

Campaign 'Updating!'

Information about the research and campaign performed by Consumentenbond on the lack of Android updates by manufacturers.

Problem: Many Android smartphones are unsafe because hardly any updates are available or none at all

- 84% of the Android smartphones that are tested on behalf of the Consumentenbond between June 2013 and May 2015 did not have the latest software.
- In fact 50% of those smartphones are unsafe, because they come with Android 4.3 or even older versions.

In a nutshell: although smartphones are no more than 2 years old, they are not updated.

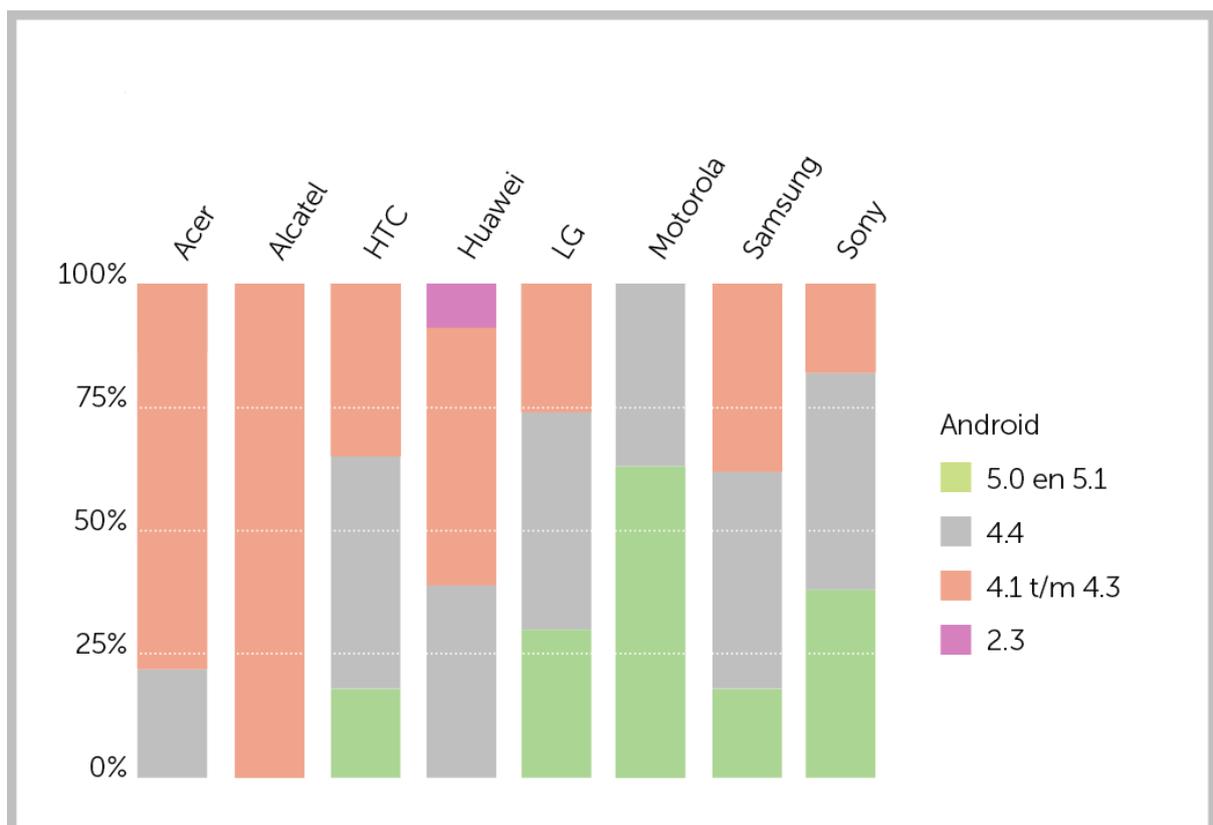
Manufacturers do release new products (with new Android versions), however they fail to support smartphones consumers are using already.

Solution: Manufacturers should update longer

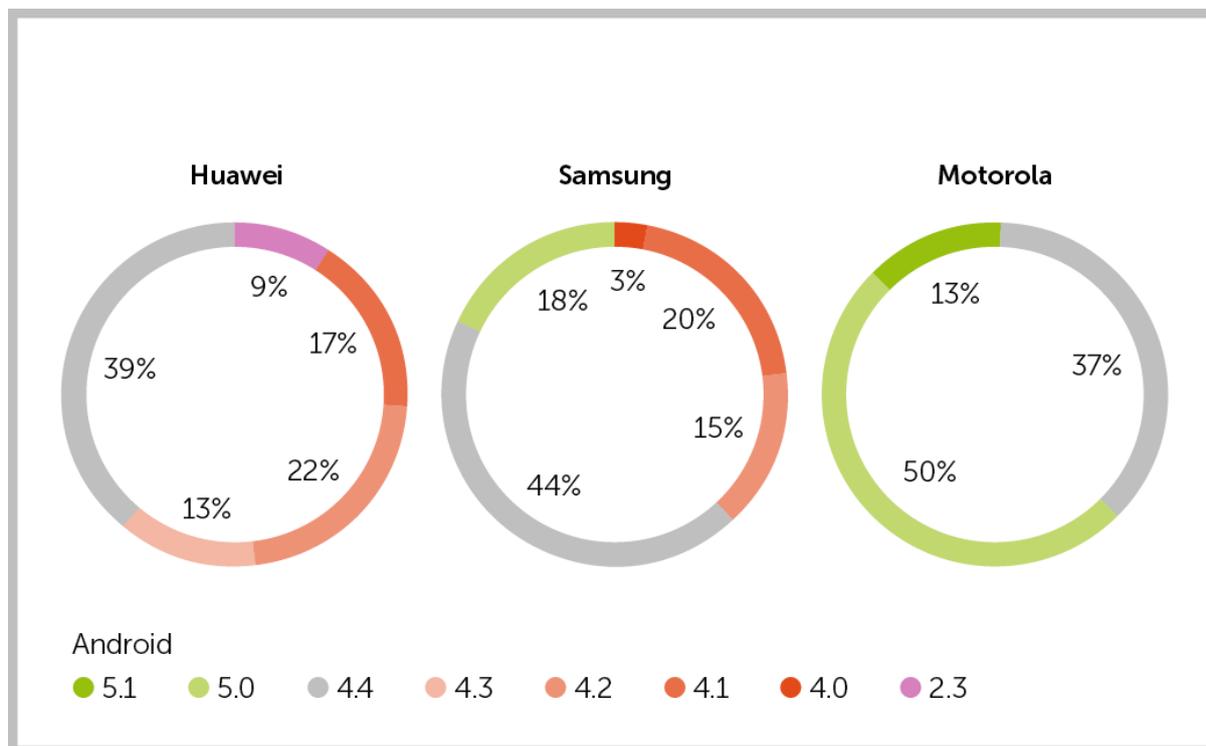
Manufacturers should update their products for a longer period of time, **at least** for 2 years after the release date. Also they should inform consumers on how long their smartphones will be supported with updates.

Differences between brands

There are many differences between the brands. In the table below the latest possible Android version on the tested smartphones per brand is displayed:



Concluding: the manufacturers who have the worst policy towards updates are Alcatel, Acer and Huawei. Alcatel and Acer only play a minor role in the Dutch market. Huawei is somewhat bigger, covering an average of 6.5% of the Dutch market for Android smartphones. However, Samsung (66% of the Dutch Android market) also has many models that are currently unsafe and only some are provided with new software (Android 5.0 and more recent versions). Compared to other manufacturers, Motorola sets a good example of how other manufacturers should behave.



No information by manufacturers

Manufacturers also **do not provide any information** on the support of their phones. There is little information available on their websites and their replies to us are vague. The Consumentenbond has been informing consumers on the **latest Android version in the information test**, advising them to consider purchasing a **new smartphone that has at least Android 5.0**.

Apple iOS and Windows Phone

On smartphones by Apple and Windows, the update issue is less of a problem. Apple's iOS tends to get updates for 4 years (rough average) after introduction which is comparatively long. But also for Apple products the update is still a surprise: the manufacturer does not provide any information beforehand. With Windows Phone 8, Microsoft has improved in this aspect, promising to update all phones with Windows 8.1 to Windows 10 for free.

Other Android products

We are now focusing on the lack of updates **on smartphones**, however this problem also applies to other products with Android software, like **tablets** and **'smart' TVs**. Smart TVs already have several apps that are no longer working because the software has not been updated. And with the 'internet of things' and Android software working on several devices like refrigerators, the problem will inevitably get bigger.

What's next

We launched our initiative last Thursday (2nd July), focusing particularly on **explaining the problem** to press, consumers and manufacturers. Next we will:

- **Address the problem to Dutch operators.** In Holland two operators (Vodafone and T-Mobile) sell 'branded' smartphones: so they add their own apps or software adjustments to the smartphones. This is causing delays which means consumers must wait for updates even longer.
- Publish information on **Android M** (with its new privacy settings) when that version is out (estimated release date is September 2015). Further ideas are to inform on how many (%) Android phones now on the market have Android M (in September and after some weeks). Then we will ask manufacturers to update their smartphones with Android M.
- With prolonged attention to these issues, we want to raise awareness among consumers as well. We might introduce a campaign in which we **encourage consumers to ask for support duration** from the manufacturers should the manufacturers continue to fail to mention it themselves.
- We will address this problem also with **regard to other products**. Like tablets and smart TVs – and we will pay attention to the problem in those test results.
- We would like to proceed **internationally and together with you**, because together we are bigger and have more impact. The manufacturers of Android smartphones are mainly located in Asia.

What you can do?

- Will you (your organization) help us address this problem? For instance:
 - Explain the problem to your readers and members.
 - Urge manufacturers to update their phones longer.
 - Provide information (in your test results) on the latest Android version of the test smartphones.
 - Join a (possible) international initiative against manufacturers.
- Do you know of any other international colleagues who might also want to address this problem? Please let us know and we will inform them as well.

Questions or ideas

We are curious about your reactions, any ideas you might have and whether you want to work on this subject. In case you have any suggestions or questions, please let us know:

- About this initiative: Inge Piek, ipiek@consumentenbond.nl, 0031 70 445 4548
- About the smartphone comparative test: Wouter Rensink, wrensink@consumentenbond.nl, 0031 70 445 45 35
- About the 'internet of things' and other products for which the lack of updates is a problem: Yvo Verschoor, yverschoor@consumentenbond.nl, 0031 70 445 42 32

More information (in Dutch)

- The action website: www.consumentenbond.nl/updaten
- About the problem: <http://www.consumentenbond.nl/campagnes/updaten/android-smartphones-snel-verouderd/>
- FAQ: <http://www.consumentenbond.nl/campagnes/updaten/faq/>
- Smartphone test information: <http://www.consumentenbond.nl/mobiele-telefoon/mobiele-telefoon-vergelijken/>