

# Digital Trends Quarterly: Inc Impact of COVID-19 - UK - December 2020

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## This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on purchasing of consumer technology products
- How online activities have changed as a result of COVID-19
- How companies can appeal to older demographics that are showing significant increases in their use of technology this year
- Opportunities in the technology gifting market.

Despite competition from a growing range of more competitively priced and more advanced smartwatches over the last few years, more basic fitness bands and sports watches have held off the challenge and increased their lead over the course of the year in ownership terms, rising from 18% in September 2019 to 20% the same month this year. Smartwatch ownership remained static at 14% over the same period.

The summer relaxation of COVID restrictions meant that the three months to September saw a return to more normal levels of smartphone purchasing, with 15% of people buying one during the period compared to uncharacteristic lows of 12% in the two previous quarters. It was encouraging to see that technology spending could bounce back with a return to some degree of normality over the summer months, but tighter restrictions towards the end of the year look set to put a dampener on consumer confidence again and subdue purchasing well into early 2021.

One of the biggest threats to the technology market overall, and particularly for screen-based devices, is people's growing concern about the negative impact too much technology use can have on their mental health. Prior to the pandemic, we saw 18% of all adults saying they had cut down on their screen time in the three months to January 2020. Although this declined to 15% in the next two quarters, with people locked down or reluctant to go out and therefore more reliant on their technology devices for entertainment and communication, the number rose again to 19% in the three months to September, after restrictions had been eased over the summer.



"Companies need to take advantage of a time when people are shopping more on their smartphones from home to refine their m-commerce offerings to fit their target markets."

– Matt King, Category Director, Technology and Media Research

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The special focus of this Report is on the technology gifting market, and one of the key findings to emerge is that grandparents are way down the list of people who are considered as potential recipients of technology products as gifts, with just 5% of those who would buy technology gifts saying they would buy for these family members. The fact that many older consumers are turning to technology more during COVID-19 provides the ideal platform for pushing the gifting message for this demographic.

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