Report on
Privacy Awareness Survey on Facebook Users

Submitted to

Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data

By
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Executive summary

Background

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) commissioned the Centre for the Advancement of Social Science Research of the Hong Kong Baptist University (CASR) to conduct a telephone survey on the usage habit (particularly their awareness on personal data privacy protection) of Facebook users in Hong Kong.

Survey Method

Prior to the survey, CASR conducted a focus group discussion on 25 June 2012 for randomly invited Facebook users aged 18 or above in order to find out their experience in using Facebook and their awareness of the privacy risk associated with using Facebook. The results from the focus group discussion helped the development of the questionnaire in the survey.

The telephone survey was held between 28 July 2012 and 5 August 2012 for Facebook users aged between 15 and 70. Interviewers called household telephone numbers by random and asked to speak to anyone in the household that used Facebook. If there were more than one member using Facebook, the person with the closest birthday would be asked to answer the questions. In total 1,016 respondents using Facebook were successfully interviewed.

Penetration of Facebook on household basis

The results found that about 45% of the households whose member(s) use(s) Facebook. The demographic information of the respondents is:

Gender			
Male	42.5%	Female	57.5%
Age			
Aged 15-20	26.8%	Aged 41-50	14.1%
Aged 21-30	28.6%	Aged 51-60	10.2%
Aged 31-40	18.3%	Aged 61 -70	2.0%
Education			
Primary or below	1.5%	Tertiary (non-degree level)	8.2%
Secondary	37.4%	Tertiary (degree level) or above	41.9%
Upper secondary / Sixth form	11.1%		
Occupation			
Managers and administrators	7.1%	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	1.2%
Professionals	11.5%	Non-skilled workers	0.5%
Associate professionals	5.6%	Housewives	6.2%
Clerks	17.2%	Students	33.5%
Service workers and shop sales workers	8.9%	Unemployed	3.7%
Skilled agriculture and fisheries workers	0.1%	Retired	3.2%
Craft and related workers	0.9%	Others	0.3%
Personal monthly income			
Below HK$5,000	1.3%	HK$40,000 – HK$49,999	4.3%
HK$5,000 – HK$9,999	13.1%	HK$50,000 – HK$59,999	3.4%
HK$10,000 – HK$14,999	22.9%	HK$60,000 – HK$69,999	1.5%
HK$15,000 – HK$19,999	17.6%	HK$70,000 – HK$79,999	0.9%
HK$20,000 – HK$29,999	22.3%	HK$80,000 or above	3.0%
HK$30,000 – HK$39,999	9.9%		

General Findings

Experience in using Facebook:

Male:	42.5%	(432 respondents)
Female:	57.5%	(584 respondents)

- The figures suggest that there are slightly more female users than male users of Facebook.

Demographic distribution by age:

Aged 15-20:	26.8%	(268 respondents)
Aged 21-30:	28.6%	(286 respondents)
Aged 31-40:	18.3%	(183 respondents)
Aged 41-50:	14.1%	(141 respondents)
Aged 51-60:	10.2%	(102 respondents)
Aged 61-70:	2.0%	(20 respondents)

- The figures suggest a possible heavier use of Facebook by the younger generations, particular the five-year age group from 15 to 20 years old.

Length of use:

For less than a year	3.6%	(36 respondents)
For one year:	9.3%	(94 respondents)
For two years:	22.1%	(224 respondents)
For three years:	23.3%	(236 respondents)
For four years:	16.6%	(168 respondents)
For five years or longer:	25.2%	(256 respondents)

- The figures suggest many Facebook users have already used it for a number of years.

Means of access to Facebook:

By desktop computers at work	25.0%	(254 respondents)
By desktop computers at home	82.6%	(839 respondents)
By smartphones:	71.3%	(724 respondents)
By notebook/netbook computers:	46.5%	(472 respondents)
By Tablet computers:	30.4%	(309 respondents)
By smartphones and at least one more other types of device:	71.3%	(724 respondents)
By desktop computers at home and at least one more other types of device:	80.5%	(818 respondents)

- These figures suggest that the majority of Facebook users used more than one device to access Facebook, and all users who used smartphone to access Facebook also used at least one other type of device to access Facebook

Occupations:

Employed	53.1%	(513 respondents)
Students	33.5%	(324 respondents)
Housewives/unemployed/retired:	13.1%	(127 respondents)

Other most-commonly-used social networking tools for these Facebook users:

Whatsapp	24.3%	(839 respondents)
Weibo (新浪微博):	13.9%	(724 respondents)
MSN:	13.1%	(472 respondents)
Twitter:	7.7%	(309 respondents)
Skype:	4.8%	(254 respondents)

Frequency on using Facebook:

Several times a day	47.3%	(481 respondents)
Once a day	24.3%	(247 respondents)
Several times a week	16.9%	(172 respondents)
Once a week	5.7%	(58 respondents)
Less than once a week	2.7%	(27 respondents)
Once a month	1.5%	(15 respondents)
Less than once a month	1.6%	(16 respondents)

Time spent on Facebook each time:

Less than 5 minutes	15.6%	(158 respondents)
5 – 10 minutes	25.9%	(263 respondents)
11 – 20 minutes	20.1%	(204 respondents)
21 – 30 minutes	15.2%	(154 respondents)
31 – 60 minutes	7.0%	(71 respondents)
More than an hour	16.3%	(165 respondents)

Main use of Facebook:

Watch friends' status/news	85.8%	(872 respondents)
Share photos	30.6%	(311 respondents)
Chat with friends/family members	28.7%	(292 respondents)
Update personal status	23.5%	(239 respondents)
Organise events	15.0%	(152 respondents)
Play games	13.5%	(137 respondents)
Share information – eg news or messages	10.4%	(106 respondents)
Share personal views	9.5%	(97 respondents)
Read Fan pages	4.6%	(47 respondents)
Use Facebook apps	2.1%	(21 respondents)

Type of Facebook apps in use:

Games	34.1%	(346 respondents)
Social networking (eg calendar which gathers friends' birthday)	24.1%	(245 respondents)
Business (eg apps from commercial organisations)	5.7%	(58 respondents)
Others	0.7%	(7 respondents)
Don't use any apps	49.5%	(503 respondents)

Type of Facebook games in use:		
Solo games (eg Diamond Dash, Bejeweled Blitz)	26.0%	(264 respondents)
Network/Interactive games (eg GodGame, Mahjong, Landlords)	24.0%	(244 respondents)
Others	0.3%	(3 respondents)
Don't play any games	58.8%	(597 respondents)

Privacy Awareness

Number of Facebook friends:		
Don't know the number of friends in Facebook	23.1%	(235 respondents)
Know the number of friends in Facebook	76.9%	(781 respondents)

Regularly review and check friends for deletion:		
Would not check friends for deletion	27.5%	(215 out of 781 respondents)
Regularly check friends for deletion	72.5%	(566 out of 781 respondents)

Create multiple Facebook accounts to communicate with different types of contacts:

Created multiple accounts to communicate with contacts	6.3%	(64 respondents)
Have not created multiple accounts to communicate with contacts	93.7%	(952 respondents)

Create multiple friend groups in Facebook:

Created multiple friend groups	36.2%	(368 respondents)
Have not created multiple friend groups	63.8%	(648 respondents)

Consideration when adding/accepting a Facebook friend:

Do I know the real person?	81.3%	(824 respondents)
Degree of familiarity	19.2%	(195 respondents)
Is the person friend of my friends?	7.2%	(73 respondents)
Do I want to share personal status/information with the person?	1.4%	(14 respondents)
Having common interests?	1.0%	(10 respondents)
Do I know the persona online?	0.7%	(7 respondents)
Personal interests	0.5%	(5 respondents)
Others	6.7%	(68 respondents)
No special consideration	4.9%	(50 respondents)

Do users read the terms clearly or understand permission of the apps before accepting

Yes	55.8%	(313 out of 561 respondents who used apps and played games)
No	40.8%	(229 out of 561 respondents who used apps and played games)
Partially	3.4%	(19out of 561 respondents who used apps and played games)

Concerned over whether the use of Facebook would lead to privacy intrusion (for all respondents)

Yes	55.1% (560 respondents)
No	44.9% (456 respondents)

Concerned over whether the use of Facebook would lead to privacy intrusion (for the 15-20 age group)

Yes	44.4% (119 out of 268 respondents)
No	55.6% (149 out of 268 respondents)

Concernes over what information in Facebook could be leaked

Personal information	21.0% (213 respondents)
Photos	12.5% (127 respondents)
Phone numbers	5.9% (60 respondents)
Email addresses	4.0% (41 respondents)
Information of friends or family being accessed	3.4% (35 respondents)

Reasons why there is no worry about privacy intrusion

No / not too much personal information	27.6% (280 respondents)
No / not too much important information	7.0% (72 respondents)
There is privacy setting in Facebook / I have adjusted the privacy setting	2.5% (26 respondents)

All information in my Facebook account can be opened to the public	2.5%	(25 respondents)
No real information entered to Facebook	1.1%	(12 respondents)

Protective measures taken by users

Yes	58.9%	(598 respondents)
No	44.1%	(417 respondents)

Detailed protective measures taken by users

Number of respondents who knew they could control the access right of their uploaded information to different types of friends.	85%	(864 respondents)
Adjust privacy settings to limit to friends only	23.2%	(236 respondents)
Adjust privacy settings	13.5%	(137 respondents)
Limit the amount of personal information uploaded/disclosed	3.3%	(34 respondents)
Install antivirus software	1.6%	(17 respondents)
Frequently change password	1.0%	(11 respondents)
Apply different privacy setting for different type of information	1.0%	(11 respondents)

- While the majority of Facebook users knew that they could adjust privacy setting to control the access right of their uploaded information to different types of friends, only a small portion of them did.

Reasons why no protective action is taken

Don't know what confidentiality actions can be taken	12.0%	(122 respondents)
No / Not too much important information	6.3%	(64 respondents)

No / Not too much personal information	6.3%	(64 respondents)
Too troublesome	2.7%	(27 respondents)
No need	2.6%	(26 respondents)

Knowing that photos shared with 'Friends only' can still be seen by others if the photos are tagged by friends

Yes	81.1%	(824 respondents)
No	18.9%	(192 respondents)

Seek permission from friend before uploading them to Facebook

Yes	31.3%	(318 respondents)
No	43.6%	(443 respondents)
Sometimes	6.0%	(61 respondents)
Never upload group photos	19.1%	(194 respondents)

Profile information put in Facebook account

Gender	87.7%	(890 respondents)
Name	75.8%	(769 respondents)
Profile picture	72.4%	(735 respondents)
Date of Birth	69.5%	(705 respondents)
Email address	63.1%	(640 respondents)
Education background	50.3%	(511 respondents)
Personal interests	40.7%	(414 respondents)
Languages	34.8%	(353 respondents)
Marital status	30.1%	(306 respondents)

Sexual orientation	20.7% (210 respondents)	

Conclusions

Overall, the results of the Facebook survey provide a general picture on the use of Facebook and the awareness of personal data protection by Hong Kong residents. In general, the survey suggests that the younger generation tends to be a more active user group of Facebook. It was also found that Facebook users tend to be have used it for some time (two years or longer) and often use more than one type of device to access Facebook. The majority of participants in the survey suggested that their main use was to check out news/updates of their friends. More than half of the respondents regularly kept track and reviewed the connection with their friends. Figures suggest that only 6% and 36% of Facebook users respectively created multiple accounts and multiple friend groups to ensure their posted information is shared with the right people

The survey figures show that there may be a gap between Facebook users' privacy protection awareness and their practice:

1. More than half of the respondents (55%) expressed concerns over whether the use of Facebook could lead to privacy intrusion, yet only a small proportion of them took actions (such as creating multiple accounts or friend groups) to limit the extent of information sharing;

2. While the majority of respondents (85%) knew that they could control access rights to their posted information, less than half of them (37%) made use of this privacy setting;

3. Only 39% of respondents who upload photos to Facebook would seek permission from friends before uploading their friends' photos.