

# Nearly a third of all US media time will be on mobile this year

Article

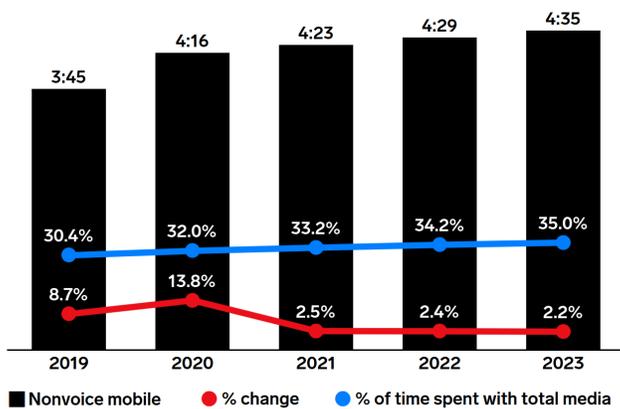
As the US begins to emerge from the pandemic, people are re-entering the world with new habits, including new mobile behaviors. This year, the time US adults spend on mobile devices will continue to grow, albeit at a slower rate than last year. Nearly a third of their daily time spent with media will be on mobile.

Whether hunkered down at home or working in jobs that require a physical presence, most people have changed their behaviors over the past year—either to preserve their health or because of changes in options for entertainment, shopping, school, or work. That’s had a profound impact on how media is consumed.

Prior to the pandemic, we expected growth in mobile time spent to slow and level off within a few years. Instead, average time spent on smartphones, tablets, and feature phones in 2020 increased by just over half an hour per day to reach 4 hours, 16 minutes (4:16), about 28 minutes more than we had predicted back in November 2019.

**Nonvoice Mobile: Average Time Spent in the US, 2019-2023**

hrs:mins per day among population, % change, and % of time spent with total media



Note: ages 18+; includes all time spent with nonvoice activities on mobile devices, regardless of multitasking  
Source: eMarketer, April 2021

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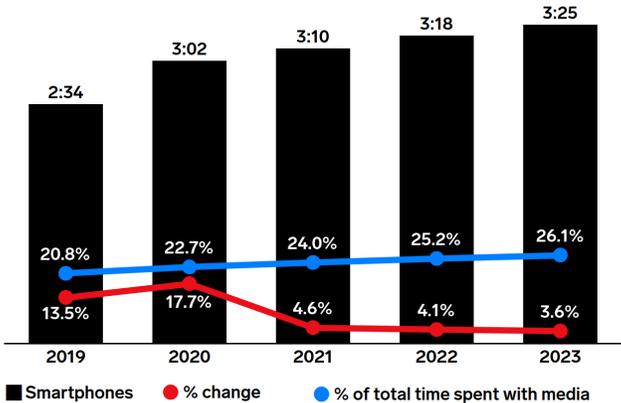
Last year’s 13.8% growth was mobile’s fastest annual increase since 2014. Growth will slow to 2% or 3% year over year (YoY) through the end of our forecast in 2023, but these growth rates sit on top of a higher base. In 2023, the average US adult will spend 4:35 per day on mobile devices.

Mobile will account for close to a third (33.2%) of time spent with any form of media in 2021. By the end of 2023, that share will climb to 35.0%. The 4:23 per day that the average US adult will spend on mobile this year will also account for 54.8% of the 7:59 of daily time spent with digital media.

A large majority (72.3%) of mobile time will be spent on smartphones in 2021. At 3:10 per day, time spent with smartphones will be up a modest 4.6% over last year. But this follows 2020’s

surge of 17.7%, the fastest growth in smartphone time spent since 2014. Even more impressive, 2020's big increase followed an unusually strong year for smartphone growth in 2019, when time spent increased 13.5%, due in part to rapid growth for premium subscription video-on-demand (SVOD), TikTok, and podcasting. We expect growth to slow to a more sustainable 3% to 5% through 2023.

**Smartphones: Average Time Spent in the US, 2019-2023**  
 hrs:mins per day among population, % change, and % of total time spent with media



Note: ages 18+; includes all internet and non-internet activities on smartphones except for voice calls on the cellular network; calls through VoIP or video chat apps, such as Skype, are included  
 Source: eMarketer, April 2021

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Tablets also had a strong 2020. Time spent was up 5.7% YoY to 1:13, the first meaningful increase these devices had seen since 2017. We expect 2020 to be peak year for tablet use, which will slowly decrease through 2023—but with a higher baseline than we had expected before the pandemic.

Most of the growth in tablet and smartphone time came from additional usage by existing users, rather than from the addition of new users. In fact, there was no significant change in longer-term patterns of user growth for either type of device. In 2019, the number of adult smartphone users grew 4.1% YoY. Growth slowed slightly last year, to 3.2%, and it will be below 2% through 2023. The number of adult tablet users increased by 1.2% in 2019 and by 1.1% in 2020, and we expect the user base will contract very slightly in 2021 and 2022. If there was a bump in users during the pandemic, it was barely perceptible.

Among the 219.2 million adult smartphone users, the average daily time spent on smartphones in 2021 will hit 3:46, up 8 minutes from 2020. The 136.1 million adult tablet users

will spend a daily average of 2:16 on those devices in 2021, down 2 minutes from 2020. In contrast, tablet time increased by 7 minutes in 2020 to reach slightly more than 2:18—the highest average usage since 2016.

To learn more about how the pandemic has changed US consumer behavior on mobile devices, Insider Intelligence subscribers can read our recent report:

**Report** by Yoram Wurmser Jun 02, 2021

## US Time Spent with Mobile 2021

