 20 MHz of channel bandwidth, denser modulation more bits per transmission. This is the path being taken by Wi-Fi 7, the latest generation that is currently defined by IEEE 802.11be. It provided a doubling of maximum channel bandwidth to 320 megahertz, 4096-QAM modulation for increased data density, and multi-link operation to enable devices to communicate on multiple frequency bands at once. The maximum throughput in ideal laboratory conditions is over 40 Gb/s.

What network administrators and regular users have noted is that there is a gap between these lab numbers and real world use. A 4-Gbps network in a test chamber can be slow and unreliable in a building with a hundred devices, concrete walls and other networks sharing the same frequencies. Video calls stop and virtual reality headsets stutter, and industrial sensors sometimes fail to report as expected. It's not about how fast you can go but how consistent you can be. This is why the IEEE 802.11bn working group the one that will eventually be known as Wi-Fi 8 has elected to take a different approach. The standard's working title also

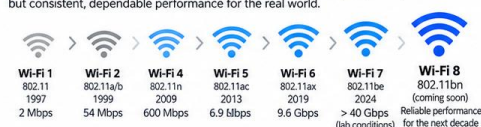
contains the word **Ultra High Reliability**, indicating that in this generation it is more important to have reliable performance than a high speed. It's a philosophical change in wireless networking standards.

The timing is based on the evolution of the use of wireless networks. Extended reality applications are not only bandwidth intensive, but they also need to be predictable in terms of latency even a few milliseconds can lead to disorientation or motion sickness. Patient monitoring data can't afford any downtime in healthcare facilities. Wireless sensors are required to report reliably either trigger false alarms for manufacturing systems. These applications require connections that are reliable, not connections that have occasional super-fast speeds.

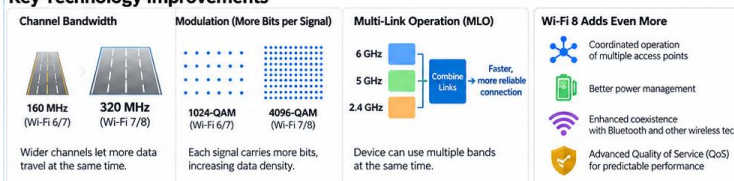
From Wi-Fi 1 to Wi-Fi 8

A Journey from Higher Speed to Higher Reliability

Each generation of Wi-Fi has brought faster speeds and new capabilities. Wi-Fi 8 (IEEE 802.11bn) focuses on Ultra High Reliability — not just peak speed, but consistent, dependable performance for the real world.

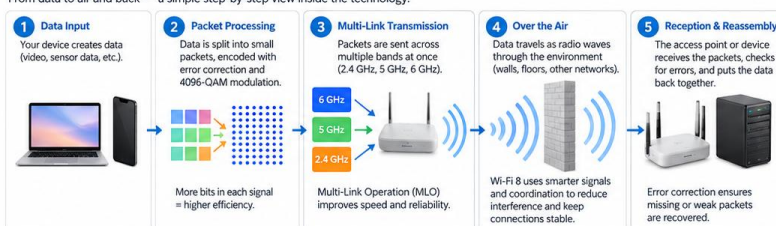


Key Technology Improvements



How Wi-Fi 8 Works (Micro-Level View)

From data to air and back — a simple step-by-step view inside the technology.



A Real-World Environment

Wi-Fi 8 is designed for consistent performance in challenging places.



Why Reliability Matters Now

Modern applications can't afford dropped connections or high latency. Wi-Fi 8 is built for the real world.



Wi-Fi 7 vs. Wi-Fi 8

Feature	Wi-Fi 7 (802.11be)	Wi-Fi 8 (802.11bn)
Focus	Higher peak speed	Ultra high reliability
Maximum channel bandwidth	320 MHz	320 MHz (and beyond)
Modulation	4096-QAM	4096-QAM (improved use)
Multi-Link Operation (MLO)	Yes	Enhanced and coordinated
Network coordination	Limited	Advanced (multiple APs)
Power management	Standard	Better and more efficient
Coexistence with other tech	Basic	Enhanced (e.g., Bluetooth)
Quality of Service (QoS)	Improved	More fine-tuned
Goal	Maximum throughput (> 40 Gb/s lab)	Consistent, predictable performance in real-world use

The Bigger Picture

Wi-Fi 8 will power a more connected, reliable world.



Fig -1: From Wi-Fi 1 to Wi-Fi 8

Wi-Fi 8 is designed to meet these needs via coordinated operation of multiple access points, better power management, enhanced coexistence with other wireless tech, such as Bluetooth, and fine-tuned mechanisms to provide quality of service. While the standard doesn't give up on speed, it does bring a number of new layers of reliability that previous generations didn't have, such as 320 megahertz channels and 4096-QAM modulation. This article covers the technical details of Wi-Fi 8, its differences from previous Wi-Fi standards, the organizations that will benefit from its implementation, some of the economic forces driving its adoption, and some of the questions yet to be resolved as the standard progresses toward ratification. By the end of the reader, the reader will have a solid grasp of the reasons for the shift towards reliability in wireless development, and the implications for networks over the next ten years.

2. OBJECTIVE

This article is a factual description of Wi-Fi 8 technology, its technical workings, how it compares to previous wireless generations, its applicability in different areas of society, and its economic implications, as well as highlighting the areas of knowledge that are still incomplete.

3. METHODOLOGY

The information included in this article has been obtained by collecting information from the technical documents published by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) working groups and technical information from various networking equipment vendors white papers and published technical specifications from standards development organizations (SDOs). All the information on timelines and market expectations was verified with various industry sources. Draft standard documentation was compared with technical claims, when available. If the specifications are still being developed or are subject to change, it is stated as such. There was no use of proprietary or unpublished data. Any statements which describe future industry activity or deployment dates are based on industry statements and not guarantees.

4. HOW WIRELESS STANDARDS EVOLVE

IEEE 802.11 has been a working group with standards for wireless networking since 1997, when the first standard had data rates of 1 to 2 megabits per second. The next few amendments were designed to add features to the previous one without losing compatibility with the current devices. This evolution takes place in a predictable manner problems are identified in real deployments, technical solutions are proposed, the technical alternatives are discussed in a consensus process and an amendment is ratified that manufacturers then implement in hardware.

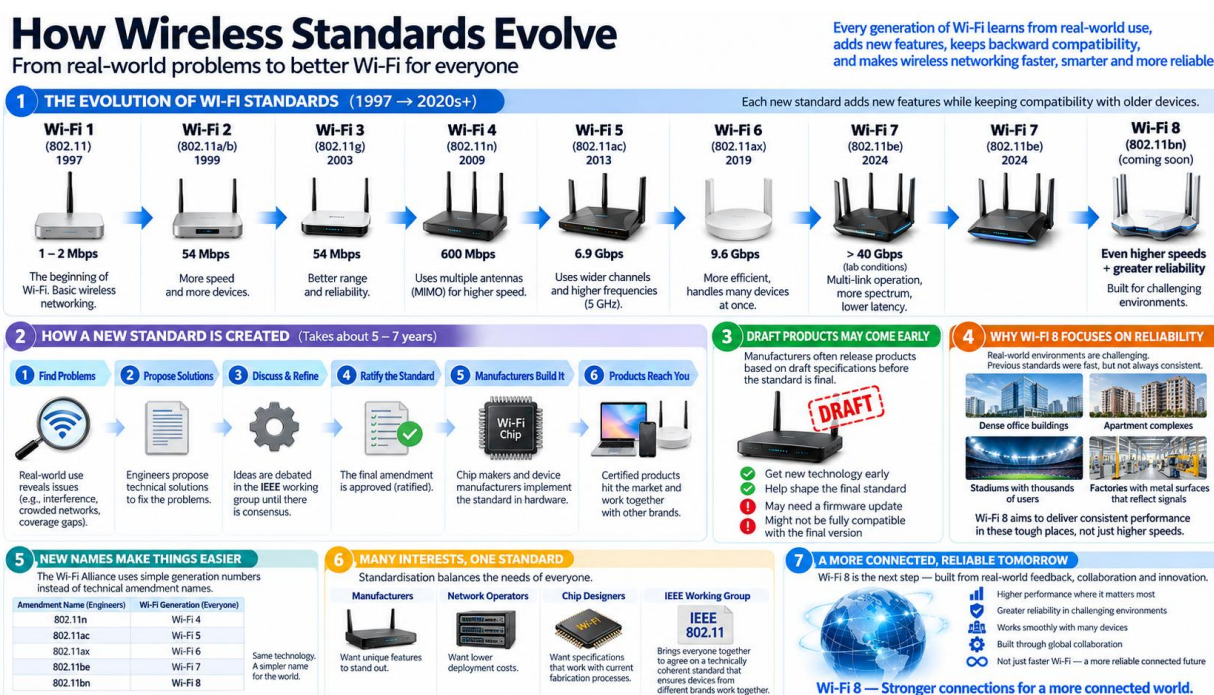


Fig -2: How Wireless Standards Evolve

It usually takes 5–7 years to go from forming the initial working group to standard being ratified. Manufacturers may be releasing products during this time based on the draft specifications with the risk that the final requirements may be different. This enables early adopters to use new technology as the standard develops, but sometimes this means that the device may need a firmware update or may not be compatible with the final standard. The naming of Wi-Fi generations, adopted by the industry alliance that certifies

wireless products, made public communication easier because of the replacement of confusing amendment numbers with sequential digits. What engineers call 802.11n became Wi-Fi 4, 802.11ac became Wi-Fi 5, 802.11ax became Wi-Fi 6, and 802.11be became Wi-Fi 7. When certification programs start, the new 802.11bn amendment will be known as Wi-Fi 8.

The working group that was established to create 802.11bn lists reliability as its goal. This focus was driven by feedback that although previous standards were technically capable of high throughput, in challenging environments they weren't delivering consistent performance. Raw speed increases weren't enough to address the issues raised by dense office buildings, dozens of adjacent networks in apartment complexes, stadiums with thousands of simultaneous users, and factories with metal surfaces reflecting signals. Standardisation is about balancing interests. Manufacturers are looking for features that set their product apart. Network operators are looking for technologies that will lower deployment expenses. Chip designers would like specifications that they can implement using current fabrication processes. Negotiation of these interests must be done within the working group and with consideration to the technical coherence of devices from different manufacturers that must be able to interoperate. The features that made the cut to Wi-Fi 8 are a product of this negotiation and are the capabilities that garnered enough consensus to move forward.

5. MULTI-ACCESS POINT COORDINATION EXPLAINED

Traditional wireless networks are individual networks that function as stand-alone entities. Traffic from the wired network is received by an access point and broadcast to any wireless client in range of the access point, which will send back their responses. Where more than one access point is used in the same area, they do not coordinate their operation, and sometimes transmit simultaneously in overlapping frequency bands, which causes interference with each other and reduces their performance.

Multi-Access Point Coordination Explained

Wi-Fi 8 helps multiple access points work together, so everyone gets a faster, more reliable and smoother Wi-Fi experience.

1 TRADITIONAL WI-FI (NO COORDINATION)

Access points work independently and may transmit at the same time, causing interference, especially when their signals overlap.



2 WI-FI 8 COORDINATION

Access points share information and work as a team to avoid interference and use the spectrum more efficiently.



The Big Idea

Instead of each access point working alone, Wi-Fi 8 lets access points share information and coordinate their transmissions.

- ✓ Less interference
- ✓ Better performance
- ✓ More devices supported
- ✓ Smarter, seamless coverage

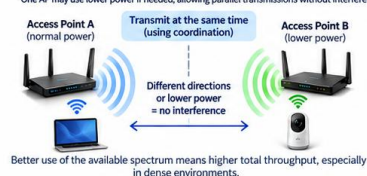
3 COORDINATED BEAMFORMING

Access points focus their signals toward their intended devices and avoid sending energy toward other access points.



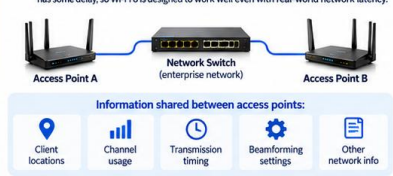
4 COORDINATED SPATIAL REUSE

Access points share channel information and can transmit at the same time when it's safe. One AP may use lower power if needed, allowing parallel transmissions without interference.



5 HOW COORDINATION WORKS (INSIDE THE NETWORK)

Access points exchange information through the wired network. This communication has some delay, so Wi-Fi 8 is designed to work well even with real-world network latency.



6 REAL-WORLD BENEFITS

Wi-Fi 8 makes networks more efficient, reliable and ready for demanding places like offices, apartments, stadiums and factories.

- Higher Capacity**
More devices can be supported at the same time.
- Fewer Coverage Gaps**
Smarter handoff of clients between access points.
- Less Interference**
Controlled overlapping transmissions.
- Better Performance**
Faster, more reliable Wi-Fi in busy environments.



Wi-Fi 8 — A More Connected World

Multiple access points. A single, smarter network. Better Wi-Fi for everyone.

Fig -3: Multi-Access Point Coordination Explained



With Wi-Fi 8, there are mechanisms for access points to coordinate their transmissions. The two techniques mentioned in the draft specification are coordinated beamforming and coordinated spatial reuse.

Coordinated beamforming makes it possible for multiple access points to send radio energy in the direction of the intended recipients while minimizing the directions in which they send radio energy that might interfere with other access points transmitting to clients in the same area. Modern access points have multiple antennas which can be used to create a transmission pattern that focuses the signal strength on the client's location. With coordination, the access points share info on where clients are located and modify their beamforming pattern to complement, and not conflict with, each other. One access point can be focused on a specific direction, while the other can intentionally limit the transmission in the same direction, thus the two can coexist without interfering with each other.

The problem of spatial reuse is related to the problem of when access points decide to transmit, which is addressed by coordinated spatial reuse. In traditional wireless protocols, the device must sense if the channel is busy before it sends a signal, otherwise it backs off if it does detect another signal. This conservative policy is to avoid collisions, but also avoids simultaneous transmissions that could be made without interference. With coordinated spatial reuse, access points can share occupancy information and make better decisions on when it's possible to use parallel transmissions. An access point could continue transmitting at a lower power level when it senses another neighbor is transmitting, if it knows that, because of the geometry of the situation, both transmissions will be successful.

These coordination mechanisms involve communication between access points, which is usually done via the fixed network infrastructure shared between the access points. This communication is limited by its latency, which restricts the speed of coordination decisions and the specification must take real-world delays in enterprise networks into consideration. Different implementations will be able to tolerate different amounts of overhead for coordination and will take different approaches to aggressiveness in exploiting coordination opportunities. The real-world impact is networks that act more as a single system than as a collection of stand-alone radios. Coverage gaps are reduced due to smarter handoff of clients by the coverage points. Overlapping transmissions are controlled, reducing the chance of interference. The more efficient use of the available spectrum in dense deployments allows for more capacity.

6. POWER MANAGEMENT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Wireless access points are on all the time and buildings with dozens or hundreds of access points add up to big energy bills. Power management has been oriented towards client devices in previous generations, where smartphones and laptops would go to sleep in between transmissions to conserve their batteries. Wi-Fi 8 brings power management to the infrastructure. The specification provides a way to dynamically reduce access points when they don't need to be at full capacity. An access point that allows for 8 spatial streams may use 4 spatial streams when there is less demand. If fewer clients are using a device, it may slow down to 160 or 80 megahertz channels. Energy consumption can be lowered and therefore the ability to transmit power can be reduced when surrounding clients are the only ones in need of service, thus lowering energy consumption and incidentally lowering interference with other networks.

These changes are based on the network status, not on a fixed schedule. An access point in a conference room could run at full strength during the day when people are holding meetings, drop to a minimum level during the evening when the conference room is empty, and bring it back up when a night security guard is monitoring the room. All decisions are local and automatic, and do not need to be made by hand. Energy

savings have a cumulative effect on large deployments. An enterprise campus of 1,000 access points that each save 30 percent on power used during off-peak hours can save significant amounts of electricity, and thus heat. The long lifespan of reduced heat extends equipment lifespan, and decreases cooling needs in network closets and data centers. In areas where electricity is produced by burning fossil fuels, there are environmental implications such as carbon emissions.

Wi-Fi 8 Power Management and Energy Efficiency

Smarter access points. Lower power. A greener and more connected world.

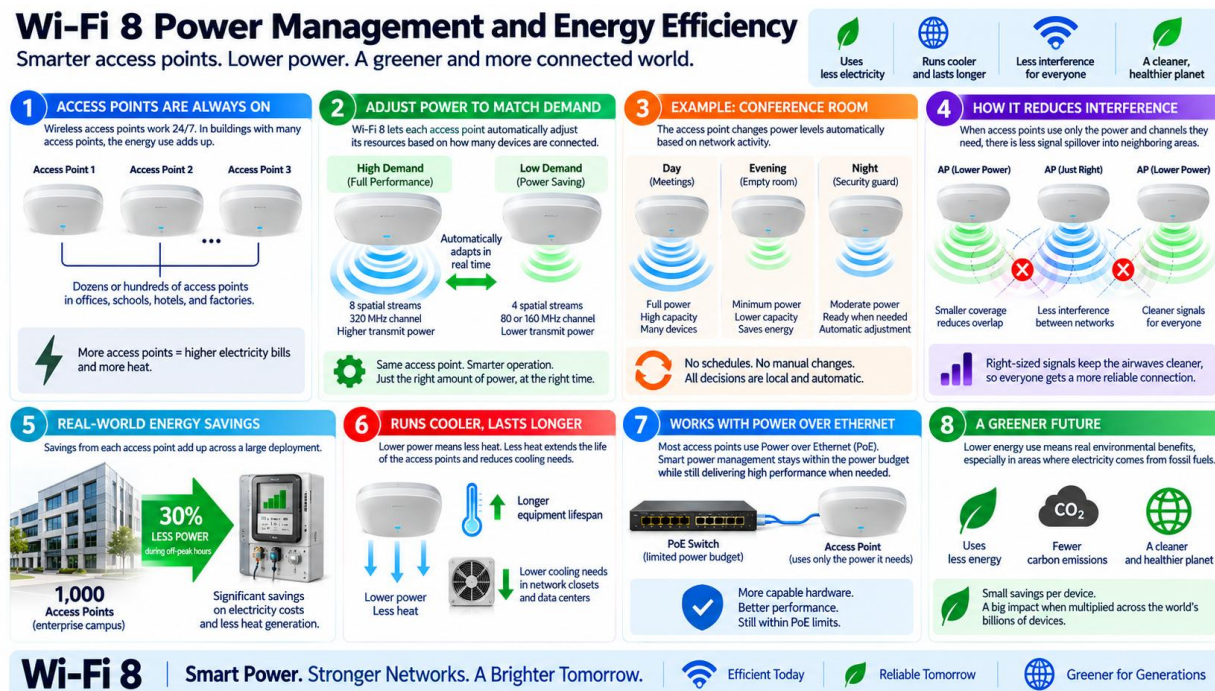


Fig -4: Wi-Fi 8 Power Management and Energy Efficiency

Most enterprise access points are powered by Power over Ethernet and the overall power budget available via standard Ethernet cabling limits access point capabilities. Dynamic access points that can control their power usage can provide increased peak performance without going over budget, turning on all the features when necessary and turning them down when not. This flexibility enables more capable hardware to be used while still complying with the infrastructure limits. This is an indirect benefit to client device battery life. Proper coordination between access points results in fewer re-transmissions of failed packets, network scans, or high-power transmissions to overcome interference by client systems. While the amount of energy saved by a single smart phone is not significant, the cumulative impact of billions of smart phones is significant.

7. SPECTRUM UTILIZATION ACROSS DIVERSE DEVICES

One wireless network is usually used by devices that have widely varying capabilities. A recently built laptop may be capable of supporting 320 megahertz channels and 4096-QAM modulations to deliver multi-gigabit throughput. An older security camera that was installed a few years ago may have only 40 megahertz channels and 64-QAM, meaning that it's only capable of maybe 150 megabits per second. An industrial sensor may have a low bandwidth requirement but high latency requirement. They all are linked to the same access point. The way this diversity was handled in the past was by backward compatibility, so that the newer access points could communicate with the older clients, but at a lower level. However, this practice would

often impact all clients when any legacy device was active. An access point broadcasting to an older client may not be able to broadcast to the newer clients during that time, although they could broadcast to different parts of the spectrum without interfering with each other.

Wi-Fi 8 will add methods to support various clients at the same time. Dynamic Sub-channel Operation and Non-Primary Channel Access enable access points to break up wide channels and allocate them to clients based on their capabilities instead of everyone being limited to the lowest common denominator. A 320 megahertz channel could be divided into a 40 megahertz segment for older clients, and a 280 megahertz segment for newer clients, which would be used concurrently. The access point dynamically controls this division, depending on the clients that are active and what they are trying to do.

Wi-Fi 8: Smarter Spectrum for Every Device

Different devices. Different needs. One access point. Everyone works together.



Fig -5: Wi-Fi 8 Smarter Spectrum for Every Device

This results in a better effective throughput for newer devices, while retaining support for the older devices. It also helps prolong the lifespan of current gear, enabling organizations to upgrade their devices progressively instead of doing it all at once. The network administrator isn't required to manually segment networks or build out a separate infrastructure for legacy support. These spectrum efficiency improvements are significant in areas where the wireless spectrum is crowded. In an urban office building, dozens of other networks can be detected. The 2.4 gigahertz band was the only Wi-Fi frequency available and only has three non-overlapping channels and is notoriously crowded. The 5 gigahertz band has more channels, but also has competition from radar systems which require wireless systems to move out of frequencies when detected. Relief comes in the form of the 6 GHz band, which was opened for Wi-Fi use in many countries in 2020, but not for older devices. Wi-Fi 8's spectrum utilization capabilities enable Wi-Fi networks to gain additional beneficial capacity from the available spectrum.

8. COEXISTENCE WITH BLUETOOTH AND OTHER WIRELESS TECHNOLOGIES

The modern devices have several wireless radios that operate in overlapping frequency bands. A smart phone could be used to access the Internet via Wi-Fi, to listen to music through wireless earbuds via Bluetooth, and to pay for goods or services with contactless payment via near-field communication. These radios are physically close, in the same radio enclosure and frequently share antenna resources. If not coordinated, they interfere with each other, reducing performance of all. Wi-Fi 8 adds features to allow non-AP devices to inform the network of its unavailability. A smartphone that will want to receive Bluetooth audio in the next few milliseconds can let the access point know, which can then schedule Wi-Fi transmissions accordingly. The access point is able to learn not to transmit during times when the client radio is busy with other wireless activities.

Wi-Fi 8 Coexistence with Bluetooth and Other Wireless Technologies

Multiple wireless radios. One device. One network that works together.

Your devices use Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, NFC and more at the same time. Wi-Fi 8 helps them share the air, reduce interference and keep everything running smoothly.

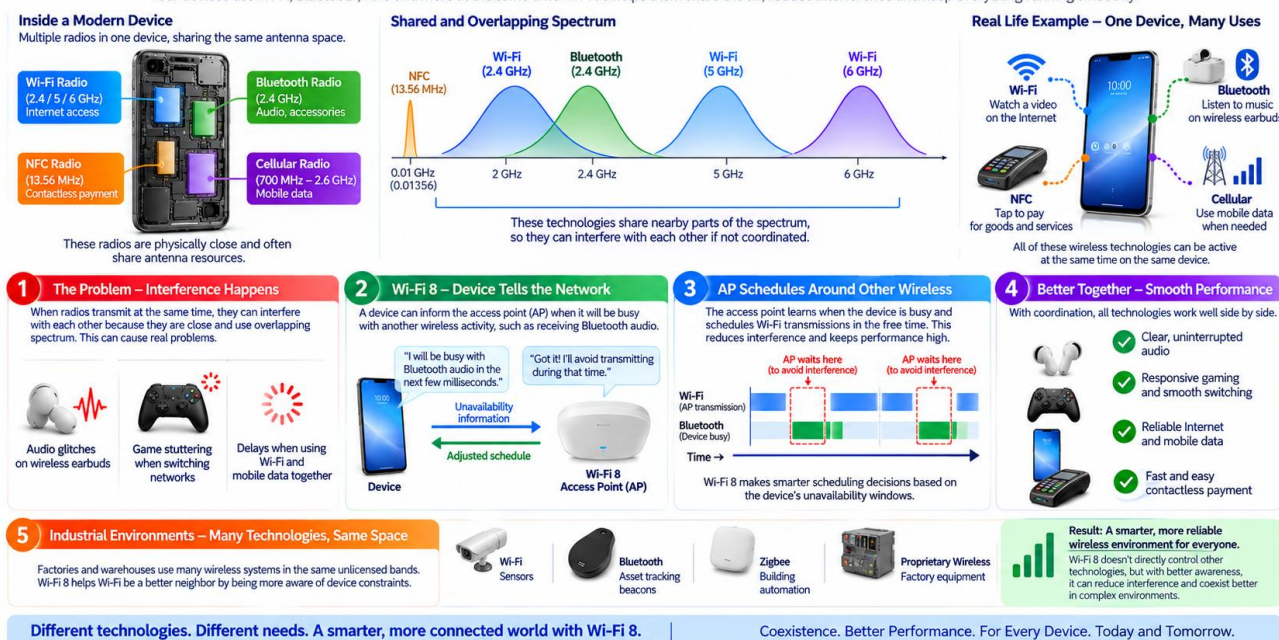


Fig -6: Wi-Fi 8 Coexistence with Bluetooth and Other Wireless Technologies

This in-device coexistence functionality clears up an issue that has gotten increasingly bad as devices have more and more wireless capabilities. Most of the early Wi-Fi devices had only one radio. Today, there may be four or five that each have a legitimate call on the shared hardware and spectrum. The interference can result in audio glitches when using the wireless earbuds, stuttering when switching between Wi-Fi and cellular data or delays when using both Wi-Fi and Bluetooth gaming controllers. This involves some exchange of information between the device and the access point for the coordination. The specification provides a way for devices to communicate their unavailability windows and for access points to use this information to make scheduling decisions. The degree to which implementations can closely fit these constraints will vary and effectiveness will be as much dependent on the quality of the firmware as the hardware capability.

Industrial areas are a special case for coexistence. Some of the wireless technologies that may be deployed on a factory floor are Wi-Fi for sensors, Bluetooth for asset tracking beacons, Zigbee for building automation, and proprietary wireless for specific equipment. They are all in unlicensed bands of the spectrum and may

interfere with one another. Wi-Fi 8 does not explicitly interoperate with non-Wi-Fi technologies, but with greater awareness of the constraints at the device-level, Wi-Fi networks can be better neighbors in these complex environments.

9. LATENCY REDUCTION FOR TIME-SENSITIVE APPLICATIONS

Certain applications are not very tolerant of delay. When a person is on a video conference and talking into their microphone, they expect to hear their voice within tens of milliseconds of speaking to the other participants. Delays of more than 150 milliseconds (ms) are noticeable and delays of more than 400 milliseconds (ms) make natural conversation difficult. Extended reality applications are even more demanding, as they require updates to occur in 10–20 milliseconds of head motion, so as not to cause disorientation. There are multiple points of delay in Wi-Fi networks. Transmission cannot occur until a channel has been available. After transmission, the data propagates at light speed, but the receiving device has to process and decode the data. Further delay is caused by acknowledgments and retransmission of failed packets. In dense networks, the delay for accessing the channel is predominant.

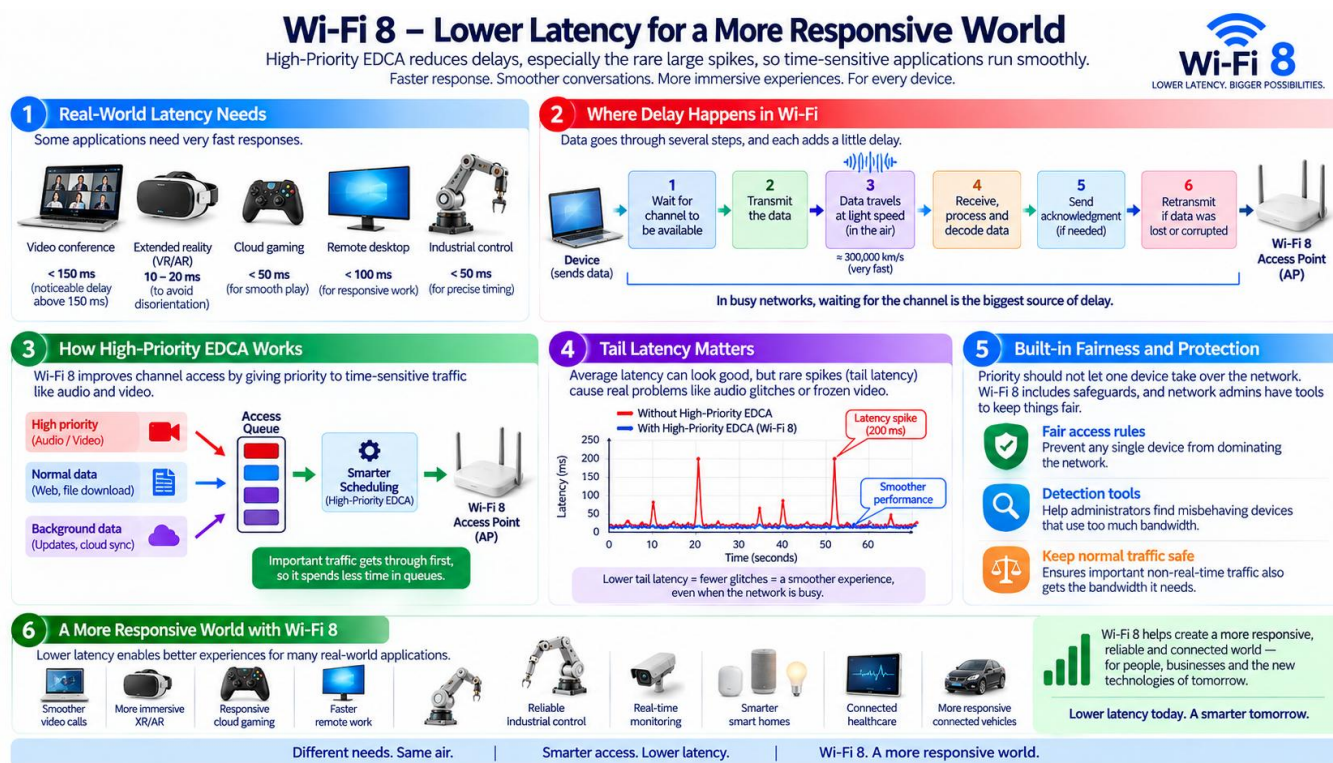


Fig -7: Wi-Fi 8 Lower Latency for a More Responsive World

Wi-Fi 8 introduces High-Priority Enhanced Distributed Channel Access (EDCA) to improve the way traffic is prioritized for channel access contention. Audio and video streams can be identified for preferential treatment, thus reducing the time they spend in queues. The mechanism focuses on tail latency, which is the rare but large latency spikes that can happen when the average latency is fine. A voice call may have an average latency of 20 milliseconds and then have a spike in latency of 200 milliseconds for a brief period where the network is congested. These spikes result in audio glitches but average performance seems fine.

The problem is to make sure priority mechanisms don't enable aggressive devices to dominate the network at others' expense. The specification has safeguards, however it is up to all devices to follow the rules. A misbehaving device may be sucking up bandwidth for normal traffic, thereby setting aside bandwidth for normal traffic that may be important for high priority applications. Network administrators will require tools to detect and deal with such behavior. Latency improvements help applications other than the obvious real-time communication use cases. For instance, in the case of cloud gaming, which involves processing games on distant servers and sending the outcomes to nearby screens, low latency is essential for a responsive experience. Any remote desktop app for a work at home employee requires regular response times. Systems that use feedback to control industrial processes require predictable timing to operate properly when closing the loop over a wireless connection.

10. SEAMLESS ROAMING AND EXTENDED RANGE PERFORMANCE

Within a building, when the client moves from one access point to another, the client must switch from one to the other. This handoff process, if not properly done, results in short periods of disconnection. Video call freezes for a few moments. File transfer stops. Application time out and reconnect. The users have become accustomed to these interruptions in large buildings.



Fig -8: Wi-Fi 8 Seamless Roaming and Extended Range Performance

Wi-Fi 8 also introduces enhancements to seamless roaming, minimizing the time taken to switch between Wi-Fi access points. This is supported by the multi-access-point coordination, which enables coordinated access points to exchange information regarding client devices and preparing for handoffs before handoffs take place. The gap of service can be minimized by an access point starting to communicate with a client while the client is still connected to the previous access point. Extended Long Range mode is for edge

coverage of the access point range. Modulation and coding schemes used in standard Wi-Fi transmissions are designed to be reliable at moderate ranges, but break down as signals become weak. Extended range mode is a compromise of range for throughput, and relies on more powerful transmission parameters that will work further away but at lower data rates. A far removed device may still be able to communicate for essential tasks when the high bandwidth application is not available.

These features particularly benefit large facilities. In warehouses and distribution centers, which are hundreds of thousands of square feet with a few access points. Buildings are linked to each other on the hospital campus by outdoor pathways. Signal reflection and absorption in manufacturing plants is unpredictable and can be caused by metal structures. In such situations, it's possible that maintaining any connection is more important than speed. The longer range also allows for deployments outside of buildings where access points are used to cover outdoor spaces. Indoor access points can cover outdoor seating at a restaurant, loading docks at a warehouse, or parking structures at an office complex, for example. While this may not be as fast as indoor service, it is enough to provide basic connectivity.

11. APPLICATIONS IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

Wireless networks at medical institutions pose the following challenging requirements. Patient monitoring devices send out vital signs at all times and there needs to be reliable connectivity with a warning to the staff of any change in patient condition. Medical imaging equipment sends gigabytes of files. Clinicians have tablets and smartphones that can give access to patient records at the bedside. People come to the site with the expectation of Internet. All have the same infrastructure.



Fig -9: Wi-Fi 8 for Smarter Safer Healthcare



Wi-Fi 8's reliability is a good fit for healthcare. An intermittently non-performing patient monitor poses clinical risks and compliance issues. When staff respond to alerts, they don't want to wait on a delay in the network. When equipment tracking systems don't know where equipment is, it affects operational efficiency. These applications are more interested in steady performance rather than maximum throughput. In a hospital setting where coverage needs to be provided in all rooms, multi-access-point coordination is helpful. Connectivity is needed in patient rooms, hallways, nursing stations, operating theatres and imaging suites. Often the building layouts feature thick walls, metal equipment, and unusual floor layout, which poses coverage problems. Coordinated access points are more effective at filling gaps than stand-alone access points.

Power management features contribute to sustainability efforts taken by many healthcare organizations. Hospitals are 24/7 operations with large energy bills due to the always-on nature of the infrastructure. Access points that cut down on power usage in the evenings and night when patient areas are quieter, help to achieve power efficiency goals without sacrificing coverage.

The coexistence are focused on a specific health care issue. Bluetooth is becoming an increasingly common feature in medical devices for use in connecting devices to displays and accessories. Infusion pumps are connected to monitoring stations. Pulse oximeters are hooked up to bedside displays. These Bluetooth connections are in the same spectrum as Wi-Fi and can be interfered with thereby interfering with Wi-Fi as well. These conflicts are minimized through better coordination of the technologies. Medical device regulatory requirements complicate. Equipment that is used to care for patients should have safety and reliability standards that are higher than those required for general purpose networking equipment. The medical device manufacturers must include Wi-Fi 8 in their healthcare products, which usually takes a few years to catch up with consumer electronics.

12. INDUSTRIAL AND MANUFACTURING DEPLOYMENTS

The environment on factory floors poses challenges which put strain on wireless networks. Signals bounce off metal surfaces in an erratic manner. Electrical noise is created by the heavy machinery. Forklifts and automated vehicles move around facilities, continuously changing the radio environment. Equipment is subjected to temperature extremes, dust and vibration. Today's manufacturing relies on wireless communication of sensors, controllers, mobile devices and autonomous systems.

With its reliability focus, Wi-Fi 8 meets various industrial needs. To achieve predictive maintenance, equipment conditions must be measured consistently, with sensors reporting on the conditions. Unpredictable delays in a robotic system given instructions via a wireless link are unacceptable. Stable bandwidth is needed for quality control cameras that send images to be analyzed. Safety systems which stop operations if issues are detected require the use of reliable communication paths. The multi access-point coordination mechanism is suitable in industrial environments with stringent coverage demands but difficult radio environments. An office floor may be sufficient with one access point, but a manufacturing hall with metal shelving, overhead cranes and moving vehicles may require multiple access points with a controlled overlap. When these access points are used on their own, there is an interference, which is reduced by coordination.

Industrial applications have other meanings when it comes to power management. In factories, access points may be in use around the clock because factories may be working on several shifts. Even the ability to

scale up capabilities according to the actual demand is useful, as it lowers power consumption during periods of scheduled downtime or weekends, for instance, without having to manually intervene.

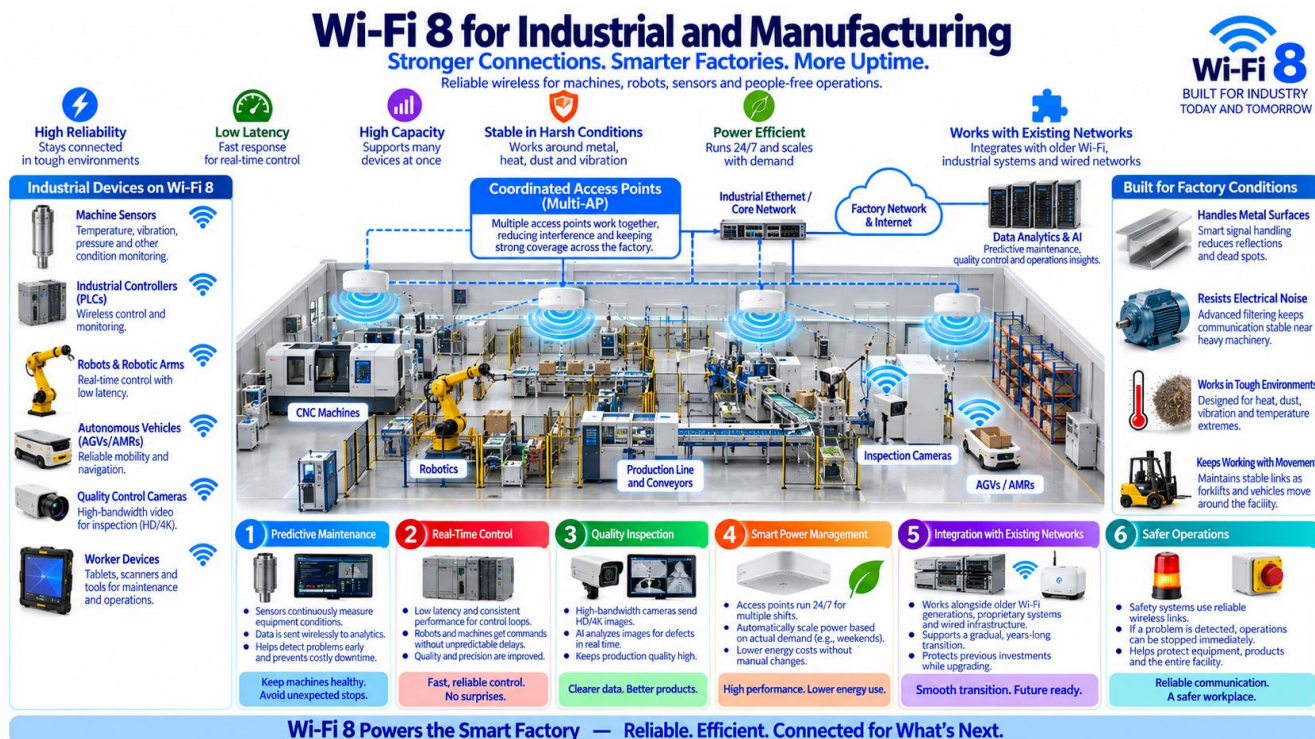


Fig -10: Wi-Fi 8 for Industrial and Manufacturing

Latency enhancements are important for industrial control applications. In traditional manufacturing, time-critical control loops were typically hardwired. Wireless control gives flexibility with variability in timing. The QoS enhancements in Wi-Fi 8 minimize this variation and make wireless control a practical option for more applications without the need for new and special industrial wireless protocols. If there is an existing industrial network, a careful planning is required for integration. There are many facilities that have already invested in the previous generations of wireless technology, proprietary systems for wireless in industry, or wired infrastructure which will not be replaced immediately. This installed base will be there during years-long transition periods alongside Wi-Fi 8.

13. EXTENDED REALITY AND IMMERSIVE APPLICATIONS

Wireless networks are challenging clients for head-mounted displays of virtual and augmented reality. The displays need to have a high bandwidth to be capable of receiving the video content at a resolution that will fill the user's field of view. They need low-latency to refresh what they see as their head rotates, otherwise it can be disorientating if the visual feedback doesn't keep up with their head. They need to perform at regular intervals, otherwise, when their performance is good, it is not comfortable because they have not been performing regularly.

In most current extended reality systems, the devices are connected via wires, restricting users' movement and posing a safety risk. Applications that are not possible with tethered systems can be achieved with

wireless operation, training simulations that allow users to move around in physical spaces, collaborative design sessions where participants move around virtual models, and entertainment experiences with full freedom of movement. The new Wi-Fi 7 added the feature of multi-link operation, which enables devices to transmit and receive data concurrently on several frequency bands. This is a useful feature for extended reality use cases to give bandwidth headroom and redundant paths. Wi-Fi 8 takes this further, with reliability enhancements that decrease the performance fluctuations that can cause comfort issues.

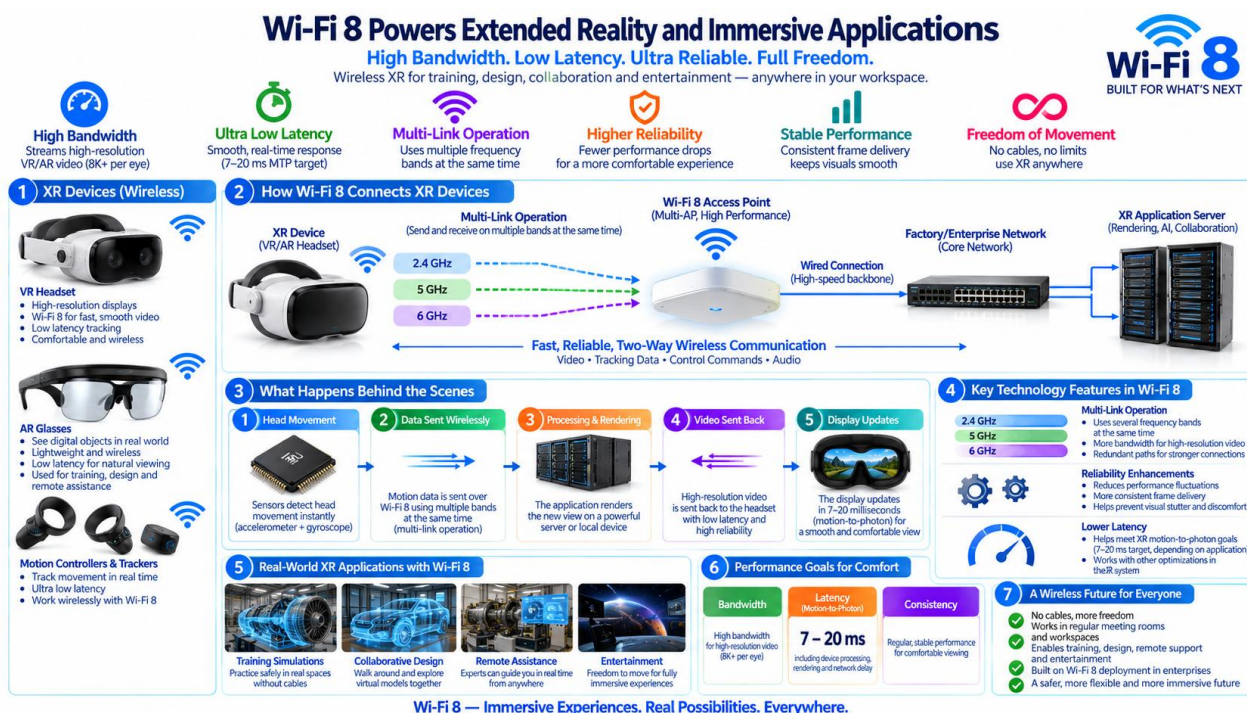


Fig -11: Wi-Fi 8 Power Extended Reality and Immersive Applications

Latency is important with extended reality. The industry goal for motion to photon latency (MTP) the time between a head movement and the corresponding display update varies from 7 to 20 milliseconds depending on the type of application. This budget needs to include processing time in the display, rendering time on the computing device, and round trip network delay. While Wi-Fi 8's latency gains are beneficial, they aren't enough to ensure the targets are met since it's just one part of the equation. The ability to wirelessly network is essential to enterprise adoption of extended reality. Training programs, remote assistance applications, and design review sessions are all possible with extended reality headsets that do not require any special infrastructure, but can instead be used in a regular meeting room or workspace. These applications will be built on the deployment of Wi-Fi 8 in enterprise environments.

14. ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF WIRELESS UPGRADES

The investment decisions for organizations planning to deploy Wi-Fi 8 have several factors to consider. Hardware expenses include access points, controllers if required, and, possibly, network switches that will need upgrading to accommodate new power and bandwidth needs. Installation costs include mounting, cabling and configuration. Running costs are electricity, maintenance and replacement.

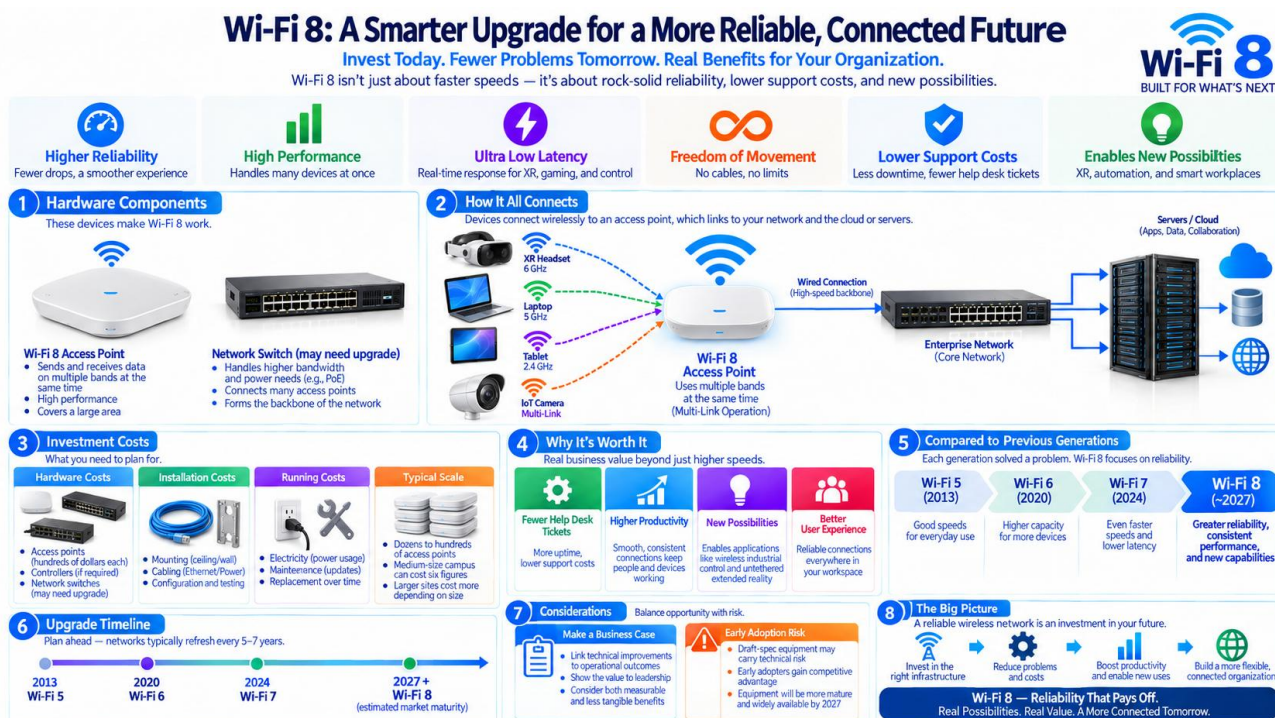


Fig -12: Wi-Fi 8 A Smarter Upgrade for a More Reliable Connected Future

It is not the same value proposition as in the past generations. Wi-Fi 5 and Wi-Fi 6 provided simple speed increases that were good for bandwidth-hungry uses. When current networks were unable to handle video conferencing, large file transfers or the ever-expanding number of connected devices, organizations were able to justify the investment. The reliability emphasis of Wi-Fi 8 offers value that's more difficult to measure but can be more significant. The more reliable the wireless network is, the lower the cost of support because the fewer number of help desk tickets to address wireless issues. They boost productivity by removing the little snags that result from sporadic connections. They make possible applications that were previously unfeasible, like wireless industrial control or untethered extended reality. These benefits are very real, but not easily captured in spreadsheet calculations.

Wireless networks have an upgrade cycle of 5 to 7 years, which is similar to equipment depreciation and the rate of development. Wi-Fi 8 equipment may be more mature and available on the market by 2027, when organizations that deployed Wi-Fi 6 in 2020 or Wi-Fi 7 in 2024 might consider replacing. Early adopters who are willing to use draft-specification equipment assume technical risk for competitive advantage. Typically, enterprise access points cost hundreds of dollars per unit and installations use dozens to hundreds of access points, depending on the size of the facility. A medium-size corporate campus could cost six-figure sums. This size needs to be justified on the basis of a business case which relates the technical improvements to operational outcomes which leadership cares about.

15. MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION PROJECTIONS

Wi-Fi 8 chipsets are expected to be available in the second half of 2026, with a few consumer devices to follow in the second half of 2026 or in 2027, according to industry estimates. These initial products will be

based on draft versions of the specifications, and the IEEE amendment that will enable Wi-Fi 8 is expected to be ratified around 2028. Enterprise access points usually take 6 to 12 months after consumer devices to become available, which is estimated to be around 2028 or 2029.

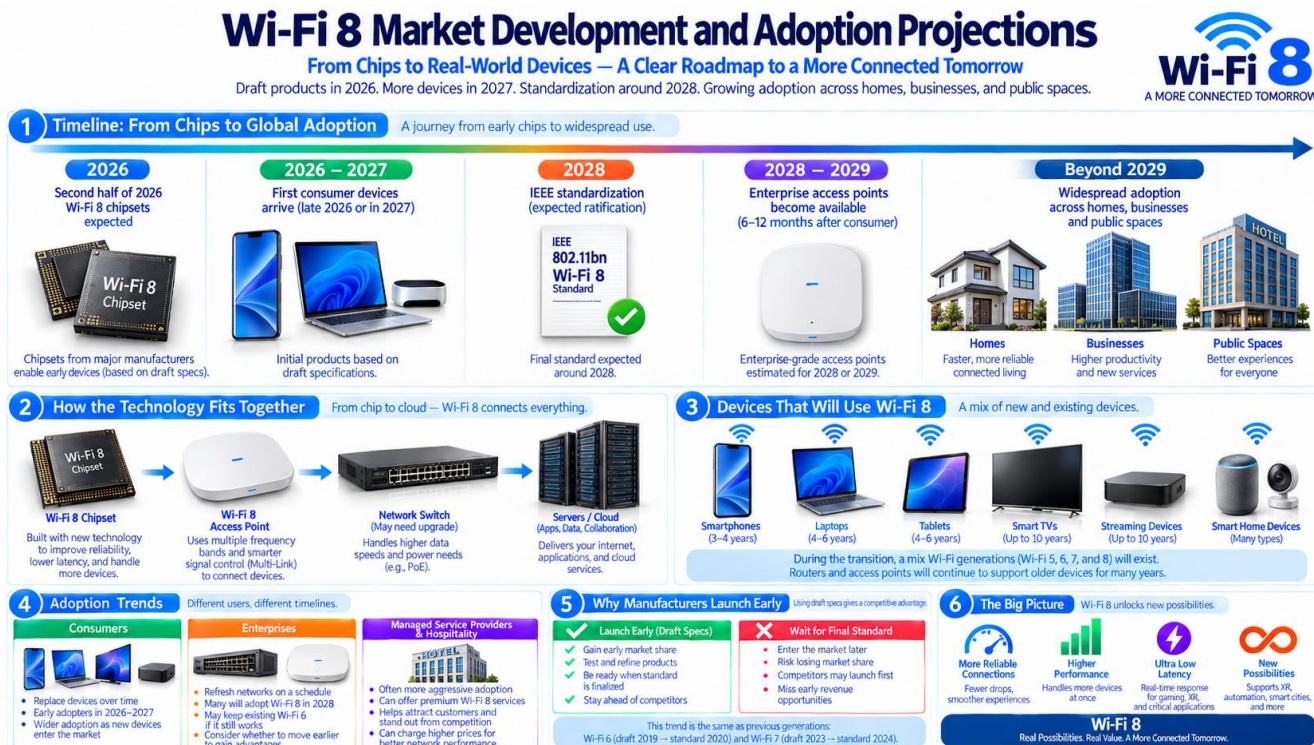


Fig -13: Wi-Fi 8 Market Development and Adoption Projections

The trend is similar to the one observed in the previous generations. Draft specifications were the basis for Wi-Fi 6 products which were introduced in 2019, followed by standardisation in 2020. In 2023, draft products for Wi-Fi 7 appeared, and in 2024, they are expected to be ratified. Manufacturers take the chance of development based on a draft as the alternative would be to wait for ratification, which would give the early market share to the competition. Consumer adoption is reliant on device replacement cycles. Smartphones are the most prevalent Wi-Fi clients, and generally last 3–4 years. Laptops last longer. Television and streaming devices can last for 10 years. During this transition, a mix of generations will exist within the installed base of client devices and networks will need to maintain support for older devices for years after Wi-Fi 8 is available.

There are new trends in enterprise adoption. Networking infrastructure is frequently changed based on a schedule, and not when equipment fails. If the company has Wi-Fi 6 equipment that is still operating, they will probably opt for Wi-Fi 8 equipment when refreshing their wireless network in 2028. The issue is whether to rush planned refreshes to be able to enjoy the advantages of Wi-Fi 8 sooner. Managed service providers and hospitality operators, who are the ones who deploy wireless networks for paying customers, may be more aggressive. A hotel with Wi-Fi 8 service can stand out from the competition. A managed office provider can charge high prices for high-quality network performance. These economics are more beneficial to early adoption than just an intra-firm network.

16. COMPARING WIRELESS GENERATIONS

Changes have been made on various technical aspects to every generation of wireless. To understand the place of Wi-Fi 8, it is important to compare it with the previous generations in these aspects.

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS A STRONGER TOMORROW

Wi-Fi Generations Evolution to Wi-Fi 8

A Clear Comparison of the Technology From Wi-Fi 4 to Wi-Fi 8

Each generation brings improvements. Wi-Fi 8 builds on everything before it — not just faster, but smarter and more reliable.



Wi-Fi 8
A MORE CONNECTED TOMORROW

Wi-Fi Generation (Release Year)	Wi-Fi 4 (802.11n) 2010	Wi-Fi 5 (802.11ac) 2013	Wi-Fi 6 (802.11ax) 2019	Wi-Fi 7 (802.11be) 2024	Wi-Fi 8 (802.11bn) Expected 2028
 Channel Bandwidth (Width of frequency used for one transmission)	40 MHz (smaller bandwidth)	160 MHz (4× wider than Wi-Fi 4)	160 MHz (same as Wi-Fi 5)	320 MHz (2× wider than Wi-Fi 6)	320 MHz (kept at the limit of available spectrum)
 Modulation Density (Information per symbol)	64-QAM (6 bits per symbol)	256-QAM (8 bits per symbol)	1024-QAM (10 bits per symbol)	4096-QAM (12 bits per symbol)	4096-QAM (same as Wi-Fi 7)
 Spatial Streams (Independent data streams using multiple antennas)	4 (up to 4 streams)	4 (up to 4 streams)	8 (up to 8 streams)	8 (up to 8 streams)	8 (up to 8 streams) (rarely all used in practice)
 Multi-User MIMO (Send data to multiple devices at the same time)	Not available	Downlink MU-MIMO (downloads only)	Downlink & Uplink MU-MIMO (downloads and uploads)	Enhanced MU-MIMO (with multi-link)	Enhanced MU-MIMO (with multi-access-point coordination)
 OFDMA (Split channel into smaller units for many devices)	Not available	Not available	Introduced (in Wi-Fi 6)	Improved (more efficient)	Further enhanced (more reliable)
 Multi-Link Operation (MLO) (Use multiple frequency bands at the same time)	Not available	Not available	Not available	Introduced (operate on multiple bands)	More advanced (with coordination across access points)
 Key Focus & Unique Features	Higher basic speeds	Faster Wi-Fi for more devices	Efficiency and capacity	Multi-link and very high throughput	Multi-access-point coordination and reliability (unique to Wi-Fi 8)

Why These Changes Matter

Wider channels, higher modulation, more streams, and new technologies help Wi-Fi deliver higher speeds, more capacity, and better reliability.



Wider Channels
Move more data at once.



Higher Modulation
Pack more information into each transmission.



More Spatial Streams
Send multiple streams at the same time.



Multi-MIMO & OFDMA
Share the air fairly with many devices.



Multi-Link Operation
Use multiple bands together.



Wi-Fi 8 Advantage
Coordinates access points for a more reliable experience.

Same Wi-Fi. A Smarter, Stronger Future. Wi-Fi 8.

More Devices. More Places. A More Connected Tomorrow.

Fig -14: Wi-Fi Generations Evolution to Wi-Fi 8

Channel bandwidth the width of the frequency range used for a single transmission has increased from 40 megahertz for Wi-Fi 4 to 160 megahertz for Wi-Fi 5 and 6 and has been doubled again to 320 megahertz for Wi-Fi 7. Wi-Fi 8 keeps the 320 megahertz and doesn't go any higher, since that's the limit of the available spectrum in the bands Wi-Fi uses. The modulation density, or the amount of information that each transmission symbol can carry, has been steadily increasing 64-QAM for Wi-Fi 4, 256-QAM for Wi-Fi 5, 1024-QAM for Wi-Fi 6 and 4096-QAM for Wi-Fi 7 and 8. These enhancements work best in areas of low interference at short distances and with higher modulation. The number of independent data streams transmitted simultaneously by multiple antennas spatial streams grew from 4 in Wi-Fi 4 and 5 to 8 in Wi-Fi 6, 7 and 8. The maximum is seldom used in practice because eight-stream access points are costly and most client devices have support for only 2 or 3 streams.

Multi-user MIMO (MU-MIMO) technology that enables simultaneous communication to multiple clients was introduced in Wi-Fi 5 for downloads but was extended to uploads in Wi-Fi 6. OFDMA, the technology that splits channels into resource units that are allocated to various clients, is a new feature introduced in Wi-Fi 6. One of the new features of Wi-Fi 7 was multi-link operation, which enables devices to operate on multiple frequency bands at once. The key features of Wi-Fi 8 are its multi-access-point coordination and reliability features, which are unique. They are not simply quantitative increases in the parameters of networks but rather qualitative changes in the way networks function.

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17. IMPLICATIONS FOR NETWORK ADMINISTRATION

Wi-Fi 8 brings questions of timing, architecture and operations to network administrators. The technology impacts the design and management of networks.

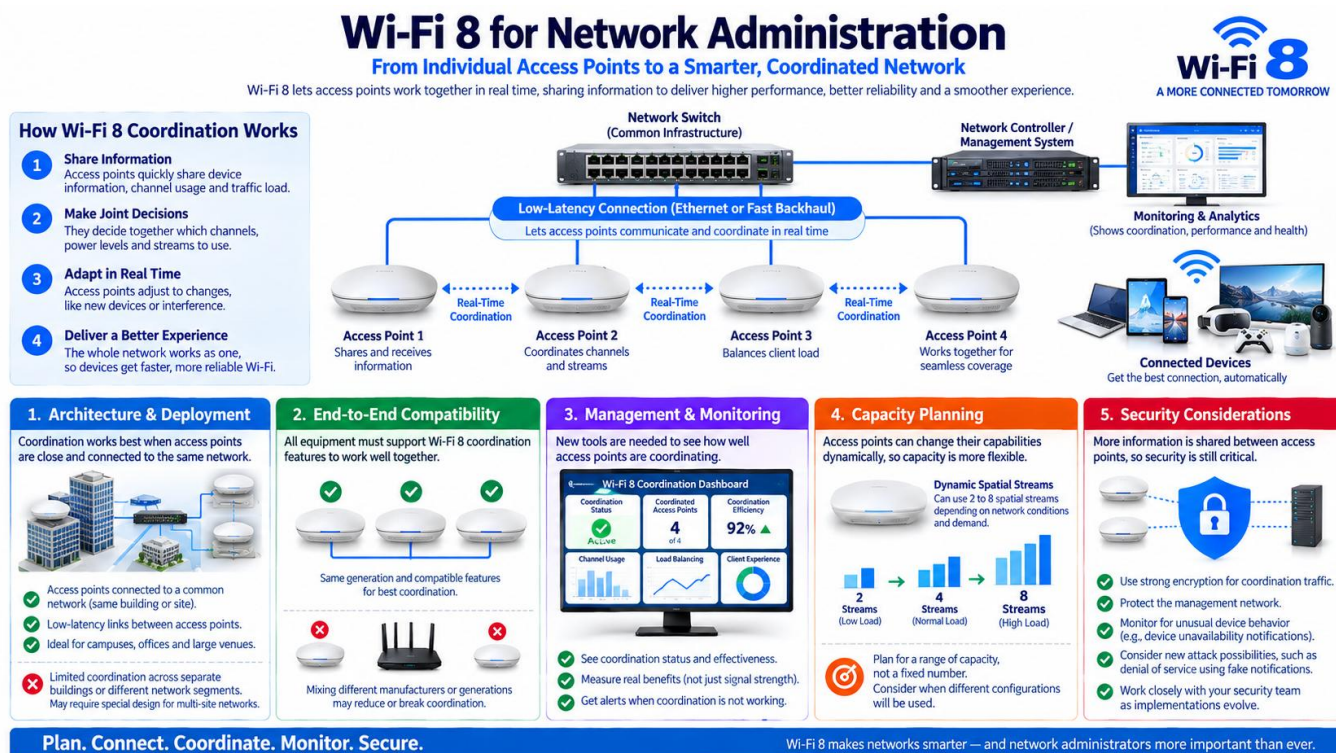


Fig -15: Wi-Fi 8 for Network Administration

The multi-access-point coordination is best suited for access points that have the ability to communicate with little delay. This favours architectures with access points that are connected to a common network infrastructure as opposed to those where access points are in separate buildings or network segments. For organisations with multiple sites, consideration may be needed to think about how co-ordination will or will not happen at the boundaries between them. Equipments are also needed to be compatible from end to end in the co-ordination features. Combining access points from multiple manufacturers, or multiple generations from a single manufacturer, may have a negative impact on the ability to coordinate. Previously procurement decisions were based on the specification of individual access points, but now system-level compatibility needs to be taken into account.

Management and monitoring tools need to be developed to indicate and measure the level of coordination and effectiveness. While metrics such as signal strength and throughput per access point are still important, they fail to reflect the coordination behavior that is one of the hallmarks of Wi-Fi 8. Administrators will require insight into the coordination of the access points and if the coordination is yielding expected benefits. However, capacity planning is complicated if access points can dynamically change their capabilities. If an access point can have two to eight spatial streams depending on the need, there is no fixed access point capacity that can be used for calculations. Rather, planning needs to consider a spectrum of capacity and when various configurations will come to life. Security concerns remain the same as previous generations and are added to. The more information this traffic passes between the coordinated access points, the more

attack surface exists if that traffic is not properly secured. Clients might be used to generate a denial of service attack using device unavailability notifications. As implementations evolve, a security team should evaluate these possibilities.

18. REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT AND SPECTRUM POLICY

Wireless networking conforms to regulatory requirements which differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. National authorities allocate spectrum, set power limits, and impose requirements that influence wireless technologies capabilities and where these technologies can be used. Wi-Fi 8 adoption will take place within these limits and regional variations will affect the deployment.

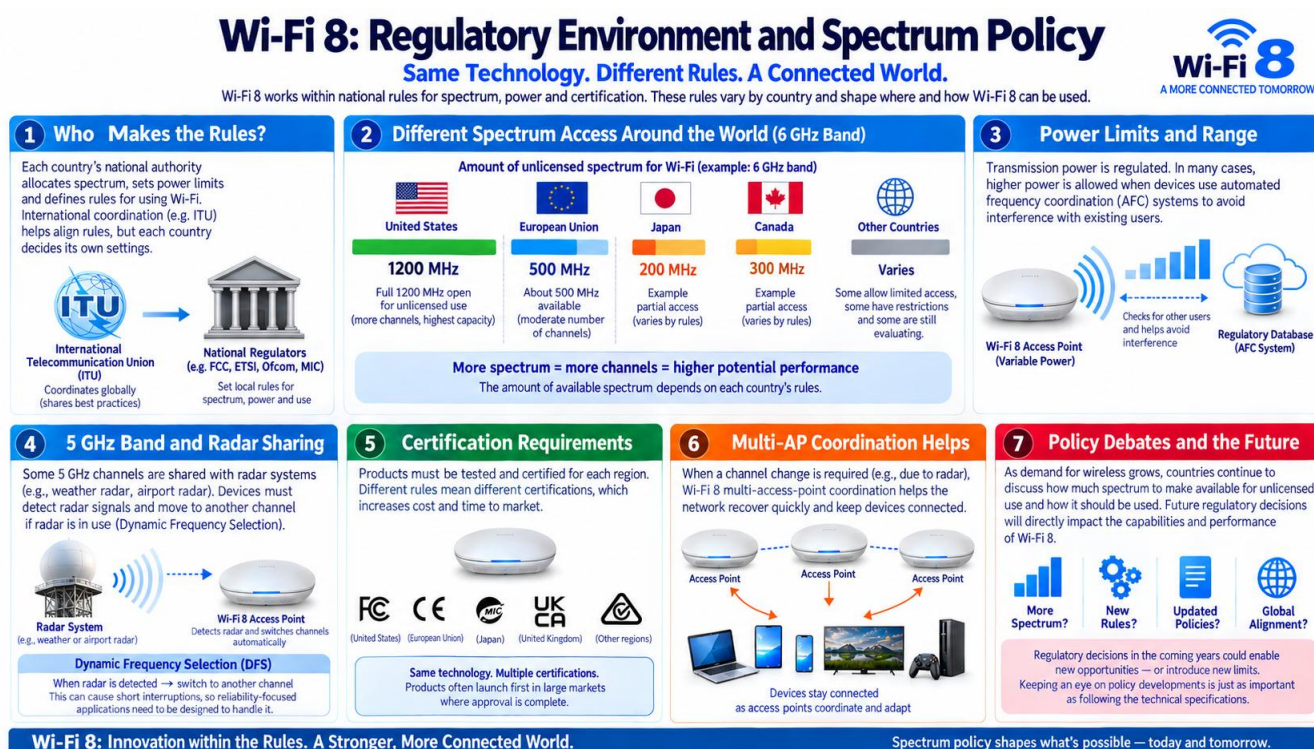


Fig -16: Wi-Fi 8 Regulatory Environment and Spectrum Policy

This variation can be seen in the 6 gigahertz band. In 2020, the United States opened up the full 1200 megahertz of spectrum in this band for unlicensed use, which allows for the most Wi-Fi channels to date. The European Union was next with access to some 500 megahertz. Other nations have opted for other choices and some have postponed unlicensed access while awaiting further research. These differences must be dealt with in devices sold worldwide, sometimes to the detriment of the capabilities that can be offered in regions where spectrum access is more limited.

Range and interference are functions of power. The rules generally allow for more power to be transmitted from apparatus that are used under automated frequency coordination systems where there is no interference with incumbent users. For longer range, Wi-Fi 8 access points will be available at higher powers and could necessitate coordination with regulatory databases, increasing deployment complexity for coverage gains. In the 5 gigahertz band, there are channels that are shared with radar systems, and wireless



devices must be able to identify when a channel is being used by a radar system and switch to another channel. This is a dynamic frequency selection requirement, and it means that reliability-oriented applications need to deal with some interruptions. Wi-Fi 8's multi-access-point coordination might make it easier for networks to gracefully recover from radar detection events, though the requirement still is there.

There are also different requirements for certification. Products sold in various regions will also need to be compliant with the regulations in those regions, which will increase the costs and time to market. Wi-Fi 8 products will likely roll out first in countries with large markets, depending on the regulatory certification process, rather than being technically ready. As demand for wireless connectivity continues to increase, policy debates around spectrum allocation continue. Regulatory actions over the next few years will determine the amount of spectrum available for Wi-Fi, if more spectrum will be available for unlicensed use and how that spectrum will be used. For those thinking long-term when it comes to wireless, it's important to keep an eye on these developments because they could impact the capabilities and performance of Wi-Fi 8 networks as much as the technical spec itself. International coordination, e.g. within the framework of the International Telecommunication Union, has an impact on national decisions, but does not require them. The outcome is a mosaic of regulatory settings, with multinational organizations having to conform to different ones when installing uniform wireless infrastructure in various countries.

19. RESEARCH GAP

The knowledge about Wi-Fi 8 today is mainly based on draft specifications and theoretical analysis. There are significant gaps in knowledge regarding in-field performance of the technology.

There is limited real-world experience with multi-access-point coordination. The mechanisms outlined in specifications are ideal and may not apply in real deployments. Latency between access points (backhaul) is widely different per installation. Coordination algorithms have to make decisions within milliseconds, and a lot of the information that they need to make decisions on may be out-of-date or incomplete. The claimed improvements in representative environments have not yet been published in research.

There is no quantification of energy savings from power management features in deployed networks. Specifications refer to capabilities, the actual reduction in power consumption depends on usage patterns and coordination overhead as well as how aggressively implementations are able to scale back capabilities. Lacks of actual installation measurements make energy savings projections speculative.

The preliminary economic analysis of deployment costs and benefits for Wi-Fi 8 is ongoing. The benefits of reliability improvements are not easily quantifiable as no data can be generated from prevented problems. Whereas for organisations thinking about deployment, they are unsure about return on investment which good data can help with.

The use of cellular networks for seamless connectivity, as stated in working group documents, has not been well covered in published research. But how Wi-Fi 8 networks will interoperate with 5G and future cellular networks to provide seamless connectivity is still up in the air.

The specifications have described the coexistence features for Bluetooth and other technologies, but they have not been tested rigorously. The effectiveness of coordination mechanisms in improving the current situation in devices with multiple radios has not been verified.

Spectrum policy implications for the long term are not discussed. Wireless technologies are increasingly making efficient use of allocated spectrum, which could lead to a rethinking of allocations. The research that



has underpinned these discussions on policy has not been commensurate with the development of technology.

20. CONCLUSION

Wi-Fi 8 is a pivot towards the future of wireless networking. The standard development process has been geared towards reliability because, for many applications, consistent performance is valued over maximum throughput, after generations of work dedicated to achieving maximum speeds. The technical systems by which this can be done are significant additions to the wireless capabilities multi-access-point coordination, power management, spectrum utilization, and latency refinements. As wireless traffic becomes more and more critical, the technology is coming. It is essential for the safety of patients in healthcare institutions. It is used in manufacturing processes. For immersive applications it is necessary that it does not produce discomfort for the user. The previous generations of applications could not handle the fluctuation in difficult environments. The change from speed competition to reliability focus is a sign of maturity in the wireless industry. Headline specs that draw attention are the focus of competition in the early generations of any technology. Mature technologies compete in terms of qualities such as reliability, effectiveness and integration that provide utility. Wi-Fi 8 is the next step in wireless local networking.

It will be deployed over the next few years, in a gradual manner. Products from 2026 and 2027 will be drafted products and will be replaced by ratification compliant products around 2028. As with the previous generations, enterprise devices will follow consumer devices. There will be a need for ongoing support of the installed base of older devices throughout, while backward compatibility is a design constraint. It is unclear whether the implementation quality is satisfied, deployment economics are met, and real world performance is achieved. Specifications tell what technology is supposed to achieve, but in practice, it comes down to engineering implementation that varies from one manufacturer to the next and one installation to the next. All organizations should embrace this uncertainty and plan for Wi-Fi 8 infrastructure that is able to handle the new capabilities. The reliability improvements will be determined through research and practical experience over the next few years. This article lists the questions that need to be answered through laboratory testing, pilot deployments and production networks. Those answers will impact the speed and extent of industry uptake of Wi-Fi 8 and what benefits Wi-Fi 8 will bring to organizations and individuals that use it.

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