

PRICES FOR REPAIRING SMARTPHONES

Findings from vzbv's market monitoring

14 July 2022

The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband – vzbv) has conducted market research into the cost of repairing smartphones compared to purchasing a new phone. The research shows that standard repairs, especially for cheaper models, are relatively expensive. Consumers may have to compare numerous prices and service providers to find an offer that justifies repairing their phone rather than buying a new one.

BACKGROUND

Consumers who want their devices to be long lasting sooner or later have to consider whether repairs are economically viable. When it comes to smartphones, for example, the screen can crack easily and battery performance deteriorates over time. At present, consumers facing such issues often decide not to get the phone repaired. The high cost of repairs is one of the main obstacles.¹

Consumers need information about repair costs and the durability of devices in order to choose more sustainable options. Ideally, they can then get their smartphone repaired at an affordable price. Against this backdrop, both European and German policymakers are endeavouring to introduce a “repairability index”, and a Right to Repair.

vzbv investigated the market for smartphone repairs in June 2022. The main questions were:

- How much do standard repairs for currently popular smartphone models cost?
- How do repair costs compare to the price of purchasing a new phone?
- How do repair costs differ between various service providers? Are there differences regarding various smartphone models?

METHODOLOGY

First, vzbv researched and recorded the average online selling price for a selection of smartphones² currently popular among consumers in Germany. We then investigated online prices for repairing these models' screens and batteries. Where the information was not available we emailed to ask for a quote, and compared the prices to the respective models' cost when new.

Our sample included new smartphone models from various manufacturers and price categories, and featuring various operating systems. We chose models which, according to a representative TU Berlin survey from 2021, were the most

¹ see <https://www.vzbv.de/pressemitteilungen/elektroschrott-verhindern-reparaturen-foerdern> (as of: 08/07/2022)

² For this purpose we used up-to-date figures from the Stiftung Warentest website: <https://www.test.de/Handys-und-Smartphones-im-Test-4222793-tabelle/> (as of: 08/07/2022)

popular in Germany.³ As models from the lowest price category (up to 300 euros) hardly appeared in the survey or were very old, our selection for this category also took into account the best-selling smartphone models worldwide in 2021.⁴ The devices included in the sample date from the years 2018 to 2021:

Price category	Make/model (year of release)
low (up to 300 euros)	Samsung Galaxy A12 (2021)
	Samsung Galaxy A51 (2020)
	Xiaomi Redmi 9 (2020)
mid-range (up to 600 euros)	Apple iPhone 11 (2019)
	Huawei P20 Pro (2018)
	Samsung Galaxy S10 (2019)
high (above 600 euros)	Apple iPhone 12 Pro (2020)
	Samsung Galaxy S20 Ultra 5G (2020)
	Xiaomi Mi 11 (2021)

Consumers who do not repair their smartphone themselves generally have a choice between the manufacturer, a retailer offering repair services, or an authorised or independent repair shop. We therefore used the following data sources to obtain prices:

- Repair prices on the websites of smartphone manufacturers
- Repair prices from electronic goods retailers such as MediaMarkt/Saturn (<https://www.mediamarkt.de/de/service/reparatur-wartung/handy-reparatur>)
- Prices from independent repair shops on the insurance company Wertgarantie's online marketplace (<https://www.wertgarantie.de/reparatur/smartphone>) – divided into repairs by post and local repair services with Berlin as sample location

Many consumers consider repairing goods themselves as a cheaper alternative to using a service provider.⁵ However, the fact that information from retailers on original replacement parts can be hard to come by makes this difficult with respect to smartphones. Our preliminary research provided evidence of this. We therefore did not include prices for replacement parts for smartphones in our research methodology.

³ Jeager-Erben, M., Poppe, E., Schaefer, A., Amend, C. (2022): Most frequently used smartphone models 2021. Smartphone survey 2021, TU Berlin (unpublished).

⁴ Counterpoint Research, market share of the world's bestselling smartphone models in 2021 (Statista 2022), <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/864417/umfrage/meistverkaufte-smartphone-modelle-weltweit/> (as of: 08/07/2022) – Comparable statistics for Germany alone were unavailable.

⁵ In a vzbv representative survey from 2017, almost one in four people (24 percent) said that either they themselves or someone in their personal environment (family, acquaintances, colleagues) had performed repairs. see https://www.vzbv.de/sites/default/files/downloads/2017/06/01/umfrage_-_haltbarkeit_und_reparierbarkeit_von_produkten_o_gewehrleistung.pdf p. 6 (as of: 08/07/2022).

For comparability purposes, we only included repair services using original replacement parts when surveying prices. We recorded the data in table form and documented it using screenshots.

FINDINGS

When researching prices we identified a total of **345 offers** to repair the nine selected smartphone models (survey period: 2 to 25 June 2022).

Expensive repairs for inexpensive smartphones

The cost of repairs compared to purchasing a new phone are notably high with respect to the budget smartphones in our sample (new price up to 300 euros).

The cheapest offer for a **new screen** in this price category amounts to **42 percent** of the original phone price, and the most expensive to **73 percent**.

The cost of **replacing the battery** for these models generally makes up between **14 and 54 percent** of the original phone price – and in one case as much as **63 percent**.

EXAMPLE: SAMSUNG GALAXY A12

Replacing a damaged screen for the second cheapest smartphone model in our sample (original phone price **192 euros**) can amount to **120 euros** from the retailer or **139.99 euros** at a repair shop (63 and 73 percent respectively).

In comparison, as would be expected, repair costs for high-end models (over 600 euros) are lower in relation to the original phone price.

Replacing the screen often costs less than half the original price (**28 to 49 percent**), though this is still a significant outlay for consumers.

A **replacement battery** in this category amounts to **7 to 15 percent** of the original phone price.

EXAMPLE: APPLE IPHONE 12 PRO

The Apple iPhone 12 Pro, which costs **1,110 euros** new, is the most expensive phone in our sample. Replacing the screen costs at least **309 euros** (28 percent), while a new battery costs at least **74.99 euros** (7 percent).

Time-consuming research due to huge price spread

Major price differences exist, above all, with respect to smartphones in the mid-range category (300 to 600 euros).

For example, **replacing the screen**: In the mid-range category, the cheapest offer amounts to **38 percent** of the original phone price, while the most expensive amounts to **107 percent**.

This means that in the worst-case scenario consumers have to pay more to replace a damaged screen than they would for a new device. Finding an affordable offer amidst such an enormous price spread can prove very time consuming.

Replacing a defective battery in this price category costs between **8 and 38 percent** of the original phone price.

EXAMPLE: HUAWEI P20 PRO

The screen replacement offers we found for the Huawei P20 Pro (original phone price **345 euros**) sometimes cost as much as or even more than a new device. Two repair shops charge **329 euros** (95 percent) and **369 euros** (107 percent) respectively.

No service provider for repairs is the cheapest per se

There is no clear answer as to which service provider is cheapest when it comes to repairs. Depending on the model, the cheapest option might be an independent repair shop, the manufacturer itself, or the services offered by a retailer.

In our sample, independent **repair shops** had the lowest price for **repairing screens** in five cases, with the **manufacturer** and **retailer** each being the cheapest in two cases respectively.

When it comes to replacement **batteries**, **repair shops** offered the lowest price in five cases and the **manufacturer** in four.

Of the smartphone manufacturers in our sample, Apple and Samsung advertise fixed prices for repairs and publish corresponding price tables for their different models online. In some cases, however, consumers have to send their phone off to be repaired and then wait for it to be sent back.

Consumers who want their phone repaired quickly have to turn to the retailer or a local repair shop and may have to invest time in searching for the most affordable offer.

Model and make determine the number of offers

Not all smartphone models can be repaired everywhere. As a result, we could not find offers for certain constellations when researching prices.

For example, independent repair shops do not offer repairs with original parts for **Apple's** iPhone models.

And we found far fewer offers for the two **Xiaomi** devices in our sample than for models from **Samsung** and **Huawei**, for example.

Contact

Federation of German Consumer Organisations

Team Monitoring Digital Markets

*Rudi-Dutschke-Straße 17
10969 Berlin*

mbdigitaless@vzbv.de

*The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband e.V.) is registered in the German Lobby Register.
You can find the respective entry [here](#).*