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GIBRALTAR REGULATORY
AUTHORITY

2nd Floor, Eurotowers 4
1 Europort Road
Gibraltar

Tel: +350 20074636
E-mail: privacy@gra.gi

PRESS RELEASE

THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER PUBLISHES A REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE 2018/19 PRIVACY AWARENESS SURVEY IN SCHOOLS

The report relates to the results of a privacy awareness survey (the "Survey") carried out in schools in Gibraltar during the 2018/19 academic year. The Survey examined the relationship between the use of new digital technology, social networking sites ("SNS") and privacy matters and formed part of an awareness raising programme for schools, organised by the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority, as the Information Commissioner (the "Commissioner"), in cooperation with the Department of Education.

The report details the results from the Survey and analyses the information gathered by comparing them to the results collated from previous years. In doing so, the Commissioner's office is able to identify any key changes or behavioural trends in privacy practices amongst students in Gibraltar when using digital technology, particularly when using SNS.

The key findings of the survey can be summarised as follows:

1. Virtually all students use SNS including 99% of Year 7 Students.
2. Daily use of SNS for private messaging increases with age.
3. Use of SNS to post comments by Year 11 Students has decreased.
4. Use of SNS to post photos or videos by students has marginally decreased.
5. In keeping with previous year's results, the Year 11 Students continue to be the year group that use privacy controls the most. The use of privacy controls on SNS by the Year 7 Students has dropped by 11% from last year.
6. There is a continued risk to privacy from 'media rich' SNS such as WhatsApp.
7. 86% of all students surveyed reveal information about others without their consent.
8. Students are increasingly using security features such as a PIN to protect access to their mobile devices, however Year 7 Students are the least secure in this regard.
9. The emergence of online console gaming apps poses potential risks to the younger users.

The Survey involved 1038 students, consisting of 538 boys and 500 girls between the ages of 11 and 16. The students and schools covered this year were the following:

- Year 7 students (aged 11-12) from Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School, St. Anne's Middle School, St Bernard's Middle School, St. Joseph's Middle School and Loreto Convent (the "Year 7 Students").
- Year 8 students (aged 12-13) from Prior Park School¹ (the "Year 8 Students").
- Year 9 students (aged 13-14) from Prior Park School, Bayside Comprehensive School and Westside School² (the "Year 9 Students").
- Year 11 students (aged 15-16) from Bayside Comprehensive School, Westside School and the Gibraltar College³ (the "Year 11 Students").

The Survey was carried out between November 2018 and April 2019.

CONCLUSION

This year's results, when examined against previous years' results, identify some positive developments. For example -

- the everyday use of SNS to post comments has significantly reduced among Year 11 Students;
- the everyday use of SNS to post photos or videos is relatively low amongst all three-year groups;
- the use of security features on mobile devices such as a PIN, facial recognition, etc. to control access to the mobile device has increased.

Notwithstanding the positive developments above, concerns remain, such as the increased use of SNS by Year 7 Students and the very high percentage of students sharing information about others without their consent.

In addition, the emergence of the use of online console apps, provides new challenges from a data protection perspective. In this regard, the continuous and increasing use of SNS demands that continuous efforts are made in relation to raising privacy awareness to help the younger generations better understand the importance of controlling their privacy. The Commissioner's office welcomes the slight improvements in privacy practices; however, it is appropriate and necessary to continue monitoring these user habits and endeavour to promote the safe use of SNS and mobile devices.

The full report is available to download from the following webpage:
<https://www.gra.gi/dataprotection/public-awareness>

¹The report does not isolate the data collated from the Year 8 Students at Prior Park but does take into account this information when presenting a general overview of statistics for all students surveyed.

² This year is the first time that Year 9 students from Westside School have participated in our survey, which makes this year's findings a true representative sample of Year 9 Students in Gibraltar.

³ Data collated from the Gibraltar College included a minority of students who were older than 15-16 years of age. However, it is unlikely that the few older students surveyed will skewer the overall trends and result patterns.