

**Research Centre for Journalism, Media and Communication (COMET),  
the PRIANO project**

**Report on the results of the privacy survey**

**Esa Sirkkunen  
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Journalismin, viestinnän ja  
median tutkimuskeskus

Tampere Research Centre for  
Journalism, Media and Communication



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION,  
MEDIA AND THEATRE

## Summary of key results:

- The majority of respondents (68%) were concerned about the fact that more and more information about internet users is collected for different purposes, for instance for targeted advertising. The majority of the respondents (76%) wanted to know in more detail what information is collected and what it is used for. Even more respondents (87%) would like to decide themselves how their personal data should be used.
- In the view of the respondents, the organisations that best safeguard personal data in digital services and databases are banks and insurance companies (72%); hospitals, health centres and medical clinics (69%); the government (59%); municipal and city authorities (55%); and educational institutions (54%). They were considerably less confident about Finnish internet providers and online shops (32%). Confidence in user personal data protection was particularly low in connection with Google (18%) and Facebook (13%).
- People still take the trouble to preserve their privacy. The most common practices included using different passwords for online services, deleting search histories and not accepting cookies, taking precautions to protect the privacy of people in photographs, and opting out of services that did not employ sufficient privacy safeguards.
- Respondents skimmed or did not read user agreements for services (EULAs), but simply accepted them so that they could start using the service. A total of 63% of Facebook users, 40% of Google users, 38% of Instagram users and 36% of WhatsApp users said that they had read the terms and conditions for use of the service.
- Respondents were not without reservations in terms of online surveillance conducted by the authorities. Just over half of the respondents (53%) said they would not grant the Finnish authorities the right to covertly monitor citizens' internet use. Slightly more than one-third (36%) of respondents would, however, approve of such monitoring.
- Younger internet users were more concerned about protecting their privacy than older respondents.

## **Background**

This report presents the key findings of a survey conducted in April 2015 by the Finnish market research company Taloustutkimus Oy and commissioned by the PRIANO research project at the University of Tampere's COMET research centre. [Link to website](#) The project was funded by the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation.

The PRIANO project analysed Finnish internet user attitudes towards online privacy. The empirical analysis of the study focuses, on the one hand, on people's general conceptions of privacy and its societal significance and, on the other hand, the conventions and practices they use in addressing privacy-related issues online.

The empirical data was derived from three different sources. The first source was the analysis of online discussion forum and social media content, which was used to map discussion of online privacy. These data were gathered under the research project blog. [Link to blog \(in Finnish/English\)](#) The second source was interviews of experts that were conducted in Finland. The interviews focused on obtaining the views of online content producers, data protection officials and privacy legislation experts on the protection of privacy and potential threats to privacy. The third source of key empirical data for the project was a quantitative survey of Finnish internet users.

The survey was used to study more widely – for the first time ever – what Finns think about safeguarding their privacy online. The results also provide a platform for the ongoing debate on the regulation of internet providers and the online surveillance that is being planned by the Finnish authorities. So far, the discussion has mainly involved the Data Protection Ombudsman, representatives from various ministries, politicians and online surveillance experts.

## **Survey implementation**

The quantitative survey was conducted by Taloustutkimus at the end of April 2015 in the form of individual interviews and as part of the Omnibus consumer research. The respondents were one

thousand Finns between the ages 15 and 79 selected using quota sampling techniques: the quotas were the target group's national age, gender, province and municipality type distribution.

Information about the respondents:

Age group (yrs)					Gender	
15-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65-79	Female	Male
176	159	210	239	216	533	467

Profession/position						
Farmer/blue collar worker	White collar worker	Senior white collar worker/expert	Entrepreneur/executive	Student/pupil	Retired	Stay-at-home mum/dad or unemployed
223	82	82	53	159	288	113

Education					
Comprehensive school	Vocational/technical/commercial school	Upper secondary school/A levels	College	University of applied sciences (polytechnic)	University
217	300	92	127	94	161

## Research results

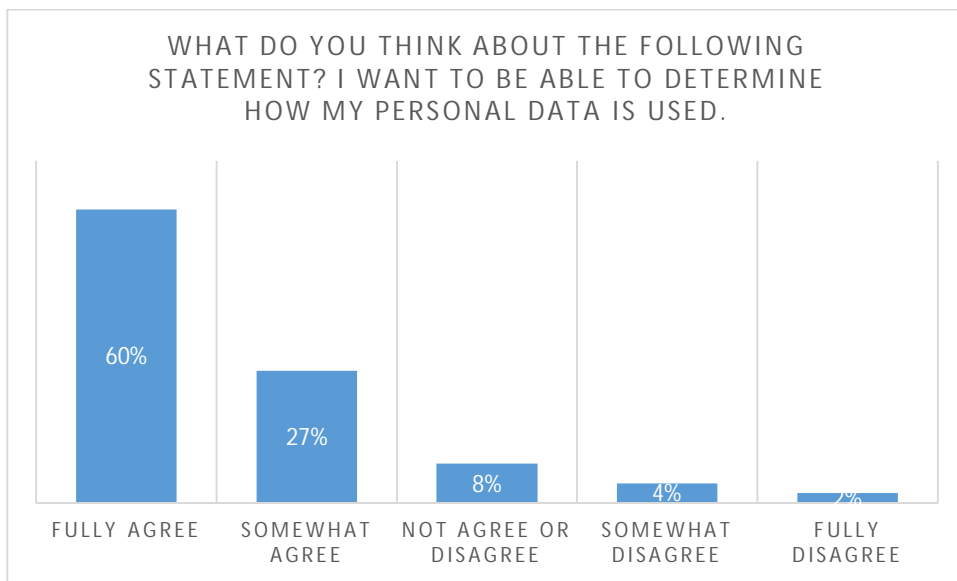
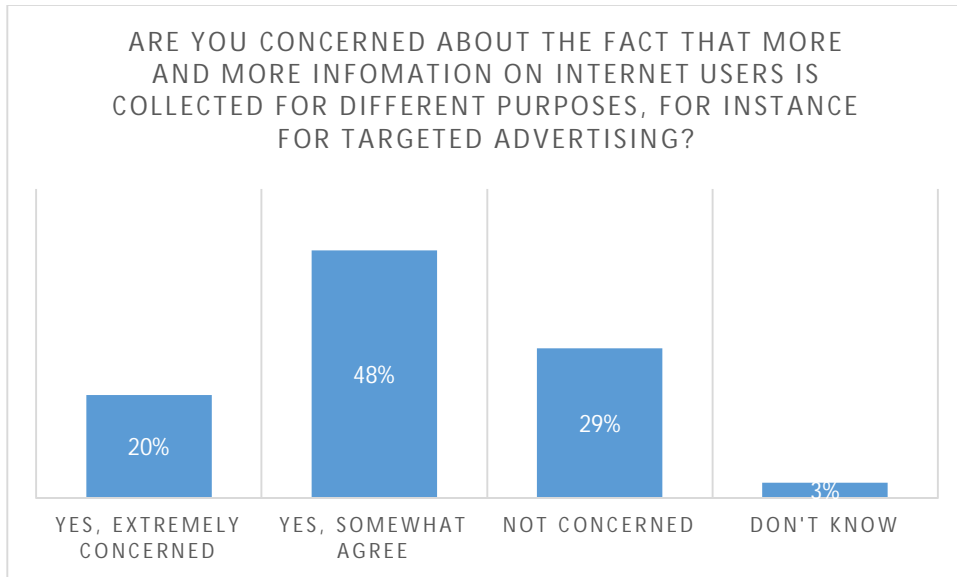
The key survey findings are summarised below under six main headings.

### 1. *Privacy is still valued*

People are still concerned about protecting their privacy, even when they are online. Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents said that they were concerned about the fact that more and more

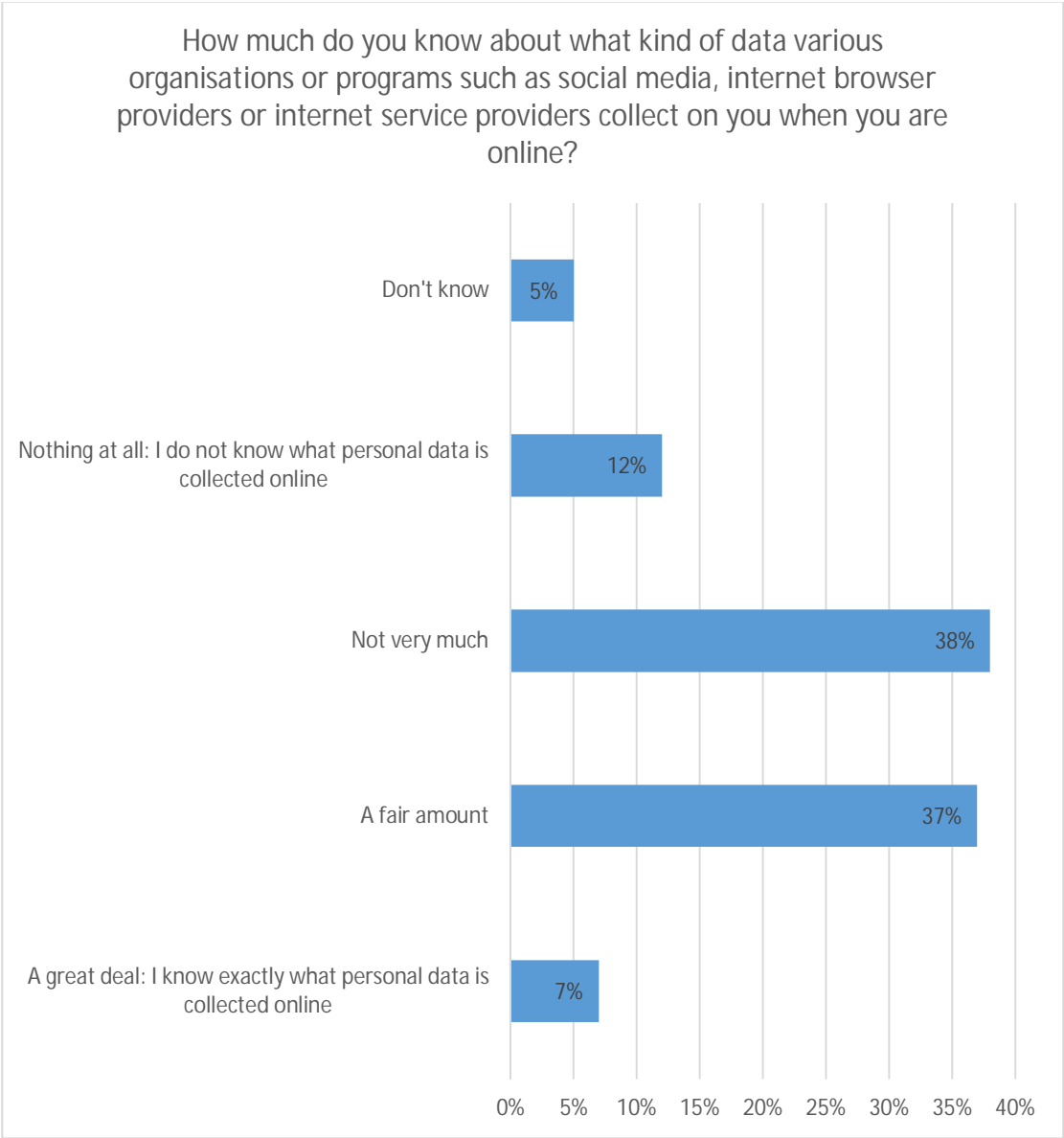
information about internet users is being collected for various purposes. The respondents also wanted to know more about how and what kind of information was being gathered. No less than 76% of the respondents wanted to know more about what kind of data on them was being collected and what this data was being used for.

The responses clearly show that Finns are concerned about losing their right of self-determination over how their data is used. As many as 87% of the respondents said that they wanted to be the ones to decide how their personal data should be used.



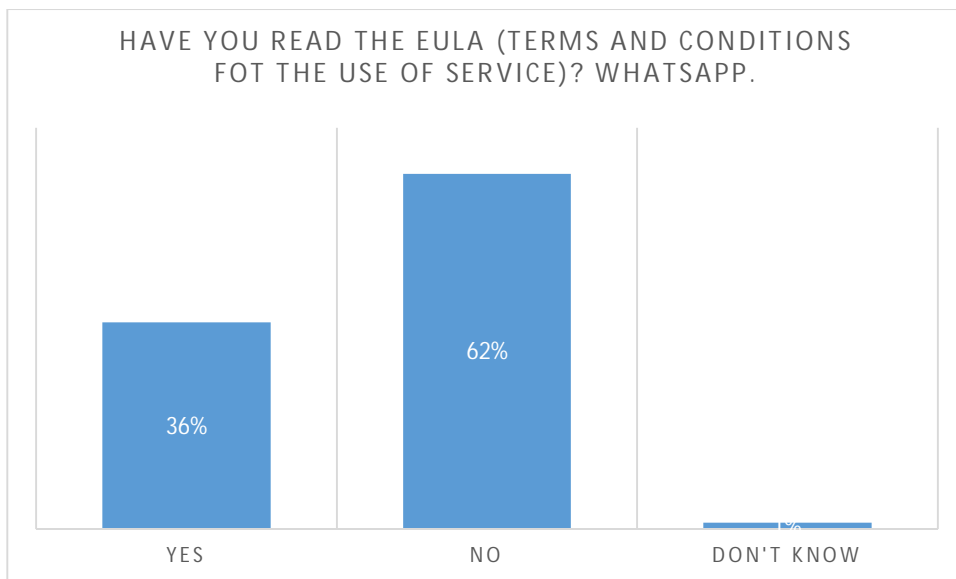
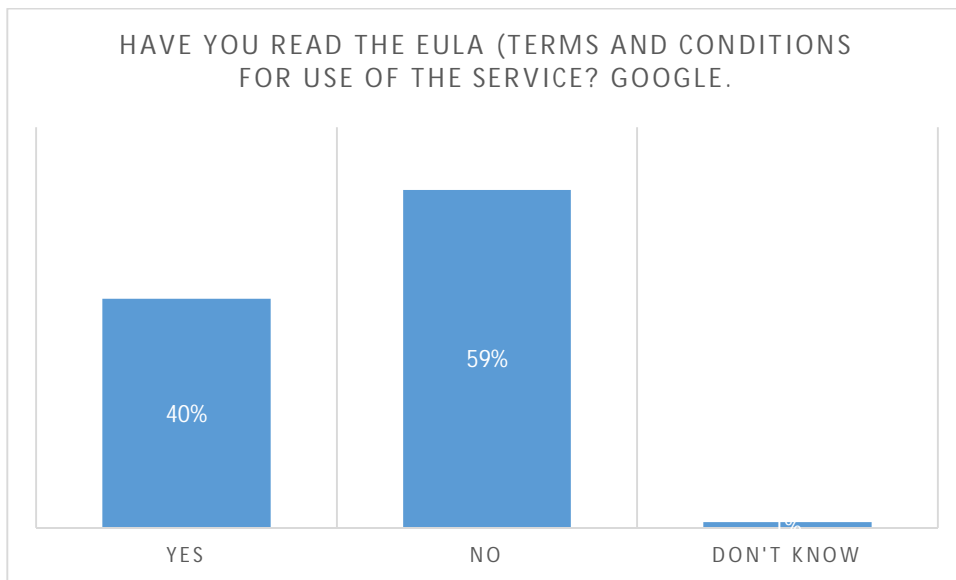
The responses show that people do not know very much about how their privacy is protected online.

Half of the respondents (50%) said that knew little or extremely little about the information that social media, internet browsers and internet providers collect on them online. However, 44% said that they knew a fair amount or a great deal about what information was gathered about them.



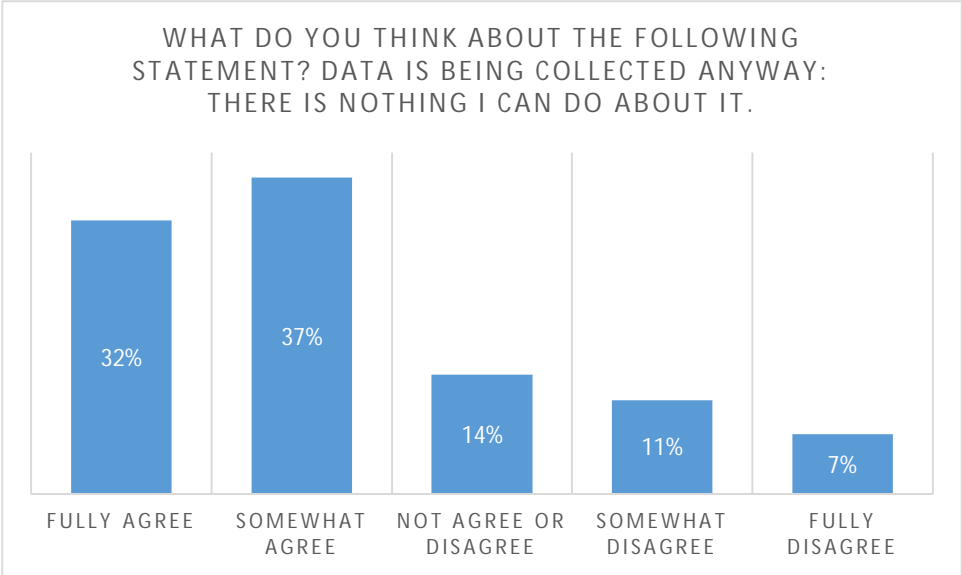
2. Users agree to the EULAs without knowing much about what is in them

How well the respondents had read EULAs varied. In the survey, 63% of Facebook users, 40% of Google users, 38% of Instagram users and 36% of WhatsApp users said that they had read the terms and conditions for use of the service.

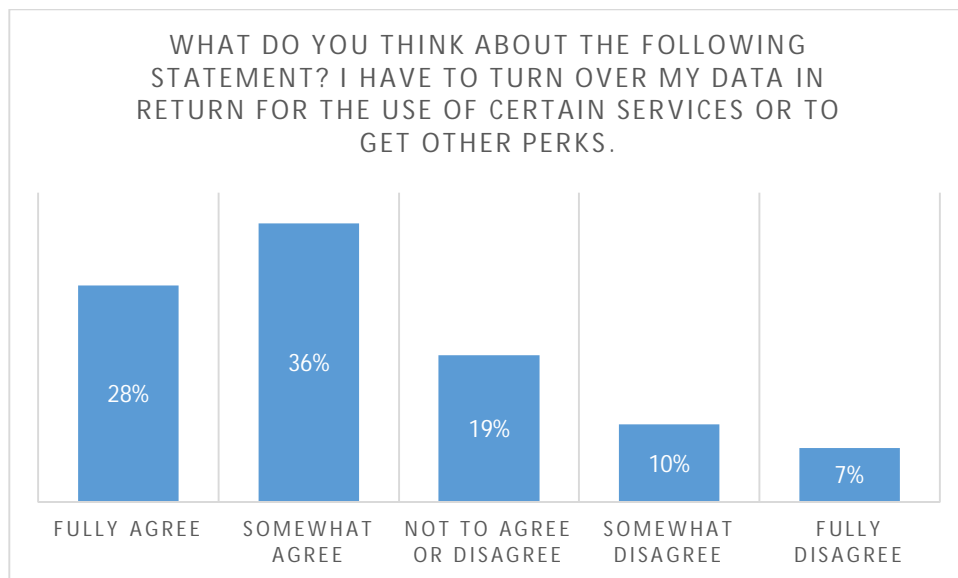


Here we run into the paradox of, on the one hand, people’s desire for privacy online and, on the other, their behaviour. This phenomenon has surfaced in other studies, too ([link to ECM Privacy website](#)). People are concerned about their privacy but don’t even read through the EULAs for new services before accepting the terms and conditions, and simply by using a service, grant permission for extensive data collection. The situation has raised questions also from the perspective of effective consumer protection. For example, Facebook’s terms and conditions are ‘take it or leave it’, the only option is for the user to accept them if they wish to use the service. A Belgian report that analysed Facebook’s EULA stated that Facebook exploited its dominant status among social media services in a manner that violates EU legislation ([link to the report](#)).

The majority of survey respondents said that there was no alternative to accepting the terms and conditions and data collection: 69% believed that their data was collected anyway and there was nothing they could do about it, and 64% said they were forced to surrender their data in return for using a service or receiving some kind of other perk.





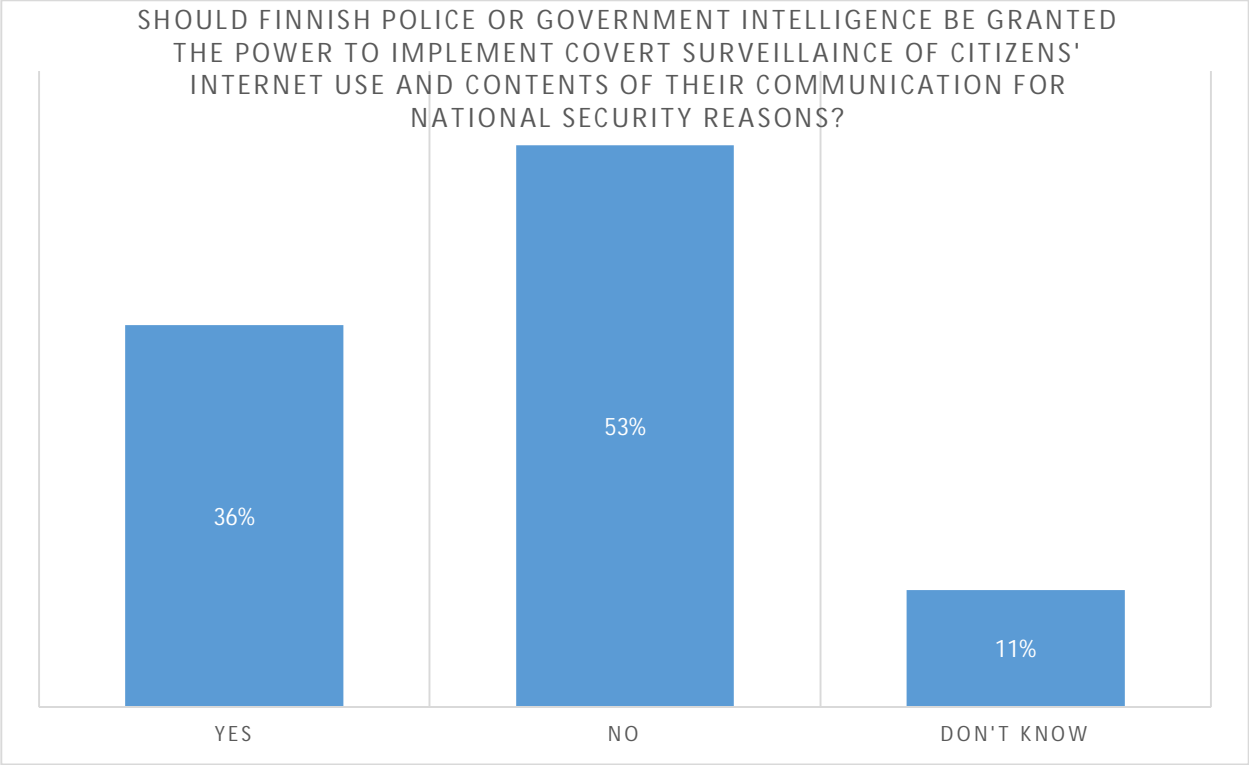


### 3. *Online surveillance by the authorities evokes contradictions*

Interesting results regarding trust in the authorities were gained from the question of whether Finnish authorities should be allowed to covertly monitor citizens' internet use and the contents of their communications. Just over half the respondents (53%) said that online surveillance should not be permitted; 36% would accept such surveillance. Younger respondents were more critical about surveillance than middle-aged or elderly respondents. The aversion towards government surveillance reflected in the respondents' replies was somewhat surprising in the light of, for example, the majority of Finnish political parties having clearly indicated a positive attitude towards online intelligence gathering.<sup>1</sup>

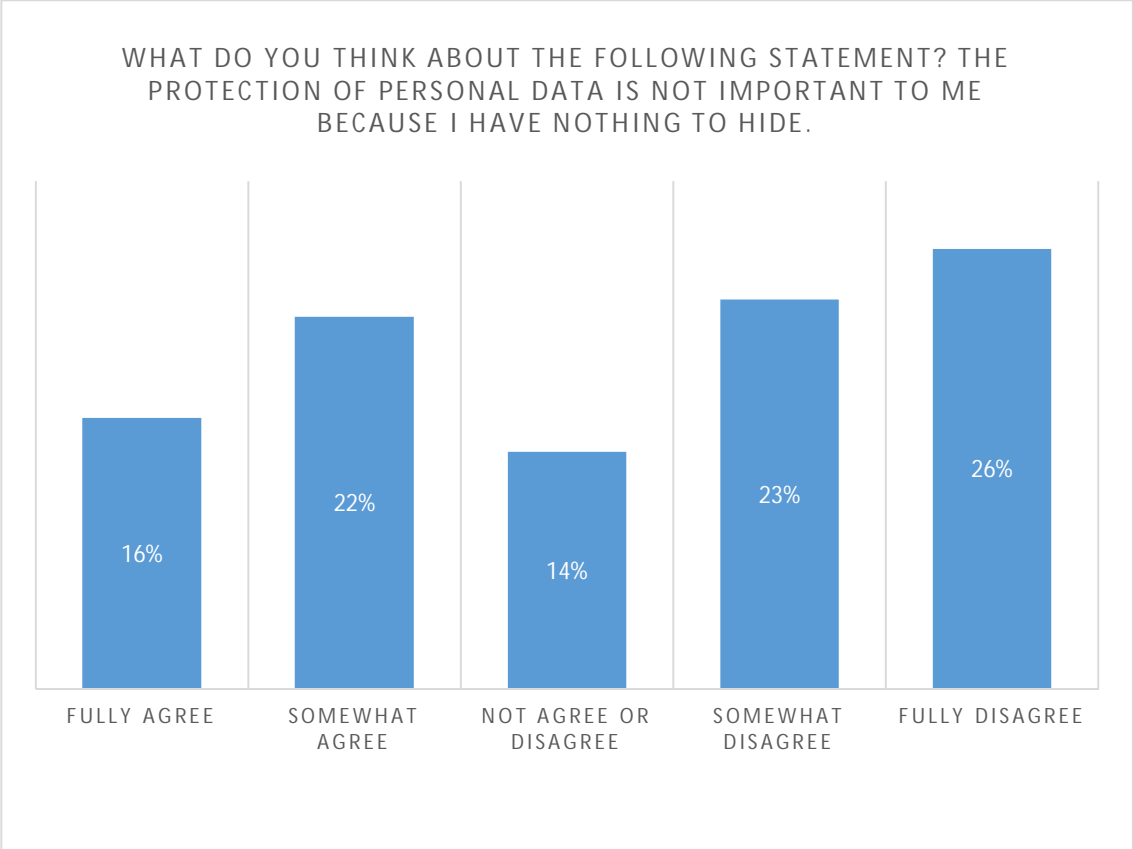
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<sup>1</sup> ([Link](#) to Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle's news (in Finnish) 22 April 2015: Proposal for online surveillance law divides Finnish political parties.



The claim that protecting personal data is not important 'because I have nothing to hide' did not receive significant support: 49% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, whereas 36% considered it to be true.

4. *Young people are careful about their privacy*

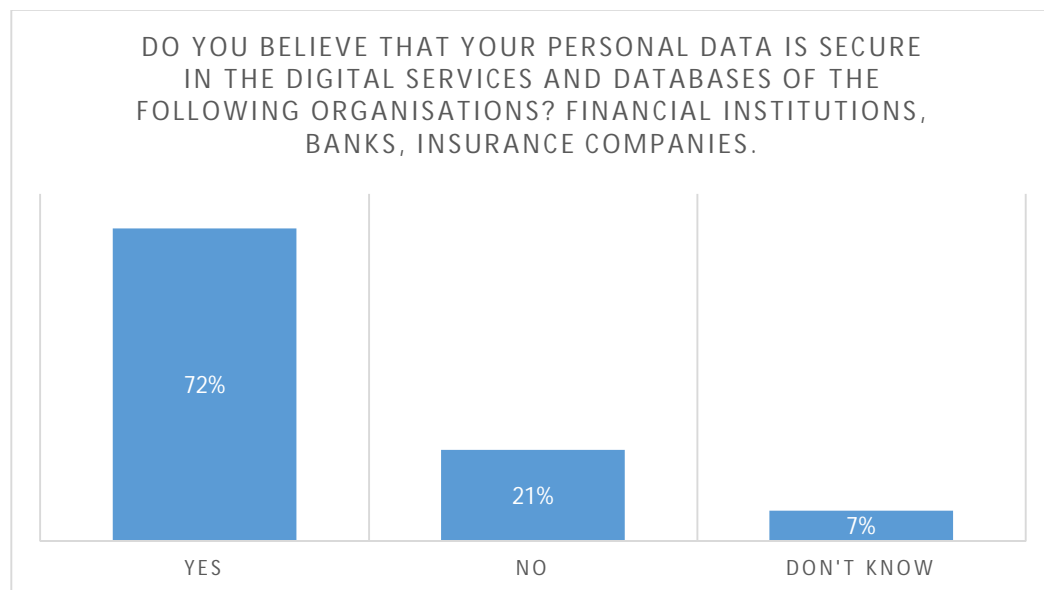


The generation of ‘digital natives’ is often said to be quite lax about what they make public about themselves online. The results, however, do not confirm this: in fact, they indicate the opposite. Younger respondents seemed to want their privacy protected more than the older respondents. For instance, just 29% of 15–24-year-olds indicated that they had nothing to hide; among the 65–70-year-olds, the figure was 53%. Younger people also expressed a greater desire to be allowed to determine what their personal data is used for.

*5. People trust banks and insurance companies, but not so much Google and Facebook*

The respondents varied a great deal in their perceptions of which organisations stored their personal data securely. In their view, the organisations that secure personal data best in digital

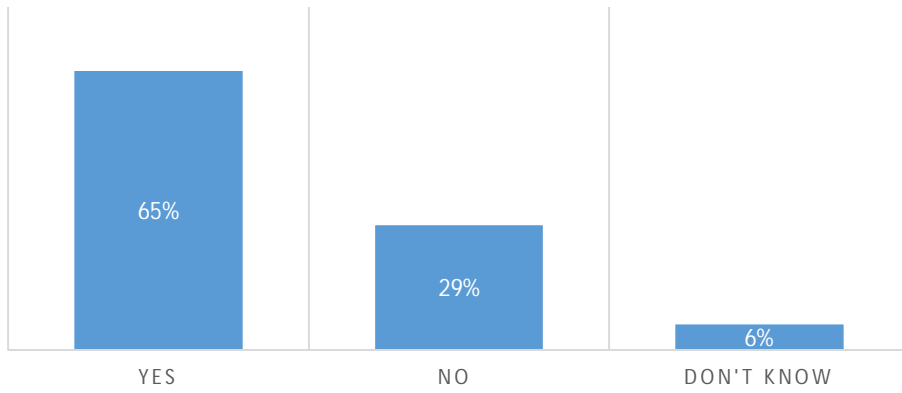
services and databases are banks and insurance companies (72%); hospitals, health centres and medical clinics (69%); the government (59%); municipal and city authorities (55%); and educational institutions (54%). They were considerably less confident about Finnish internet providers and online shops (32%). Confidence in user personal data protection was particularly low in connection with Google (18%) and Facebook (13%). Even a foreign nation's intelligence service (22%) was thought to be better at protecting information than Google or Facebook.



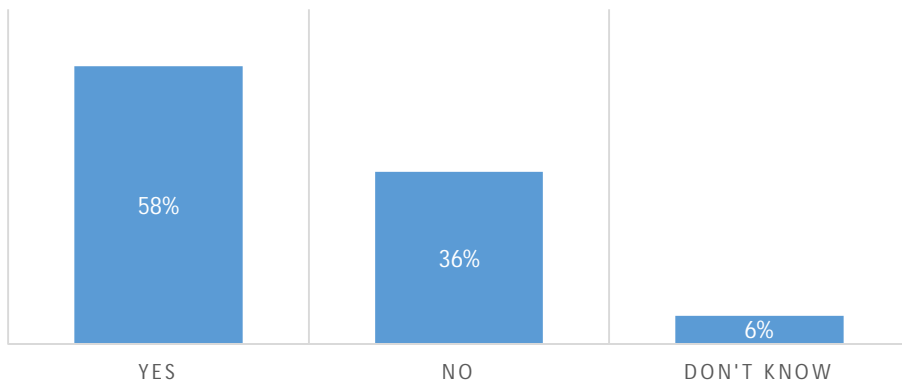
#### 6. *Browsing histories deleted; uploading photos carefully considered*

The respondents assume different practices or behaviours in an attempt to protect their online privacy. Of the respondents, 75% said that they use different passwords for different online services; 65% reported they regularly deleted their browsing history or cookies; and 58% had not uploaded photos or videos that could be used to identify individual people. In addition, 56% said they had opted out of certain online services due to insufficient privacy protection, and 51% avoided using open public WiFi. Other privacy practices included private browsing (46%), discontinuing use of online services with insufficient privacy protection (36%) and using encryption software, e.g. the Tor network (16%).

HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING TO PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY ONLINE? DELETED BROWSING HISTORY OR COOKIES.



HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING TO PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY ONLINE? NOT PUBLISHED PHOTOS OR VIDEOS IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE IDENTIFIABLE.



## **Preliminary comparison with findings from other countries**

Finns are not alone with their concerns. When privacy research from other countries is compared, Americans appear to be even more concerned than Finns about their disappearing privacy. In a study conducted in 2014 by the Pew Research Centre in the USA, 80% of American social media users expressed concern about advertisers and other third parties having access to their data ([link to the study](#)), and 91% of the respondents believed consumers had lost control of how companies collect and use their personal data. Similar to most of the Finnish respondents, the majority of American respondents (55%) agreed to data collection in order to use online services for free.

In a 2014 study conducted by the Estonian Institute of Human Rights and the University of Tartu ([link to the study](#)), Estonian responses differed slightly from the Finnish ones on how much they knew about the amount of information different organisations collected about them. The majority of Estonian respondents (54%) thought that they at least knew well enough how data about them was collected, but 43% said they did not know enough or anything at all. The distribution was slightly different in Finland, with 44% reporting they knew a great deal about data collection and 50% estimating their knowledge about this to be insufficient or non-existent.

Estonians seemed to be better adjusted than Finns to the fact that they are subject to data collection. No less than 83% of Estonians replied that data was collected anyway and there was nothing they could do about it; the corresponding rate in Finland was 69%. Where 64% of Finns said that they were forced to turn over their data in order to use a service or receive a benefit, the corresponding rate among Estonians was 88%. The gap was wider with respect to agreement with the statement 'I have nothing to hide'. As many as 74% of the Estonians agreed with the statement, versus only 36% of the Finnish respondents.

Estonians seemed to be more trusting than Finns when data was collected by government, municipal or health authorities, or educational institutions. To the question, 'Should governments be granted more authority to collect data on citizens without their permission for security reasons', 61% of the Estonian respondents agreed, whereas only 36% of the Finns responded positively to a similar question.

Estonian young people were, like their Finnish peers, more concerned about their privacy than their elders, which further confirmed the inaccuracy of the claim that young people do not care about their privacy.

In conclusion, we can state that privacy still means a great deal to Finns, Americans and Estonians alike. A major issue in communications policy in Finland and Europe is whether we should simply conform and accept data collection required by the digital services business model, or whether this model should be steered towards giving the users more say over how their data is used. Another problematic question is how online surveillance can be implemented in Finland without it breaching the constitutional right to privacy of communications.

Further information

Esa Sirkkunen, researcher  
esa.sirkkunen@uta.fi  
+ 358 40 76 80 323  
COMET Research Centre  
University of Tampere

**1. Do you use the following online services?**

**Google**

Yes, daily or almost daily  
Yes, once a week or less  
No

[RESPONDENTS WHO REPLIED 'YES']

Have you read the EULA (terms and conditions for use of the service)?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

**Facebook**

Yes, daily or almost daily  
Yes, once a week or less  
No

[RESPONDENTS WHO REPLIED 'YES']

Have you read the EULA?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

**WhatsApp**

Yes, daily or almost daily  
Yes, once a week or less  
No

[RESPONDENTS WHO REPLIED 'YES']

Have you read the EULA?

Yes  
No  
Don't know



## **Instagram**

Yes, daily or almost daily

Yes, once a week or less

No

[RESPONDENTS WHO REPLIED 'YES']

Have you read the EULA?

Yes

No

Don't know

**2. How much do you know about what kind of data various organisations or programs such as social media, internet browser providers or internet providers collect on you when you are online?**

A great deal: I know exactly what personal data is collected online

A fair amount

Not very much

Nothing at all: I do not know what personal data is collected online

Don't know

**3. Are you concerned about the fact that more and more information on internet users is collected for different purposes, for instance for targeted advertising?**

Yes, extremely concerned

Yes, somewhat concerned

Not concerned

Don't know

**4. Should Finnish police or government intelligence be granted the power to implement covert surveillance of citizens' internet use and the contents of their communications for national security reasons?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**5. Do you believe that your personal data is secure in the digital services and databases of the following organisations?**

*Please respond once for each organisation:*

Yes

No

Don't know

The Finnish state

Local government (municipality, city) in Finland

Educational institutions: schools, colleges, universities etc.

Health organisations: hospitals, health centres, clinics

Financial institutions: banks or insurance companies

Finnish internet providers or online shops

Google

Facebook

A foreign nation's intelligence agency

**6. What do you think about the following statements?**

Fully agree

Somewhat agree

Not agree or disagree

Somewhat disagree

Fully disagree

I want to be able to determine how my personal data is used.

The protection of personal data is not important to me because I have nothing to hide.

Data is being collected anyway; there's nothing I can do about it.

I want to know in more detail what data is being collected on me and how it is used.

I have to agree to turn over my data in return for the use of certain services or to get other perks.

## 7. Have you done any of the following to protect your privacy online?

*Please respond for each item:*

Yes

No

Don't know

- Used different passwords for different online services.
- Avoided using open public WiFi connections.
- Used private (anonymous) browsing.
- Deleted browsing history or cookies.
- Increased the privacy settings of an online service or app.
- Not published photos or videos in which people are identifiable.
- Asked someone else to take down information about you on the internet.
- Opted out of services due to their insufficient protection of privacy.
- Stopped using services due to their insufficient protection of privacy.
- Used encryption software (e.g. the Tor network) to browse the internet or send documents or messages.