



Privacy: Risk/Benefit Survey

A Nationally Representative Phone Survey

June 2019 Results

Overview of Methodology

Consumer Reports fielded this Privacy Survey to understand consumer behaviors and attitudes regarding internet-connected devices and privacy, in particular on mobile apps. These results are based on interviews conducted from June 18–23, 2019.

The survey was administered by SSRS on its Omnibus survey platform using a nationally representative sample. Interviews were conducted in English and in Spanish, to both landline telephone households and cell phone numbers. In total SSRS collected 1,004 interviews. Final data are weighted by age, gender, race, telephone type, education, and region to be proportionally representative of the US adult population.

The margin of error for results based on the total sample is +/-3.60 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins, and only those subgroups for which there are at least 100 unweighted cases are included.

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TOPLINE RESULTS

The questions presented below were shown to respondents in this order unless otherwise noted. Where appropriate, question verbiage, response answer choices, or direction of scales were randomized or rotated and those instances are noted below.

Prepared by CR Survey Research Department, July 2019

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INTRO. [TEXT READ TO RESPONDENTS; THEN Q1, Q2, & Q3 ASKED IN A RANDOMIZED ORDER TO RESPONDENTS.]

Now, we are going to ask some questions about your behaviors and attitudes regarding internet-connected devices and privacy.

Q1. [LIST READ IN A RANDOMIZED ORDER. RESPONSE CHOICES INCLUDED 'YES,' 'NO,' AND 'NOT APPLICABLE.' PERCENTAGES IN TABLE BELOW ARE THOSE WHO RESPONDED 'YES'. IF NEEDED FOR TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION ITEM, INTERVIEWER READ: "THIS IS A SECURITY FEATURE YOU CAN TURN ON FOR SOME ONLINE ACCOUNTS THAT REQUIRES A 2ND PIECE OF INFORMATION, SUCH AS A CODE SENT IN A TEXT MESSAGE, IN ADDITION TO YOUR PASSWORD TO LOG ON"]

<p>I'm going to read a list of things people might do to protect their privacy or personal data when using technology. For each item, please tell me if it is something that you currently do. You can say "Yes" or "No," but if a particular statement does not apply, please answer with "not applicable" and we will move on to the next one. For this question, we are interested in what you do when using your personal devices and not those owned by your employer or solely used for business purposes.</p> <p>Do you...</p>	
	Total
	%
Use a strong password, often defined as at least 8 characters long, including upper and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols, to access your home WiFi network	74
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	932
Delete or choose to not install apps on your smartphone if you think they collect too much personal information or do not protect it adequately	71
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	902
Require a password, PIN, or other method, such as touch or face ID, to unlock your smartphone	69
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	921
Adjust your smartphone settings to only allow an app access to your location while you are using the app	65
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	885
Block or routinely delete some or all cookies on your web browser	63
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	917
Set permissions for apps on your smartphone to block access to things like your camera, location or contacts if they aren't needed for the app to function	60
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	887
Use two-factor authentication, such as password plus phone verification, on any of your online accounts	50
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	909
Use "private" or "incognito" mode on your web browser when you want to keep your browsing or search history from being saved or seen by others	47
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	909
Use a password manager that automatically creates and stores a very strong password for each of your online accounts	36
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	918
Use a "virtual private network," or VPN, to ever access the internet on your devices, for instance your laptop, smartphone or tablet	34
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Not applicable' or 'Don't know'	878

Q2. [ORDER OF SCALE ROTATED WHEN READ TO RESPONDENTS.]

Which statement about data collection on mobile apps WHEN YOU ARE NOT USING THE APP do you agree with the MOST? Examples of data collection include your location, who your contacts are, what your battery level is, or what other apps you use.

Mobile apps should...

	Total
	%
Be allowed to collect this without restriction	6
Only be allowed to collect this if they get permission the first time they do this	15
Only be allowed to collect this if they get permission each time they do this	46
Not be allowed to collect this	33
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	959

Q3. [VERBIAGE READ TO RESPONDENTS WITH THE ORDER OF "BENEFITS" AND "RISKS" RANDOMIZED. ORDER WAS KEPT THE SAME THROUGHOUT QUESTION STEM. SCENARIOS READ IN A RANDOMIZED ORDER, FOLLOWED BY "DO YOU FEEL THAT...". ORDER OF SCALE CHOICES ("BENEFITS OUTWEIGH" AND "RISKS OUTWEIGH") ROTATED TO MATCH STEM.]

There are benefits and risks to you as a consumer when sharing personal information in today's digital world. Sharing data about yourself and your online activities can sometimes make websites and apps feel more personalized and add convenience. But sometimes, online tracking of personal information feels too intrusive, and could have unfavorable consequences, like in the case of a data breach.

I'm going to present a series of scenarios of types of information collected about you and for each, one possible outcome. We'd like to know the extent to which you feel the benefits outweigh the risks, or the risks outweigh the benefits when sharing these types of information.

Do you feel that...

	Total
	%
Your email address is required by a website before it will allow you to read an article or see other content. Your email is added to a mailing list.	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	7
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	10
Benefits are equal to the risks	22
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	19
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	42
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
964	
Access to your camera and photos is requested by a shopping app. If you submit a review on a purchase, you'll be able to add photos to it from your smartphone.	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	8
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	8
Benefits are equal to the risks	22
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	21
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	40
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
956	
Your location information is requested to play a game app like "Words with Friends." This allows other local players to find you when you are online.	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	8
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	10
Benefits are equal to the risks	22
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	19
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	41
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
954	

(continued)	
Access to your list of phone contacts is requested by a navigation app. You'll be able to automatically get directions to friends' houses.	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	10
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	11
Benefits are equal to the risks	25
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	19
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	36
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
965	
Access to your phone's calendar is requested by a social media site. You can add events you are interested in to your calendar straight from the app.	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	9
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	12
Benefits are equal to the risks	30
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	20
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	29
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
957	
Access to your smartphone microphone is requested by your mobile web browser. You'll be able to submit searches using your voice.	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	9
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	14
Benefits are equal to the risks	27
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	19
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	31
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
958	

(continued)	
<i>Your browsing history of clothing websites is saved by the browser using cookies. Ads for similar stores you might be interested in pop up on your web browser.</i>	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	8
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	13
Benefits are equal to the risks	34
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	18
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	27
<i>Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'</i>	
966	
<i>What you have typed into a search engine, such as researching an illness online, is saved by the search engine. Afterwards, you receive ads for doctors or treatments you may find useful in your web browser.</i>	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	11
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	17
Benefits are equal to the risks	33
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	16
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	24
<i>Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'</i>	
974	
<i>What you've watched on your smart TV is saved. The next time you go to watch TV, there are recommended shows and movies for you.</i>	
Benefits strongly outweigh the risks	17
Benefits somewhat outweigh the risks	23
Benefits are equal to the risks	32
Risks somewhat outweigh the benefits	12
Risks strongly outweigh the benefits	15
<i>Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'</i>	
947	

Q4.

Do you use the internet, at least occasionally?	
	Total
	%
Yes	84
No	17
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
1003	

Q5.

Do you have an internet-connected smartphone?	
	Total
	%
Yes	78
No	22
Base: All respondents, excluding those who said 'Don't know'	
990	

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