

22/06/2021



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PRESS RELEASE

THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER PUBLISHES A REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE 2020/21 PRIVACY AWARENESS SCHOOL SURVEY

The report relates to the results of the Privacy Awareness School Survey carried out in schools in Gibraltar during the 2020/21 academic year (the "Survey").

The Survey examined the relationship between the use of digital technology and privacy matters amongst Year 5, 7, 9 and 11 students. This initiative forms part of the Information Commissioner's awareness-raising campaign for schools, conducted in co-operation with the Department of Education.

The results of the Survey are set out in a report (the "Report") which highlights key changes and/or behavioural trends in privacy practices amongst students in Gibraltar when using digital technology, particularly relating to Social Networking Sites ("SNS"). The Report also features additional analysis regarding platforms such as YouTube and online gaming platforms, an area of concern as highlighted in previous years.

A total of 892 students between the ages of 9 and 16 years completed this year's Survey, which was carried out between November 2020 and March 2021. Notably, the sample size for the 2019/20 academic year was considerably larger, with a total of 1421 students taking part. The significant drop in sample size this year is likely to be COVID-19 related, given that there were certain restrictions in place which hindered the dissemination/completion/collection of the surveys. There was also a period of school closure between December 2020 and February 2021 as a result of the pandemic.

Some of the key findings as found within the Report are summarised below –

1. Almost all students surveyed use SNS.
2. SNS is used daily but mostly for private messaging and its use grows as students get older.
3. A significant rise in the use of SNS to post photos or videos has been identified.
4. The results reflected consistent, increased use of privacy controls for all students. However, Year 5 students emerged as the least likely to use privacy controls when using SNS.

5. There exists a continued risk to privacy from 'media rich' SNS.
6. The use of YouTube is more autonomous, with the majority of all students using YouTube only to watch videos and listen to music.
7. Over 50% of Year 5 students seek consent before posting personal data about others on SNS.
8. Year 5 students are the most cautious when installing a new app on a mobile device.
9. The combined percentage of students who are generally aware of privacy controls is moderately high.

The use of SNS has expanded exponentially since its arrival in the early 2000s. With this, the Information Commissioner recognises that the influx of personal data being posted online has put privacy at the forefront of discussion.

Whilst the slight improvements in privacy practices are welcomed by the Information Commissioner, the concerns that remain will require further examination in years to come. It is therefore appropriate and necessary to continue monitoring the user habits of all students, and more specifically, to support the younger generations in their understanding of the importance of data protection and privacy-related matters.

The full report is available to download from the GRA's website:
<https://www.gra.gi/data-protection/public-awareness>