

Electronics in **F**OCUS

**Smart wearables
feature more health &
safety applications**

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Introduction

Wearable technology or smart wearables are rising in popularity and significant revenue growth is forecast for the sector.

Consumers are primarily adopting these electronic devices for sports, fitness tracking and health monitoring, but there is increasing penetration of smart wearables alongside the expansion of their applications in areas like telemedicine, navigation, infotainment and communication.

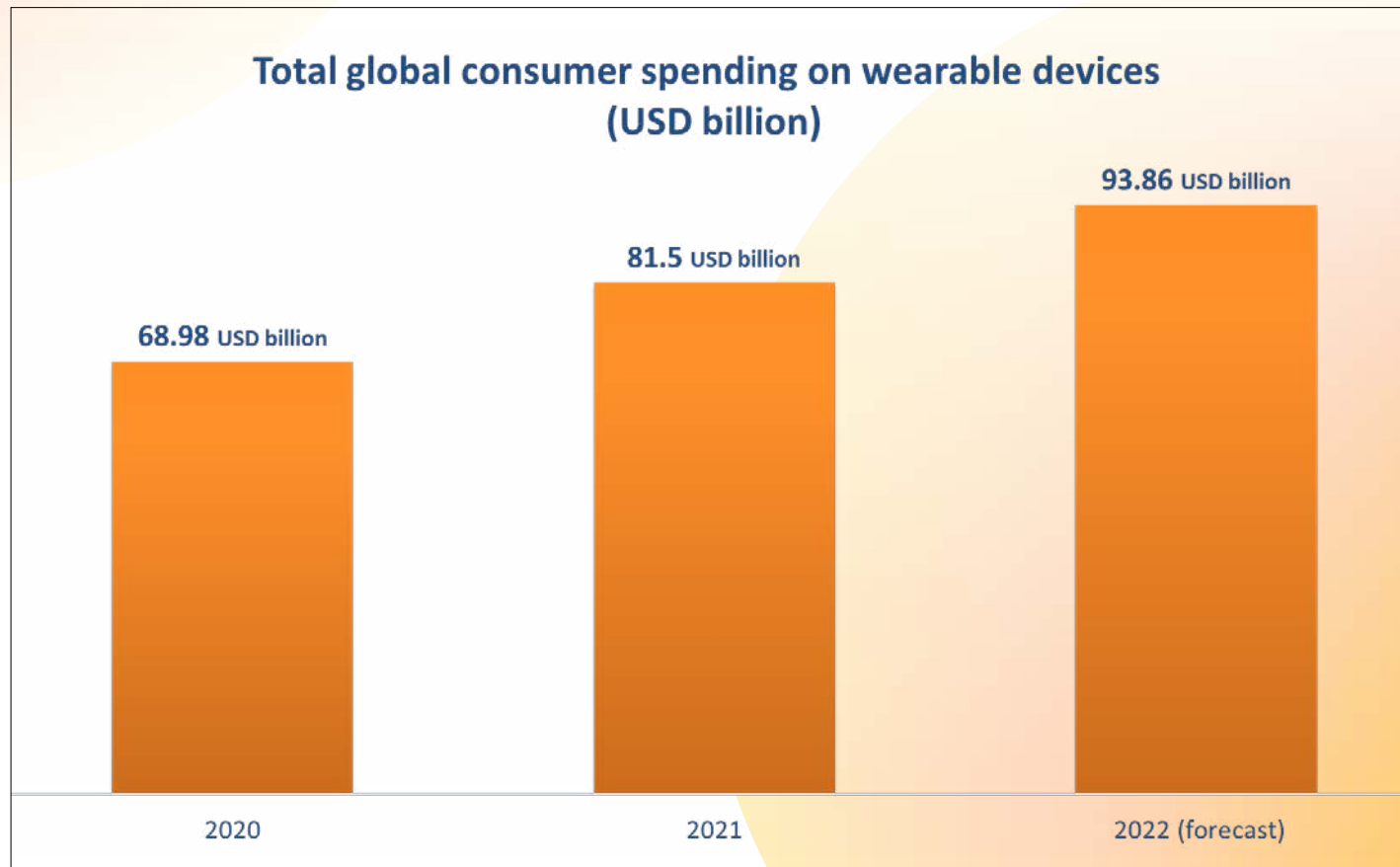
Some industry observers, including Market Research Future (MRF), are even predicting that smart wearables may replace smartphones in the near future.



Key market statistics

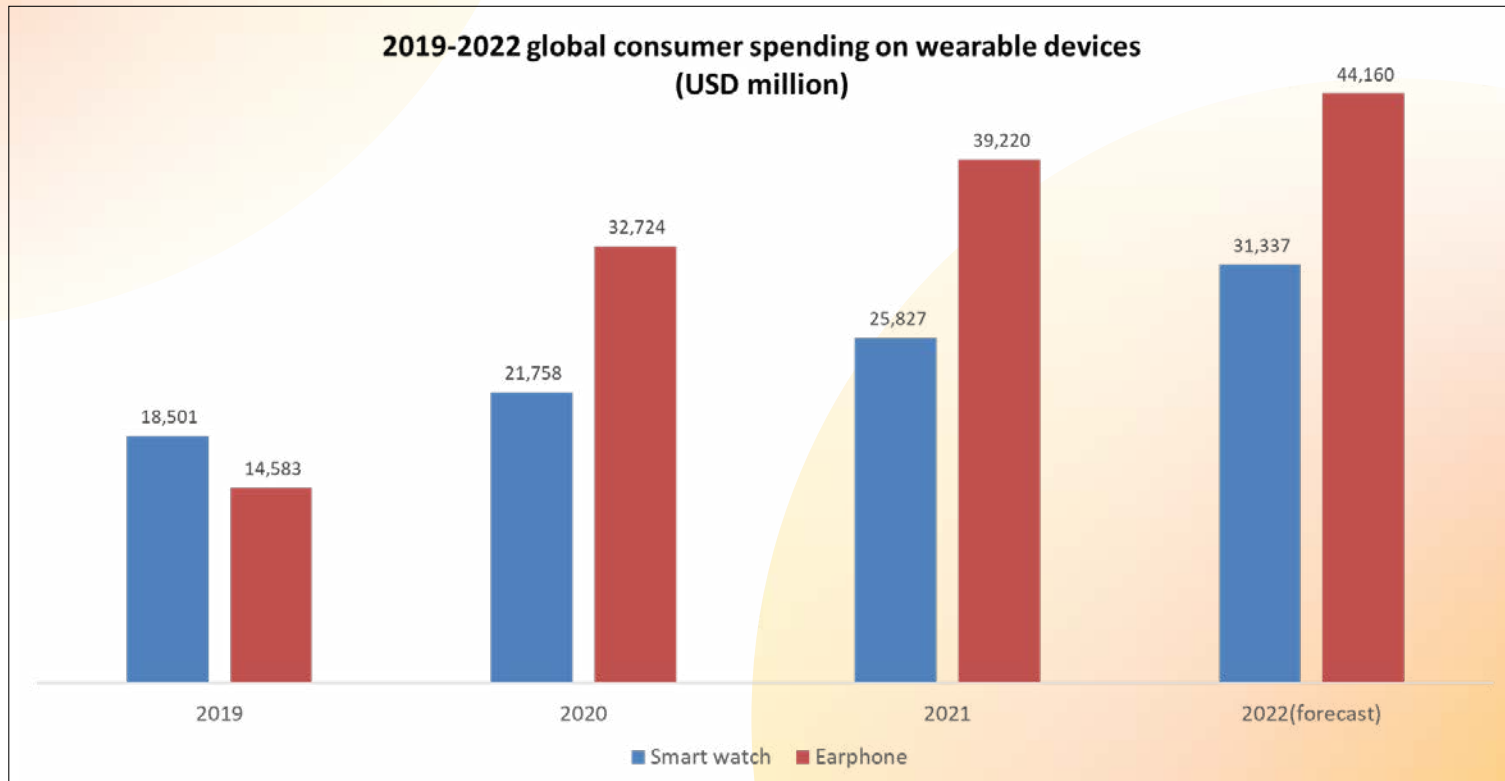
Smart wearables have been growing at a fast pace in recent years, in terms of total devices shipped globally as well as in the value of consumer spending.

Total global wearable device shipments in the fourth quarter of 2021 alone hit a record high of 171 million units, a 10.8 percent increase over the same period in 2020, according to research by the International Data Corporation (IDC). Shipments for the entire 2021 totaled 533.6 million units, a 20 percent rise compared with 2020, IDC added.



Trending keywords

Looking at consumer spending patterns on wearables since 2019, smart watches and earphones, such as true wireless earphones (TWS), seem to show the most remarkable growth. From 2019 to 2022, spending on smart watches grew from US\$18.5 billion to US\$31.3 billion and that on earphones from US\$14.6 billion to US\$44.2 billion.



According to Global Sources' exclusive analysis team, the most searched products and keywords related to smart wearables show a strong demand for TWS earbuds, smart watches, smart bracelets, and smart bands. Many of the trending keywords are related to Apple products. Apple is among key companies in the wearable devices market, shipping 34 percent of wearables in 2020.

Product trends: Health monitoring & safety features

Smart watches

Smart watches are expected to continuously lead the wearable device market and be the main product driving sales growth for the sector.

In 2020, smart watch end-user spending reached US\$21.8 billion, and this number is expected to increase to US\$31.3 billion in 2022. As new processor technologies and improvements to solid-state batteries increase battery life, smart watches are bound to attract more new users, which will further drive product sales.

Nearly 60 percent of smart watches are designed with functions to monitor heart rate, incidence of falls, and blood oxygen saturation levels. These functions will become common features of most smart wearables in the future especially since recent consumer studies show that smart wearables incentivize health-seeking behavior. A report by Insider Intelligence states that 75 percent of users of smart wearables say that the devices help them keep track of their health.

The development of biosensor technologies, such as electrocardiogram capability for smart watches, will make health data from these devices invaluable as a reference for doctors' diagnoses in the coming years.

In addition to health monitoring functions, smart watch design now also includes mobile phone features such as making calls and location tracking. These features are particularly helpful for parents and guardians who are concerned for the safety of children and the elderly.





TWS earbuds

Another category of smart wearables comprises so-called “hearables,” which includes TWS earbuds. Health monitoring capabilities, hearing aid functions, and bone conduction applications are new functional directions that developed rapidly in TWS earphones in recent years, thereby enriching product features and improving user experience.

Among the recent developments in TWS earbuds are heart rate monitors. In some models, a slight tap on an earbud will give the user’s heart rate during exercise and an alert tone will play when the heart rate is too high. Other models have built-in accelerometers that can detect the angle of the cervical spine when a user is seated. The earbuds will play a rhythm when a user has been seated or has been in a fixed position for too long. The tone is a reminder to move the head and neck so as to improve posture and prevent spine problems.

Another health feature is smart hearing protection. Some TWS earbuds work with apps that are able to monitor in real-time the decibel level of audio content and ambient sounds that a user hears and can suggest volume reduction and or amount of listening time. Other models have multi-scenario active noise cancellation modes that enable a user to cancel out background chatter or keyboard noises indoors and block the sound of aircraft or public transportation engines while on travel.

Further advancements in technology may provide TWS earbuds with more health detection functions.

Smart bracelets

In addition to basic functions such as sports and fitness monitoring, smart bracelets are being designed for different market segments such as the elderly and female groups. Among popular features are those for health management, beauty care, and life services.

Consumers who opt for smart bracelets cite stylish design, versatility, water-resistance, and long battery life as among their key considerations when purchasing these devices.



Health and fitness tracking



Elder care and health management



Communication and safety

Summary

A strong growth is seen for wearable devices in the medium term. The smart wearables sector is forecast to expand at a 17.8 percent CAGR to be worth US\$230 billion by 2030, according to MRF.

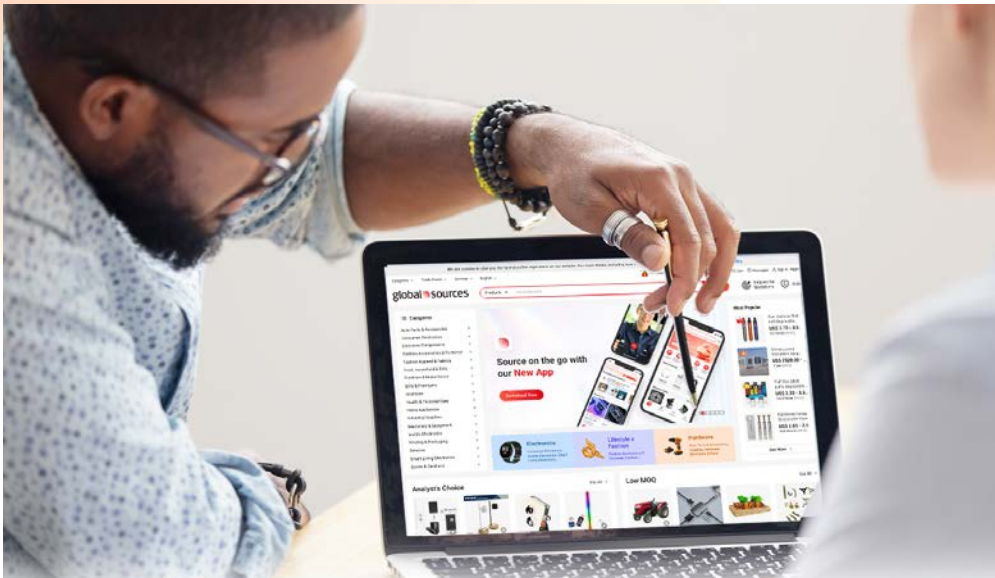
Increased consumer concerns regarding health and fitness, which was particularly noted during the height of COVID-19, are key to the growth of the smart wearables sector.

Other key market drivers are the growing penetration of smartphones, mobile networks, computing, and broadband connectivity, as well as the continuing development of the Internet of Things.

Long battery life fitness hearing protection
LOCATION TRACKING IoT water-resistance
hearing protection **HEALTH MONITORING**
Apple IoT Long battery life ELDER CARE
electro cardiogram **sports** LOCATION TRACKING
fitness water-resistance health monitoring
Apple **children**

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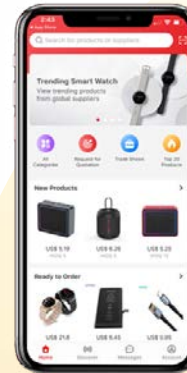
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