

**PRESS RELEASE**

**28/5/14**

**DATA PROTECTION SURVEY SHOWS THAT 92% OF 11-12 YEAR OLDS REGULARLY USE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

As part of its Control Your Privacy Campaign, the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority, acting as the Data Protection Commissioner, and with the co-operation of the Department of Education, carried out a survey of the Year 7 students of Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School, St. Anne's Middle School, Sacred Heart Middle School, St. Joseph's Middle School and Loreto Convent. The survey comprised 378 students, consisting of 192 boys and 186 girls, between the ages of 11 and 12. The survey was carried out during the months of February and March 2014.

The purpose of the survey was to obtain an understanding on the extent of use of social networking sites ("SNS") amongst children in Year 7 schools. Additionally, the survey served to learn about their habits with regards to SNS, in particular, which SNS are being used, the reasons and frequency of use, and the extent to which available privacy controls are being used. Finally, the survey also enabled the Commissioner to establish the extent to which those using mobile devices, use available security, namely password or PIN.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Whilst many of the results do not show alarming traits nor reflect tendencies which are of concern to the Commissioner, there are, however, some notable results.

In particular, it was found that 92% of the children use at least one SNS. In this respect, it should be noted that, in many cases, the minimum age for using a SNS is 13. This is certainly the case for the 3 most popular SNS used by the children who participated in the survey. This statistic in itself is worrying, not only because it shows a disregard of the age restrictions imposed by SNS, but also because of the high percentage of children using platforms which are not designed for their age group.

Of concern too is the fact that the 3 most popular SNS being used are Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram (respectively). Whilst Facebook provides a number of functions including the ability to post comments, photographs and videos, Snapchat and Instagram are specifically designed for the exchange of photographs. In other words, given that 61% use Snapchat, for example, it may be implied that there are a large number of photographs being made available to another party and, in every case, there is an element of risk as regards unauthorised disclosure to a third party, interception by hackers or the photograph being used maliciously in the future.

Notable too is the fact that 52% of the children send private messages every day. This again is worrisome because it shows a large amount of activity going on daily on SNS in this age group.

Perhaps the most disquieting result is that 22% do not use privacy controls and a further 13% almost never use them. This means that the privacy of 35% of the children, as regards their

personal data on SNS, is at risk. The positive aspect to this statistic of course, is that 65% do use privacy controls, meaning that overall, there is a large awareness of the use of privacy controls in SNS. The Commissioner, however, still believes that 35% is a very high percentage given the age of the children.

It is noted that the survey was completed by children in Year 7, and the Commissioner is unable to comment on the user habits of students or children outside of the age range 11-12. It is, therefore, inappropriate to conclude that the results reflected below extend to children of other ages. Given the results, however, the Commissioner believes it appropriate, and to a certain extent necessary, to continue to establish user habits in SNS amongst children, in particular because of some of the worrying results already obtained.

For further information please contact the Information Rights Division of the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority on +35020074636 or email [privacy@gra.gi](mailto:privacy@gra.gi)

### Extract of Survey Results

