

Results of the 2014 GPEN Privacy Sweep

Global Trends and Examples

Summary Observations:

- Many popular and successful apps are embracing the potential to build user trust, and avoid concerns, by providing clear, easy to read and timely explanations regarding exactly what information they will collect and how they will use it; while others are missing that opportunity by failing to provide even the most basic privacy information.

Tombstone Data:

- Number of participating PEAs: 26
- Number of apps swept: 1211

Permissions (Indicator 2):

- 75% of apps requested one or more permissions
- Top requested permissions: Location; Device ID; Access to Other Accounts; Camera; and Contacts
 - *Proportion of apps requesting permissions and potential sensitivity of associated information highlights the importance of apps' transparency*

Pre-Installation Communications (Indicator 1):

- 59% of apps caused concerns for sweepers with respect to pre-installation privacy communications
 - *Many apps provided little information prior to download*
 - *Many apps provided a link to a webpage with a privacy policy that was not tailored to the app*
 - *Several apps linked to social media pages (some required login, some led to broken links and some raised questions as to who the developer or data controller was)*

Small Screen (Indicator 4):

- 43% of apps failed to tailor privacy communications to a small screen according to sweepers
 - *Negative examples: small print, lengthy, multiple pages requiring scrolling*
 - *Positive examples: pop-ups, layered information, just-in-time notifications*

Overall Satisfaction with Privacy Communications (Indicator 5):

- 15% of apps were given a rating of '3' – i.e. clear explanation of app's collection, use and disclosure of personal information/data
- 54% of apps were rated '0' or '1' – i.e. privacy information either absent (30%) or inadequate (24%)
 - *Positive examples: brief, plain-language explanation of what information the app will and will not collect and use pursuant to each permission*

Excessive Permissions (Indicator 3):

- For 31% of apps, sweepers were concerned that requested permissions exceeded what they would expect based on their understanding of the apps' functionality
 - *There were few examples of apps collecting information that clearly exceeded the app's functionality (like 'flashlight apps requesting contacts')*
 - *Most concerns appear to stem from a sense of unease created as a result of a lack of transparency (i.e. inadequate explanation of collection, use and disclosure pursuant to permissions)*