

Managing Networks in Unprecedented Times – Part 2

In our [previous post](#), CWTA reported on the dramatic changes in traffic volumes and usage patterns that Canada's telecommunications network operators experienced during the months of March and April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In that report, we highlighted how prompt action by Canada's facilities-based carriers and the resiliency of the communications networks enabled Canadians to quickly transition to remote work and the accelerated digitization of society. We also noted the many measures that facilities-based carriers have taken to help their customers and vulnerable communities during these difficult times. We continue to report on these measures on our [website](#).

This report provides an update on traffic volumes during May, a month in which some regions of Canada began to slowly loosen restrictions on the mobility of citizens and the reopening of some businesses.

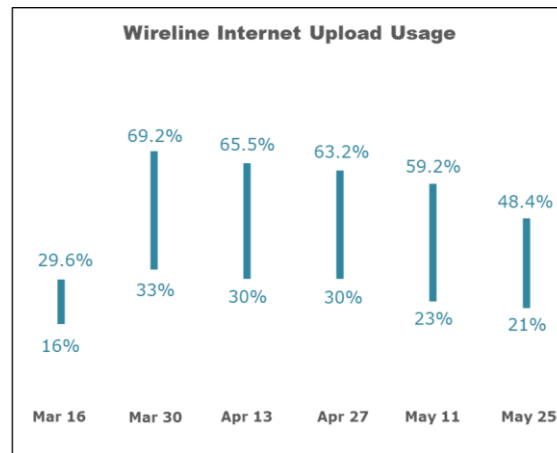
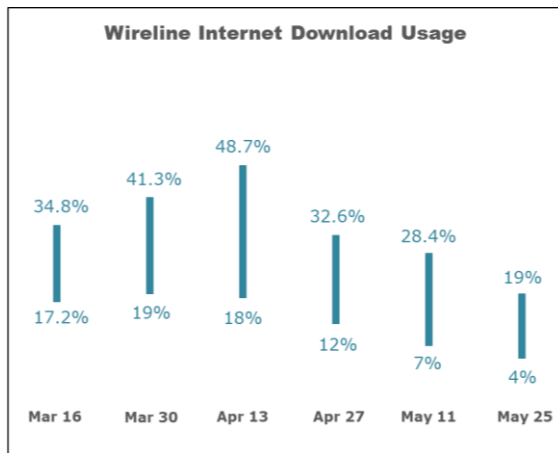
Highlights for May

- Wireline home internet traffic increased as much as 28.4% for downloads and 59.2% for uploads. This represents a slight moderation of traffic volumes compared to the highs in March and April, but still much greater than pre-COVID volume.
- Mobile data traffic volume continued to vary widely with changes ranging from + 41.5% to -25% for download traffic and + 40% to -13% for upload traffic.
- The median change in traffic volume for mobile data shows that download traffic volumes began to approach pre-COVID levels in the later part of May, with upload traffic volumes surpassing the pre-COVID baseline by 13.2%.
- Mobile voice call minutes continue to remain high, with increases of as much as 45.2%.

Traffic Volumes in May

Home Internet

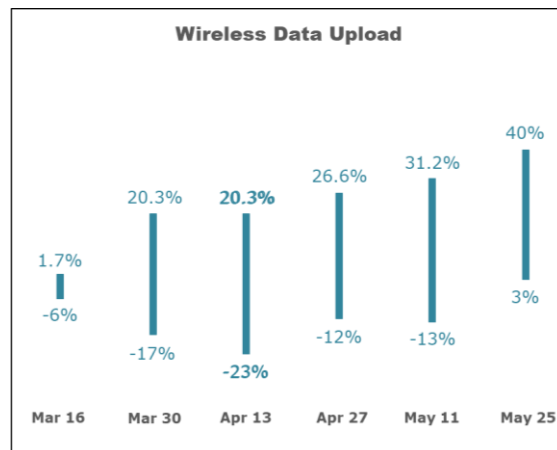
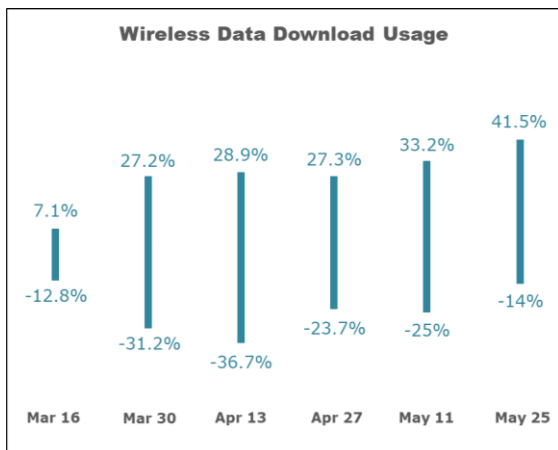
As the chart below shows, wireline traffic volumes moderated slightly in May, but still remained higher than the pre-COVID baseline volumes.



*The above charts show the range of increase in data volume among participating carriers compared to their pre-COVID-19 baseline average. Each carrier’s baseline average was determined using their averages for February 24, March 2 and March 9.

Mobile Wireless Data and Voice

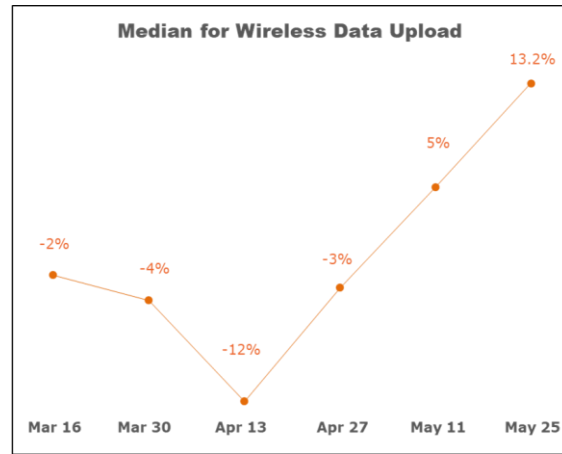
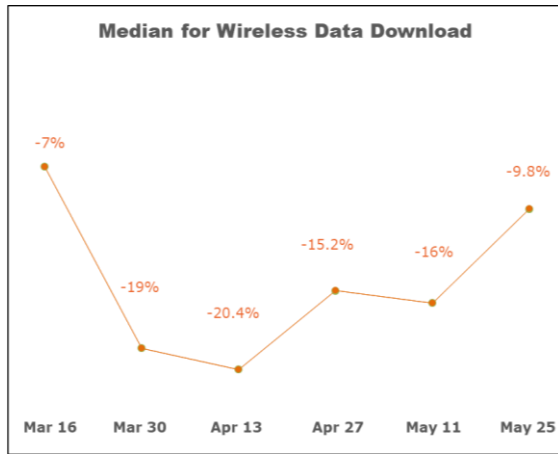
As in March and April, the change in volume for mobile wireless data traffic varies widely among carriers in May. For the dates surveyed we saw download and upload traffic volume increases by as much as 41.5% and 40%, respectively during May. On the other end of the spectrum, decreases in mobile wireless data download volumes were smaller than in March and April, while all carriers reported increases in upload traffic volumes on May 25.



*The above charts show the range of increase in data volume among participating carriers compared to their pre-COVID-19 baseline average. Each carrier’s baseline average was determined using their averages for February 24, March 2 and March 9.

For this report, we also take a closer look at the trend for mobile wireless traffic volumes by examining the median increases in volume. As the charts below show, in March and April, when most Canadians were asked to limit travel outside their homes, the median change in mobile wireless traffic volume among carriers surveyed shows a decrease in mobile wireless data volumes. In May, as restrictions in some regions of Canada began to loosen, the median trend for download traffic approaches the pre-

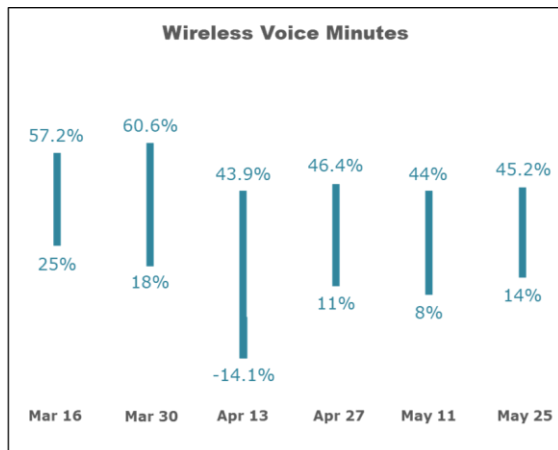
COVID baseline volume, while the median upload traffic volume is 13.2% higher than the pre-COVID baseline.



*The above charts show the median change in wireless data volume among participating carriers compared to their pre-COVID-19 baseline average. Each carrier’s baseline average was determined using their averages for February 24, March 2 and March 9.

Mobile Voice

As the chart below shows, the increase in mobile wireless call volume continued into May, with increases of up to 45.2% for the dates surveyed.



*The above chart shows the range of increase in calling minutes among participating carriers compared to their pre-COVID-19 baseline average. Each carrier’s baseline average was determined using their averages for February 24, March 2 and March 9. The low call minutes for April 13 is likely due to it being Easter Monday, resulting in less use of mobile calls for work purposes.

Conclusion

As Canada begins the slow process of reopening its economy, the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic remain unclear. However, what is certain is that Canadians’ increased reliance on telecommunication services will continue into the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sudden acceleration in the digitization of our society, with businesses and governments moving more of their operations online, and individuals increasingly using technology to work and to stay in touch with one another.

While usage patterns have changed slightly during the last three months, traffic volumes remain high. Fortunately, Canada's telecommunications networks have remained resilient, as facilities-based carriers continue to monitor their networks around-the-clock, invest in additional capacity where necessary, and work with government, business, and individual customers to address challenges caused by the pandemic.

Note: Network operators surveyed were Bell, Rogers, TELUS, Shaw/Freedom, Videotron, SaskTel and Tbaytel.