
HarmonyOS: 1 billion devices and a growing open-source ecosystem - Ag

Data: 2025-09-30 10:19:28

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[Redazione RHC](#):30 September 2025 11:09

The *Open Source Hongmeng Technology Conference 2025*, recently held in Changsha, highlighted the achievements of HarmonyOS "Hongmeng" (??), the open source operating system developed by Huawei. Richard Yu, Huawei Executive Director and President of Device BG, said in a video message: *"Over the past five years, with the support of the Open Atom Open Source Foundation, industry, academia, and research have collaborated to develop HarmonyOS as an open source project, creating a true miracle in the history of Chinese software development."*

According to the latest data, the HarmonyOS open source community has over **9,200 contributors** and more than **130 million lines of code** contributed as of August 31, 2025, and the Chinese operating system is installed on [nearly one billion devices](#). *The operating system covers a wide range of sectors*, including **government, transportation, finance, energy, water conservation, and construction, establishing itself as the fastest-growing open source system.**

The open source initiative dates back to September 2020, when the Open Atom Open Source Foundation integrated the core functionality code of HarmonyOS donated by Huawei, giving rise to the **OpenHarmony** project. Since then, all companies have been able to develop commercial versions based on this platform, including the **Hongmeng 5**, released by Huawei.

Android ban and 6 years to be self-sufficient

The **HarmonyOS** project was officially launched in 2019 as *Huawei's strategic response to growing geopolitical and technological uncertainty*. The initial idea was to **develop a distributed operating system capable of running on different devices**—from smartphones to tablets, from car dashboards to connected appliances—offering a uniform and integrated user experience.

The final push for HarmonyOS's development came in **May 2019**, when the US government **placed Huawei on the "Entity List," preventing the company from receiving US technology without special authorization**. Among the most significant blocks was one related to **Google**, which operates **Android and Google Mobile Services (GMS)**. In practice, Huawei was faced with the impossibility of *updating Android on its devices with official Google services*.

This ban radically accelerated China's technological autonomy.

While the country could previously rely on systems controlled by others, such as Android or other American platforms, **the ban has forced Huawei and the entire Chinese industry to develop their own open and independent solutions**. HarmonyOS is therefore not just an operating system: it

represents a **strategic turning point** , capable of *reducing China's technological vulnerability and creating a competitive national digital ecosystem*.

From an international security and intelligence perspective, the situation is of considerable importance. The inability to control Chinese software, which until a few years ago could be indirectly influenced through foreign platforms, now appears to be a **strategic and intelligence blunder** of significant proportions. The direction is clear : **a fully Chinese, open-source, and distributed operating system reduces dependence on external suppliers and consolidates national autonomy, reversing technological balances that until recently seemed consolidated.**

In short, the Android ban represented more than just a commercial obstacle: it **accelerated China's technological independence** , transforming a critical moment into a historic opportunity for the domestic industry and for the evolution of its own digital ecosystems, such as HarmonyOS.

Accelerating growth

As of September 20, 2025, HarmonyOS devices are installed on one billion devices, and HarmonyOS 5 has surpassed **17 million** , while the HarmonyOS App Store hosts more than **30,000 applications and meta-services** . Yu Chengdong emphasized how rapid the growth has been: “It took us nearly 10 months to reach 10 million devices, and only two months to double to 20 million,” highlighting an unprecedentedly accelerating adoption curve.

This surge signals a turning point in the ecosystem: HarmonyOS is moving from a “usable” system to an “easy-to-use” one, deeply integrating into users’ daily lives. The platform is no longer limited to a single device, but creates a connected experience across phones, tablets, laptops, car dashboards, and smart home devices, improving the efficiency and usability of digital services.

Integrated user experience

Users have begun to experience more intuitive management of everyday functions. For example, through HarmonyOS, you can book restaurants or buy tickets even abroad using apps like Dianping, without having to switch between separate apps. Weibo, meanwhile, has introduced high-definition HDR Vivid images, improving the visual quality of everyday content.

This integration between systems and applications allows for the combination of real-life scenarios with advanced digital capabilities, creating a fluid ecosystem that grows thanks to user feedback and continuous system optimization.

Co-creation with developers and partners

HarmonyOS is no longer just a single vendor's product, but a collaborative ecosystem. The Hongmeng 5 App Store boasts **over 9,000 applications across 70 innovative experiences** , while more than **100 government and enterprise platforms** have adopted the system, involving approximately **38 million businesses** .

Leading apps, such as the Hongmeng version of Xiaohongshu, have introduced innovative features based on **gesture recognition, while Weibo has improved the visual experience.** HarmonyOS's lightweight design and flexible architecture allow developers to quickly test and optimize new features, reducing costs and development time. This co-creation model generates a virtuous cycle of

feedback, innovation, and continuous growth.

Expanding digital ecosystem

With more than **20 million devices**, HarmonyOS has reached a critical scale that amplifies network effects. Each new user and each new application strengthens the entire ecosystem, increasing the quality of interactions and spurring further innovation. The widespread adoption of the ArkTS language and the evolution of the DevEco Studio toolchain have made it easier for small and medium-sized developers to join, contributing to the ecosystem's biodiversity.

The system now operates as a self-reinforcing cycle between users, partners, and developers: feedback drives optimization, innovations expand the ecosystem, and overall growth attracts additional users and businesses. HarmonyOS thus demonstrates that the value of a digital ecosystem lies in its symbiosis, rather than in the number of individual nodes.

Towards the future

According to Richard Yu, HarmonyOS will continue to evolve by transforming user feedback into increasingly integrated and functional experiences. The operating system's growth path demonstrates how digital evolution goes beyond technology, aiming to create a collaborative ecosystem where users, businesses, and developers coexist in a virtuous balance.

Redazione

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