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## Job seekers damaging job opportunities with social networking

Opening themselves up to identity fraud as well

by Stuart Miles published on 23 November 2007

The Information Commissioner's Office has warned that young people's future employment opportunities at risk because of social networking sites.

According to a report from the ICO as many as 4.5million young people would not want a college, university or potential employer to conduct an internet search on them unless they could first remove content from social networking sites.

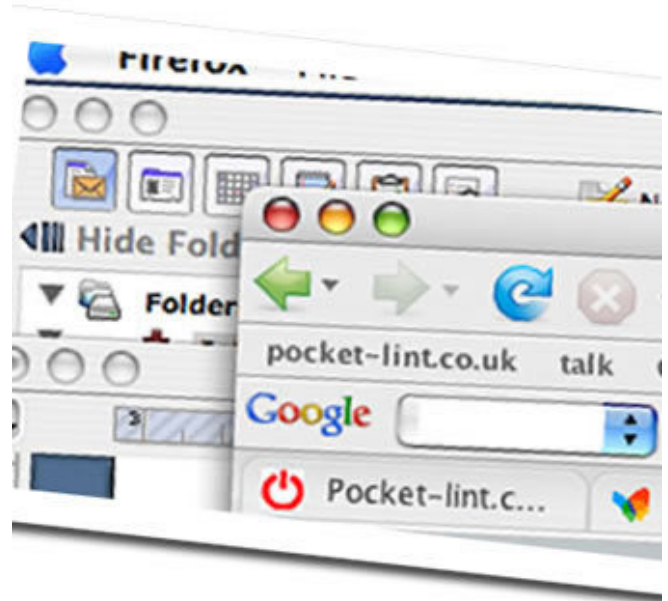
However almost six in 10 have never considered that what they put online now might be permanent and could be accessed years into the future.

David Smith, Deputy Commissioner for the ICO, said: "Many young people are posting content online without thinking about the electronic footprint they leave behind. The cost to a person's future can be very high if something undesirable is found by the increasing number of education institutions and employers using the Internet as a tool to vet potential students or employees".

As well as not thinking ahead before posting information on the web about their drinking antics from the night before, the survey of Britons aged 14-21 also revealed that youngsters' online behaviour is a gift to potential fraudsters.

Two-thirds (eight in 10 girls aged 16-17) accept people they don't know as "friends" on social networking sites and over half leave parts of their profile public specifically to attract new people.

More than seven in 10 are not concerned that their personal profile can be viewed by strangers and 7% don't think privacy settings are important and actively want everyone to see their full profile.



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Not surprisingly the research also found that a third of young people have never read privacy policies on social networking sites and don't understand how they can manage their personal information.

But when asked how they feel about websites potentially using their details to target advertising at them or to pass on to other websites or brands, a huge 95% are concerned about this, with 54% caring "a lot" about how their personal information is used.

The research findings are unveiled as the ICO launches a new website at [www.ico.gov.uk/youngpeople](http://www.ico.gov.uk/youngpeople) to help young people understand their information rights.