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**Information Privacy and the “Right to be Forgotten”: An Exploratory
Survey of Public Opinion and Attitudes**

Summary of Survey Results - September 2013

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**These results are currently being analysed as part of research at National University of
Ireland Galway**

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Research Method

- This report provides a summary of the findings for 260 internet users who completed the online survey between August and September 2013.
- To gain respondents a combination of two non-probability sampling techniques was used, namely “snowballing” and convenience sampling.
- The survey instrument contained 24 questions, the majority of which were either Likert scale items or checkboxes, with a number of open-ended comment textboxes also included.
- There were four main groups of items on the questionnaire, relating to:
 - (1) General demographic variables;
 - (2) Attitudes towards the right to be forgotten;
 - (3) Attitudes towards on-line privacy; and
 - (4) Perceived on-line risks, safeguards and controls
- Survey results were analysed using the statistical software program SPSS.



Summary of findings:

Q. What is your gender?

The gender response rate is split as 60% females and 40% males

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (Number (n))
Female	59.14%	152
Male	40.86%	105

Q. What is your current occupation?

Over two thirds of respondents indicate they are currently employed

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Student	17.31%	45
Jobseeker	5.38%	14
Employed	73.46%	191
Retired	0.38%	1
None of the above	3.46%	9

Q. Approximately how long have you been using the internet?

Under one third of respondents indicate they have been using the internet for more than 15 years

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
<1 year	17.31%	0
<5 years	5.38%	19
<10 years	73.46%	96
<15 years	0.38%	70
15+ years	3.46%	74



Q. Do you normally access the internet through: (Tick all the apply)

The largest proportion of respondents indicate that their laptop is their primary way of accessing the internet

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Smartphone/ Mobile phone	80.77%	210
Laptop	86.92%	226
Personal Computer (PC)	45.38%	118
Tablet	37.69%	98
None of the above	0%	0

Q. How much personal information do you reveal online?

Less than two thirds of respondents indicate they reveal *only the personal information that they have to* online

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
None	1.57%	4
A small amount	30.20%	77
Only what I have to	58.43%	149
A lot	9.41%	24
I don't care how much I reveal online	0.39%	1

Q. Do you know what your privacy rights are?

The largest proportion of respondents indicate they know *very little* about their privacy rights

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Not at all	8.98%	23
Very little	29.69%	76
Little	19.14%	49
Some	28.52%	73
Quite a bit	11.33%	29
A lot	1.95%	5
Completely	0.39%	1



Q. Should the "Right to be Forgotten" apply to personal information stored about you i.e. erased if you request to do so? (If yes, tick all the apply)

The largest proportion of respondents indicates that *personal information that I provided, which someone else copies and re-circulates* should be erased if they request so

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Personal information that I provided myself	87.45%	223
Personal information that others provided about me	83.53%	213
Personal information that I provided, which someone else copies and re-circulates	87.84%	224

Q. Should the Right to be Forgotten be implemented into legislation?

The largest proportion of respondents indicate the *"right to be forgotten"* should be implemented into legislation

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Yes	98.83%	253
No	1.17%	3

Q. Do you think the "Right to be Forgotten" will be a success if it is implemented into legislation?

Two thirds of respondents indicate that the *"right to be forgotten"* will be a success if it is implemented into legislation

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Yes	66.41%	170
No	33.59%	86



Q. Is it right to judge people on their past online behaviour? For e.g. missing out on a job opportunity due to something that was posted online e.g. a photo from a night out posted on Facebook?

The largest proportion of respondents indicate that people should not be judged on their past online behaviour

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Yes	7.14%	18
No	67.86%	171
Depends how long ago it was posted	25%	63

Q. Do you agree that you have a lot of control over your privacy online?

The largest proportion of respondents indicate they do not have a lot of control over their privacy online

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Strongly disagree	7.91%	20
Disagree	31.62%	80
Slightly disagree	16.21%	41
Neutral	10.67%	27
Slightly agree	21.34%	54
Agree	9.49%	24
Strongly agree	2.77%	7

Q. Do you think it would be easy to erase all your personal information online?

The largest proportion of respondents thinks it would not be easy to erase all their personal information online

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Yes	6.35%	16
No	86.90%	219
Don't Know	6.75%	17



Q. What would you like happen to your online profile when you die?

The largest proportion of respondents indicate they would rather their online profile was closed down due to inactivity after they die

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
I'd rather it was closed down due to inactivity	52.57%	133
I'd rather it remains available to view online forever with commenting enabled	4.74%	12
I'd rather it remains available to view online but closed to comment	15.42%	39
Not sure	26.09%	66
Not applicable	1.19%	3

Q. In your opinion, how well do current laws protect you against the following:

The largest proportion of respondents indicate that they are not very well protected by current laws

	Don't know	Not at all protected	Slightly	Moderately	Very well	Extremely well protected	Responses (n)
Protection against violation of your privacy online	28.80%	26.40%	30.40%	13.60%	0.80%	0%	250
Protection against damages to your reputation caused by online companies (e.g. SNS's)	24.10%	47.79%	16.87%	9.64%	1.61%	0%	249
Protection against threats of cybercrime and on-line fraud	18.95%	26.21%	31.05%	18.95%	4.44%	0.40%	248
Protection of your rights to freely express your personal views	24.40%	15.60%	20.80%	22.40%	15.20%	1.60%	250



Q. How often have the following events happened to you online?

Details of the frequency of particular events happening to respondents

	Never	Seldom	A few times	Frequently	Very frequently	Responses (n)
Your account was maliciously accessed by an unauthorised person	63.97%	28.34%	7.29%	0%	0.40%	247
The privacy of your personal information was violated	60.82%	26.94%	10.61%	1.63%	0%	245
Your reputation was damaged as a result of information posted online	80.49%	15.85%	3.25%	0%	0.41%	246
You were the victim of an on-line fraud, either on a SNS or elsewhere	84.84%	12.30%	2.46%	0.41%	0%	244
You had an unpleasant experience as a result of information disclosed by you online	73.17%	17.48%	8.94%	0.41%	0%	246



Q. How concerned are you that: (Information shared you may want forgotten include personal details such as login details, address, phone number, PPS Number etc.)

Details of the level of concern of particular unwanted incidents happening to respondents

	Not at all concerned	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely concerned	Responses (n)
Information they share with friends may be in appropriately disclosed by them to others	22.27%	28.34%	25.51%	16.60%	7.29%	247
People you only know online are not who they say they are	29.98%	26.72%	21.86%	12.96%	8.50%	247
Other internet users might try to trick or defraud you	13.41%	28.86%	23.58%	21.95%	12.20%	246
Other internet users might abuse your personal information	6.91%	28.46%	25.20%	23.98%	15.45%	246
Online companies might divulge your information to other parties without your explicit consent	2.85%	13.82%	27.64%	31.30%	24.39%	246
Online companies might use your information for purposes other than explicitly stated in their privacy policy	4.45%	13.36%	30.77%	29.96%	21.46%	247



Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Details of respondent's attitude towards their online privacy

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Responses (n)
I am generally a private person in my everyday life	0.81%	2.02%	5.24%	7.66%	21.37%	42.74%	20.16%	248
I tend to reveal minimal personal information about myself online as I value my rights to privacy	0.40%	2.42%	4.84%	10.08%	14.92%	39.92%	27.42%	248
I feel uncomfortable about my personal information being in the hands of others	0%	3.64%	4.05%	7.69%	18.22%	32.39%	34.01%	247
I believe there is no need to be concerned about disclosing personal information online	38.71%	39.11%	12.10%	4.44%	1.61%	1.61%	2.42%	248
It does not bother me that a history of my activities and movements are held by third parties online	42.74%	29.03%	10.89%	5.65%	4.84%	4.84%	2.02%	248



Q. In your opinion, how likely are you to be damaged as a result of your online information being:

Details of respondent's likelihood of being damaged as a result of their online information being used in unintended ways

	Extremely unlikely	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely	Extremely likely	Responses (n)
Used for commercial purposes (e.g. market research, advertising)	9.92%	16.53%	39.26%	14.46%	11.98%	4.13%	3.72%	242
Made available to unknown individuals or organisations without your knowledge	5.79%	9.09%	24.79%	16.53%	26.03%	14.05%	3.72%	242
Accessed by someone you don't want (e.g. parents, teacher, employer, ex-friend)	5.37%	9.09%	23.14%	17.36%	25.21%	13.22%	6.61%	242
Used against you by someone (e.g. to cause embarrassment or spy on you)	3.73%	9.96%	21.58%	19.09%	24.07%	14.94%	6.64%	241



Q. How much control do you believe you have over the following issues online (e.g. through policies, privacy settings, etc.):

Details or respondents level of control over particular online issues

	No control at all	Very little	Little	Some	Quite a bit	A lot	Complete control	Responses (n)
Your ability to control who can view your information	2.08%	18.75%	18.75%	29.58%	22.92%	6.67%	1.25%	240
Your ability to control the actions of other users	34.85%	31.95%	16.60%	11.62%	3.73%	0.83%	0.41%	241
Your ability to correct inaccurate or untruthful information about yourself	9.13%	26.56%	24.07%	24.48%	12.45%	2.90%	0.41%	241
Your ability to delete embarrassing or damaging information about yourself	8.33%	27.08%	23.75%	28.33%	8.33%	3.33%	0.83%	240
Your ability to prevent your data and actions from being used/analysed by online companies in ways that you did not intend	24.17%	32.50%	24.17%	13.33%	3.75%	1.67%	0.42%	240
Your ability to prevent your data and actions from being used/analysed by other parties in ways that you did not intend	26.47%	31.51%	23.11%	11.76%	5.04%	1.68%	0.42%	238



Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Details of respondent's attitude towards their online privacy

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Responses (n)
Overall, I see no real threat to my privacy due to my presence on the internet	15.83%	32.08%	25%	9.58%	12.50%	4.58%	0.42%	240
I fear that something unpleasant might happen due to my presence on the internet	2.07%	15.35%	17.01%	17.43%	30.71%	15.77%	1.66%	241
I feel safe publishing my personal information online	15.83%	25%	26.67%	19.58%	10.83%	2.08%	0%	240
Overall, I find it risky to publish my personal information online	1.26%	6.69%	7.11%	12.97%	31.80%	25.94%	14.23%	239
It is unlikely that someone could succeed in gaining unauthorised access to my personal information online	17.99%	29.71%	19.25%	14.23%	12.55%	4.60%	1.67%	239

Q.23 Do you think placing an expiry date on information disclosed online would be a more feasible option as opposed to attempting to erase all this information?

The largest proportion of respondents indicate they think placing an expiry date on information disclosed online would be a more feasible option as opposed to attempting to erase all this information

Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (n)
Yes	83.47%	202
No	16.53%	40