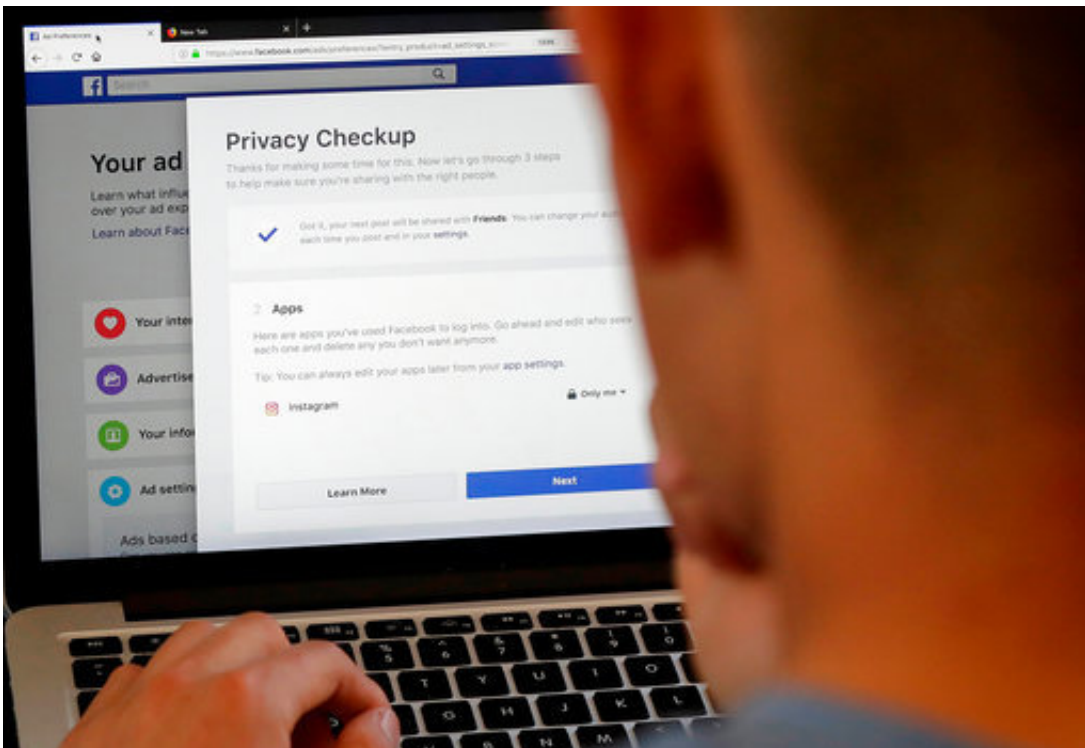


Poll: Privacy debacle prompts social-media changes

April 24 2018, by Barbara Ortutay



In this March 26, 2018, file photo, a man poses for photos in front of a computer showing Facebook ad preferences pages in San Francisco. If you've made changes to how you use social media since Facebook's Cambridge Analytica privacy debacle, you're not alone. A new poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 7 out of 10 of online adults who've heard of the Cambridge Analytica scandal have changed their behavior on social media. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File)

If you've made changes to how you use social media since Facebook's Cambridge Analytica privacy debacle, you're not alone.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that 7 out of 10 of online adults who've heard of the scandal—revelations that a data mining firm may have accessed the private information of some 87 million Facebook users to influence elections—have unfollowed accounts, deleted their profiles or made other changes in how they use social media.

And since 9 in 10 Americans have heard at least a little bit about Cambridge Analytica, this means the scandal has led to widespread changes in the use of social media among Americans. What's less clear is whether these changes are permanent, and whether they will affect business at Facebook, Twitter and other social media companies.

Facebook has said that it hasn't noticed a meaningful decline in usage since the scandal broke and it doesn't seem to have experienced much of an advertiser exodus, either. But that doesn't mean the social media giant is in the clear. Some high-profile tech luminaries such as Elon Musk and Steve Wozniak have disavowed Facebook, and a "DeleteFacebook" online campaign—even if it didn't lead to mass defections—has bruised the [company](#)'s already-battered image.

Cole Bearden, 26, a musician and liquor store employee in Nashville, said he soured on Facebook a while ago, after his parents friended him and turned his app into "a perpetual recipe video-sharing machine." That, along with his concerns about surveillance and advertisements, convinced him to drop the app from his phone a year ago. He said in an interview last month that he checks his profile only occasionally.

Still, Bearden says deleting his profile won't mean a lot unless many other Facebook users do the same. And even that, he says, may come too

late.

"The real damage has been done. Our concept of open democracy has been undermined, subverted and potentially irreparably damaged," he said.

Some people, though, were cautious long before Cambridge Analytica. Jessica Garcia, who lives in Homewood, Illinois, said she was already "pretty strict" with all her settings and she uses social media (Facebook, mostly) only minimally. She doesn't post much and stays out of politics.

Asked who bears the responsibility to protect people's online privacy, the poll found that vast majorities of Americans think both social [media](#) companies (84 percent) and individual users (72 percent) have a large share. Just short of half—46 percent—see that as a large responsibility of the federal government.

Garcia agrees with the majority and said it's a combination of individual and company responsibility.

"I don't feel like the government needs to step in and start controlling that," she said. "If we can't make good decisions and people and they don't make good decisions as companies, it'll fall apart on its own."

Americans who have taken some action after hearing about Facebook's recent privacy crisis include 29 percent who have deleted certain [social media](#) accounts—the most drastic step. A larger number, 38 percent, uninstalled apps on their phone, while 42 percent said they used certain platforms less often. Nearly half, 47 percent, unfollowed or unfriended certain people, and 41 percent unfollowed groups or organizations.

Forty-five percent reviewed or changed their privacy settings—something Facebook encouraged recently by sending a notice

to users through their Facebook pages. First, it notified the 87 million people whose information may have been leaked to Cambridge Analytica. This week, it began sending all 2.2 billion Facebook users a more generic notice to review their settings that show what apps have access to their data.

According to the poll, women were more likely than men to have made at least one change, and younger people were more likely to say they have reviewed their privacy settings or uninstalled apps from their phones. Older Americans were more likely to say they have followed news of the scandal.

The Cambridge Analytica fiasco was not Facebook's first privacy scandal, though it may have been its worst. The poll also found that Americans have broader concerns about how their data is used by companies like Facebook, Twitter and Google. Sixty percent said they were very or extremely concerned that such companies may not keep their personal information secure, and more than half said they were concerned that the companies might track their data even after they have tried to delete it.

African Americans were more likely to express concern about privacy than whites. For example, 72 percent of blacks and 57 percent of whites are worried about companies securing their personal information, while 62 percent of blacks and 44 percent of whites are concerned about companies tracking their location.

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Citation: Poll: Privacy debacle prompts social-media changes (2018, April 24) retrieved 7 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-04-poll-privacy-debacle-prompts-social-media.html>

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