

It's Apple's time to dominate smartwatches — competitors hope they can be stronger together

Article

The wearables market saw record sales in Q1 2021 as global shipments topped 100 million units for the first time, [per](#) Counterpoint Research. Apple maintained its leadership position

with 33.5% of total shipments and a 50% year-over-year increase in sales of its diversified Apple Watch line.

Apple wasn't the first smartwatch-maker to market, but its recent forays into fitness and health are paying off.

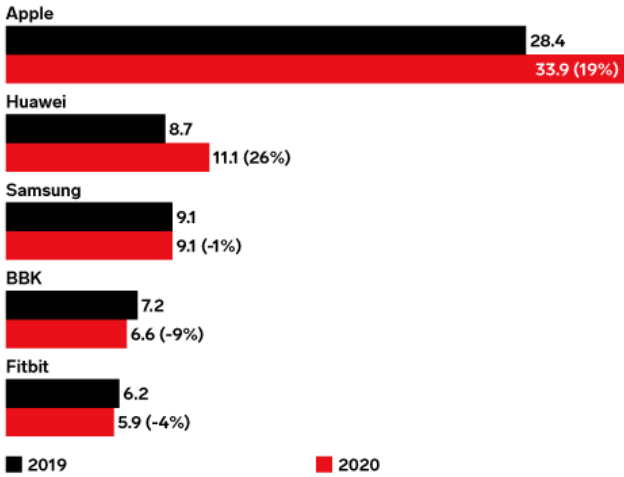
- **Apple seamlessly integrates Watch hardware and software with its other ecosystems:** Apple Watch users have access to Apple Fitness workouts, they also use the watch with iPhones, iPads, and Macs as an access control device and as a mobile payments solution.
- **Personal health features were highly valued during the pandemic:** Aside from fitness tracking, Apple Watch offers handwashing timers, blood oxygen sensors, a fall-detection feature, irregular heart rate (A-fib) notifications, and an EKG. Many consumers see these as essential features for their personal health and safety.
- **Accessibility updates are on the way:** AssistiveTouch, an [upcoming](#) feature, will allow Watch users to operate the wearable without touching the screen or controls. The Watch will sense gestures like pinches or fist clenches to trigger specific apps or features. AssistiveTouch will add another accessibility component to Apple's sizable health stack.

Google is [mobilizing](#) a consolidation of Wear OS, Fitbit, and Samsung's Tizen OS under its new Wear platform. Google says it is bringing the best of these platforms into a single experience later this year. Google will develop software to run on hardware created by Samsung. In turn, Fitbit will contribute its fitness and health tracking services.

Despite the consolidation of features and platforms, Wear will still be lagging behind Apple Watch on several fronts. Google will need to interest developers to create apps, appease customers with concerns about data collection, and convince existing Fitbit and Tizen OS loyalists to migrate to the new platform.

Top 5 Smartwatch Brands Worldwide, Ranked by Shipments, 2019 & 2020

millions and % change



Source: Counterpoint Technology Market Research as cited in press release, March 5, 2021

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