Google Play Store Ratings & Reporting

In Q4 of 2019, Google Play began using a weighted algorithm to determine the overall rating for apps. As Google stated at the time, “instead of a lifetime cumulative value” for ratings, as was previously used, “your Google Play Store rating will be recalculated to give more weight to your most recent ratings”. Due to this change, the data we receive is no longer a true count of the number of ratings an app receives in the Play Store. The overall rating and trends over time are up-to-date and accurate, but the underlying counts reflect that weighted algorithm, and as such do not always represent customer ratings on a 1:1 basis. In fact, some of the underlying counts may be misleading. Unfortunately, Google no longer sends Alchemer Digital or any other 3rd party, the actual number of ratings, so the weighted rating data that we must use to calculate an apps actual Play Store rating.

Because Google is now weighing recent ratings more heavily than historical ratings, if an app receives more one-star reviews in the current week and Google drops the apps rating, they will send through the ratings data that supports that score instead of the actual numbers coming through. If an app's rating drops due to the algorithm, Google may need to over-represent the current number of low ratings in order to match the score they've given. The number that shows in the below graphs on the Summary dashboard should be viewed as indicating the recent trend of ratings based on the weighted ratings Google has calculated. The accurate number of ratings and reviews can be seen directly in your Google Play store, and your Star Rating should match across both Alchemer Digital and Google Play.

Lastly, Google gives this brief explanation on the Play Store policy: "Play Store ratings for apps, and the corresponding bar graphs showing the *proportional* number of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 star reviews, are *calculated based on the app's current quality ratings* from user reviews, *rather than the lifetime average value* of user reviews, unless the app has very few ratings. This gives users more insight into the app, and a better understanding of its current state, since apps can change over time, and often add and remove features. We show the total lifetime number of reviews as this provides users with valuable information about the app's use and longevity."

To accommodate this change to Google Play, we’ve added help text to the Star Rating section of your Android Dashboards and removed some counts that could be misleading. Remember: while rating distribution data is still useful to indicate trends, focusing on counts from specific days can be misleading -- sometimes even creating what look like massive spikes in one or five star ratings.

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