

# The Growth of Bluetooth Audio



By [Win Cramer](#)

In the fast-paced consumer technology industry, it can be hard to keep up. We've seen the audio industry transition from stiff, wired headphones to wireless Bluetooth earbuds the size of a quarter. Now we can talk to others via our earbuds, have the earbuds track our steps and still be completely hands-free.

We've officially stepped right out of a "Jetsons" episode. Technology has come a long way and shows no signs of slowing down. Let's narrow in on the audio tech industry, how it has evolved to where it is today and where we see it going.

## **The Slow Road to Wireless**

Ten years ago, JLab Audio forecasted change in the audio industry; we could see wireless connectivity slowly approaching. However, the accessibility of Bluetooth and its high cost wasn't quite there yet for brands and consumers.

In the early days — when JLab Audio started utilizing Bluetooth — the tech was challenging and mostly used for talking via a single earpiece (i.e., the fast-paced business folks). The connection wasn't clear, the range was only about 10 feet and one of the biggest challenges was that many devices still didn't feature easy-to-use Bluetooth settings. The technology of the battery and power consumption used in earbuds and headphones also needed to be equivalent of the phone or device it was connecting, meaning it needed to work just as quickly and efficiently. At the time, tiny batteries still needed improvements and the power draw in Bluetooth controllers was still far too high. Soon after the cost of technology went down, battery and power consumption tech caught up and improvements were made to decrease the number of skips and cutouts and increase the range of use.

Now Bluetooth is less expensive, better and faster. At the moment, it's the heart of JLab Audio's technology.

## Today's Staggering Growth of Wireless



The transition to Bluetooth headphones wasn't necessarily smooth; wired originally provided better sound due to the ability to receive a higher-quality audio signal. Therefore, not every consumer made the change to wireless, likely because of their old-school roots and lack of knowledge. Now, according to the Consumer Technology Association's (CTA) *Consumer Technology Extended Forecasts 2015-2020 (January 2017)*, 63 percent of U.S. households have headphones and 37 percent of those are Bluetooth.

Today's increased use of mobile devices is also contributing to the staggering growth of wireless audio tech. Apple's recent removal of the headphone jack in the iPhone 7 (and likely future models) is a huge factor in getting consumers to adopt wireless audio. Now consumers are forced to advance to Bluetooth as their audio option, creating a spike in wireless earbuds and headphones and the education required to use the technology. Wireless has become easier to use and improved in the past couple years, providing a clearer sound — with tech such as aptX that provides a higher-quality, compressed audio, especially for the average consumer who is streaming music.

### What Consumers Want Today

Prior to Apple's launch, we were already seeing truly hands-free and intuitive wireless earbuds take over. Brands are jamming technology into a little bud, but many seem to forget to make fit, comfort, and sound a priority. A fitness tracker, heartbeat monitor and two-hour battery life won't make for a comfortable earbud experience, if you're thinking all-day use.

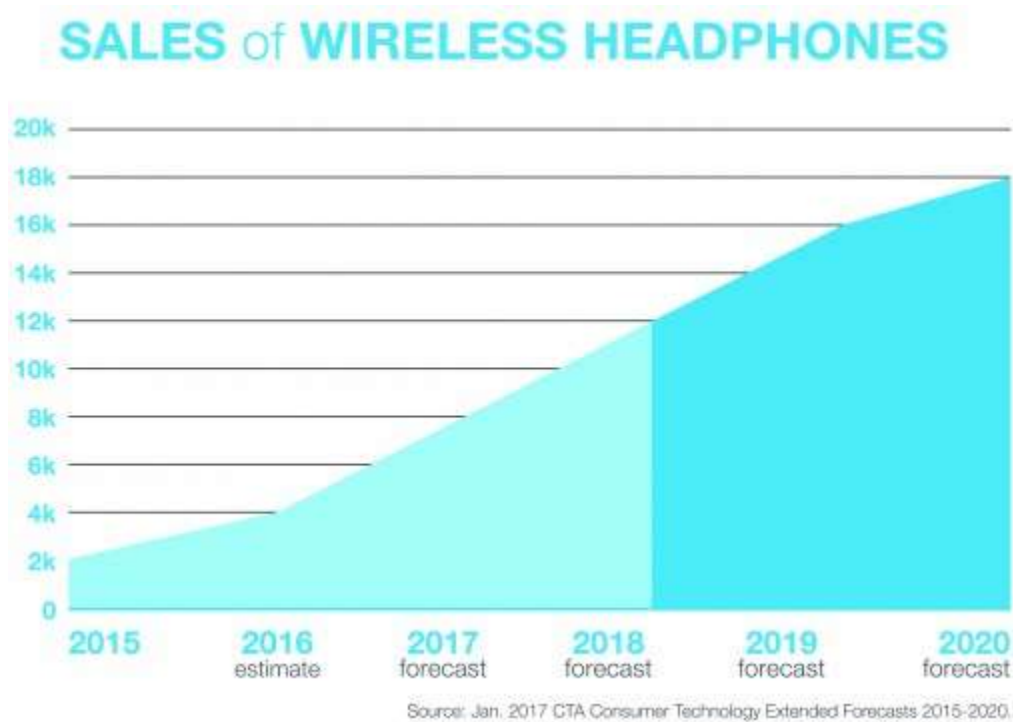
According to the 2015 Nielsen Report, the average consumer listens to 25 hours a week of music. If you're spending those hours with an earbud that can't handle vigorous use, you will inevitably spend more money on continuous earbud purchases. It's important as a brand that we never sacrifice comfort and fit for sound-bite technology that a phone likely already has baked in. Customers want a great fit that's comfortable all day, with amazing sound. Period. We can't forget who we are and what got us here.

With any form of Bluetooth audio comes the added value of versatility and convenience. We're in an on-the-go society and music often powers, inspires and drives people through their day. Bluetooth headphones and speakers are enhancing our lives and will inevitably be the sole source for all listening habits. Service providers now offer mobile TV, and streaming music apps such

as Pandora and Spotify give you music anywhere. These will all affect the transition to Bluetooth and the demand for more power, battery life and portability.

### What's Next for Bluetooth Audio?

Major growth and adoption of Bluetooth wireless audio is upon us! It's an exciting time to be an audio company, proven by CTA's forecast of 500 percent growth of wireless headphones between 2015 and 2018. Expect better connection quality, music clarity and video experience, as well as the speed of the connection from device to earbud to quicken.



As Bluetooth technology continues to advance, JLab Audio will create even more amazing audio experiences, and consumers will enjoy another level of entertainment. I'm excited to be part of this major evolution.