

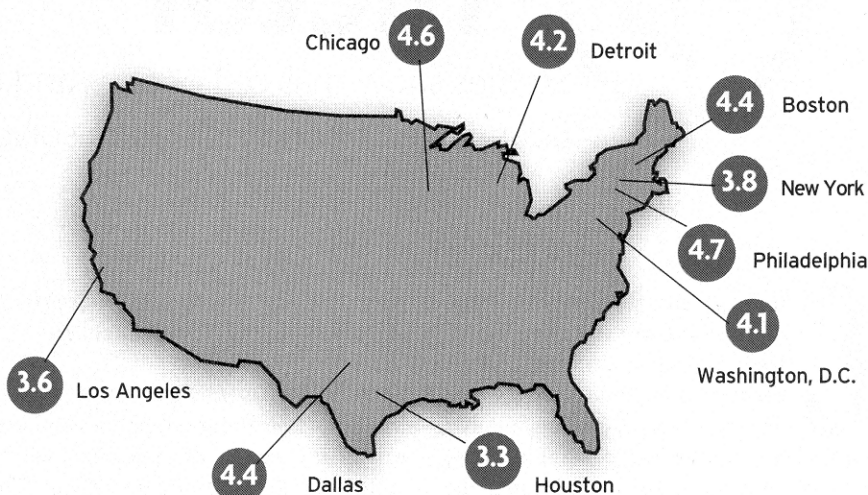
A rare look at cell-phone service and coverage

Rating overall performance in major cities

The scores shown at right are the first objective, overall ratings of providers' performance available to consumers.

We asked Telephia, a leading provider of market information for the cell-phone industry, to assess overall performance in nine major metropolitan areas, using its own 5-point scale (5 is best, 1 is worst). The company assessed five to seven providers in each metropolitan area, using its drive-test methodology: Company engineers drove specially instrumented vans through each area, making calls continually and measuring the quality of coverage, dropped calls, and blocked calls. The performance scores shown here are the average of individual-carrier scores weighted by their October 2001 market shares.

If you want to get cellular service or change providers, ask neighbors or colleagues for recommendations. Or try a prepaid plan first; that way, you can easily switch providers if the service isn't to your liking.

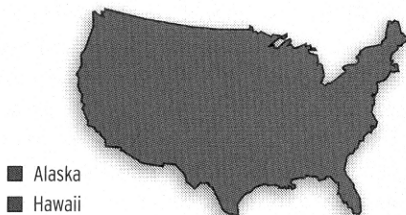


Source: Telephia. For more information, go to www.telephia.com.

National coverage? Not quite.

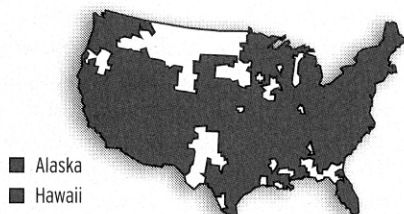
These five cellular providers claim coast-to-coast or nationwide coverage, but that can be misleading. Colored areas of the maps, drawn using data from a trade association, show each carrier's licensed home area, where you can call without roaming charges—if, that is, you can get a signal. In fact, some providers don't have towers throughout their licensed areas, but they may provide service in some locales through roaming arrangements with other carriers. Carriers don't have licenses in white areas but may offer service there, again through reciprocal agreements.

Source: Based on November 2000 data (the latest available) from the Cellular Telephone Internet Assn. Wireless Source Disks, version 3.3



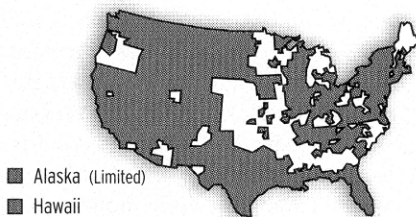
Sprint

On paper, this is a nationwide network "reaching more than 230 million people." However, Sprint has not yet built the towers needed to provide service everywhere in the U.S.



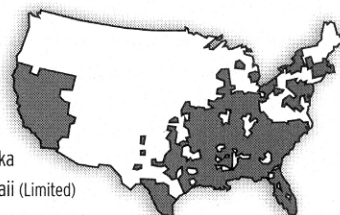
AT&T Wireless

Now a separate company from AT&T long distance, AT&T Wireless has cellular service through much of the U.S. However, it has no home service for the Northern Plains states.



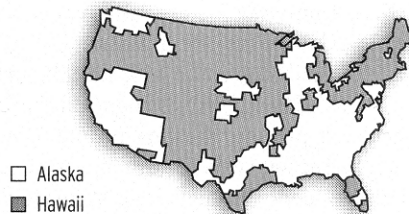
Verizon

The company bills itself as "the largest wireless communications provider in the U.S., with more than 28 million voice and data customers." It can rightly claim "coast-to-coast" coverage, but with gaps along the way—including a large swath of the Great Plains and the South.



Cingular

A joint venture of SBC and BellSouth, Cingular says it's "the second largest wireless company in the U.S.," serving 21.2 million customers in 38 states and the District of Columbia. But it actually has licenses only in a small geographic area. Denver, Minneapolis, New York, and Seattle are among the cities not licensed.



VoiceStream

Created through a merger with Deutsche Telekom and VoiceStream Wireless Corp., the company says it's "the nation's fastest-growing provider of all-digital personal communications services." As of mid-2001, it had some 6 million customers in 59 cities. But, like Sprint, it has not built towers to provide service in all areas.