
Press release

MOBILE NETWORKS

Arcep publishes a report on the impact that the shutdown of 2G and 3G technologies will have on mobile network coverage

Paris, 30 March 2026

Mobile operators have announced their timetables for phasing out 2G and 3G technologies on their networks between the end of March 2026 and 2029 in Metropolitan France. These networks will continue to function with 4G and 5G technologies. Arcep is particularly mindful of the actions being put into place with operators' customers to make them aware of this shutdown and, if required, to help them take the necessary steps to prepare for it. The Authority is keen to ensure that users and every stakeholder have all of the useful information they need to achieve this. It provides current figures on the use of 2G and 3G technologies, and today is publishing a report from the Expert Committee charged with providing independent opinions on mobile networks (see inset below). **This report analyses the impact that the sunseting of 2G and 3G technologies will have on mobile network coverage in Metropolitan France.**

This report is part of the work that Arcep is doing to monitor the switchoff of 2G/3G technologies and its impact on users

The widespread availability of 4G, along with the steady growth of the base of devices compatible with 4G services, is leading operators to phase out their 2G and 3G networks. This is a trend that is happening worldwide¹.

In France, the decisions to switch off 2G and 3G technologies are part of operators' strategies, and their timetables have been set². Arcep has already published information, analyses and observatories tracking this shutdown, which is being further supplemented by today's report.

Steadily decreasing use of 2G and 3G technologies as the shutdown nears

At the end of December 2025, the total number of SIM cards installed in devices that were only 2G or 3G/2G compatible stood at 2.4 million, marking an 11% decrease in six months. Regarding VoLTE-compatible³ devices, measurements taken by Arcep in the field by in 2025 revealed that less than 0.1% of successful mobile voice/SMS/internet communications were in 2G and less than 0.9% of successful mobile voice/SMS/internet communications were in 3G. These figures nevertheless raise two questions:

- As the announced shutdown of 2G looms, is there a difference in voice, IoT and mobile internet service coverage depending on whether they are being provided using 2G, 3G or 4G/5G technologies?
- How will coverage for each of these services evolve when 2G and 3G technologies are both fully shut down?

The switchoff of 2G then 3G networks is not expected to result in substantial variations in the level of coverage nationwide

¹ This is a global trend. In December 2025, the GSA¹ counted 303 operators that had announced their upcoming 2G and/or 3G network switchoff, or that had already completed their shutdown. Cf: <https://gsacom.com/paper/2g-3g-switch-off-december-2025/>

² The announced switchoff from France's three main mobile networks as of this writing: (Orange) <https://reseaux.orange-business.com/articles/arret-2g-et-3g/>, (SFR) https://alticefrance.com/sites/default/files/pdf/20230125_CP_SFR_Nokia_5G.pdf, (Bouygues Telecom) <https://www.bouyguetelecom-entreprises.fr/blog/arret-programme-des-technologies-2g-et-3g-4-questions-pour-tout-comprendre/#:-:text=S'inscrivant%20dans%20ce%20mouvement.ans%20plus%20tard%2C%20fin%202029> and (Free mobile) <https://assistance.free.fr/articles/1927>

³ Voice over LTE (VoLTE) refers to the feature enabling voice calls over a 4G network.

The report concludes that:

- for IoT and mobile internet services, the 4G radio interface intrinsically delivers superior performances to 2G/3G networks;
- regarding voice services, although some of the technical features that are proper to 4G are likely to generate gaps in the level of VoLTE coverage and coverage for classic 2G/3G voice services at the expense of VoLTE, 4G technology and its recent evolutions, along with advances in network engineering, give operators the ability to activate several levers to improve VoLTE service coverage and counterbalance the identified limitations compared to 2G/3G.

In light of these elements, it does not appear likely that the switchoff of the 2G then 3G networks will result in substantial variations in the level of mobile coverage nationwide. Here, the report underscores that operators have the means to manage the switchoff of 2G then 3G without any regression in mobile coverage for customers equipped with devices that are VoLTE-compatible for voice services.

A report produced by the Technical Experts Committee on mobile networks

Arcep created the Technical Experts Committee on mobile networks in 2018. Made up of technical experts representing mobile network operators and equipment suppliers, along with participants from academia and French national frequency agency, ANFR, the Committee can deliver opinions of a technical nature that are independent from those of Arcep, creating the ability to share information, opinions of sectoral consensus on any technical matter relating to mobile network technologies. Chaired by Olivier Taffin (Head of radio access network technologies at Nokia), the Committee's secretarial duties and management are assured by Arcep⁴.

- [An FAQ for users \(in French\): "2G and 3G mobile network sunsets: Are you ready?"](#)
- [Report on the carbon impact of shutting down 2G/3G network and migrating their voice and M2M services to 4G/5G](#)
- [Quarterly observatory of SIM cards used in devices that are only 2G and 3G compatible](#)

Associated document

- [Report on the impact that the shutdown of 2G and 3G technologies will have on mobile network coverage in Metropolitan France \(in French\)](#)

Arcep at a glance

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications, Postal Affairs and Print Media Distribution (Arcep), a neutral and expert arbitrator with the status of independent administrative authority (AIA), is the architect and guardian of internet, fixed and mobile electronic communications, postal and press distribution networks in France.

⁴ <https://www.arcep.fr/la-regulation/grands-dossiers-reseaux-mobiles/comite-experts-mobile.html>