



**NATIONAL OPINION POLL ON COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TO PRIVACY
CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MARKET AND
SOCIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS (AMSRO) BY *NEWSPOLL***

OCTOBER 2012

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Overview

Every day, Australians provide enormous quantities of information about themselves to a wide range of organisations – to retailers, bankers, insurers, health funds, government departments and agencies and countless others. What do we know about how this data is protected? The short answer is that most of us know only “a little”, a handful claim to know “a lot” and an appreciable number say they “know nothing” about it.

The special AMSRO poll conducted late last month on a nationwide sample shows that just under ten percent of those questioned claimed they know a lot about how companies and organisations protect their personal information while a quarter claimed they knew nothing about it. Between these extremes, close to two thirds of the population said they knew “a little” about how these organisations protect personal information.

It makes little difference to these findings if you are a male or female (Table A1), but the information collected does suggest that ignorance peaks among persons aged 25-34, and that knowing “a lot” varies markedly from a low of 5 per cent among those with basic schooling only to 15 percent among the university educated (Table A2). Conversely, knowing nothing falls from a high of 30 per cent among those who left school at secondary level to 20 per cent among those with a university education (Table A3). Similarly with a person’s income: as income rises, knowing a lot increases and knowing nothing decreases at much the same rate as for the education attainment levels (Table A4).

AMSRO is currently reviewing its Privacy Code -- the only industry code to have formal recognition under the Commonwealth Privacy Act of 1988 and to be co-regulated by the Australian Privacy Commissioner and the Association. The poll is part of the review process and was conducted by *Newspoll* on behalf of AMSRO to gauge community awareness about privacy and related issues.

The findings will be released at a conference the Association is staging with the University of Sydney Business School on Friday 16 November 2012. Special Guest Speaker at the Conference is Mr Timothy Pilgrim, the Australian Privacy Commissioner.

In addition to gauging how much is known about protection of privacy, the poll also tested community response to questions about providing personal information over the internet. The people polled were asked whether they were more or less concerned about providing their details over the internet when compared with furnishing details by way of pen and paper.

Answers about these concerns reveal widespread wariness about the internet and tend to split the community into two major groups. Just over half are more concerned about providing information over the internet than on paper and a little over a third are equally concerned about security irrespective of the medium. A very small percentage is less concerned about the internet versus paper and likewise, a very small proportion didn’t have a view on the matter

The Office of the Australian Privacy Commissioner has commissioned polls in the past to help guide policy formulation and communication strategies. Among questions asked are some that are reasonably comparable with AMSRO’s Newspoll. It shows that the split in community thinking is nothing new, having been observed in 2001 and 2004 (Table B1). There is a hint that concerns about providing information over the internet have been higher in the past and that the current reading therefore reflects a comparative decline in the level of concern amounting to some 10 per cent.

Interestingly, the results of this question reflect differences similar to those found when knowledge of the protection of personal information was tested. Education (Table B2), income (Table B3) and whether those polled were classified as having Blue Collar or White Collar occupations (Table B4) were important factors affecting the split of concerns over whether information is submitted over the internet or on paper.

Trends in the tabulation of poll results

The following tables and graphs illustrate the points made in the preceding discussion. This is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of the survey data.

Question A: Thinking now about providing personal information to companies and organisations. How much would you say you know about the protection of the personal information you provide to companies or organisations? Would you say you know...?

Table A1: Gender

	Total	M	F
A lot	9	10	9
A little	64	66	63
Nothing	25	24	27

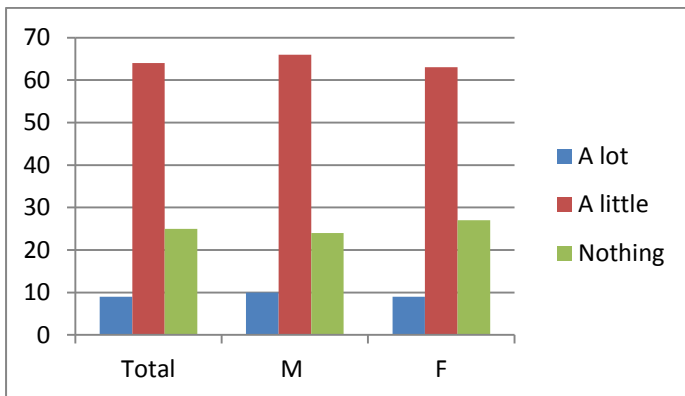


Table A2: Age Groups

	18-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+
A lot	4	10	9	12	10
A little	74	54	70	66	59
Nothing	18	36	21	22	30

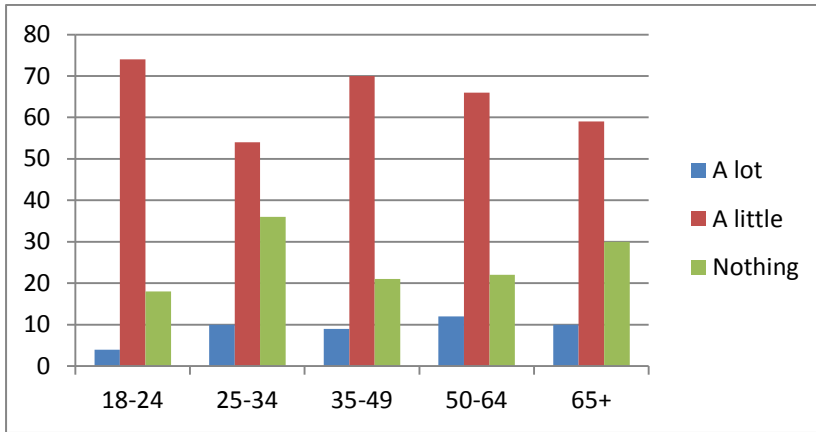


Table A3: Levels of

Education	Prim/Sec	TAFE etc	Uni
A lot	5	8	15
A little	64	66	64
Nothing	30	26	20

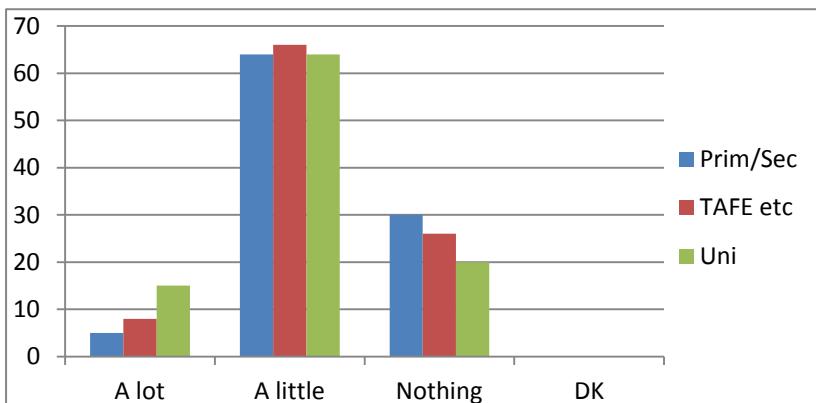
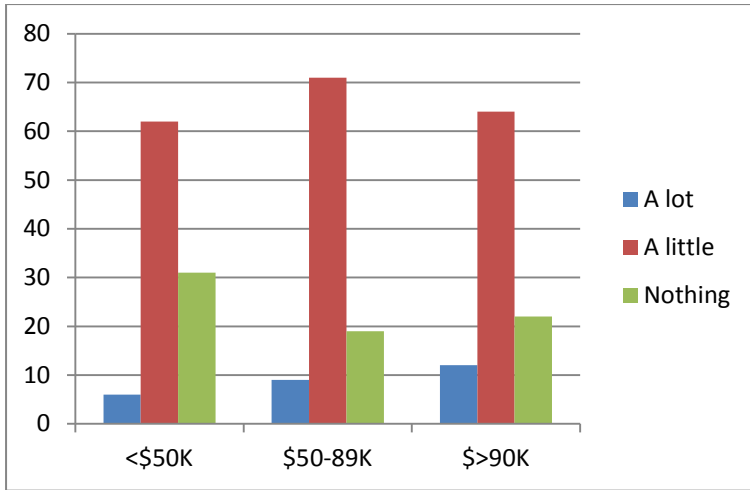


Table A4: Income levels

	<\$50K	\$50-89K	\$>90K
A lot	6	9	12
A little	62	71	64
Nothing	31	19	22



Question B: Thinking about providing personal information over the internet. Compared to other situations such as filling out paper forms, would you say you have more concern about the security of your personal information when using the internet, less concern or would you have about the same amount of concern?

Table B1: Totals 2001, 2004 and 2012 surveys

	2001	2004	2012
More	57	62	52
Less	8	5	5
Same	31	30	35
Never/none/DK	4	3	8

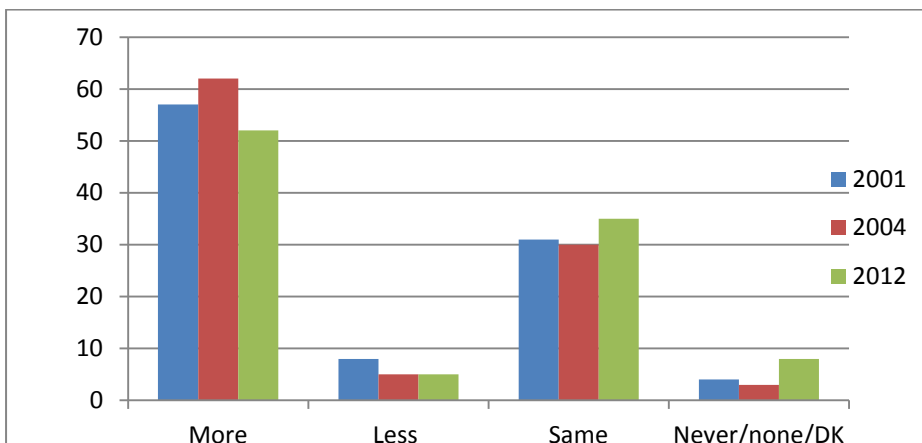


Table B2: Education	TAFE		
	Prim/Sec	Etc	Uni
More	52	57	47
Less	5	4	6
Same	27	34	45
Never	14	4	1
None/DK	2	0	1

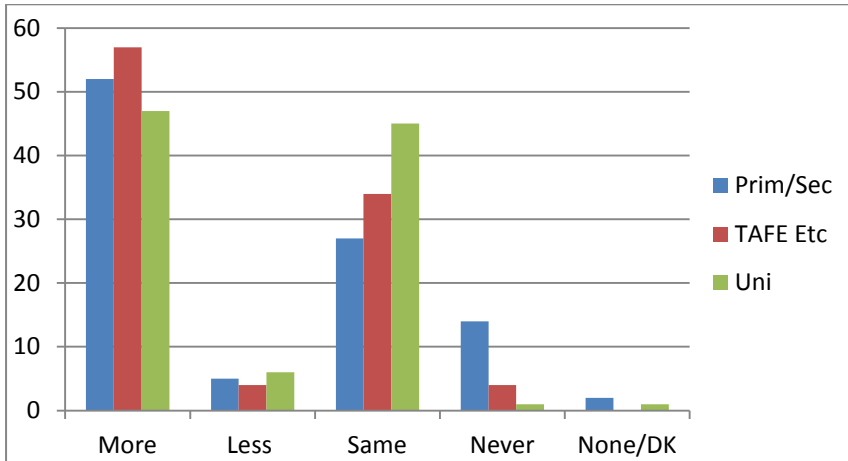


Table B3: Income

	<\$50K	\$50-89K	\$>90K
More	56	58	47
Less	4	5	5
Same	25	32	45
Never	13	4	1
None/DK	2	0	2

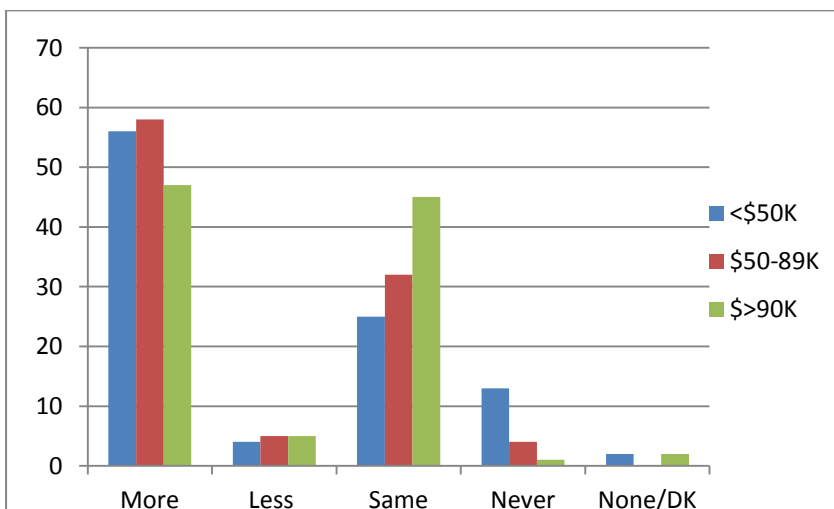


Table B4: Occupation

	White	Blue
More	50	54
Less	5	5
Same	43	26
Never	1	12
None/DK	1	3

