

Study finds need for education about online privacy

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The final report of a major national study on how New Zealanders manage their personal information in online commercial transactions, online government transactions and on social networking sites, is being released today. Led by Professor Miriam Lips, Chair in e-Government, School of Government at Victoria University, and commissioned by the Department of Internal Affairs, the report is based on in-depth qualitative interviews and focus groups that delve deeper into the insights gained from a nationwide survey published last year.

The researchers were interested to find that most New Zealanders do not yet have mature online behaviours and have become more private online over time, as they learn from their own experiences or that of others. A bad online experience had usually changed people's online behaviour in a profound way.

"We found that the more online experience people had, the more likely they were to obscure aspects of their 'real' identity by using pseudonyms or providing fake information for example," says Professor Lips. "While young people were adventurous in online environments, they too demonstrated privacy-savvy online behaviours and indicated that they had become more private online over time.

"At the same time we found that many people struggle with understanding what information on them is collected, what they can share in online environments, or how the information they provide is being used."

Among the recommendations in the report is providing education and training programmes tailored to people according to their age and background, to promote awareness of how to keep themselves private online. "We also would like to see organisations being more transparent about how they collect and use online identity information, and more people using RealMe, as it is a safe way for users to verify their identity online and enables them to access a variety of online services via a single log on, which would help with the problem many people have around managing multiple passwords."

General Manager Digital Transformation, Richard Foy from the Department of Internal Affairs, says the Department welcomes the report's recommendations. "It's essential that New Zealanders feel safe when they are using the Internet and the more we can do to facilitate that the better."

Some key findings

- People from different age groups, ethnic backgrounds and those with low levels of education or internet expertise, vary in their privacy perceptions and online behaviours. For example, Māori and Pasifika are much more inclined to share identity information in online relationships, compared to Pakeha or Asian people.
- Many people take a pragmatic approach and will trade in their identity information for a particular online service (e.g. providing their email address in order to get access to an online article or their mobile phone number in order to be able to complete a commercial transaction). However, many of them do so because they feel they don't have a choice. Often when people feel the information requests are too intrusive they will stop and exit an online transaction.
- Many young people would prefer to deal with government agencies via offline channels. They find government websites hard to use and feel it is easier to talk to someone in person.
- The majority of people trust New Zealand websites more than overseas websites, and trust [government](#) sites with their identity information more than other sites. In general, reputation, brand recognition and reviews are all important for people to establish trust in a particular site.
- Compared to overseas experience, New Zealanders have limited personal experience with forms of cybercrime or cyber-enabled crime.

More information: To read the report visit [www.victoria.ac.nz/sog/research ... govt/news-and-events](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sog/research...govt/news-and-events)

Provided by Victoria University

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