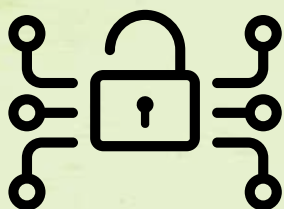


ADAPTING

in response to the changing business world



If people are to continue to participate in research projects, of any kind, they must have confidence that researchers will protect their personal information.

Jane Gregory explains how the Professional Standards Committee is preparing for changes to the way personal data needs to be handled.

Privacy and data security is critical for our industry. Researchers must be alert to the latest moves in privacy and data protection. In 2018, AMSRS will continue to help members do this as market and social research shifts and adapts in its practice in response to the changing business world.

The issue of data protection (for this is what the Privacy Act covers) will continue to gain prominence as organisations develop ever larger databases with more and more customer information. The Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme, coming into effect this month, is brought in to combat problems.

Australians are concerned about data protection and privacy, as evidenced in recent surveys. Digital databases pose inherent security risks. The occasional publicised breach provides a cautionary warning

83%

public concerned their personal data might be misused.

GRBN Trust Survey 2016

to all in our industry of the negative backlash, reputational harm and fuels the public's fear on the misuse of their personal data. On the other hand, people continue to provide their information to organisations and take part in social networking.

Therefore researchers are working against a background of public discussion of the risks of providing personal information, running in parallel with increasing provision of such information as part of daily life. This may seem contradictory, but there are many different motivations operating, including perceptions of risk and the benefits of increased social interaction via networking.

How best to safeguard the future of market and social research

If people are to continue to participate in research projects, of any kind, they must have confidence that researchers will protect their personal information. Researchers have always recognised this and offered such assurances. The AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour is important evidence of this, providing reassurance that members adhere to clear professional standards and ethics.

The Code is freely available on the AMSRS website and the Ethics Line receives queries every year from members of the public about a researcher, organisation or project. I suspect this type of query will increase over time.

The Professional Standards Committee will continue to monitor this and provide advice to members through guidelines, webinars and articles. Other issues that will be monitored carefully in 2018 are:

- the merging of research and non-research purposes – the source of many members' queries
- the problems of de-identification of personal information, particularly in digital form
- passive data collection and associated issues – a guideline on this topic is in development.

Good practice gives better experience

Finally, a plea to everyone to do all they can to make the interview process easy and pleasant for participants. Given that concern about providing personal information may be a deterrent to participation, researchers must minimise other potential deterrents, including complex, intrusive or long surveys. I recommend the *AMSRS Guideline on Good Practice for Market and Social Research Interviews* as a reminder – it is easy to let this side of the survey process slip.

JANE GREGORY, AMSRS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OFFICER

For more information

- *Australian Community Attitudes to Privacy Survey 2017, commissioned by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC): www.oaic.gov.au/engage-with-us/community-attitudes/australian-community-attitudes-to-privacy-survey-2017*
- *GRBN Trust Survey 2016: <http://grbnnews.com/grbn-survey-research-sector-needs-improve-trust-relationships-general-public/>*



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