

Awareness of How Your Data is Being Used and What to Do about It

In this age of big data, your data has become more important than you could have ever imagined. Yes, important data, such as banking details and perhaps your earnings, have always been important – to you if to no-one else! But, any data that you generate – and believe us when we tell you it's a *lot* – is important, to someone, somewhere.

Don't believe us? Think back to every time you sign up for 'free' use of a website or app. While you may not have had to hand over any cold, hard cash, you did have to give your email address, or access to your Google+ or Facebook account.

The reason these websites and companies are so happy to offer you access to their sites in return for some information, or access to it, is because data is important. And, as such, it's become a kind of currency for every kind of business.

Why Your Data is Valuable

[Data is valuable](#) because it can be used to help businesses work out how to sell more of its products or services to you and people like you. To do that, they want to know:

- Your preferred social media platform.
- How old you are.
- Where you live.
- What apps you use to communicate with friends and family.
- What newspapers or news sites you regularly use.
- How often and for how long you're online on mobile and a computer.
- What your hobbies are.
- Where and how often you like to go on vacation.

How Your Data is Being Used

- It's used for Targeted Ads.
- Social Scientists Study It
- Websites Use It For Optimizing User Experience
- Data Brokers Collect & Sell Your Data
- Insurance Companies Analyze It
- Identity Thieves Use It To Steal Your Identity
- Plan Real Life Burglaries
- Your Data Is Being Stored

Check this Infographic about How Your Data Is Being Used

How Your Online Data Is Being Used Right Now

In this age of big data, your data has become more important than you could have ever imagined.



Your Data Is Being Used For Targeted Advertising

Targeted advertising is a form of online advertising that focuses on the specific traits, interests, and preferences of a consumer.

Social Scientists Study Your Data

Social scientists collect and aggregate data on what we decide to share, post, like, and so on, in order to better observe an array of contemporary social trends.



30 USER EXPERIENCE STATISTICS YOU SHOULD NOT IGNORE



Websites Use It For Optimizing User Experience

Many Websites Analyze Your Uses of Their Site like where you Click, the media you share or how much time you spend on a given page, in order to optimize the user experience for everyone.

Data Brokers Collect & Sell Your Data

Big Data companies, known as data brokers, have been compiling intricate personal profiles. Every time you visit a website, companies you've never heard of are collecting data about you and selling or sharing it with other companies.



Insurance Companies Analyze Your Data

Insurance companies have been known to purchase and study our online data, using it to set rates and premiums.

Identity Thieves Use Your Data To Steal Your Identity

Identity theft is the deliberate use of someone else's identity, usually as a method to gain a financial advantage or obtain credit and other benefits in the other person's name. Once identity thieves have your personal information, they can drain your bank account, run up charges on your credit cards.



Plan Real Life Burglaries

When you check in at the airport gate, do you also "check in" using Facebook or Twitter? If so, you're a burglar's favorite type of traveler: burglars use social media all the time. The minute you post trip details, the thief begins planning his own trip - to your empty house. He can find it using Google Street View, online image searches, and Internet directories. Once identity thieves have your personal information, they can drain your bank account, run up charges on your credit cards.

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Resources

- [1. <http://techcrunch.com/2012/07/03/what-is-the-value-of-your-data/>](http://techcrunch.com/2012/07/03/what-is-the-value-of-your-data/)
- [2. <http://www.zeit.com/how-to/users-guide-to-keeping-your-data-private-online/>](http://www.zeit.com/how-to/users-guide-to-keeping-your-data-private-online/)
- [3. <http://mentalfloss.com/article/14790/14-ways-your-online-data-being-used-right-now>](http://mentalfloss.com/article/14790/14-ways-your-online-data-being-used-right-now)

Visual Created By Corporate Data Recovery

Source-How Your Online Data Is Being Used Right Now (Infographic)

Among many other details, that can be useful to specific businesses, for specific reasons. You see, by understanding key details about their target audience - or an audience they'd like to be able to target - companies are willing to provide free blogs, advice and games in return for it. When a company gets a marketing campaign right, based on the information they've mined from 'free' online subscriptions, the return on that investment can be pretty stellar. Of course, it's not just your data that's valuable - it's the collection of data from many, many online users who've all handed over access to a chunk of their online life. Companies will store all of that data, analyse it and use it to come up with a way to encourage potential customers to spend your money with them - again and again and again.

Make Your Data Private

However easy it's been for different businesses to get hold of some or a lot of your information, it's also pretty easy for you to [stop them from accessing even more](#) of it.

For Facebook users - and we know there are millions of you - just go to your settings tab and click on apps. Here you will see how many apps you've signed up to and have some form of access to your data. Luckily, it's a simple process to remove them and stop your future data being seen or used by them.

Viewing the permissions you've given Google can be done from [here](#) and again, it's pretty straight forward to see and disable the access you've already given, often unwittingly. For other apps and social media platforms, head to the settings section in 'my account' and you should find similar, helpful interfaces, where you can re-take control.

Of course, in many cases, sharing your data is beneficial, but it's better for you if you know what they are, why they're sharing your data and if you're happy with that to continue. After all, now that you know how valuable your data really is, you want to make sure you're getting more than 'free' access to a few blogs or special offers, now and again, in return for access to it!