



Australians worried
about privacy risks,
strongly support
privacy reforms

Reset.
AUSTRALIA

AUGUST 2024

Summary

Reset.Tech Australia worked with YouGov in July 2024 to poll over 1500 Australian voters. They were asked a range of questions about digital regulation, in the context of anticipated reforms to the *Privacy Act 1988*. Australians are significantly anxious about a range of privacy and data protection issues, strongly support the direction of travel with the Privacy Act Review, and would like to see reforms carried within a year. A significant number of undecided voters noted they would consider privacy reforms in weighing up who to vote for in the next election. The question set is available at the end of this document.

Key findings this way

Reset. AUSTRALIA

Reset.Tech Australia is an independent, non-partisan policy research lab committed to driving public policy advocacy, research and civic engagement to strengthen our democracy within the context of technology. We are the Australian affiliate of Reset, a global initiative working to counter digital threats to democracy.

Cover image: Digital artwork created using Midjourney in response to the prompt *"Imagine a forest of technology pillars hovering over an Australian landscape, casting a shadow across a valley at dawn H6D-100c, Sirui 50mm f/1.8 anamorphic 1.33x, UHD --style raw --stylize 600 --v 6.0"*

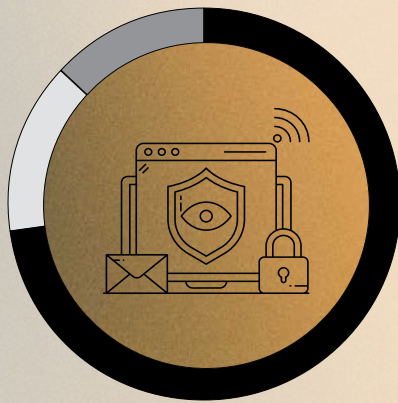
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Key Findings

01. Australians are anxious about a range of privacy risks.

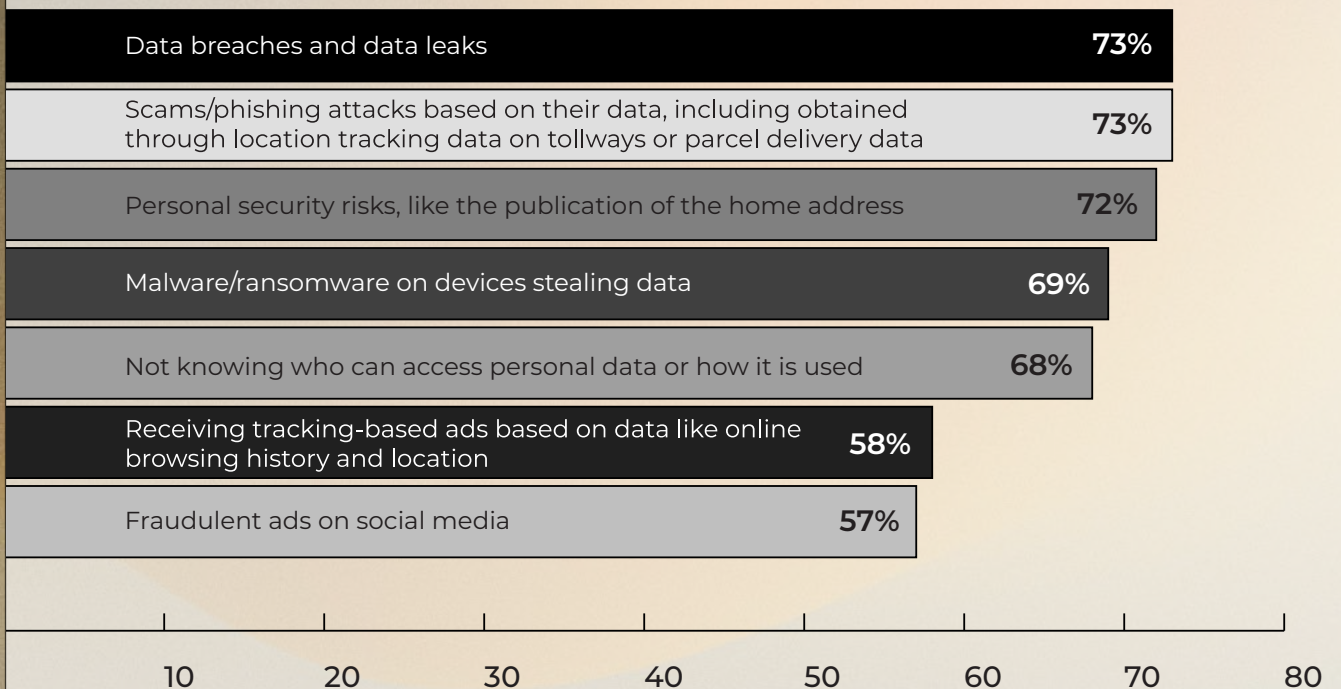


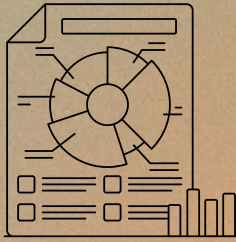
73% of respondents agreed with the statement:

'I feel my data is insecure and exposed'.

○ 14% 'not sure' ● 13% 'disagree'

Across a broad list of risks associated with poor privacy protections, Australians reported the following concerns for themselves and their families:

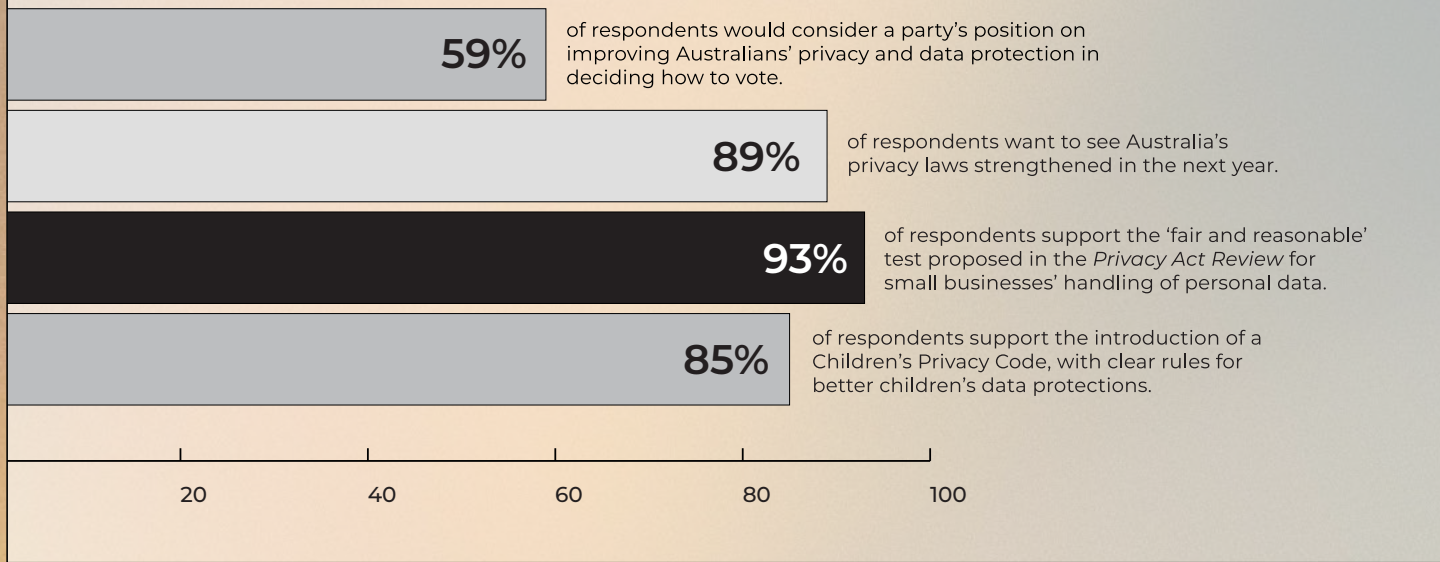




Key Findings

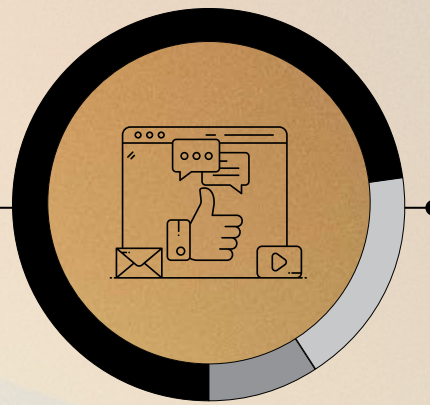


02. Australians specifically want reforms to privacy and data protection.



03. Australians are concerned about under-enforcement of unsafe and misleading content online.

73% were more concerned about social media platforms failing to remove content platforms deemed to be unsafe, or misinformation.



Only **18%** were more concerned about platforms removing too much content deemed unsafe or misinformation.

● 9% 'don't know'





Key Findings



04. Australians understand that choices need to be made about online regulation

54% of respondents preferred a model for protecting young people that goes towards fixing social media platforms' products...

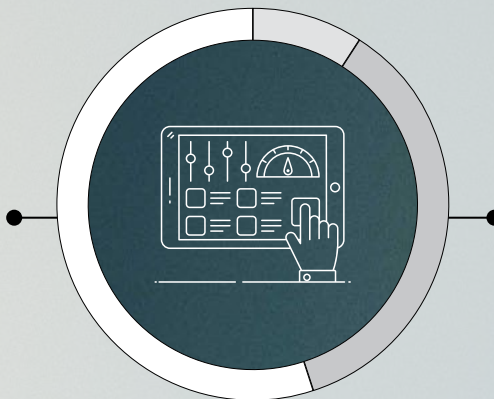
12% responded 'no change' or 'don't know'



...whereas only **34%** supported a prohibition for under 16s to access social media platforms.

55% of respondents agreed with the statement: 'I'd rather that there were more controls and restrictions on what I see online that might be offensive or harmful, even if that means that I might miss out on seeing some opinions or content'.

9% 'don't know'



whereas only **36%** of respondents agreed with the statement: 'I'd rather that there were fewer controls and restrictions on what I see online that might be offensive or harmful to allow me to make up my own mind, even if that means I might see opinions or content that I find offensive or upsetting'.





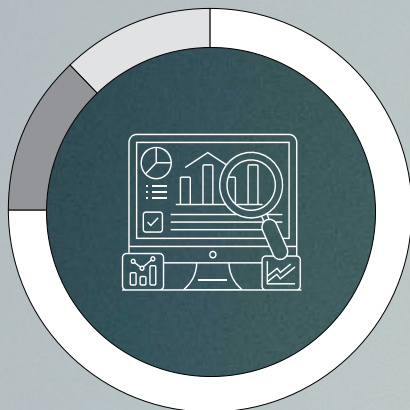
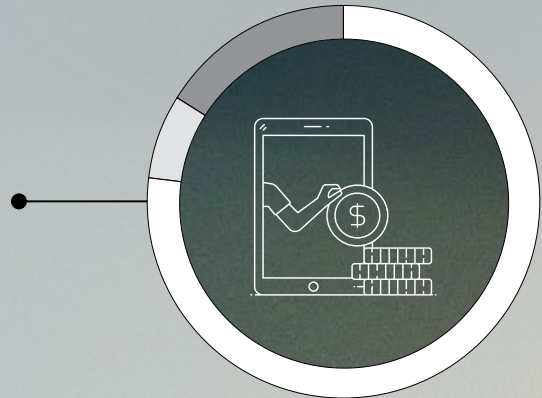
Key Findings



05. Australians want to see muscular enforcement and accountability measures over social media companies.

77% of respondents agreed fines should represent more than a 'cost of doing business'.

- 7% disagreed with this statement
- 16% didn't know

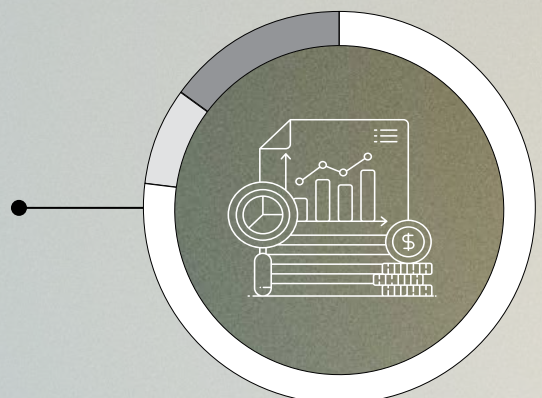


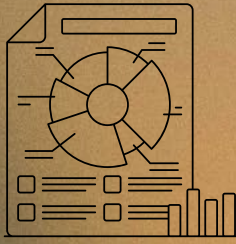
75% of respondents agreed fines should be proportionate to revenue made by a platform.

- 13% disagreed with this statement
- 12% didn't know

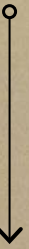
77% of respondents agreed fines for digital platforms should reflect levels set in other industries, such as financial services regulation.

- 8% disagreed with this statement
- 15% didn't know

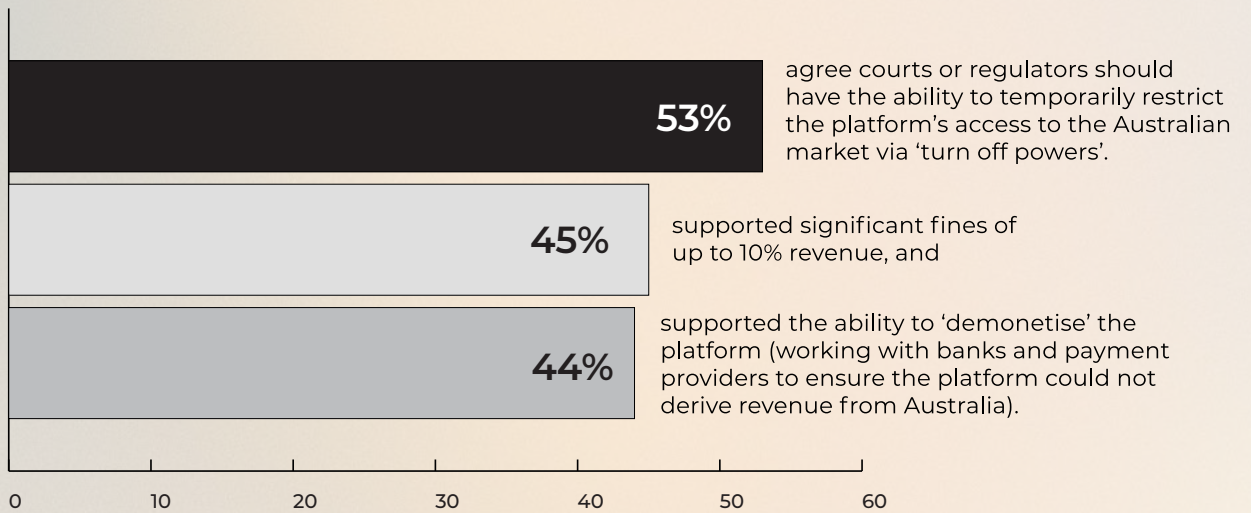


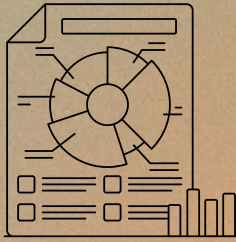


Key Findings

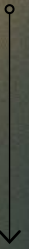


05. Australians want to see muscular enforcement and accountability measures over social media companies.





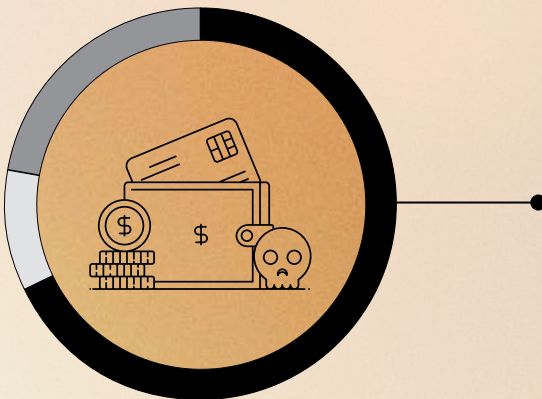
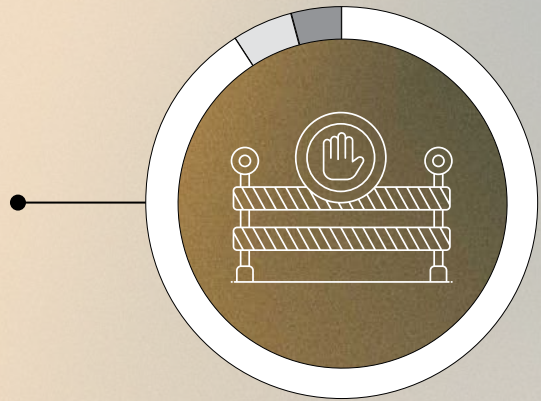
Key Findings



06. Meaningful tech regulation has compelling public support.

91% of respondents agreed with the statement: 'Social media companies should be held to the same standards of compliance and corporate accountability as in any other sector'.

5% disagreed 4% didn't know



68% of respondents believe that the market has failed and digital platforms exploit their market dominance to skirt Australian safety laws.

10% disagreed 22% didn't know

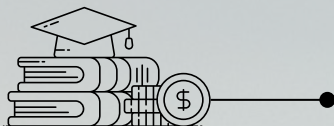




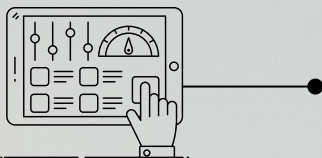
Key Findings



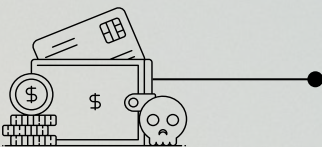
07. Demography matters.



Older, wealthy, high-educated Australians in particular support muscular regulation of tech and social media companies.



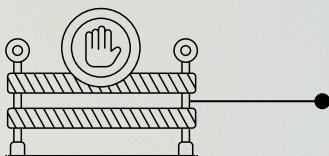
Liberal voters are the strongest supporters of online content-based measures.



Liberal voters and outright home-owners are the strongest believers that the digital platform market has failed.



Over 50s are most concerned about privacy and data breaches.



University-educated, high-income earners, and outright home-owners strongly support tough fines and enforcement measures on social media companies.



Questions and Data

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'Social media companies should be held to the same standards of compliance and corporate accountability as in any other sector' (n=935. 'Don't know' excluded)

Total Agree	91%
Total Disagree	5%

2. Regulation in the digital world comes with trade offs. Which if the following statement(s) is closer to your view? (n=953, 'Don't know' excluded)

I'd rather that there were more controls and restrictions on what I see online that might be offensive or harmful, even if that means that I might miss out on seeing some opinions or content	55%
I'd rather that there were fewer controls and restrictions on what I see online that might be offensive or harmful to allow me to make up my own mind, even if that means I might see opinions or content that I find offensive or upsetting	36%

3. Regulation in the digital world comes with trade offs. Which if the following statement(s) is closer to your view? (n=941, 'Don't know' excluded)

Government should regulate all online services more heavily, even if it makes it harder for smaller online services to make money and means there are fewer choices of services online	52%
Government should regulate all online services less heavily to help smaller companies and to give consumers more choices, even if this means that consumers are less protected	29%

4. When it comes to protecting young people, which is closer to your view? (n=933, 'Don't know' excluded)

Laws implemented that make social media platforms fix their products to protect children in the digital world	54%
Laws implemented that prohibit under 16s from accessing social media platforms	34%

Questions and Data

5. I am more concerned about... (n=928, 'Don't know' excluded)

Social media platforms failing to remove content that platforms deem to be unsafe or as misinformation	73%
Social media platforms removing too much content that platforms deem to be unsafe or as misinformation	18%

6. It can be hard to ensure that digital platforms comply with Australian laws, but the ability to issue fines is currently the main tool available to regulators. There is some debate about how big fines should be to ensure compliance. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following levels of fines for social media companies when they break the law? (n= 952, 'Don't know' excluded)

	Total respondents who agree	Total respondents who disagree
Fines should represent more than a 'cost of doing business' in Australia	77%	7%
Fines should be proportionate to the revenue made by a platform	75%	13%
Fines for digital platforms should reflect the levels in other industries, like finance	77%	8%

7. If a social media platform persistently fails to comply with Australian laws and all other remedies have failed, which, if any of the following powers would you support courts or regulators being given in law (n=955, 'Don't know' excluded)

The ability to temporarily restrict the platform's access to the Australian market via 'turn off' powers	53%
Significant fines of up to 10% of global revenue	45%
The ability to 'demonetise' the platform, working with banks and payment providers to ensure the platform could not derive revenue for Australia	44%
None of the above	6%

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with: The 'market' has failed and digital platforms exploit their market dominance to skirt Australian safety laws (n=947, 'Don't know' excluded)

Total Agree	68%
Total Disagree	10%

Questions and Data

9. Which of the following concerns you when it comes to your and your families privacy and data online (n=954)

Data breaches and data leaks	73%
Scams/phishing attacks based on my data, such as whether I am expecting a parcel or just drove through a toll booth	73%
Personal security risks, like my home address or other personal details being shared or published	72%
Malware/ransomware ending up on my devices that steals my data	69%
Not knowing who my data is accessible to and how it is used	68%
Receiving tracking-based ads based on data like my online browsing history and physical location	58%
Fraudulent ads on social media	57%
None of the above	5%

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with: the statement 'I feel that my data is insecure and exposed' (n=949, 'Don't know' excluded)

Total Agree	73%
Total Disagree	14%

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'I would like to see Australia's privacy laws strengthened in the next year' (n=991, 'Don't know' excluded)

Total Agree	89%
Total Disagree	4%

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'All businesses operating in Australia, including small businesses, should be required to handle my personal data in fair and reasonable ways' (n=980, 'Don't know' excluded)

Total Agree	93%
Total Disagree	3%

Questions and Data

13. To what extent do support or oppose the introduction of a stand-alone Children's Privacy Code that outlines clear rules to ensure children's data is better protected? (n=971, 'Don't know' excluded)

Total support	85%
Total oppose	3%

14. With an election coming up, would a party's position on improving Australians privacy and data protection be something you would consider in deciding how to vote? (n=952, 'Don't know' excluded)

I have already decided how I will vote	24%
I will think a lot about this when I decide how to vote	31%
I will think a little bit about this when I decide how to vote	28%
I won't think about this when I decide how to vote	9%

This means that of those who have not decided how to vote yet (n=723), 77% would think 'a lot' (41%) or 'a little bit' (37%) about a party's position on improving privacy and data protection in making their decision.

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