

# Wearables saw explosive —but conditional— growth in 2020

Article

2020 was a landmark year for wearables adoption, **according to** a new IDC report. Worldwide wearables shipments reached 444.7 million units in 2020, a 28.4% increase year over year (YoY), and in Q4 alone, shipments increased 27.2% YoY to reach 153.5 million units.

Apple made up the lion's share of those Q4 shipments, with 55.6 million units and a 36.2% share of the global wearables market. For comparison, the two closest competitors, Xiaomi

and Samsung, lagged far behind Apple, with 8.8% and 8.5% market share in Q4, respectively. Apple's dominance was driven largely by a 45.6% YoY increase in shipments of its Watch devices, and a 22% YoY increase in hearables.

**Part of the adoption surge in the US can be attributed to the coronavirus pandemic, which saw renewed consumer interest in wearables and increased consumer electronics spending generally.** Many consumers have turned to wearables during the pandemic to help manage their own physical and mental health. Fifty-four percent of US adults reported using a digital wearable to track at least one health metric last year, **according to** Rock Health's 2020 Digital Health Consumer Adoption Report, an increase from 44% the previous year. Further, 46% of respondents began using their wearables for a new purpose during the pandemic, with the most popular reported new uses being to manage a diagnosed health condition (66%), fitness tracking (34%), and trying to become more physically active (32%).

**At the same time, overall US consumer spending on electronics also increased last year.** US sales of consumer technology through December were up 17% compared with the previous year, **according to** NPD Group's recent Future of Tech forecast. The increase in consumer tech sales, which NPD attributes to the pandemic, represents "the strongest growth in at least seven years."

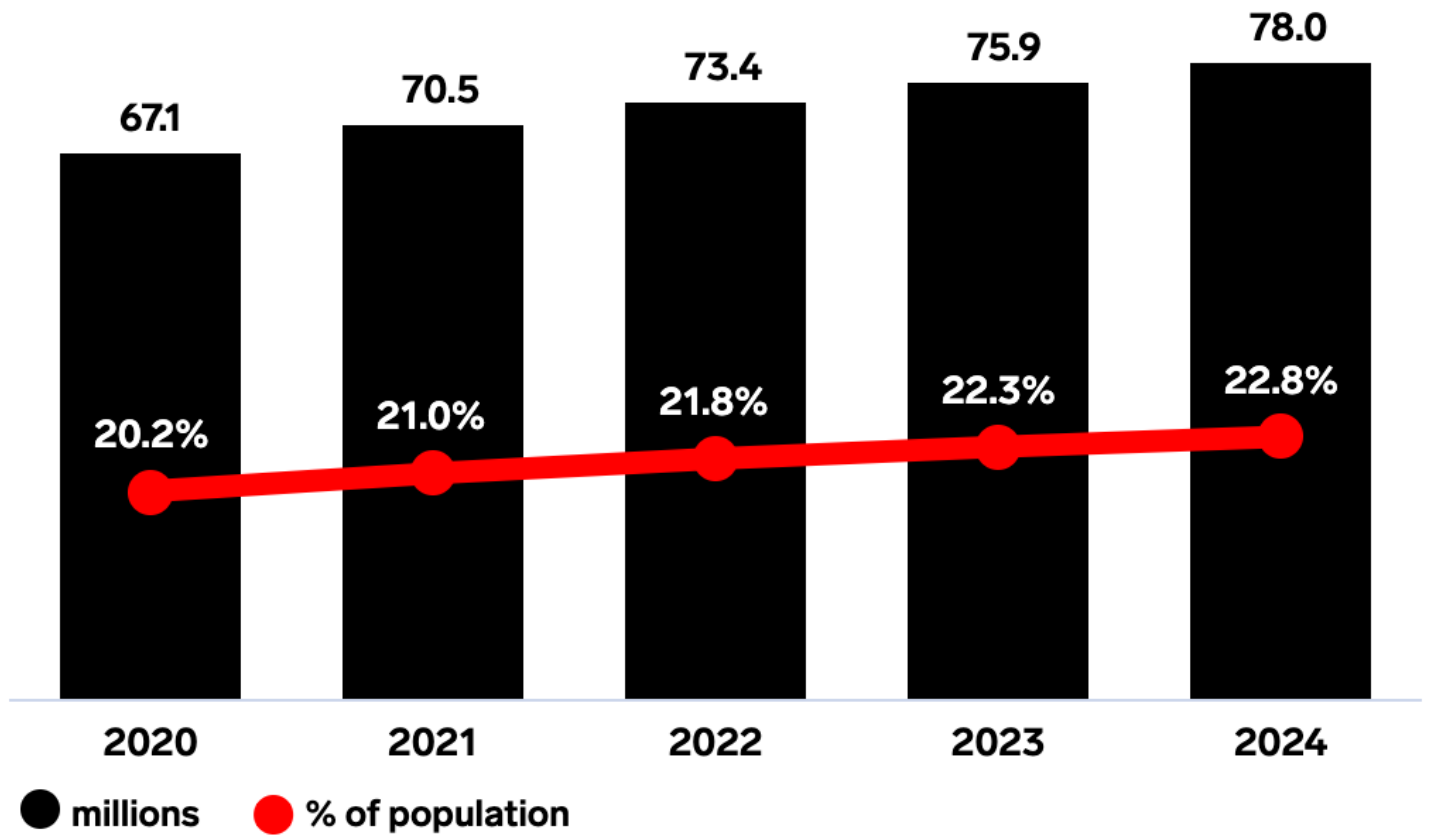
**It's unclear whether the recent uptick in wearables will outlive the pandemic boom.**

eMarketer's latest US Smart Wearable Users **forecast** expects 21% of the US population will use a wearable device at least once per month by the end of 2021, a slight increase from 20.2% projected at the end of 2020. From there, the forecast expects only modest growth in smart wearable adoption, eventually reaching 22.8% of the population by the end of 2024.

The eMarketer forecast indicates the pandemic-driven wearables boom may struggle to maintain its pace once living conditions eventually return to some degree of pre-pandemic normality.

# Smart Wearable Users

US, 2020-2024



Source: eMarketer, September 2020

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