Privacy and Surveillance on the Internet

Welcome to Our Project

Thanks for coming to this survey, which is the creation of the students of Criminology 417, a Special Topics course entitled "Privacy and Surveillance in a Digital Age." We thank you for taking the time to help us out. The survey is still a work in progress, but your responses to the questions we've included here will help us understand how a broader group of people view some of the issues we have been discussing.

The questions and statements below deal with different opinions and practices associated in one way or another with life on the internet, by which we mean that world wide network you access through cable or wifi through a computer, tablet or smartphone. Your responses are anonymous -- we never ask for your name or information that could be used to identify you -- nor do we record any information about you as you visit this site. [We cannot speak for SFU or Survey Monkey, however.] The Survey Monkey site estimates that completing the entire survey will take about 15-20 minutes. Although we hope you go through the whole thing, you can leave out any question you would rather not answer.

The person writing this is the professor for the course, Dr. Ted Palys, a Professor in the School of Criminology at SFU. If you would be interested in receiving a brief summary of our findings from this preliminary survey, please contact either the student who referred you to this site or to me at palys@sfu.ca via a separate email. Although doing so will identify you as a respondent, we will have no way of connecting your name to any given survey. If you would still like to take part, please proceed.

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Online activity

In this first set of questions, we would like to get some sense of how often you are online -- connected with the internet in some active way -- and what you do when you are connected.

1. Which of the following activities do you engage in when you go online? Please check all that apply.

	Every day	At least once a week	At least once a month	Less than once a month	I never do this
Shopping (including 'window shopping' and searching for items or deals)	○	○	○	○	○
Music streaming	○	○	○	○	○
Posting to or reading social media	○	○	○	○	○
Research and browsing according to your interest	○	○	○	○	○
Video streaming	○	○	○	○	○
Playing online games	○	○	○	○	○
Checking and updating information on a social dating site	○	○	○	○	○
Email, texting or other direct communication	○	○	○	○	○
Keeping up with the news	○	○	○	○	○
Share and download files	○	○	○	○	○

2. About how long on average would you say you are actively engaged with the internet (i.e., actually reading, texting, viewing, browsing, posting, etc) in a typical day?

○ Less than an hour a day

○ More than 1 but less than 3 hours a day

○ More than 3 but less than 6 hours a day

○ More than 6 but less than 10 hours per day

○ More than 10 hours a day

Other (please specify)

[   ]

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Corporate Trust

3. Listed below are six major companies who dominate the internet. From what you know of each one, to what extent do you trust each company to protect your personal information from third parties (e.g., other companies, government authorities)

	I *don't* trust them to protect my personal information		Not sure or no opinion		I trust them to protect my personal information
Apple	○	○	○	○	○
Amazon	○	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	○	○	○
Google/Alphabet	○	○	○	○	○
Microsoft	○	○	○	○	○
Twitter	○	○	○	○	○

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Sensitivity of Information

4. The next set of items asks for your views about the sensitivity of different kinds of personal information. Please indicate how indifferent or concerned you would be if each type of information about you were tracked and made available to third parties (e.g., other corporations, legal authorities).

	Not concerned; I don't care who knows this				Should be legally protected requiring my consent
Your contacts (their names, phone, email)	○	○	○	○	○
Your browser search history	○	○	○	○	○
Your location history (i.e, location tracking)	○	○	○	○	○
The content of the texts you do on your phone	○	○	○	○	○
Your political views	○	○	○	○	○
Your religious or spiritual views	○	○	○	○	○
Your social insurance number	○	○	○	○	○
Who and when you call and text	○	○	○	○	○
Your health history	○	○	○	○	○
Your genetic code	○	○	○	○	○

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Social Media

5. Which of the social media platforms listed below do you use regularly, if any? Please check all that apply.

☐ Facebook ☐ Snapchat ☐ Okuna

☐ Instagram ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Tik Tok

☐ YouTube ☐ Reddit ☐ I don't use any of the platforms listed here

☐ Twitter ☐ Pinterest

6. One company that has been quite controversial in its approach to privacy is Facebook. If you have a Facebook account, please describe in a sentence or two how you use that account and how you decide whether and what to post there.

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Comfort With Technology

For this next set of questions, we would like to know more about how comfortable you feel with technology.

7. A "technophobe" is someone who probably uses technology -- because it is hard to avoid these days -- but does not like it and feels uncomfortable using it. A "technophile" is someone who loves and embraces technology. If we see those two as extreme opposites on a scale, where would you put yourself on that scale?

Technophobe   Technophile

8. Listed below are a number of things some people do to protect their information in different ways. We have two questions dealing with these practices. In this first question we would like to know simply whether you are ABLE to do each of the following activities.

	No problem for me to do	Might need at least a bit of help	Could not do this without help	I don't know; have never done it
Back up my files	○	○	○	○
Change the default privacy settings on my computer's operating system	○	○	○	○
Encrypt a file	○	○	○	○
Track who is monitoring my online activity	○	○	○	○
Use a VPN (Virtual Private Network)	○	○	○	○
Determine whether a web site is using secure (encrypted) data transfer	○	○	○	○
Recognize a phishing attempt (by email, SMS or otherwise)	○	○	○	○
Change my cookie preferences	○	○	○	○
Enable "Incognito" mode in my web browser	○	○	○	○
Use an encrypted browser (i.e., TOR)	○	○	○	○

9. Now for this second question, we would like to offer the same list, but would like to know which of the different activities you would do regularly IF you knew how to do them.

	Highly likely I would do it, or have already done this	Not sure whether I would or not	Highly UNlikely I would do this
Back up my files	○	○	○
Change the default privacy settings on my computer's operating system	○	○	○
Encrypt a file	○	○	○
Track who is monitoring my online activity	○	○	○
Use a VPN (Virtual Private Network)	○	○	○
Determine whether a web site is using secure (encrypted) data transfer	○	○	○
Spot a phishing attempt (by email, SMS or otherwise)	○	○	○
Change my cookie preferences	○	○	○
Enable "incognito" mode in my web browser	○	○	○
Use an encrypted browser (i.e., TOR)	○	○	○

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Privacy

10. Our course and this survey is in part about privacy -- what it means to us, how important it is. But it seems to mean different things to different people. Please write a sentence or two about what privacy means to you.

11. How important would you say that your privacy is to you?

Not very important		Extremely important	

12. Are there any concerns or issues that come to mind when you think about your privacy online? If so, please comment in a sentence or two.

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Privacy Practices

13. The next group of items all deal with online activities you might engage in. Please indicate how well each statement reflects what you do in different situations on the internet.

	Generally NOT true of me	Sometimes true; sometimes not	Generally true of me	Not sure or irrelevant to me
When I download a new app or software, I *never* read the terms of service	○	○	○	○
I log into Facebook first and then access other apps and programs from there	○	○	○	○
I use Ghostery or Privacy Badger or similar to monitor tracking	○	○	○	○
I sync my devices using cloud applications	○	○	○	○
Social media is my primary source of world news	○	○	○	○
I use a VPN (Virtual Private Network) when I browse the internet	○	○	○	○
I change from the default privacy settings when I download a new app	○	○	○	○

	Generally NOT true of me	Sometimes true; sometimes not	Generally true of me	Not sure or irrelevant to me
i "like" things that appeal to me on the internet.	○	○	○	○
I often check my privacy settings	○	○	○	○
I usually just say "yes" when I download an app that asks for access to contacts, photos, cameras, etc.	○	○	○	○
When given a choice, I limit ad tracking or "customization" of ads	○	○	○	○
I always encrypt sensitive files	○	○	○	○
I have different passwords for each of my online accounts	○	○	○	○
I always use strong passwords	○	○	○	○
I use a Fitbit, Apple watch or similar device to monitor my biometrics	○	○	○	○
When I post pictures I often tag them with the names of he people in them	○	○	○	○

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Attitudes and Opinions

The next three questions include statements that express different views that people hold about the information that exists about them online. We have split them into three sets simply to try and keep the response categories visible.

14. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement below.

	Completely Disagree		Neutral or no opinion		Completely agree
I don't mind companies collecting information about me when I visit their web site	○	○	○	○	○
I have no idea how companies use the information they collect about me	○	○	○	○	○
Government agencies should have access to any information they want if necessary to protect our security	○	○	○	○	○
I wish I knew more about how to protect my personal information when online.	○	○	○	○	○
People who are extremely concerned about privacy probably have something to hide.	○	○	○	○	○

15. The second of three sets: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Completely Disagree		Neutral or no opinion		Completely agree
I think younger people are less concerned about protecting their privacy than older generations.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel safer against terrorist attacks knowing the government can monitor our online activity.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I have control over what information is gathered about me on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.	○	○	○	○	○
Protecting my privacy is less important to me than staying connected with friends and family.	○	○	○	○	○
I can't do anything online any more without feeling someone or something is tracking and recording what I do.	○	○	○	○	○

16. The last of three sets: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

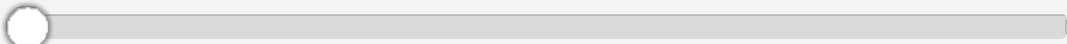|	Completely Disagree		Neutral or no opinion		Completely agree
I find it creepy when an obviously targeted advertisement shows up on my computer	○	○	○	○	○
Companies seem to make it as difficult as possible to find out how and where to change privacy settings.	○	○	○	○	○
I encrypt all my sensitive files.	○	○	○	○	○
Internet companies only use the information they have about me to improve the services they provide.	○	○	○	○	○

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Priorities

One of the things we have found in our course is that different authors who talk about privacy also talk about the trade-offs that sometimes must be made between privacy and other values. Listed below are several different scales that reflect some of these other values. In instances where the two that are listed come in conflict, how much would you prioritize each side, if at all?
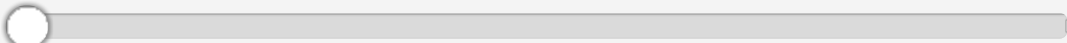
17. In debates about government surveillance, some people argue that our privacy should never be violated without reasonable cause and a warrant, while others argue that ensuring our collective security is the bigger priority. When the two come in conflict with one another, which would you prioritize? Drag the slider to a position that reflects your view.

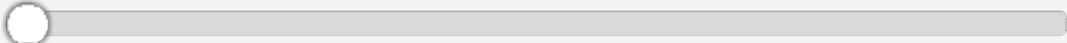| 100% on privacy	Would value the two equally	100 % on security

18. Mark Zuckerberg (of Facebook) once said that "privacy" was over-valued and that "sharing" is the new norm. How would you prioritize those two? Drag the slider to a position that reflects your view.

100% on privacy	I value the two equally	100 % on sharing

19. Some people suggest that the convenience that we get from apps is a good trade-off for the privacy we lose by using them. When you consider those two alternatives, which would you prioritize more? Drag the slider to a position that reflects your view.

100% on privacy even if that affects convenience	Would value the two equally	100 % on convenience even if it reduces privacy

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Internet Governance and Regulation

The next three questions include different views about how the internet should be regulated. We again have broken them into three sets to make them easier to see the response scales.

20. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the various statements below.

	Disagree Completely	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree or no opinion	Agree Somewhat	Agree Completely
Government needs to be more transparent about the information it gathers about us.	○	○	○	○	○
Corporations should be required to be more transparent about the information they gather about us.	○	○	○	○	○
Corporations should not be allowed to rent or sell our information to other companies without our consent.	○	○	○	○	○
The big internet companies are out of control and need to be regulated.	○	○	○	○	○
"Consent" to terms of service and privacy policies on the internet is a joke -- it's to benefit the companies, not us.	○	○	○	○	○

21. Again, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Disagree Completely	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree or no opinion	Agree Somewhat	Agree Completely
Police should be required to get a warrant to access information about our online activity.	○	○	○	○	○
I have no idea what companies do with the information they gather about me from my online activity.	○	○	○	○	○
Any personal information we provide to companies should be shared beyond that company only with our explicit consent.	○	○	○	○	○
There should be a limit to how long information about you remains on the internet.	○	○	○	○	○
No company should be allowed to gather information about us beyond what is needed to provide us with their service.	○	○	○	○	○

22. And for the last time in this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Disagree Completely	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree or no opinion	Agree Somewhat	Agree Completely
It bothers me that a company like Facebook can gather information about me from around the internet even if I am not logged into Facebook and even if I don't have a Facebook account.	○	○	○	○	○
There's nothing we can do about the internet's "surveillance economy" where corporations compile our information and sell or rent it to others.	○	○	○	○	○
I'm concerned that any information about me on the internet will be there forever.	○	○	○	○	○
Companies need to be more transparent about what they do with the information they collect about us.	○	○	○	○	○

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Wrapping Up

23. The internet is young enough that there are some people around who have never known a world without the internet, while others have been around long enough to have grown up in a mostly analogue world. In which of the following periods were you born?

○ I was born in 1960 or earlier into an analogue world

○ I was born between 1961 and 1979 in a world that was discovering computerization

○ I was born between 1980 and 1995 as the world saw the first personal computers

○ I was born in 1996 or later and have never known a world without the internet

24. You've given us the opportunity to ask you lots of questions to better understand your and other people's views about the internet and how it might be governed. Are there any comments you would like to leave us with now that you are done? Perhaps something we missed or something you would like to comment on further? Or perhaps things you learned from this survey or things you will do differently after completing it?

Thanks very much again for taking the time to complete this exploratory survey. Please click the "submit" button to finish.