

Analysts: PC manufacturers can do better

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The annual rate of PC hardware failure is down, but manufacturers can do better, technology analysis firm Gartner found in a study released over the weekend.

"While the good news is that desktop PC and notebook PC hardware annual failure rates" -- defined as a problem that requires replacing a hardware component -- "have declined, the bad news is that notebook annual failure rates still range from 15 percent to 20 percent throughout the life of the system," the company said in a statement.

"The number of motherboard replacements has been rising over time as more components get integrated onboard," Gartner research Vice President Leslie Fiering said via the statement. Motherboards proved to be problematic for both desktop and notebook PC users, according to the study.

For desktops purchased in 2003 or 2004, the failure rate for the first year of the computer's life was 7 percent, with a 15 percent projected failure rate for the fourth year, Gartner said.

For desktop computers purchased in 2005 or 2006, the rates dropped to 5 percent for the first year of life and a projected 12 percent for the fourth year, the statement said.

Notebooks bought in 2003 or 2004 experienced a whopping 20 percent failure rate in year one, and a projected 28 percent rate in year four. The numbers dropped to 15 percent and 22 percent, respectively, for

notebooks from 2005 and 2006, according to Gartner.

"Some measures that the smartest PC vendors have implemented to improve reliability include: increasing design and system testing; increasing component qualification; raising the penalty to component suppliers for component failures; and performing overall system tests during repair incidents to spot and fix any imminent problems before they can cause further failures," the statement said.

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