

Travel eSIM Usage Study 2026

Observed data demand from mid July to early October and its implications for allowance selection

By NXTL | Research prepared 13 October 2026

Executive summary

- Approximately 75% of observed active NXTL accounts recorded less than 5 GB through the measured service over the main available-history study period.
- Mean account usage was approximately 6.7 times the median. With the mean indexed to 100, the median is approximately 15, or 85% below the mean.
- Approximately 14% of active accounts generated 82% of recorded data volume over that period.
- The fully covered recent 30-day supporting view also shows concentrated demand: approximately 82% of active accounts recorded less than 5 GB, and approximately 9% generated 71% of recorded volume.
- Excluding accounts with an inferred sparse, backup-like pattern increased the main-period mean by approximately 4%. The distribution remained skewed.

The main period is the available recorded history from 14 July through 10 October 2026 UTC, approximately 88 days including an initial partial day. Accounts were not necessarily active throughout that period. These are observed account totals across their included eSIMs, not confirmed trip sizes or representative traveller estimates. Exact operational counts, aggregate traffic and financial values are withheld. [1]

Research question and study design

How much does recorded data demand vary within a pay-as-you-go connectivity service, and what does that variation imply for consumers choosing an allowance?

The primary descriptive analysis uses the longest available consistent byte-based history. A fully covered recent 30-day view provides additional context using the same definitions. The analysis also tests inferred backup patterns and alternative definitions of usage episodes.

The source does not record confirmed departure and return dates, customer intent, purchased competitor allowances or application activity. Each account contributes one included usage total within the relevant observation window. An account may support several people or devices, and some accounts were active only briefly.

The recent window is contained within the main window, and the account populations overlap. Differences between their totals or distributions are not evidence of a month-to-month trend or independent replication. Longer observation can capture more activity from an account, without establishing the duration of a trip.

Main study period and recorded demand

The main available-history period begins on 14 July 2026 and ends immediately before 11 October UTC. The initial day is partial. Calling it a complete 90-day study or three complete calendar months would overstate coverage; the report describes it as approximately 88 days of recorded history. [1]

Recorded account usage during the main study period	Approximate share of active accounts
Below 1 GB	45%
1 GB to below 3 GB	21%
3 GB to below 5 GB	9%
5 GB to below 10 GB	11%
10 GB or more	14%

Source: NXTL observed active-account totals in the available history, 14 July–10 October 2026 UTC. Categories are mutually exclusive. Shares are rounded to whole percentage points. GB thresholds are consumption bands, not disclosed aggregate traffic totals. [1]

Approximately three quarters of observed active accounts recorded less than 5 GB over this window. Meanwhile, the approximately 14% with totals of at least 10 GB generated approximately 82% of included bytes. Higher-volume accounts and business accounts were retained. Their usage is part of the observed cohort's demand. [1]

This concentration does not establish why those accounts used more data. The source cannot identify tethering, streaming or particular applications. It also cannot establish the total number of people served by an account. The heavier group is therefore described by volume rather than by an assumed behavior.

Mean and median describe different parts of demand

The arithmetic mean divides total included usage by the number of active accounts. The median is the middle total after ordering account observations by volume. In the main study period, the mean is approximately 6.7 times the median. [1]

The public presentation sets the mean to an index of 100. The median is approximately 15 on that scale, or approximately 85% below the mean. The index does not disclose absolute usage, and it does not represent a percentage of accounts.

Summary measure	Normalized account usage index
Arithmetic mean	100
Median	Approximately 15

Source: NXTL main-period account totals. Mean equals 100 by definition; the median index is rounded. [1]

The mean represents the whole distribution but can be pulled upward by heavier observations. The median shows its midpoint but says little about higher demand. A consumer choosing a future allowance needs to consider their own expected use rather than treating either number as a universal recommendation.

Recent 30 day supporting view

The supporting window covers 11 September through 10 October 2026, inclusive, in UTC. Its stored source coverage is complete. The same account-level aggregation and primary exclusions apply. [1]

Finding	Main available history	Recent 30 days
Active accounts with recorded totals below 5 GB	Approximately 75%	Approximately 82%
Mean relative to median	Approximately 6.7 times	Approximately 5.9 times
Median on an index with mean equal to 100	Approximately 15	Approximately 17
Share of active accounts with totals of at least 10 GB	Approximately 14%	Approximately 9%
Share of bytes generated by that highest usage band	Approximately 82%	Approximately 71%

Source: NXTL observed account totals. The windows overlap and have different lengths and eligible account populations. They are not independent samples, comparable per-day rates or evidence of a time trend. Percentages and indices are rounded. [1]

Both views describe considerable variation within their observed populations. Their agreement on a broad pattern is useful descriptive context. It does not make the cohort representative of travellers, eliminate PAYG selection effects or establish that each account used the service throughout a window.

Effect of inferred backup patterns

The main-period backup sensitivity analysis classifies sparse, backup-like accounts using activity timing and inactivity gaps over an extended observed span. Low volume alone does not establish backup use. [1]

Excluding that group increases the mean account total by approximately 4% and the median by approximately 6%. The share below 5 GB changes from approximately 75% to 74%. The broad distribution remains skewed. [1]

Some backup users may remain in other classifications, while Wi-Fi-heavy travel can resemble intermittent use. The classifications are inferred activity patterns rather than verified customer purposes. In the main period, approximately 24% of accounts meet the base sustained-use rule and contribute about 65% of included bytes. [1]

These checks address one possible explanation for the distribution. They do not prove that all low-volume accounts are travellers or that all sustained-use accounts have the same connectivity needs.

Sensitivity to the definition of a usage episode

A usage episode is an inferred span of eSIM activity separated from another episode by a specified number of complete inactive UTC days. Inactivity can reflect the end of a journey, Wi-Fi use or occasional backup connectivity.

Using seven inactive days as the reference rule, alternative definitions produce the following changes in mean episode size. Each rule changes both grouping and the eligible closed sample; this is not a controlled comparison of identical episodes. [1]

Inactivity gap used to separate episodes	Approximate mean episode size relative to the seven-day rule
3 days	31% lower
7 days	Reference definition
14 days	39% higher

Source: NXTL available-history episode sensitivity analysis. Episodes affected by observation boundaries or unresolved usage are excluded from closed summaries. These are inferred eSIM usage episodes, not verified trips. [1]

The size of these differences prevents us from selecting one rule and presenting its result as a universal average trip. Classification into travel-like patterns also changes when stricter country-transition rules are used. Single-country travellers can remain unclassified.

Relevance to allowance selection and expiry

Provider terms establish what happens to unused allowance. Airalo states that remaining package data cannot be used after validity ends. Saily similarly states that a plan and any remaining data expire when its validity period ends. These are documented product rules, not measurements of actual customer waste. [2][3]

Consumers should also check when validity begins. Airalo explains that installation or connection to a supported network can start the clock, depending on the package. Keeping an eSIM profile installed does not by itself establish that its expired allowance carries forward. [4]

Smaller fixed allowances already exist: the Saily global page reviewed offers options below 10 GB, as well as larger allowances. This study has not established that large packages dominate market sales or that consumers are forced into them. [7]

PAYG is another available model. NXTL charges recorded usage against account balance, while Roamless also offers PAYG credits and states that those credits do not expire. The present study does not rank those services or establish that PAYG always costs less. [5][6]

A suitable comparison must account for expected volume, destination coverage, validity, setup fees, top-ups and relevant service conditions. An unused allowance can still belong to a good-value package. Allocating purchase price to unused data does not automatically establish achievable savings.

The observed variation supports examining more than one usage scenario when choosing connectivity. It does not prove that the cohort bought oversized bundles, lost money at expiry or would have achieved a particular saving elsewhere.

Methodology and disclosure

This exploratory research was prepared on 13 October 2026 from stored NXTL/OCS network usage detail. The main analysis uses available recorded history from 14 July to 10 October 2026 UTC, with a partial initial day. The recent supporting period is 11 September–10 October. The exclusive cutoff is 11 October at 00:00 UTC, more than 48 hours before extraction. The intended 90-day and 180-day analyses lack earlier byte history; missing history is not treated as zero traffic. [1]

An active account has positive included usage in the relevant window. Summaries combine its included eSIM traffic once. Stored usage timestamps, rather than processing timestamps, determine period membership. Decimal GB thresholds use 1 GB = 1,000,000,000 bytes. The source does not measure Wi-Fi or other SIMs, and no confirmed trip duration or customer purpose is available.

Known staff/admin traffic and ambiguous differing-quantity records are excluded from primary results. Higher-volume and business accounts are retained. Alternative quantity scenarios change the main-period mean by less than 1%, with the same median and below-5-GB share. An aligned historical extraction matches an existing NXTL usage report, establishing reporting consistency rather than an independent supplier completeness audit. Separate supplier aggregates were not combined because their time alignment remains unresolved. [1]

Activity-pattern rules use observed spans, active-day density, country transitions and inactivity gaps. They were tested under alternative definitions and do not establish actual travel or backup intent. Closed episodes exclude relevant observation-boundary and unresolved-source cases. Their sensitivity is reported descriptively.

Public results use rounded whole percentages and normalized indices. Exact account and eSIM counts, record counts, total traffic, absolute usage summaries, charges and individual observations are commercially confidential. Calculation records are retained privately and have not been independently reviewed. Withheld denominators limit external assessment of sample scale and precision; no confidence intervals or significance claims are made.

The cohort is not a representative sample of international travellers, bundle buyers or all NXTL network sources. Accounts can support multiple devices and people. They were not necessarily active throughout the study period. PAYG customers may have different needs from customers selecting fixed allowances. Longer coverage improves the amount of observed history, but does not resolve these selection and measurement limits.

NXTL sells PAYG connectivity and has a commercial interest in the subject. This is descriptive company research. It does not measure purchased competitor allowances, actual expired data, destination rankings or global financial waste. Rounding reduces published precision but does not provide a formal guarantee against inference from other sources.

Sources

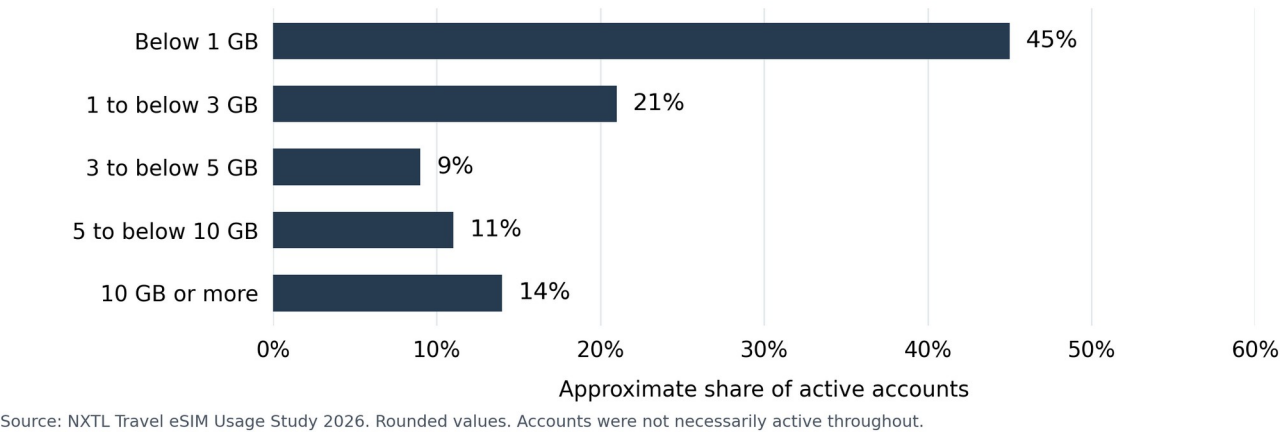
1. NXTL observed usage research, prepared 13 October 2026. Internal aggregates, classification sensitivity and source reconciliation. Public methodology and rounded chart data accompany this paper; underlying operational denominators and totals remain private.
2. Airalo Help Center, "What happens to the unused data after the validity period?" [Read the source](#)
3. Saily Help Center, "Saily data plan management." [Read the source](#)
4. Airalo Help Center, "How do data amounts and validity periods work for eSIM packages?" [Read the source](#)
5. Roamless Support, "How Roamless Pay-as-you-go Credits Work." [Read the source](#)
6. NXTL eSIM, current service overview. [Read the source](#)
7. Saily Global eSIM Plans, options reviewed 13 October 2026. [Read the source](#)

Provider documentation checked 13 October 2026. Research preparation, observation cutoff and actual publication date are distinct. Conditions can change; recheck the specific offer before buying.

Shareable main period charts

75% recorded less than 5 GB

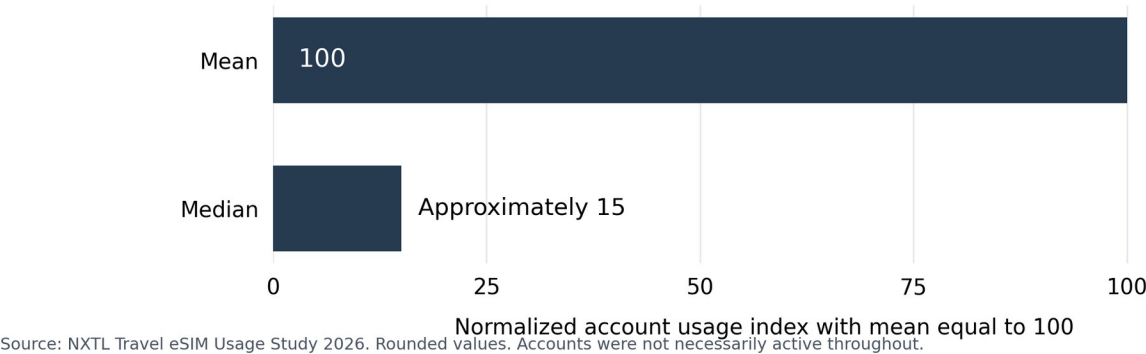
Observed NXTL accounts | 14 July-10 October 2026 UTC | Initial day partial



Rounded distribution of account totals in the available history. Source: NXTL Travel eSIM Usage Study 2026.

The median was 85% below the mean

Observed NXTL accounts | 14 July-10 October 2026 UTC | Initial day partial



Normalized mean and median in the main study period. Index values are not GB or percentages of accounts.