



## Chapter IV

# Protecting One's Privacy: Insights into the Views and Nature of the Early Adopters of Privacy Services

Sarah Spiekermann  
Humboldt University Berlin, Germany

---

### Abstract

---

*Using privacy and security technology becomes increasingly important in many application areas for companies as well as for consumers. However, the market for **privacy enhancing technologies** (PETs) is still small, especially in the private consumer segment. Due to the nature of the technology per se, little is known and can be learned about the views and motivation of those who carefully protect their transactions on the Net. Are they a niche group? Or do they hold views and have traits that promise a wider-spread adoption of PETs in the long run? This chapter gives an insight into the traits and views of 5,037 customers of a popular German anonymity service called JAP (Java Anon Proxy). Due to its high-service reputation and unchanged questions posted on the service's Web site for over 2½ years, insights could be gained on PET users' demographic and psychographic traits. Moreover, 482 free-text comments could be analysed to provide a unique insight into the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of PET users.*

---

## Introduction

---

When we refer to **anonymity** and **privacy** today, we often refer to a “right.” An example is the prominent citation of Warren and Brandeis’ (1890) call for “the right to be let alone” or the “right to informational self-determination” as it is found in the German basic constitutional law. However, as electronic communication channels become more ubiquitous, this right is increasingly being undermined. For those who want to protect their privacy right, new tools and services are developed, maintained, and marketed: privacy enhancing technologies (PETs).

One important PET is anonymizing technology. It is offered in such forms as anonymizing proxies, mixes, or onion routing procedures. Little insight has been gained into the **users** of such privacy technology. Even though a myriad of privacy studies have been conducted in past years showing that privacy and anonymity are theoretic concerns across countries and cultures, these studies have not treated the question whether *everybody* wants to be anonymous.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it is always assumed that privacy is such a value in itself that it needs protection. This stands in sharp contrast to the fact that few people seem to act to protect their privacy, that is, on the Internet (Spiekermann, Grossklags, & Berendt, 2001). There is only one study to our current knowledge on a privacy software called “Privacy Bird”® (Cranor, Arjula, & Guduru, 2002) that has looked at *the actual* users of privacy technology. Knowledge on PET *usage reasons* and thus *motivation* to protect oneself in an electronic communication environment thus seems to be sparse as of today. Besides the psychological investigations into the general desire for seclusion or self-disclosure (Cozby, 1973), no insight exists into the subject.

Consequently, more information needs to be discovered about those who use (and buy) PETs. It should be investigated whether these early adopters are the forerunners of a bigger market. Are they different from the average Internet user and citizen? In what respect? And what reasons do anonymous surfers give for actively seeking protection? The current article sheds some light onto these questions. It does so by presenting results from a questionnaire-based study which was conducted over a timespan of 2½ years with 5,037 users of a mix-based anonymity service called AN.ON.

---

## Method

---

From July 4, 2001, to October 13, 2003, an online questionnaire was posted in German and English on the Web site of an anonymity-service called AN.ON (<http://anon.inf.tu-dresden.de>). AN.ON is a free anonymity service with a client application called JAP. The service allows people to anonymously surf the Internet.

10 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: [www.igi-global.com/chapter/protecting-one-privacy/24714](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/protecting-one-privacy/24714)

## Related Content

---

### Local News and Mobile: Major Tipping Points

Kenneth E. Harvey (2016). *Handbook of Research on Human Social Interaction in the Age of Mobile Devices* (pp. 171-199).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/local-news-and-mobile/156997](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/local-news-and-mobile/156997)

### Forensic Psychological Perspectives on Youth Gang Involvement in Juvenile Fire Setting and Bomb Making Weapons Cases: Forensic Perspective Youth Gangs Fire Setting and Weapons

Ronn Johnson (2017). *Gaming and Technology Addiction: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 862-882).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/forensic-psychological-perspectives-on-youth-gang-involvement-in-juvenile-fire-setting-and-bomb-making-weapons-cases/162550](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/forensic-psychological-perspectives-on-youth-gang-involvement-in-juvenile-fire-setting-and-bomb-making-weapons-cases/162550)

### Virtue and Virtuality: Technoethics, IT and the Masters of the Future

Miles Kennedy (2013). *Moral, Ethical, and Social Dilemmas in the Age of Technology: Theories and Practice* (pp. 1-18).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/virtue-virtuality-technoethics-masters-future/73607](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/virtue-virtuality-technoethics-masters-future/73607)

### The Contribution of Digital Technologies to the Involvement of Parents in School Life of Their Children: The Case of African Minorities

Maria João Cruzand Guilhermina Lobato Miranda (2019). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 29-40).

[www.irma-international.org/article/the-contribution-of-digital-technologies-to-the-involvement-of-parents-in-school-life-of-their-children/222709](http://www.irma-international.org/article/the-contribution-of-digital-technologies-to-the-involvement-of-parents-in-school-life-of-their-children/222709)

### Mobile Health Technology Evaluation: Innovativeness and Efficacy vs. Cost Effectiveness

Sherina Idrish, Afrin Rifat, Mehree Iqbaland Nabila Nisha (2017). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 1-21).

[www.irma-international.org/article/mobile-health-technology-evaluation/177216](http://www.irma-international.org/article/mobile-health-technology-evaluation/177216)