

# Google-owned Fitbit wins FDA clearance for its heart-monitoring algorithm

Article

**The news:** Google-owned Fitbit received FDA clearance for its new photoplethysmography (PPG) algorithm to identify atrial fibrillation (AFib), [per](#) a company blog post.

- The algorithm can passively assess a user's heart rhythm in the background while they're still or asleep.
- If it detects an irregular heart rhythm, Fitbit will notify the wearable user, who can then speak with a healthcare provider to seek further treatment.

**How it works:** The algorithm will make Fitbit's heart monitoring features easier to use than its current spot-check approach to detecting AFib.

Fitbit's EKG app lets users assess themselves for possible AFib by recording an EKG trace, and users can then generate a report to share with their physicians. In contrast, the new algorithm will be able to detect AFib 24/7 without needing to spot-check manually, which can appeal to what consumers already like about commercial wearables: their ease of use.

About **43% of consumers think commercial wearables (like Fitbit, Apple Watch, or Oura) are easier to use than their medically prescribed devices, according to** a January 2022 Software Advice survey of 476 US patients.

**The bigger picture:** Fitbit's new algorithm will help it keep up with the Apple Watch's features as Apple continues to dominate the wearables space.

Since 2020, the Apple Watch has offered users a similar FDA-cleared feature that regularly checks a user's heart rhythm in the background for signs of AFib. Now, **Apple is working on other health-monitoring features for its Watch, like blood pressure and fertility tracking,** which will likely help the tech giant keep its top spot in wearable sales.

And despite a supply chain crunch, Apple maintained its lead in wearable shipments during Q4'21 by shipping nearly **60 million units**, far ahead of **Xiaomi**, which ranked second with **14.6 million units**, per IDC data.

- Notably, Google's Fitbit didn't make IDC's top 5 list this year (or in Q4'21), which likely means it had fewer than **9.2 million shipments** (the number of wearables Imagine Marketing shipped, earning it the fifth spot in the list).
- Fitbit's new AFib-detecting algorithm could help the wearable company close the shipments gap between its competitors, especially as it appeals to more consumers this year with additional features, including glucose tracking.

## Wearable Device Shipments Worldwide, by Brand, 2020 & 2021

millions, % of total, and % change

	2020	% of total	2021	% of total	% change
Apple	151.5	34.1%	161.8	30.3%	6.8%
Xiaomi	50.8	11.4%	54.4	10.2%	7.1%
Samsung	40.1	9.0%	48.1	9.0%	20.1%
Huawei	34.0	7.6%	42.7	8.0%	25.6%
Imagine Marketing (boAt)	10.2	2.3%	26.8	5.0%	163.4%
Other	158.2	35.6%	199.9	37.5%	26.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>444.7</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>533.6</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>20.0%</b>

Note: numbers may not add up to total due to rounding

Source: International Data Corporation (IDC), "Worldwide Quarterly Wearable Device Tracker" as cited in press release, March 9, 2022

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