

Right to Repair

The Problem for Consumers

Without consumer and independent repair shop access to parts, tools, software and information, manufacturers can require consumers to use their own repair services or ones they authorize. They can then increase the prices consumers pay to get things repaired there, nudge consumers to pay for expensive service contracts such as Apple Care, or prevent repair from occurring at all (so that consumers are forced to buy a whole new product).

The Policy Opportunity

Access to self-repair or independent repair shops saves consumers money, reduces e-waste, and provides jobs — especially in rural communities where access to authorized repair is limited.

- **Household Savings:** Repairing goods saves consumers money, but consumers find it difficult to access repairs because parts are unavailable. Roughly six in 10 Americans (58%) who have had a large appliance break in the last five years say they have replaced it because it broke. Of those, 26% tried to repair it but could not. When consumers were deciding on whether or not they should repair a product, seven in 10 consumers focused on the cost of the repair.¹ It's clear that keeping repair costs reasonable is essential for ensuring that consumers try to repair products rather than replace them, which is why access to independent repair shops and ensuring those shops can access parts at the same costs and terms that manufacturers provide to licensed or their own repair shops is essential.
- **Reduced E-Waste:** Repairing goods instead of tossing them, keeps them out of landfills. Today, most of these tossed electronics are not recycled. Only 22 percent of small IT equipment such as cell phones and routers are recycled while 34 percent of

¹ Consumer Reports. "Right to Repair Survey: A Nationally Representative Multi-Mode Survey. Produced June-July 2024. https://article.images.consumerreports.org/image/upload/v1723220409/prod/content/dam/surveys/Consumer_Reports_Right_to_Repair_June_July_2024.pdf

large appliances such as washing machines or large printers are.² Keeping them in operation longer reduces that potential waste.

- **Rural constituents benefit:** Finding an authorized repair shop to fix devices in rural areas is tough. When consumers were unable to repair a device or appliance, 12% said it was because the repair shop was inconvenient or too far away.³ Additionally, independent repair shops in rural areas provide useful local jobs.

Consumer Reports' Position

Consumer Reports provides model legislation to protect a consumer's right to repair their own electronics, major appliances, and more. Consumers and independent repair shops should have access to the parts, tools, software and documentation to effect repairs on fair and reasonable terms and at a rate that is equivalent to those charged to authorized retailers. Manufacturers should not use parts pairing to prevent replacement parts from working or send deceptive, or non-dismissible warnings about parts on repaired items. Legislative action protecting the right to repair will reduce waste, save consumers money, and offer consumers choice in maintaining their expensive gadgets and appliances.

When we asked consumers about their experiences repairing smartphones, appliances and vehicles, we discovered that 82% of consumers believe manufacturers should be required to make the basic diagnostic information, tools, and replacement parts needed to make repairs to their products available to independent repair professionals⁴.

² Cornelis P. Baldé, Ruediger Kuehr, Tales Yamamoto, Rosie McDonald, Elena D'Angelo, Shahana Althaf, Garam Bel, Otmar Deubzer, Elena Fernandez-Cubillo, Vanessa Forti, Vanessa Gray, Sunil Herat, Shunichi Honda, Giulia Iattoni, Deepali S. Khatriwal, Vittoria Luda di Cortemiglia, Yuliya Lobuntsova, Innocent Nnorom, Noémie Pralat, Michelle Wagner (2024). International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). 2024. Global E-waste Monitor 2024. Geneva/Bonn.

<https://api.globalewaste.org/publications/file/297/Global-E-waste-Monitor-2024.pdf>

³Consumer Reports. "Right to Repair Survey: A Nationally Representative Multi-Mode Surve. Produced June-July 2024. https://article.images.consumerreports.org/image/upload/v1723220409/prod/content/dam/surveys/Consumer_Reports_Right_to_Repair_June_July_2024.pdf

⁴*ibid*

About Consumer Reports

Founded in 1936, CR is on a mission to create a fair and just marketplace for all. Widely known for our rigorous research and testing of products and services, we also survey millions of consumers each year, report extensively on marketplace issues, and advocate for consumer rights and protections around safety, digital rights, financial fairness, and sustainability. CR is independent and nonprofit.

For more information on our Right to Repair work, please contact Stacey Higginbotham at stacey.higginbotham.consultant.consumer.org.

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