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## **Consumers to online advertisers: No tracking for ANY reason**

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(Note to editors: A summary of poll findings is attached to this release.)

WASHINGTON, DC – Consumers do not want to be tracked online even for more relevant advertising, according to the results of a new survey on online tracking released today by Consumer Action. The survey also found widespread confusion as to the extent of online tracking and the existence of consumer privacy protections.

“Consumers need to be aware that online companies currently track, collect and share data without asking permission,” said Michelle De Mooy of Consumer Action, the non-profit consumer rights organization coordinating the survey. “Most people surveyed would not be willing to pay to access a website even if they knew the site would not track them. This indicates that a legislative solution, rather than a market-based solution, would be more effective in protecting consumers’ privacy online.”

### **Mobile privacy**

The survey\* finds that consumers are using mobile phones at the same rate as desktops and laptops to access the Internet. Hispanics and other minorities are using mobile phones to access the Internet at a higher rate. Despite the efforts of some mobile providers, many consumers are confused by privacy settings on wireless devices.

### **What people want**

People want control over tracking. An overwhelming majority of those surveyed believe they have the right to control the collection of personal information.

Consumers are seeking tools that allow them to make a choice about tracking. Consumers who use the Internet want to be able to rely on their chosen preferences.

More than half of those surveyed want browsers to be set to Do Not Track automatically (by default) and prefer to be able to adjust the settings on a case-by-case basis when and if they choose.

### **Confusion reigns**

Half of all consumers falsely believe that the law prohibits online tracking.

More than a third of consumers surveyed are unaware that when they are online, detailed financial information about them is collected and used to create profiles of them, even when they aren't sharing financial information but simply making a purchase or signing up for a website.

About a fifth of those surveyed are unaware that individuals can be specifically linked to a mobile device. More than a quarter of consumers (29%) don't realize that when a mobile phone is turned on, and on or near your person, your location can be determined.

One-third of those surveyed are unaware of the true scope of online tracking and data collection and they don't realize they can be followed from website-to-website. More than a third of those surveyed are unaware that highly sensitive information, such as health conditions, is collected and shared.

About 43% don't bother to read or don't understand their browser's privacy settings, and therefore are uninformed and potentially vulnerable to privacy incursions.

### **The bottom line**

Consumers know that online tracking goes on and that companies aren't transparent about it.

The majority of individuals surveyed recognize that there is a quid-pro-quo cost to using the Internet, but they don't like the arrangement. More than 2/3rds of those surveyed said they **would not** be willing to allow companies to track them in exchange for a free service or product. Contrary to what many advertisers may say, consumers do not see being tracked as a fair trade for more relevant ads.

More than half of consumers don't believe that marketers care about consumers' privacy online. And, more than half don't buy the oft-repeated argument by advertisers that consumers want more relevant ads and are willing to trade off their personal information to get it.

### **About the survey\***

The "Do Not Track" nationwide telephone survey was conducted by ORC (ORC International of Princeton, New Jersey, from May 2-5, 2013. The survey is drawn from two independent non-overlapping samples—one for landlines and one for cell phones consisting of 1,010 adults, 503 men and 507 women 18 years of age and older, living in the continental U.S. 660 interviews are from the landline sample and 350 interviews are from the cell phone sample.

### **About Consumer Action**

Through multilingual consumer education materials, community outreach and issue-focused advocacy, Consumer Action ([www.consumer-action.org](http://www.consumer-action.org)) empowers underrepresented consumers nationwide to assert their rights in the marketplace and financially prosper.

On June 27, 2013, Consumer Action will hold a Do Not Track forum at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. Please contact Michelle De Mooy ([michelle.demooy@consumer-action.org](mailto:michelle.demooy@consumer-action.org)) for more information.

Also later this month, Consumer Action will add a new website, [RespectMyDNT.org](http://RespectMyDNT.org), to its family of nine topic-specific sites. [RespectMyDNT.org](http://RespectMyDNT.org) will inform consumers about the ways they are tracked online and give them the opportunity to have an active voice on this issue by sending emails to elected officials and policymakers and signing onto petitions and other grassroots actions.

Consumer Action received a grant from Microsoft to launch a public education campaign on Do Not Track.