

29/06/2022



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PRESS RELEASE

THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER PUBLISHES A REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE 2021/2022 PRIVACY AWARENESS SCHOOL SURVEY

The report relates to the results of the privacy awareness survey carried out in schools in Gibraltar during the 2021/22 academic year (**the "Survey"**). The Survey examined the relationship between the use of digital technology, social networking sites (**"SNS"**) and privacy controls amongst Year 5, 7, 9 and 11 students from local schools, including level 1 and 2 students from the Gibraltar College.

The Survey forms part of the Information Commissioner's awareness raising campaign for schools, which has been held annually since the 2013/2014 academic year, in cooperation with HM Government of Gibraltar's Department of Education.

The results of the Survey are set within the Information Commissioner's report (**the "Report"**), which highlights key changes and/or behavioural trends amongst students regarding their use of digital technology and SNS, including their privacy practices. The Report also provides additional information and analysis regarding the use of various platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp and TikTok, as well as online gaming platforms, which have become increasingly popular amongst students in Gibraltar.

The Survey was completed by a total of 1093 students, largely between the ages of 9 and 17 years. The sample size for the 2021/2022 academic year has increased compared to last year's survey, which had a reduced sample size due to the restrictions in place, as well as school closures at the time, stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following on from last year's format, the Survey consisted of a questionnaire made available to students by an online platform or in paper format, with questions focusing on the usage of SNS and mobile devices, including measures for the protection of personal information and privacy.

Some of the key findings of the Report are summarised below –

1. Almost all students surveyed use SNS.
2. The use of SNS amongst Year 5 students has increased every year since 2019.

3. Posting comments on SNS has decreased amongst Year 11 students but increased amongst Year 5 and 9 students.
4. Over a third of Year 7 students seek consent from family and friends before posting information about them on SNS, which although still a low uptake, represents a positive increase to previous years.
5. There has been a general drop in the number of students who use privacy controls, compared to last year's survey results. The use of privacy controls is less prevalent amongst Year 5 students.
6. YouTube is the most popular SNS. The majority of students use it only to watch videos and listen to music, which presents a more autonomous practice when compared to the use of other 'media rich' SNS.
7. Less than 40% of students seek consent from others before posting information about them on SNS.
8. A third of all students are aware of the privacy controls available to them in online gaming platforms but choose not to use them.
9. Year 5 Students are more likely to refuse than accept access when installing a new app on a mobile device.

Based on the above, the Information Commissioner has concerns in regard to the increased use of SNS amongst younger students in Gibraltar, in particular, because most SNS are designed for individuals over the age of 13. Notwithstanding, the Report notes some positive trends amongst students in regard to their online privacy practices.

The Information Commissioner will continue to promote privacy awareness amongst students in Gibraltar through his campaign and encourage the use of appropriate privacy controls to help students, in particular, those considered more vulnerable, protect their personal information and privacy when using SNS and online gaming platforms.

The Report is available to download from the GRA's website: <https://www.gra.gi/data-protection/privacy-awareness/school-campaign>