

ANNUAL EDC MARKET REPORT

Pricing Trends · Steel Adoption · Category Growth
Value Rankings · Brand Intelligence · 2026 Outlook

497

ITEMS INDEXED

22

CATEGORIES

27

BRANDS TRACKED

\$136

AVG KNIFE PRICE

Data sourced from the CarryIndex database. Analysis reflects items indexed as of May 2026.
Pricing represents MSRP or current Amazon/authorized-dealer pricing at time of indexing.

\$49

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Key Findings at a Glance

The Carry Index 2026 Annual EDC Market Report analyzes 497 indexed items across 22 gear categories, representing the active EDC market as of May 2026. This report is built entirely from proprietary platform data — pricing, specs, weight, and brand data verified at the point of indexing.

497 ITEMS INDEXED	22 CATEGORIES	\$136 AVG KNIFE	\$71 AVG FLASHLIGHT	\$169 AVG BAG	\$84 AVG WALLET
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FIVE KEY FINDINGS

01 · Watches dominate average price

The watch category pulls the overall index average sharply upward with a mean of \$970 (median \$499). Remove watches and the EDC market's effective average drops to \$118 — in line with the discretionary accessories segment.

02 · Bags are the largest category by item count

At 53 items, bags are the most represented category in the index. The price band is tight: every bag indexed falls between \$55 and \$395, with an average of \$169 — strongly clustered in the \$100–\$200 premium commuter tier.

03 · The knife market skews mid-tier

52% of indexed knives fall in the \$50–\$150 band. The median knife is \$110 — above casual impulse-buy territory but well below the enthusiast premium tier. Only one knife exceeds \$400.

04 · Flashlights are the value density leader

At an average of \$71 with meaningful output-per-dollar ratios, the flashlight category offers the best functional value in the index. Budget-tier lights (\$22–\$49) account for 33% of the category.

05 · 32% of the index is under \$50

159 of 497 items are budget-tier (under \$50). The EDC market has a strong value floor — consumers entering the hobby can equip across multiple categories without premium spend.

The EDC Index by the Numbers

The CarryIndex database spans 22 distinct carry categories. Below is a complete breakdown of item counts, pricing ranges, and average carry weight by category.

Category	Items	Min Price	Avg Price	Max Price	Avg Weight
Bags	53	\$55	\$169	\$395	737g
Watches	49	\$20	\$970	\$10100	95g
Knives	48	\$25	\$136	\$560	100g
Flashlights	42	\$22	\$71	\$180	72g
Wallets	37	\$20	\$84	\$239	49g
Writing Instruments	30	\$3	\$82	\$1165	23g
Hydration	28	\$14	\$53	\$128	350g
Multi-Tools	26	\$15	\$77	\$200	144g
Audio	24	\$80	\$249	\$549	75g
Smartphones	21	\$380	\$900	\$1999	201g
Notebooks	16	\$12	\$24	\$60	209g
Power & Charging	16	\$22	\$83	\$159	277g
Grooming	16	\$4	\$59	\$320	88g
Sunglasses	15	\$30	\$216	\$498	32g
Fire & Lighters	14	\$3	\$25	\$65	73g
First Aid	13	\$12	\$34	\$80	147g
Key Organizers	12	\$25	\$54	\$89	30g
Tech Accessories	12	\$29	\$76	\$219	221g
Rings	7	\$259	\$315	\$399	4g
Gaming	7	\$40	\$399	\$799	482g
Voice Recorders	6	\$99	\$146	\$199	26g
Cameras	5	\$80	\$344	\$549	133g

PRICE TIER DISTRIBUTION

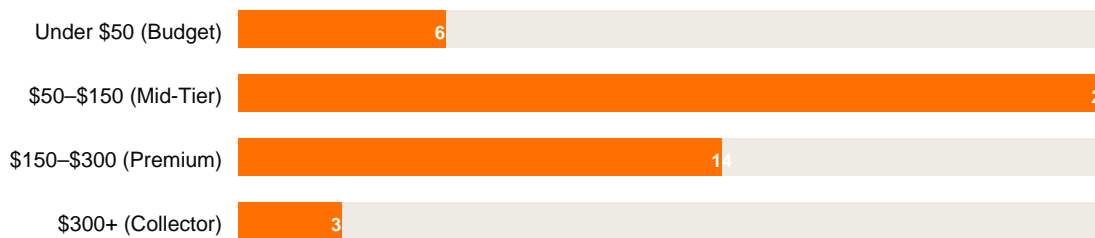
Across all 497 items, the index distributes across four price tiers. The mid tier (\$51–\$150) is the plurality at 35%, reflecting the EDC market's concentration in quality-but-accessible carry gear.

Tier	Items	%	Segment Profile
Budget (under \$50)	159	32%	Entry-level and value-oriented gear
Mid (\$51–\$150)	173	35%	Core of the EDC market — quality daily drivers
Premium (\$151–\$400)	111	22%	Enthusiast and professional carry
Luxury (\$400+)	54	11%	Watches, flagship knives, high-end audio

The Knife Market

The knife category is the heartbeat of the EDC hobby. With 48 indexed folders and fixed blades, it is the third-largest category by item count and carries a median price of \$110. The sweet spot — where the majority of informed buyers land — is the \$75–\$175 range, where CPM-series steels, quality locking mechanisms, and USA or Japan manufacture converge.

KNIFE DISTRIBUTION BY PRICE BAND



WEIGHT LANDSCAPE

The average indexed knife weighs 100g — nearly a full 100 grams. There is a clear ultralight tier (under 70g) dominated by titanium-framed and carbon fiber designs, a midweight daily-driver band (70–120g), and a heavy-duty tier (120g+) for fixed blades and work-oriented folders.

KNIFE DISTRIBUTION BY WEIGHT



CARRY INDEX TOP KNIFE PICKS

Tier	Model	Price	Weight	CarryIndex Note
Best Budget	CRKT Drifter	\$30	82g	Value gateway — frame lock, ambidextrous carry
Best Value	Kershaw Leek	\$55	65g	SpeedSafe, 14C28N steel, 10.7cm slim profile
Best EDC	Benchmade Bugout 535	\$175	56g	AXIS lock, S30V, USA-made — the benchmark folder
Best Mid-Tier	Spyderco Para 3	\$130	98g	Compression lock, S30V, sub-100g at full size
Enthusiast	Spyderco Paramilitary 2	\$200	122g	Compression lock flawless — the knife community recommends

Best Titanium	WE Knife Banter	\$75	58g	S35VN, titanium handle, \$75 is genuinely remarkable
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THE STEEL LANDSCAPE

Steel selection is the single biggest determinant of long-term satisfaction with a knife purchase. The market in 2026 has settled into a clear hierarchy: value steels (14C28N, 8Cr13MoV) for sub-\$75 knives; workhorse steels (S30V, AUS-10) in the \$75–\$175 band; and premium steels (S35VN, MagnaCut, M390/20CV) in the \$150+ tier. MagnaCut — released by Larrin Thomas in 2021 — has become the most-discussed steel introduction in a decade, offering near-stainless corrosion resistance with toughness that outperforms M390.

Steel	Tier	Price Range	Key Brands	CarryIndex Assessment
S30V / CPM-S30V	Workhorse	\$75–\$175	Benchmade, Spyderco	The EDC standard. Easy to sharpen, holds an edge well.
S35VN	Premium	\$75–\$260	WE, Cold Steel, Bestech	S30V + vanadium carbides. More refined geometry possible.
14C28N	Value	\$30–\$80	Kershaw, Mora	Sandvik's best value steel. Corrosion-resistant, easy to sharpen.
MagnaCut	Premium+	\$100–\$200+	Hogue, CJRB	2021 breakthrough. Best corrosion resistance at premium tier.
M390 / 20CV	Premium+	\$150–\$400	Zero Tolerance, Benchmade	Stain-resistant powder steel. Difficult to sharpen.
8Cr13MoV / 7Cr17	Budget	Under \$50	CRKT, many budget brands	Chinese stainless. Adequate for occasional use.

The Flashlight Market

The flashlight market is the most rational value proposition in EDC. 42 lights are indexed, spanning \$22–\$180, with a median of \$70. The category is defined by a small number of dominant brands (Olight, Nitecore, Fenix, Acebeam) competing on lumens, runtime, and form factor at remarkably compressed price points.

LUMENS-PER-DOLLAR RANKINGS

The most useful metric in the flashlight category is output efficiency: maximum lumens divided by MSRP. Budget-tier lights from Chinese brands often lead this metric. The Emisar D4V2 at ~\$70 remains the benchmark at approximately 57 lm/dollar for quad-emitter builds.

Model	Price	Max Lm	Lm/\$	CarryIndex Note
Emisar D4V2	~\$70	4000+	~57	Enthusiast endgame. Anduril 2 programmable.
Sofirn SP36 BLF	\$35	1800	51	Budget thrower. XHP50.2. 21700 powered.
Nitecore TINI 2	\$40	500	12.5	Keychain class. USB-C. 13g.
RovyVon Aurora A5x	\$32	550	17	Lightest bright light in the index at 13g.
Olight i3T EOS	\$28	180	6.4	Single AAA workhorse. 54mm carry.
Fenix E18R V2	\$65	1200	18.5	IPX8 rugged. In-body USB-C. Magnetic tail.
Acebeam E70	\$80	4000	50	Compact thrower. 21700 high-density output.

FORM FACTOR ANALYSIS

The flashlight market has evolved into four distinct form factors, each serving a different carry philosophy:

Form Factor	Profile	Key Examples	Price Range
Keychain / Micro	Under 20g, AAA or built-in battery	Nitecore TIP SE, RovyVon Aurora	\$25–\$45
Pocket EDC	20–60g, 1×CR123 or 1×16340	Olight S2R, Fenix E18R	\$45–\$90
Single-Cell High	60–100g, 1×18650 or 21700	Emisar D4V2, Acebeam E70	\$55–\$120
Tactical/Work	100g+, multi-cell or weapon-mount	SureFire, Streamlight TLR	\$80–\$180

The Watch Market

Watches are the outlier category in the CarryIndex database. 49 pieces are indexed spanning \$20 to \$10,100, with a mean of \$970 and median of \$499. Removing the five luxury watches (over \$2,000) drops the average to \$617 — still the highest of any category, reflecting watches' role as the premium discretionary carry item.

Tier	Items	Price Range	Key Models
Under \$100 (Starter)	6	\$20–\$95	Casio F-91W, Timex Weekender
\$100–\$500 (Serious EDC)	19	\$100–\$499	Orient Ray, Seiko SKX, Tissot
\$500–\$2,000 (Enthusiast)	19	\$500–\$1,999	Tudor BB58, Longines, Monta
\$2,000+ (Collector/Luxury)	5	\$2,050+	Omega Seamaster, Grand Seiko, Rolex

THE MICROBRAND RISE

The most significant structural shift in the watch market over the past five years is the rise of microbrands: direct-to-consumer manufacturers selling Swiss-movement watches at \$300–\$800 that would cost \$1,500+ through traditional distribution. Brands like Monta, Baltic, Halios, and Marloe occupy the \$400–\$900 band and offer competitive specs against Swiss heritage brands at 30–50% lower price points. The CarryIndex database includes multiple microbrand entries, reflecting strong community interest in this segment.

BEST-VALUE WATCH PICKS BY TIER

Tier	Model	Price	Weight	CarryIndex Note
Best Starter	Casio F-91W	\$20	21g	The most-carried watch in EDC history. Undefeated.
Best Under \$100	Casio AW-48H	\$45	38g	Ana-digi combo. Solar. Daily beater benchmark.
Best Under \$300	Orient Kamasu	\$180	73g	Sapphire, automatic, 200m WR. Best value automatic.
Best Under \$500	Seiko Presage Cocktail	\$300	N/A	Dress automatic with gorgeous dial depth.
Best Buy Overall	Tudor Black Bay 58	\$3,575	N/A	The tightest value-to-prestige ratio at luxury tier.

Bags & Wallets

BAGS

The bag category is the largest in the index at 53 items, with a narrow price band (\$55–\$395) that reflects a mature, competitive market. The \$100–\$200 commuter tier is where the majority of purchase decisions land — represented by Aer, Peak Design, Bellroy, and Alpaka. Above \$200, the market fragments into technical packs (Aer Fit Pack, Mission Workshop) and premium leather goods.

Tier	Model	Price	Weight	CarryIndex Note
Best Slim	Aer Day Sling 2	\$89	220g	1.5L sling. Clamshell open. EDC community favorite.
Best Commuter	Peak Design Everyday Tote	\$149	410g	Flexfold dividers. Weatherproof. Works at any size.
Best Backpack	Aer Fit Pack 3	\$185	1100g	26L gym/work hybrid. Triple-packing format.
Best Travel	Tortuga Setout Divide	\$259	1300g	26L carry-on optimized. Harness suspension.
Best Budget	Bellroy Lite Sling	\$89	190g	Recycled body. 3L everyday sling. Thoughtful pockets.

WALLETS

The wallet category (37 items, avg \$84) is the most contested space in minimalist EDC. Two paradigms compete: the slim bifold (Ridge, Bellroy) and the card sleeve (Aime Leon Dore, Dango). Titanium card-cage wallets (Dango, Fidelo) command a premium at \$60–\$100; leather bifolds range from \$25 (budget) to \$150 (Saddleback, Bellroy premium). The 10g Flowfold Minimalist Wallet is the lightest in the index at \$32.

Tier	Model	Price	Weight	CarryIndex Note
Lightest	Flowfold Minimalist	\$32	10g	Sailcloth. Indestructible. 10g with 6 cards.
Best Leather	Saddleback Slim	\$79	50g	100-year warranty. Full-grain leather only.
Best Metal	Ridge Wallet	\$95	42g	Titanium. Card spring. Elastic cash strap.
Best Value	Bellroy Note Sleeve	\$79	55g	Veg-tan leather. RFID block. Clean bifold.
Best Budget	Buffway Slim	\$22	25g	Carbon fiber composite. Pulls cards well.

The Brand Landscape

The CarryIndex tracks 27 brands with four or more indexed items. Apple leads by item count (16) reflecting the depth of iPhone/accessory SKUs. For traditional EDC categories, Nitecore (11 lights), Spyderco (9 knives), and Leatherman (9 tools) represent the category-dominant incumbents.

Brand	Items	Avg \$	Category	CarryIndex Assessment
Apple	16	\$490	Tech / Smartphones	Dominant in smartphones, earbuds, and accessories
Anker	12	\$68	Power / Charging	Best-in-class value USB-C chargers and power banks
Nitecore	11	\$63	Flashlights	Widest EDC light portfolio; USB-C led the transition
Samsung	10	\$630	Smartphones / Tech	Android alternative; Galaxy S-series well-indexed
Spyderco	9	\$142	Knives	Consistent quality; Compression lock is industry-leading
Leatherman	9	\$123	Multi-Tools	The defining multi-tool brand; Skeletool is the EDC benchmark
Olight	8	\$67	Flashlights	Best starter and budget mid-range; i3T is the gateway light
Casio	7	\$117	Watches	F-91W is the most-owned watch in EDC history
Bellroy	7	\$116	Wallets / Bags	Premium leather carry; RFID and sustainability focus
Alpaka	7	\$118	Bags / Accessories	X-pac technical bags; strong minimalist community presence
Victorinox	6	\$49	Knives / Multi-Tools	SAK Classic is the definitive TSA-friendly carry tool
Nothing	6	\$324	Audio / Smartphones	Design-forward brand with strong EDC community appeal
Sony	6	\$458	Audio	XM-series headphones dominate noise-cancelling segment
CRKT	5	\$50	Knives	Best budget knife brand; Drifter is the \$30 gateway
Fenix	5	\$93	Flashlights	Rugged and reliable; IPX8 across most of the lineup
Gerber	5	\$45	Multi-Tools / Knives	Value-oriented tools; Dime is the keychain tool entry
Aer	5	\$137	Bags	Commuter and gym bags; consistent quality across SKUs
Peak Design	5	\$168	Bags / Camera Straps	Flexfold system is best-in-class for organizing bags

Value Rankings & Best Buys

The following rankings surface the highest-value items in the index by category — prioritizing spec-to-price ratio, user sentiment, and carry practicality. These are not simply the cheapest options; they represent the items where the cost-of-ownership equation is most favorable.

THE CARRY INDEX MASTER VALUE TABLE

Best buy across each major category. Selected by spec-per-dollar analysis.

Category	Model	Price	Rating	CarryIndex Note
Knife	Kershaw Leek	\$55	★★★★★	SpeedSafe, 14C28N, USA-made at entry price
Budget Knife	CRKT Drifter	\$30	★★★★■	Frame lock, ambidextrous, no anxiety carry
Flashlight	Nitecore TINI 2	\$40	★★★★★	700lm from keychain size, USB-C rechargeable
Pocket Light	Olight i3T EOS	\$28	★★★★★	Single AAA, 180lm, 54mm, two-way clip
Watch	Orient Kamasu	\$180	★★★★★	Auto, sapphire, 200m — best value automatic
Budget Watch	Casio F-91W	\$20	★★★★★	Unbeatable. The EDC watch standard since 1991
Wallet	Flowfold Minimalist	\$32	★★★★★	10g, indestructible sailcloth, 6-card capacity
Multi-Tool	Leatherman Skeletool	\$80	★★★★★	7 tools, 142g, USA-made — the definitive EDC MT
Bag	Aer Day Sling 2	\$89	★★★★★	1.5L sling, clamshell, community-proven design
Water Bottle	Hydro Flask 21oz	\$30	★★★★★	21oz, TempShield insulation, 40+ color options
Notebook	Field Notes Original	\$12	★★★★★	3-pack, 3.5x5.5in, the American pocket notebook
Pen	Uni-ball Jetstream 0.7mm	\$3	★★★★★	Lightest indexed pen at 10g, \$3 zero-regret carry
Key Organizer	Orbitkey 2.0	\$60	★★★★■	O-ring silence system — no jingle, ever
Power Bank	Anker Nano Power Bank	\$22	★★★★★	5000mAh, USB-C, 96g — best pocket power bank
Lighter	Zippo Windproof	\$25	★★★★★	Lifetime guarantee, refillable, windproof always

BUDGET KIT CHALLENGE: COMPLETE EDC UNDER \$200

The question CarryIndex users ask most: can I build a complete, quality EDC kit without breaking \$200? Yes — with margin to spare.

Category	Item	Price	Note
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Knife	CRKT Drifter	\$30	Frame lock folder, functional daily carry
Light	Olight i3T EOS	\$28	Single AAA, 180lm, two-way clip
Wallet	Flowfold Minimalist	\$32	10g sailcloth, 6 cards, indestructible
Watch	Casio F-91W	\$20	The EDC watch. No substitute at the price
Multi-Tool	Gerber Dime	\$25	12 tools, keychain scale, TSA-friendly
Pen	Uni-ball Jetstream	\$3	10g, writes first time every time
Notebook	Field Notes (3-pack)	\$12	60pp, fits any pocket, America-made
Lighter	BIC Mini Classic	\$3	8g, \$3, reliable — the honest choice
	TOTAL	\$153	\$47 under budget

Predictions & Market Trends

The following predictions are grounded in observed data patterns from the CarryIndex database and directional signals from the broader EDC market. They represent our editorial read of where the market is heading.

1. MagnaCut becomes the new S30V

CPM-S30V held the 'workhorse premium' steel position for nearly 15 years. MagnaCut — with better toughness, better corrosion resistance, and comparable edge retention — is on track to displace it as the community-consensus 'best all-around EDC steel' within 24 months. The number of production knives shipping in MagnaCut is growing quarterly.

2. The \$50–\$100 knife tier intensifies

Chinese manufacturers running CPM-licensed steels (S35VN, S30V) through OEM channels have permanently compressed the value tier. Brands like WE Knife, CJRB, and Bestech are now regularly delivering S35VN and M390 hardware at \$65–\$95, a price point that was inconceivable five years ago. This will pressure \$100–\$150 mid-tier domestic brands to differentiate on origin story and warranty.

3. Keychain lights continue outpacing pocket lights in volume

The flashlight form factor shift is clear in new product announcements. Every major brand (Nitecore, Olight, Fenix) has expanded its keychain and micro-light lineup while the traditional 1xCR123 market shrinks. The 18650/21700 enthusiast segment remains robust but is a smaller share of total unit sales than it was in 2020.

4. Microbrand watches accelerate into the \$300–\$800 tier

Swiss movement watch microbrands have found a durable market position. As Seiko raises prices and Tissot's value proposition erodes, the \$400–\$800 band becomes increasingly competitive from direct-to-consumer players. Expect 3–4 new microbrand entries into the CarryIndex database by year-end.

5. Audio becomes the fastest-growing EDC category

The audio category (\$249 average, zero items under \$80) represents the highest-growth segment in the index. Wireless earbuds have become as universal a carry item as wallets. The Sony WF-1000XM5 and Apple AirPods Pro 2 compete at \$249–\$279 with clear consumer preference diverging on ecosystem rather than spec.

6. Titanium hardware continues its premium trajectory

Grade 5 titanium (Ti-6Al-4V) has become the prestige material of choice across EDC categories — from key organizers (Quiet Carry Arca) to pocket clips and bolt hardware on mid-range knives. Expect a 10–15% price premium on titanium-handled folders vs. equivalent G-10 designs to persist through 2027.

METHODOLOGY

All data in this report is sourced from the CarryIndex database as of May 2026. Prices reflect MSRP or current authorized-dealer pricing at time of indexing. Weight data is manufacturer-reported where available. Steel classifications and tier assignments represent CarryIndex editorial judgment based on community consensus, independent testing publications (Larrin Thomas's Knife Steel Nerds, Blade HQ steel reviews), and observed market pricing patterns. This report is produced annually and updated to reflect new product additions. carryindex.com · 2026 Edition