

Forget 5G and foldable. We just want it to last all day: What you want from new smartphone

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Foldable phones, 5G and other hyped features aren't going to motivate most of you to buy a new smartphone.

You're driven by something more basic—like a [phone battery](#) that'll last a full day and beyond.

These are key takeaways from a survey of 1,303 smartphone buyers in the U.S., conducted this month on USA Today's behalf by SurveyMonkey Audience.

Consider that 2 out of 3 smartphone owners have heard of the blazing fast "5G" wireless networks that are only now starting to emerge. Nearly half have at least a passing familiarity with "foldable" or flexible-screen devices that are supposed to herald the next wave of smartphone innovation, including a model that Samsung is expected to formally flaunt (if not yet release) at a press event on Wednesday in San Francisco marking the 10th anniversary of the company's flagship Galaxy S phone line.

And yet for Samsung and other phone makers all gung-ho on exploiting 5G and flexible design hardware in 2019, familiarity doesn't mean such features rank high on consumer wish lists, at least if those would-be mobile buyers have to spend a small fortune to get them.

Instead, folks want what they've always wanted, notably that extra juice and a handset that takes good pictures. Even at that, consumers can live without multiple camera lenses or fancy augmented reality stunts.

Indeed, 76 percent of iPhone owners and 77 percent of Android users listed longer battery life as something that will get them excited about buying a new phone. Fifty-seven percent and 52 percent, respectively, said a better camera would do it..

But only 37 percent and 40 percent pointed to 5G as a reason to get jazzed, 34 percent and 31 percent indicated a bigger screen would do the trick, and just 17 percent and 19 percent said a flexible design that

morphs from phone to tablet is what they're after.

Meanwhile, smaller screen phones or devices built around throwback or nostalgic designs barely registered in the survey.

Better, not newer

"Smartphone consumers have gotten into the habit of upgrading their phone every couple of years, so they pretty much know what to expect," says Laura Wronski, senior research scientist, at SurveyMonkey, and the person who ran the study. "Their new phone will be a bigger, better, faster version of their old phone. They aren't looking for their phone to suddenly turn into a virtual reality device or to have all these extra bells and whistles. They want an improvement on what they have."

One thing evident from the survey is that iPhone and Android owners are locked in, with around 90 percent in each group planning to stick with their current operating system even if they splurge on a new phone. (Nearly 54 percent of the Android respondents have Samsung phones.)

Both groups are equally likely to say they'll upgrade their phones when new models are released (43 percent and 42 percent, respectively). iPhone owners would appear to be more overdue for an upgrade if only because 40 percent of them have held their current handset for more than two years, compared to only 21 percent of Android users who have had their devices that long.

Of course, while Samsung is set to unveil what are expected to be at least three new Galaxy S models on Wednesday, iPhone owners will likely have to wait until at least September for their next shot at an upgrade, assuming Apple sticks to its usual playbook on timing.

Price counts

Not surprisingly, neither group wants to spend a lot of money, though as it happens, iPhone users are more likely than their Android counterparts to indicate that they aren't planning to upgrade this year because new models are too expensive, at 45 percent compared with 35 percent. Android owners, on the other hand, are more likely than iPhone owners to say they're not planning to upgrade because they're happy with how their current phones are working, at 65 percent compared with 55 percent.

Price remains a huge factor. Thirty percent of respondents said they're willing to pay only \$300 or less for a new phone. Twenty-six percent said they'd spend between \$300 and \$500, while just short of 25 percent said they'd fork over between \$501 and \$750.

On the higher end, 16 percent would pay between \$751 and \$1,000. Only 3 percent were willing to part with more than a grand.

Galaxy S9+ owner Bob Levine, an author at Lynda.com, responded to a USA TODAY question on Twitter by tweeting, he wouldn't spend "not one dime right now. I'm not paying for gimmicks."

For his part, New Jersey attorney Mark McPherson told USA TODAY that he's much more interested in foldable phones as a means to increasing screen size, while still maintaining portability and some semblance of battery life. He says he's "decidedly less interested in 5G, though who wouldn't like a little greater speed?"

McPherson, who owns a Samsung Note 9 and before that a Samsung Note 8, says he's "used to paying through the nose for a phone." But that doesn't mean he'd do it again.

"I won't be ponying up that kind of cash in the near future unless there's a paradigm shift that makes it worthwhile," McPherson said. "I don't think I have felt this hostile towards the idea of having to overpay for a new [phone](#) in the last 20 years. The industry seems to have found its own negative tipping point. Well done."

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