

Consumers' Perspectives on E-Waste and Electronics Recycling

Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates for HP
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Introduction

Consumers' Perspectives on E-Waste and Electronics Recycling was conducted by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB) for HP, in March 2005. PSB conducted 1,226 interviews with the general public in the United States. The overall margin of error is +/- 2.8% at the 95% confidence level and higher for subgroups.

Executive Summary

According to *Consumers' Perspectives on E-Waste and Electronics Recycling*, U.S. consumers have little knowledge of "e-waste." In fact, 95% of American consumers do not know the meaning of the term "e-waste." Further, Americans do not feel they are being told about options that might be available for recycling programs or other means of proper e-waste disposal where they live. For example, a 58% majority of American consumers do not know if there is a recycling program where they live specifically for old or no longer used technology products. Only about one in five (19%) say there is such a recycling program where they live, while another 22% say there is not.

Stockpiling old or no longer used technology products is a common practice among U.S. consumers. In fact, the research found that nearly three out of four U.S. consumers (68%) have used or unwanted technology products in their homes. Additionally, the research indicates that a reason for stockpiling may be that consumers are not informed of proper e-waste disposal. Fully three in four American consumers (77%) say there is little or no information available concerning how to properly dispose or recycle old computers and other technology products where they live.

Despite this widespread lack of understanding, a majority of American consumers view e-waste as an important environmental issue. *Consumers' Perspectives on E-Waste and Electronics Recycling* found that 63% of American consumers believe e-waste is a more important or as important environmental issue as air pollution.

In terms of potential solutions to the problem of properly disposing of old or no longer used computer technology, fully three in four American consumers (76%) would prefer to pay a fee on the back-end, at the time they dispose of the old technology product, rather than at the front-end (24%) when they first buy the product. Further, American consumers are looking to local municipalities, not manufacturers, to provide workable e-waste recycling. These consumers seem to prefer to properly dispose of old or no longer used technology products using existing local waste systems rather than create new alternatives that might cost them time or money. For example, six in ten (60%) prefer to drop old technology products at a local waste facility for free, rather than pay \$20 for at-home pick up or \$10 for in-store disposal in return for an equal value gift card.

Research Findings

Do you know what the term e-waste means?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
No	95	96	96	95	92
Yes - Electronic waste / Discarded electronics	2	3	2	1	4
Yes – Other	2	1	1	2	4
Yes - Not sure	1	1	*	2	0

*Less than 0.5%

Do you have any old or no longer used technology products, such as a computer, monitor, printer or print cartridge around the house?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
Yes	68	73	66	69	66
No	32	27	34	31	34

IF YES TO PREVIOUS QUESTION: What is the main reason that you still have one or more old technology products lying around your house? MULTIPLE RESPONSE					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
I keep them around as back up equipment or for parts	42	40	44	42	39
I don't know how to arrange for them to be properly recycled	20	26	19	17	19
There is no good reason to get rid of old computer, printer	18	15	19	24	12
Not permitted to throw them out with the regular trash	14	16	10	8	23
Don't have time to haul them myself/place is inconvenient	11	10	9	9	16
It is not worth the cost of paying someone to pick them up	9	6	4	13	13
Cost too much in the first place to throw out like other trash	9	14	6	6	11
Other (SPECIFY)	8	9	8	6	10
Don't know	*	0	*	0	0

*Less than 0.5%

In the last 2 years, have you disposed of any old or no longer used technology products, such as a computer, monitor, printer or print cartridge?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
Yes	63	64	61	67	62
No	37	36	39	33	38

IF YES TO PREVIOUS QUESTION: What did you do with them?					
MULTIPLE RESPONSE					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
Put them out for trash collection	37	37	37	45	30
Gave or sold it to someone else	27	31	27	24	24
Gave it to charity or school	22	15	25	14	30
The store I bought it from has a recycling program, they took it	13	11	7	14	23
Put them out as part of normal recycling	7	7	7	10	7
Had to take it myself to a waste disposal facility	7	8	6	5	11
The company that made it has a recycling program, they took it	7	4	5	13	6
Had to arrange to have them picked up by local authorities	1	1	1	*	4
Had to arrange for a private trash hauler to pick them up	1	0	1	1	1
Other (SPECIFY)	2	2	2	3	2

Less than 0.5%

Is there a recycling program where you live specifically for old or no longer used technology products, such as computers, monitors, printers or print cartridges?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
Yes	19	16	16	22	24
No	22	27	21	25	18
Don't know	58	57	63	53	57

Would you say that there is a lot of information available concerning how to properly dispose of old computers and other technology products, some information available, not so much information, or almost no information?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
A lot of information	3	6	1	1	4
Some information	20	28	15	21	22
Not so much information	36	27	36	42	38
Almost no information	41	39	48	36	36

Many states are considering legislative proposals to require consumers to pay fees to fund municipal e-waste recycling programs. One proposal would require consumers to pay a fee up front, when you buy a new technology product. Another proposal would require consumers to pay a fee on the back-end, at the time you dispose of the old technology product. Which do you prefer, an up front fee when you buy, or a back-end fee when you dispose?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
Up front	24	20	22	23	34
Back-end	76	80	78	77	66

In order to engage in e-waste recycling more regularly, would you prefer?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
To pay \$20 to have your old product picked up at your home	2	5	1	2	4
To pay \$10 to drop it off at a retailer and receive a \$10 in-store gift card	38	39	35	37	43
To pay nothing to drop it off at a local waste facility	60	56	65	61	53

Is e-waste a more important environmental issue than deforestation, about as important as deforestation, or less important than deforestation?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
More important	11	6	12	16	10
About as important	55	60	50	56	57
Less important	34	34	38	27	33

Is e-waste a more important environmental issue than air pollution, about as important as air pollution, or less important than air pollution?					
	Overall (%)	Region			
		N. East	South	MW	West
More important	8	10	9	5	8
About as important	55	53	52	64	53
Less important	37	38	39	31	39

Contact

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