

# consumer action

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## CONSUMER ACTION “DO NOT TRACK” SURVEY RESULTS

1,000 individuals nationwide were polled from May 2 through May 5, 2013. The survey was conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation (ORC).

### 1. How do you access the Internet? Would you say on a...

- 894 people (89%) replied that they access the Internet. 104 said they do not access the Internet and 2 people said they didn't know or had no opinion (11%).

Those who said they accessed the Internet were read a list of ways to go online. These choices were randomized and respondents could choose all that applied.

- 620 (69%) used a laptop computer.
- 606 (68%) used a desktop computer.
- 563 (63%) used a cell phone or smartphone.
  - 262 (87%) of 301 respondents aged 18-34 accessed the Internet this way.
  - 100 (74%) Hispanics (any race) accessed the Internet this way.
- 289 (32%) used a tablet (such as an iPad).
- 195 (22%) used a Web-enabled TV or similar appliance.
- 3 people specified “Other.”

**Takeaway:** Consumers are using phones to access the Internet at nearly the same rate as desktops and laptops. Gen Y-ers, Hispanics and other minorities are using mobile phones to access the Internet at a higher rate.

### 2. The next few questions (A-H) concern consumer privacy while online. Please tell me if you think each of the following statements is true, false or if you don't know. (Statements were randomized.)

A. Individuals can be personally linked to a specific device, such as a computer or mobile phone, when they go online.

- 808 (81%) responded that the statement was true.
- 94 (9%) said the statement was false.
- 98 (10%) said they didn't know.

**Takeaway:** Consumers aren't entirely in the dark when it comes to being personally linked to a mobile phone. An overwhelming majority (81%) is aware that individuals can be specifically linked to a device.

B. Companies collect detailed personal information about individuals, such as health conditions, without telling them.

- 710 (71%) responded that the statement was true.
- 276 (28%) said the statement was false.
- 135 (14%) said they didn't know.

**Takeaway:** A large majority of consumers are aware that sensitive information is taken without their knowledge. But more than a third are unaware that information, such as health conditions, is collected and shared.

C. Online companies create detailed financial information about individuals, even when they are not purchasing something online.

- 637 (64%) responded that the statement was true.
- 211 (21%) said the statement was false.
- 151 (15%) said they didn't know.

**Takeaway:** 36% 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 joining an email list.

D. Companies often track individuals' whereabouts or location when they are using a mobile phone.

- 589 (59%) responded that the statement was true.
- 171 (17%) said the statement was false.
- 119 (12%) could not answer true or false (don't know).

**Takeaway:** 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.

E. Online following, or tracking, means that a company only learns which websites an individual has visited, and that's all.

- 334 (33%) responded that the statement was true.
- 512 (51%) said the statement was false.

**Takeaway:** One-third of consumers 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.

F. It's illegal for a company to track where individuals go and what they do online without their permission.

- 487 (49%) responded that the statement was true.
- 411 (41%) said the statement was false.

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

G. You would allow companies to track, collect and share data with your permission if you received a free service or product in return.

- 247 (25%) responded that the statement was true.
- 691 (69%) said the statement was false.

**Takeaway:** *More than two-thirds would not be willing to allow companies to track them in exchange for a free service or product. Consumers need to be aware that online companies currently track, collect and share data without asking permission.*

H. You would be willing to pay a fee to gain access to a website if you knew the site would not track you.

- 244 (24%) responded that the statement was true.
- 693 (69%) said the statement was false.

**Takeaway:** *Most people would not be willing to pay to access a website even if they knew that 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.*

**3. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (A-K). Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?**

A. You see no harm in being tracked online if it results in your being shown more relevant ads.

- Strongly agree: 93 (9%)
- Somewhat agree: 145 (15%)
- Somewhat disagree: 186 (19%)
- Strongly disagree: 550 (55%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 26 (3%)

**Takeaway:** *Contrary to what many advertisers may say, consumers do not see being tracked as a fair trade for more relevant ads.*

B. There should be a way for people to limit when they are tracked online.

- Strongly agree: 760 (76%)
- Somewhat agree: 137 (14%)
- Somewhat disagree: 25 (3%)

- Strongly disagree: 63 (6%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 14 (1%)

**Takeaway:** *Consumers are seeking tools that allow them to make a choice about tracking.*

C. You should have the right to control what information is collected about you online.

- Strongly agree: 871 (87%)
- Somewhat agree: 77 (8%)
- Somewhat disagree: 8 (1%)
- Strongly disagree: 39 (4%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 5 (1%)

**Takeaway:** *An overwhelming majority of those surveyed believe they should have the right to control the collection of personal information.*

D. If the settings on your computer say "Do not track," your preference should be respected.

- Strongly agree: 911 (91%)
- Somewhat agree: 53 (5%)
- Somewhat disagree: 11 (1%)
- Strongly disagree: 20 (2%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 5 (1%)

**Takeaway:** *Consumers who use the Internet want to be able to rely on their chosen preferences.*

E. Online marketers consider your privacy when you are online.

- Strongly agree: 106 (11%)
- Somewhat agree: 153 (15%)
- Somewhat disagree: 197 (20%)
- Strongly disagree: 522 (52%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 21 (2%)

**Takeaway:** *More than half of consumers don't believe that marketers care about consumers' privacy online.*

F. Online marketers are trying to save you time by using tracking to only send you ads about what you need or desire.

- Strongly agree: 148 (15%)
- Somewhat agree: 265 (27%)
- Somewhat disagree: 181 (18%)
- Strongly disagree: 368 (37%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 38 (4%)

**Takeaway:** *More than half of individuals surveyed don't buy the oft-repeated argument by advertisers that consumers want more relevant ads and are willing to trade their personal information to get it.*

G. Companies that track you online make it clear what they are doing.

- Strongly agree: 110 (11%)
- Somewhat agree: 103 (10%)
- Somewhat disagree: 202 (20%)
- Strongly disagree: 562 (56%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 22 (2%)

**Takeaway:** *Consumers know that companies engaged in online tracking aren't transparent about it.*

H. You believe that being tracked online is the price of using the Internet.

- Strongly agree: 276 (28%)
- Somewhat agree: 266 (27%)
- Somewhat disagree: 116 (12%)
- Strongly disagree: 314 (31%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 28 (3%)

**Takeaway:** *The majority of individuals surveyed recognize that their data is often the price of using the Internet, but their responses to other questions in this survey indicate that they don't like the arrangement and value their privacy above all (see 3A).*

I. You've read and understand the privacy settings on your Internet browser.

- Strongly agree: 276 (28%)
- Somewhat agree: 298 (30%)
- Somewhat disagree: 150 (15%)
- Strongly disagree: 210 (21%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 66 (7%)

**Takeaway:** *A large proportion (58%) of those surveyed care enough about their online privacy that they have taken the time to understand their browser's privacy settings. But about 43% don't bother to read or understand these settings, and therefore are uninformed and potentially vulnerable to privacy incursions.*

J. You've read and understand the privacy settings on your mobile phone.

- Strongly agree: 317 (32%)
- Somewhat agree: 246 (25%)
- Somewhat disagree: 141 (14%)
- Strongly disagree: 220 (22%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 77 (8%)

**Takeaway:** *Despite the efforts of some mobile providers, many consumers are confused by privacy settings on wireless devices.*

K. This is a two-part question about online tracking tools.

a) You would prefer to have Internet browsers turn off tracking automatically for you, as long as you have a way to turn it back on.

- Strongly agree: 582 (58%)
- Somewhat agree: 246 (25%)
- Somewhat disagree: 54 (5%)
- Strongly disagree: 81 (8%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 36 (4%)

b) You would prefer to have control of tracking yourself when you browse the Web.

- Strongly agree: 744 (74%)
- Somewhat agree: 135 (14%)
- Somewhat disagree: 41 (4%)
- Strongly disagree: 58 (6%)
- Don't know/no opinion: 22 (2%)

**Takeaway:** *People want control over tracking. Period. 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 they choose.*

### **About Consumer Action**

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