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Global consumer survey reveals that majority of old mobile phones are lying in drawers at home and not being recycled
July 08, 2008

Espoo, Finland - Only 3% of people recycle their mobile phones despite the fact that most have old devices lying around at home that they no longer want, according to a global consumer survey released by Nokia today. Three out of every four people added that they don't even think about recycling their devices and nearly half were unaware that it is even possible to do so.

The survey is based on interviews with 6,500 people in 13 countries including Finland, Germany, Italy, Russia, Sweden, UK, United Arab Emirates, USA, Nigeria, India, China, Indonesia and Brazil. It was conducted to help Nokia find out more about consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards recycling, and inform the company's take-back programs and efforts to increase recycling rates of unused mobile devices.

Markus Terho, Director of Environmental Affairs, Markets, at Nokia said, "It is clear from this survey that when mobile devices finally reach the end of their lives that very few of them are recycled. Many people are simply unaware that these old and unused mobiles lying around in drawers can be recycled or how to do this. Nokia is working hard to make it easier, providing more information and expanding our global take-back programs." He added, "If each of the three billion people globally owning mobiles brought back just one unused device we could save 240,000 tonnes of raw materials and reduce greenhouse gases to the same effect as taking 4 million cars off the road. By working together, small individual actions could add up to make a big difference."

The findings highlight that despite the fact that people on average have each owned around five phones, very few of these are being recycled once they are no longer used. Only 3% said they had recycled their old phone. Yet very few old devices, 4%, are being thrown into landfill. Instead the majority, 44%, are simply being kept at homes never used. Others are giving their mobiles another life in different ways, one quarter are passing on their old phones to friends or family, and 16% of people are selling their used devices particularly in emerging markets.

Globally, 74% of consumers said they don't think about recycling their phones, despite the fact that around the same number, 72%, think recycling makes a difference to the environment. This was consistent across many different countries with 88% of people in Indonesia not considering recycling unwanted devices, 84% in India, and 78% of people in Brazil, Sweden, Germany and Finland.

The survey revealed that one of the main reasons why so few people recycle their mobile phones is because they simply don't know that it is possible to do so. In fact, up to 80% of any Nokia device is recyclable and precious materials within it can be reused to help make new products such as kitchen kettles, park benches, dental fillings or even saxophones and other metal musical instruments. Globally, half of those surveyed didn't know phones could be recycled like this, with awareness lowest in India at 17% and Indonesia at 29%, and highest in the UK at 80% and 66% in Finland and Sweden.

Mr Terho said, "Using the best recycling technology nothing is wasted. Between 65 - 80 per cent of a Nokia device can be recycled. Plastics that can't be recycled are burnt to provide energy for the recycling process, and other materials are ground up into chips and used as construction materials or for building roads. In this way nothing has to go to landfill."

Many people interviewed for the survey, even if they were aware that a device could be recycled, did not know how to go about doing this. Two thirds said they did not know how to recycle an unwanted device and 71% were unaware of where to do this.

Nokia has collection points for unwanted mobile devices in 85 countries around the world, the largest voluntary scheme in the mobile industry. People can drop off their old devices at Nokia stores and almost 5,000 Nokia Care Centers. To find their nearest take back point people can visit www.nokia.com/werecycle.

Responding to the survey findings Nokia is developing a series of campaigns and activities to give people more information on why, how and where to recycle their old and unwanted devices, chargers and mobile accessories. The company is also expanding its global take-back program by adding many more collection bins and promoting these in store to raise