

# ~5.3 Billion mobile phones will become waste in 2022; a small fraction will be properly disposed of

2022 International E-waste Day slogan:  
*'Recycle it all, no matter how small!'*

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, October 13, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Experts expect roughly 5.3 billion mobile / smartphones will drop out of use this year.

Stacked flat atop one another at an average depth of 9 mm that many disused phones would rise roughly 50,000 km – 120 times higher than the International Space Station; one-eighth of the way to the moon.



Logo of the International E-Waste Day

And, despite their valuable gold, copper, silver, palladium and other recyclable components, experts expect a majority will disappear into drawers, closets, cupboards or garages, or be tossed into waste bins bound for landfills or incineration (see background notes, appended).



People tend not to realise that all these seemingly insignificant items have a lot of value, and together at a global level represent massive volumes"

*Pascal Leroy, Director General,  
WEEE Forum*

And, surprisingly, mobile phones rank 4th among small EEE products most often hoarded by consumers.

Organizers today released the results of surveys conducted to reveal why so many households and businesses fail to bring Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in for repair or recycling.

The surveys were conducted from June to September, 2022 by members of the WEEE Forum; the results were consolidated by the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Sustainable Cycles (SCYCLE) Programme.

The surveys show that, of 8,775 European households in 6 countries representing the diversity of the European Union – Portugal, Netherlands, Italy, Romania and Slovenia, and a separate UK survey, the average household contains 74 e-products such as phones, laptops, electric tools, hair dryers, and toasters (excluding lamps).

Of that 74 avg. total e-products, 13 are hoarded (9 of them unused but working, 4 broken).

The top 5 hoarded small EEE products (by number of pieces\*), Europe:

- \* Small consumer electronics and accessories (e.g. headphones, remote controls)
  - \* Small household equipment (e.g. clocks, irons,)
  - \* Small information technology equipment (e.g. external hard drives, routers, keyboards, mice)
  - \* Mobile and smart-phones
  - \* Small equipment for food preparation (e.g. toasters, food processing, grills)
- (\* By weight, white appliances outweigh all other types of e-waste by far.)

Meanwhile, LED lamps rank tops the list of products most likely to be trashed.

Hoarded small kitchen and household equipment, laptops and tablets as share of total stock of those products in households:

- \* Italy (29%)
- \* Netherlands (17%)
- \* United Kingdom (14%)
- \* Slovenia (12%)
- \* Romania (9%)
- \* Portugal (8%)
- \* Lebanon (4%)

Top 5 reasons for hoarding WEEE of any kind, Europe:

- \* I might use it again in the future (46%)
- \* I plan on selling it / giving it away (15%)
- \* It has sentimental value (13%)
- \* It might have value in the future (9%)
- \* I don't know how to dispose of it (7%)

Others

- \* Didn't have time, forgot about it, does not take up too much space (3%)
- \* Planned use in secondary residence (3%)
- \* Presence of sensitive data (2%)
- \* There is no incentive to recycle (1%)

Says Pascal Leroy, Director General of the WEEE Forum, the organisation behind [International E-Waste Day](#): “We focussed this year on small e-waste items because it is very easy for them to accumulate unused and unnoticed in households, or to be tossed into the ordinary garbage bin. People tend not to realise that all these seemingly insignificant items have a lot of value, and together at a global level represent massive volumes.”

“The producer responsibility organisations in the WEEE Forum that manage the collection of e-waste are constantly working to make the proper disposal of small e-waste simple and convenient for users and households,” says Mr. Leroy.

“Providing collection boxes in supermarkets, pick up of small broken appliances upon delivery of new ones and offering PO Boxes to return small e-waste are just some of the initiatives introduced to encourage the return of these items.”

Adds Magdalena Charytanowicz of WEEE Forum: “As noted in our short public video (<https://youtu.be/r8XloquM40Y>), in 2022 alone, small EEE items such as cell phones, electric toothbrushes, toasters and cameras produced worldwide will weight an estimated total of 24.5 million tonnes – four times the weight of the Great Pyramid of Giza. And these small items make up a significant proportion of the 8% of all e-waste thrown into trash bins and eventually landfilled or incinerated.”

“These devices offer many important resources that can be used in the production of new electronic devices or other equipment, such as wind turbines, electric car batteries or solar panels – all crucial for the green, digital transition to low-carbon societies.”

In the past twenty years, the PROs in the WEEE Forum have collected, de-polluted, recycled or prepared for re-use more than 30 million tonnes of WEEE.

They have spent enormous sums on communication campaigns. Still, challenges ahead remain daunting.

On 7 Dec. 2022 the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Grand Challenge Conference (<http://weeeforumconference.com>) will mark the 20th anniversary of the WEEE Forum, a consortium of reputable e-waste collection organizations.

The conference will also mark the 20th anniversary of EU Directive 2002/96/EC, the world’s first supranational (EPR) legislation on e-waste soon to be revised and updated.

Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, commented: “The continuing growth in the production, consumption and disposal of electronic devices have huge environmental and climate impacts. The European Commission is addressing those with proposals and measures throughout the whole product life-cycle, starting from

design until collection and proper treatment when electronics become waste.”

“Moreover, preventing waste and recovering important raw materials from e-waste is crucial to avoid putting more strain on the world’s resources. Only by establishing a circular economy for electronics, the EU will continue to lead in the efforts to urgently address the fast-growing problem of e-waste.”

Dr. Kees Baldé, Senior Scientific Specialist at UNITAR SCYCLE, noted that many small electronic products such as disposable airplane earbuds or cables and adapters accumulate largely unnoticed in many households. All the defunct earbuds accumulated by 2026 strung together would stretch around the moon three times.”

“Moreover, over the past decade the growth in generated e-waste has been considerably higher than the growth in recycling, thus it is important to remind people of the importance of reusing or returning every single piece of electronics or electrical product that is forgotten about in household drawers.”

Full news release: <https://bit.ly/3Ckitzl>

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