

Internet Service Provider Wi-Fi Hotspots

Wi-Fi hotspots are an important service that ISPs offer in order to differentiate themselves and extend their brands. Hotspots are locations where internet access is offered to the public via 802.11 Wi-Fi technology (a specification for implementing wireless local area networks [WLANs]).

By 2019, the CRTC reported over 51,000 hotspots available in Canada, with +12,000 of those in Alberta⁵⁶. However, this number is disputed by the largest provider of Wi-Fi hotspots in Canada (based on the number of access points available), the Shaw Go Wi-Fi network, which says it has more than 100,000 hotspots across Western Canada at the writing of this report in 2021⁵⁷. This is an increase from the 75,000 hotspots Shaw reported in Canada in 2016.

Regardless, there are many places to get free Wi-Fi access in Alberta. The full Shaw Go Wi-Fi network is open to Shaw customers, and is available for "Guest Access" in select locations⁵⁸. TELUS established its own Wi-Fi hotspots in 2015. By 2021, they had reported over 20,000 free hotspots across Western Canada. Bell also offers Wi-Fi access points across Alberta, with almost 500 partner retail outlet locations⁵⁹.

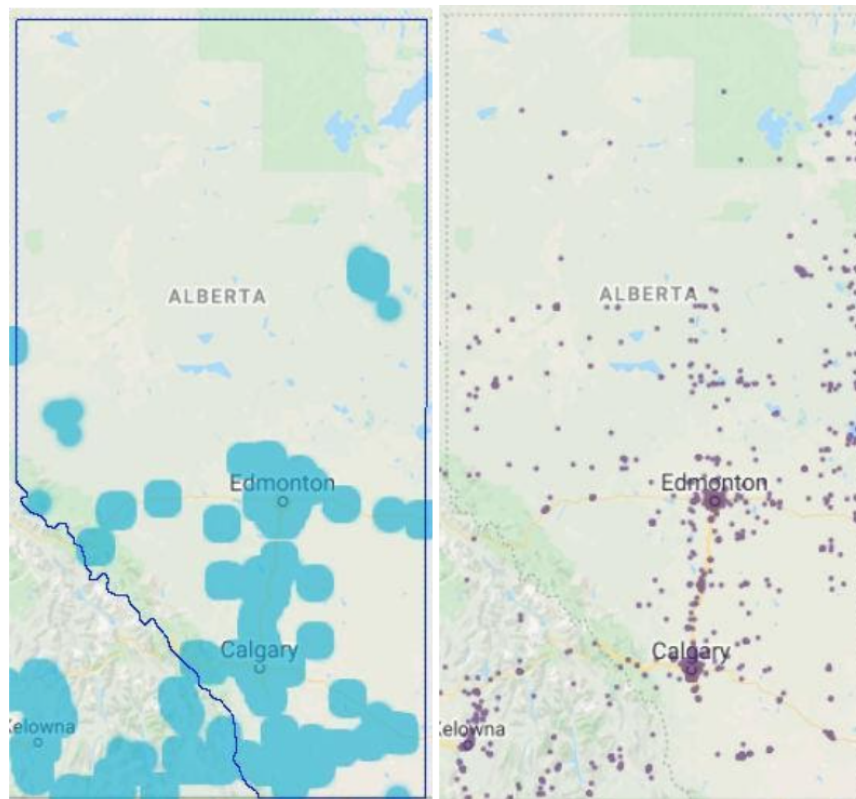


Figure 12. A comparison of “heat maps” between Shaw Go Wi-Fi (left) and TELUS’s free Wi-Fi (right) in Alberta, as of February 2021. TELUS’s map does have some inaccuracies outside of towns and cities, but shows more distribution than Shaw’s. Shaw has more sites in larger municipalities. Sources: Shaw Go Wi-Fi and TELUS Free Wi-Fi⁶⁰.

References

⁵⁶ CRTC. [Communications Monitoring Report 2020](#), page 98.

⁵⁷ Shaw. [Shaw Go Wi-Fi - Over 100,000 hotspots across Canada | Shaw](#). Accessed 22 February 2021.

⁵⁸ Shaw. [How to set up Guest Access for Shaw Go Wi-Fi](#). Accessed 22 February 2021.

⁵⁹ Bell. [Bell Wi-Fi locations](#). Accessed 22 February 2021.

⁶⁰ Shaw & TELUS. [Shaw Go Wi-Fi - Over 100,000 hotspots across Canada | Shaw & Free Internet & Free Wifi - Public Wifi Hotspots | TELUS](#). Accessed 22 February 2021.