



What do people think about their mobile phones?

Greenpeace conducted a global survey to explore people's behaviours and thoughts regarding their mobile phones, from what motivates them to purchase a new model, to how often they have repaired them and what they know about recycling.

SUMMARY

- 1. Background information and key findings
- 2. It is time for the true innovation

Between July and August 2016, Greenpeace conducted a representative survey with the general population in 6 markets worldwide around the issues of mobile phone consumption, repair, and recycling.

Methodology

The surveyed markets include USA, Russia, Mexico, Germany, China, South Korea; research was carried out online among a nationally representative quota sample of c. 1,000 adults in each country. It was conducted between July and August 2016, among adults aged 18-75 in US, adults aged 16-70 in Germany, 16-60 in Russia, 18-59 in Mexico, 18-55 in South Korea, and 18-50 in China. Data have been weighted to the known population profile in each country.

Respondents were asked several questions, including: the number of mobiles owned (in use and not in use); the reason for buying a new mobile phone; their level of agreement with the current frequency at which mobile phone manufacturers release new models; their experience with mobile phones repair and recycling; and finally, the most important feature a smartphone should have.

Key Findings

- Number of phones possessed on average by each respondent

1. Avg. n. of mobile phones per capita

USA	3.46
Mexico	5.18
Russia	5.55
Germany	3.22
China	3.98
South Korea	4.17

2. China and South Korea have the highest percentage (95%) of respondents with access to a personal smartphone. Mexico follows with 89%.



- Main reason for buying a new mobile phone:
 1. More than one third of respondents surveyed in all countries answered that “getting a more up-to-date device” was the reason for buying a new phone last time they did.
 2. Nearly 3 in 10 respondents answered that it was because their previous phone was broken or got lost.
- What do people think about the current mobile phone industry?
 1. More than half of the respondents surveyed in all countries agree that mobile phone manufacturers release too many new models each year; the percentage is as high as 76% in Mexico.
 2. More than half of the respondents surveyed agree that they would be ok with changing their mobile phone less often; Russia has the highest percentage (69%).
 3. About half of the respondents surveyed in Germany and Mexico, 44% and 41% respectively, agree that mobile network providers offer people new mobile phone upgrades too often.
 4. 67% and 66% respondents surveyed in Russia and Germany, respectively, disagree with the fact that they cannot wait to buy the latest mobile phone when it hits the market.
- Repair and recycling habits:
 1. Only 9% of German respondents had the experience of having damaged mobile phones repaired by the manufacturer, with China enjoying the highest percentage of 36%.
 2. Only a small number of respondents had repaired their damaged mobile phone by themselves, with 2% in Russia, 3% in Germany, and 4% in China.
 3. In South Korea, 57% of respondents had sold or given their old mobile phone to a specialized recycling company, while it is only 11% in Germany.
 4. Respondents surveyed in China (66%) and South Korea (64%) are more likely to have had their phones repaired, compared to those in the US (28%) and Germany (23%).
 5. Nearly half of respondents surveyed in all countries believe that mobile phone manufacturers should be most responsible for making recycling accessible. This sentiment were particularly strong in Germany (61%) and China (53%).
- What are the important features that a smartphone should have?
 1. 9 in 10 of the respondents surveyed in all countries consider having a long-lasting battery is an important feature of a new smartphone.
 2. Apart from Germany (86%), over 90% of respondents surveyed said that “designed to last” is an important feature of a new smartphone.
 3. 4 in 5 respondents believe it is important for a new smartphone to be easily repaired if damaged. This rises to as high as 95% in China, 94% in Mexico and 92% in South Korea.
 4. 4 in 5 respondents consider it important that a new smartphone is not produced using hazardous chemicals, especially in China (96%) and Mexico (92%).
- What do people think it happens to mobile phones once they are discarded?
 1. 31% and 53% of respondents in the US and Russia respectively, think discarded mobile phones end up in landfills in their own countries, while only 4% of respondents in South Korea think the same.



It is time for the true innovation

It is clear that according to the survey, long-lasting battery and designed to last are the most desired features of smartphones; while over half of respondents agree that manufacturers are releasing too many new models.

True innovation should strive to improve economic and environmental goals simultaneously. Mobile phone manufacturers - who are responsible for providing recycling services, according to most of the respondents - can be economically benefited from good product design. The new product design should take recycling into consideration from the beginning of the production phase, using the recycled materials instead of virgin materials, and making the products easier to be dismantled at the end.

We challenge the information technology sector to move towards closed-loop production and embrace the circular economy. Designing for durability, and recycling to extend product lifespan not only enables the materials to be reused, but can also generate revenues for manufacturers. It is time for the technology leaders to rethink the way they make our electronic gadgets, to reshape the economic model for the environment and for people, and eventually to lead the world to a brighter future.