

What Happens to Old Smartphones, and Why?

iPhones traded-in much more than Android phones

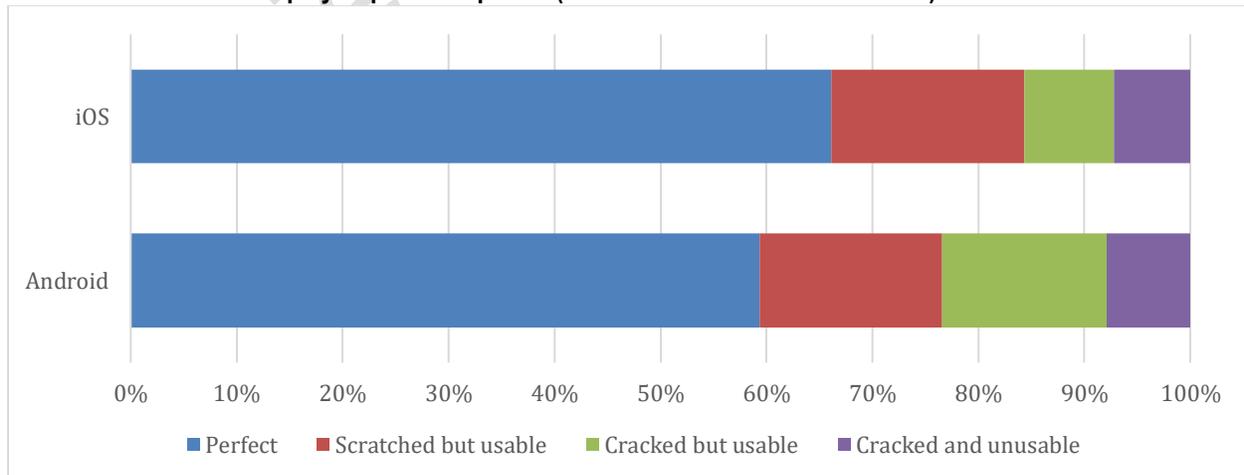
In the June 2021 quarter, CIRP analyzed mobile smartphones, to understand the lifecycle of the prior phones of new iPhone and Android smartphone buyers. CIRP has tracked age of previous phone for many years and analyzed the trend of consumers keeping a phone longer. Most recently, we found consumers keep previous phones for an average of over three years, up from under two years only a few years ago. We now analyze some of the underlying factors related to previous phones.

Most retiring phones are in good condition, with useable displays and batteries that last for all or most of a day. Consequently, many previous phones are sold or traded-in, passed along to a friend or family member, or saved for potential future use.

iPhones owners report their old phone screens are in better condition, while Android phone owners report that their old phones have better battery life. Still, a much higher percentage of iPhones are sold or traded-in than Android phones. Consumers report Android phones are recycled or lost, broken, or stolen at a much greater rate than iPhones, or merely kept for future use, compared to iPhones.

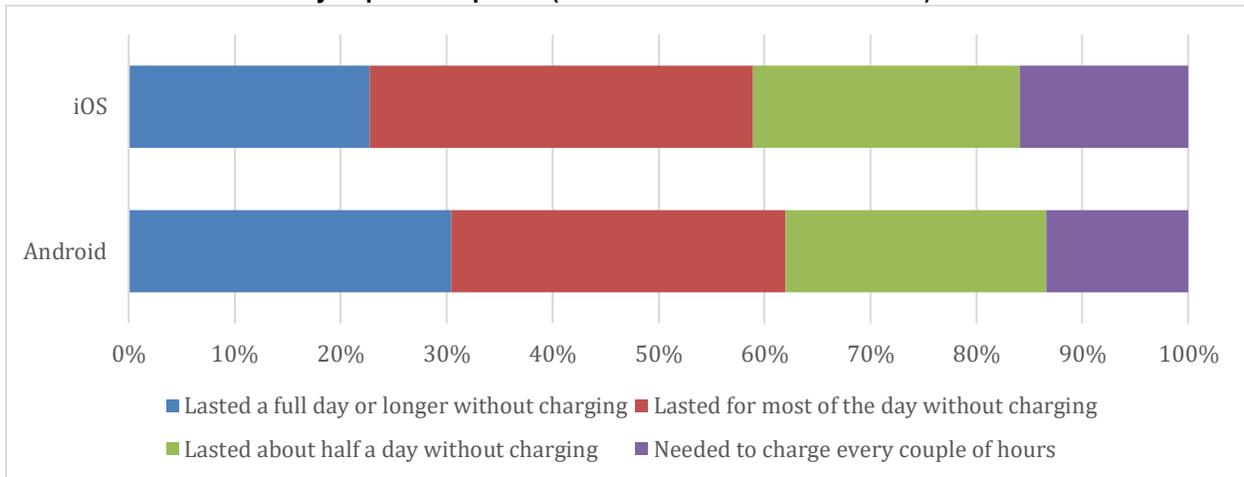
Overall, about 80% of previous phones have a display in good condition, either “perfect” or “scratched but usable”. 84% of buyers having an old iPhone report a “perfect” or “scratched but usable” display, compared to 76% of buyers having an old Android phone (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Condition of display of previous phone (twelve months ended June 2021)



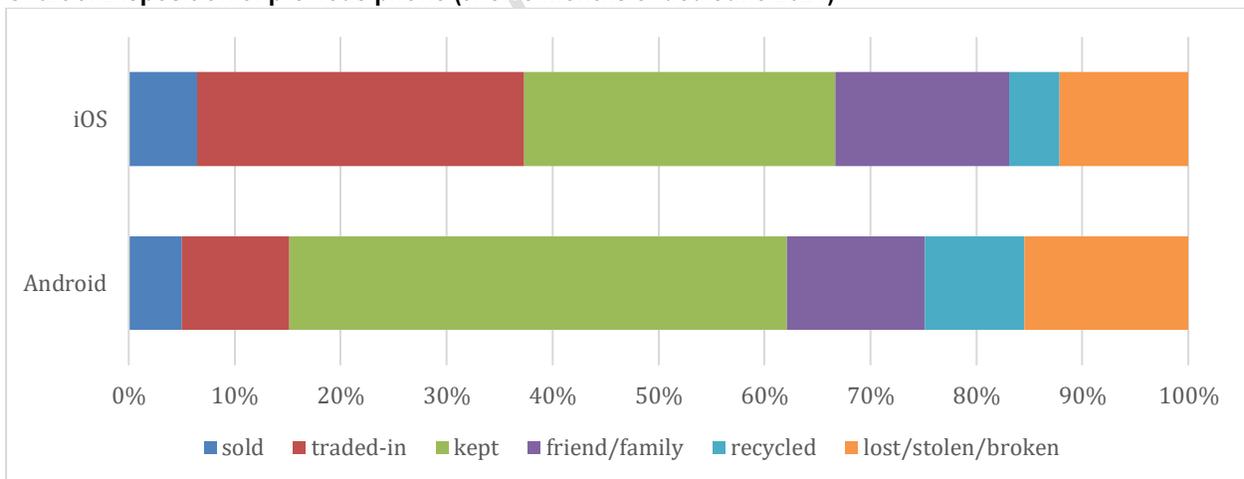
60% of previous phones have a battery in good condition, lasting either “a full day or longer” or “most of the day”. In contrast to displays, 30% of buyers with an old Android phone report a battery that lasts a full day or more, compared to 23% of buyers with an old iPhone (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Condition of battery of previous phone (twelve months ended June 2021)



Based on these conditions and also other factors, we find that overall, 80% of previous phones are repurposed in some way. 25% are either re-sold or traded-in for a new phone, while 54% are given to a friend or family member or kept by the consumer for possible future use (Chart 3).

Chart 3: Disposition of previous phone (twelve months ended June 2021)



We find some significant differences between iPhones and Android phones. Almost one-third of iPhones are traded-in for a new phone, compared to 10% of Android phones. In contrast, almost half of Android phones are kept by the consumer for future use, compared to only 29% of iPhones. And, 24% of Android phones are either recycled or reported as lost, stolen, or broken, while only 17% of iPhones are recycled, lost, stolen, or broken.

Methodology and Disclaimers

This analysis is based on 2,000 US subjects that acquired a new or used smartphone in the twelve months ending in June 2021.

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