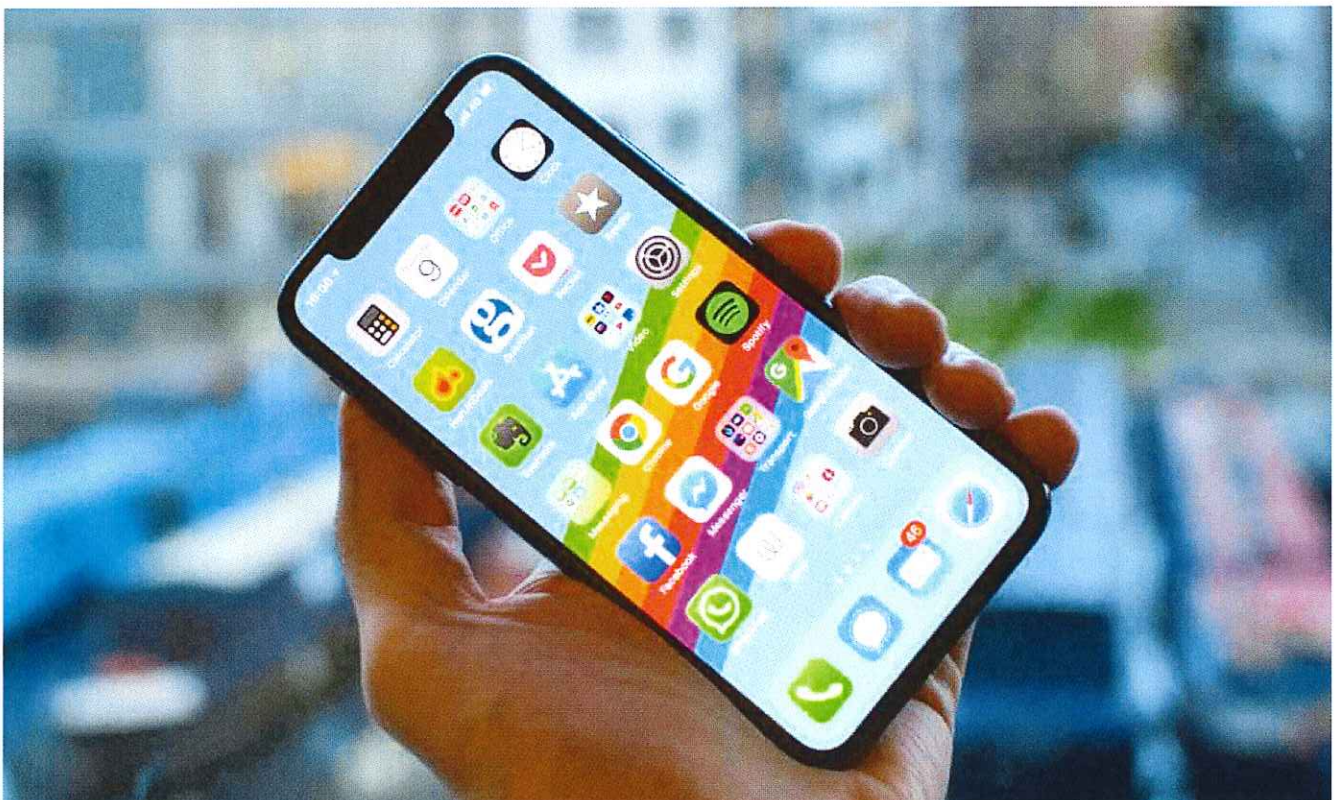


# The Guardian

## I tracked my iPhone usage for a week and this is what I learned

From picking up the phone every seven minutes to realising that Safari is my main time sink, Apple's Screen Time tools revealed more than I expected



How often do you pick up your phone? Photograph: Samuel Gibbs for the Guardian

**Samuel Gibbs**

Thu 12 Jul 2018 07:00 BST

How many times do you pick up and interact with your phone in a week? More than 500 times? How about the sheer number of notifications you get? It might number in the thousands.

With all the talk of smartphone addiction, I was curious to find out just how often I actually use my phone and why, so I took Apple's new Screen Time phone-tracking tools for a spin, installing the latest iOS 12 beta. What I discovered is that I pick up my phone every seven minutes during the day - far more than I imagined, and not just at the prompt of a notification.

I'll admit to suffering from phantom notifications, the feeling that your phone has just buzzed even through it hasn't. Now I have the data to prove it.

While I picked up the phone more than 1,000 times in the week, close to 150 times a day, I actually only received around 700 notifications in a week. That means I pick up and actually interact with my phone, not just look at the time, around 50 times a day without prompting.

Obviously some of that is looking things up or proactively sending messages and emails. But the rest I put down to that nervous twitch to check my phone.

Screen Time revealed something surprising in the apps I use too. During the week Safari was my go-to app more than anything else, spending almost three hours browsing the web. That was a full hour longer than I spent in Netflix, and twice as long as I spent in Mail, even though it feels like all I do these days is answer emails with close to 300 notifications a week.

Having dumped Twitter in April 2017, and turned everything off on Facebook, social media doesn't figure much in my usage. The messaging app Signal comes in with only an hour's worth of usage, despite getting close to 200 notifications from it - the second most demanding of my attention this week.

The number of apps I spent 45 minutes or less with are numerous, and include Reeder, the Google app, Facebook and Pocket, which explains why my "read it later" list just keeps on growing - 45 minutes just isn't enough to get through all those long reads.

Curiously I use my phone more frequently on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Why that is, I haven't been able to work out, but the rest of my usage - even at weekends - is consistent with a minimum of three hours spent staring at the little screen a day.

It turns out my weekdays are also fairly consistent too, with a burst of 45 minutes spent jabbing at the screen between 8-9am, and another 35 minutes between 5-6pm. I can also see that Facebook is almost exclusively used only on a Saturday, the Amazon app primarily only on a Sunday, and Mail peaks on a Wednesday.

All these patterns and more are plain to see when you have the data on hand, which is precisely what Apple's Screen Time and Google's upcoming Dashboard aim to do. While I wouldn't say I'm addicted to my phone (although maybe I'm just in denial), I certainly pick it up more than I thought I would. Perhaps it's time to put the phone down and ignore the vibrations, real or not.

## **iOS 12: everything you need to know about new iPhone features**

### Topics

- iPhone
- Smartphones
- Apple
- iOS
- Mobile phones
- features