



Gartner Says Worldwide Smartphone Sales Declined 5% in Fourth Quarter of 2020

Apple Became Top Smartphone Vendor in Fourth Quarter and Surpassed Huawei to Move into No. 2 Spot in Full Year 2020 Results

STAMFORD, Conn. February 22, 2021— Global sales of smartphones to end users declined 5.4% in the fourth quarter of 2020, according to Gartner, Inc. Smartphone sales declined 12.5% in full year 2020.

“The sales of more 5G smartphones and lower-to-mid-tier smartphones minimised the market decline in the fourth quarter of 2020,” said Anshul Gupta, senior research director at Gartner. “Even as consumers remained cautious in their spending and held off on some discretionary purchases, 5G smartphones and pro-camera features encouraged some end users to purchase new smartphones or upgrade their current smartphones in the quarter.”

The launch of the 5G iPhone 12 series helped Apple record double-digit growth in the fourth quarter of 2020. Apple surpassed Samsung to retake the No. 1 global smartphone vendor spot (see Table 1). The last time Apple was the top smartphone vendor was in the fourth quarter for 2016.

Full Year 2020 Results

Samsung experienced a year-on-year decline of 14.6% in 2020, but this did not prevent it from retaining its No. 1 global smartphone vendor position in full year results. It faced tough competition from regional smartphone vendors such as Xiaomi, OPPO and Vivo as these brands grew more aggressive in global markets. In 2020, Apple and Xiaomi were the only two smartphone vendors of the top five ranking to experience growth.

Huawei recorded the highest decline among the top five smartphone vendors which made it lose the No. 2 position to Apple in 2020 (see Table 2). The impact of the ban on use of Google applications on Huawei’s smartphones was detrimental to Huawei’s performance in the year and negatively affected sales.

“In 2021, the availability of lower end 5G smartphones and innovative features will be deciding factors for end users to upgrade their existing smartphones,” said Mr. Gupta. “The rising demand for affordable 5G smartphones outside China will boost smartphone sales in 2021.”

Gartner clients can read more in “Market Share: PCs, Ultramobiles and Mobile Phones, All Countries, 4Q20 Update.”

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