ExpressVPN Holiday Privacy Study: Americans Feel Most Forms of Surveillance Are Unreasonable Trade-Offs for National Security

New Data From Leading VPN Provider Reveals That Privacy Is a Top Concern for Americans in 2018 and That 13 Percent of Parents Aren’t Monitoring Their Tweens’ Online Lives

TORTOLA, British Virgin Islands (PRWEB) December 11, 2017 -- ExpressVPN, a leading VPN provider, has today announced the results of its Holiday Privacy Study. The study of more than 1,000 U.S. adults age 18+, conducted online by Propeller Insights on behalf of ExpressVPN in November 2017, found that online privacy is a top concern for Americans in the coming year and that most put a high premium on their privacy—but also that more than a third would be willing to risk their personal information to snag a hot holiday gift.

Americans Put a Premium on Privacy
Online privacy is a top concern for more than two-thirds (70 percent) of Americans in 2018. Americans are most worried that:

- Credit score trust will be lost due to Equifax data breach – 33 percent
- Anything kept in the cloud could suddenly be hacked – 29 percent
- Trump administration will increase surveillance of Americans – 27 percent
- Health information could be made public – 23 percent
- A data breach could expose their private photos – 17 percent

Most Americans (58 percent) would not allow a third party to read their emails under any circumstances, but some would be willing in order to block spam (19 percent) or for the sake of national security (17 percent). Only 8 percent want their internet service provider to be able to see which sites they visit.

Trust in Government and NSA Is Low
When asked who they would least trust to monitor or read their emails, 27 percent indicated they would trust the government the least—followed by Google (23 percent), their internet service provider (21 percent), Yahoo (20 percent) and their employer (19 percent). Only 21 percent trust the NSA with their data, while six percent say they would trust Edward Snowden more than the NSA.

More than half (58 percent) of Americans believe that the government should be required to obtain a court-issued warrant to obtain the:

- Content of communications between:
  - Americans and non-Americans – 31 percent
  - Non-Americans – 28 percent
  - Americans – 24 percent

- Metadata of communications between:
  - Americans and non-Americans – 29 percent
  - Non-Americans – 27 percent
  - Americans – 22 percent

Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of Americans feel that most forms of surveillance are unreasonable trade-
offs to protect national security, including:

- Monitoring of phone conversations by the government – 45 percent
- Reading of emails by the government – 42 percent
- Reading of texts and IMs by the government – 41 percent
- Logging of internet browsing history by the government – 41 percent
- The government using license plates to track movement – 37 percent

Risky (Holiday) Business

Well over a third of Americans (39 percent) would be willing to risk their personal information if it meant they could snag a hard-to-find hot holiday gift, including making purchases on an unfamiliar website (18 percent), sharing personal data (14 percent), and letting a website store their credit card information (13 percent).

Another fifth of Americans would be willing to share their credit card information with an unfamiliar shopping website for a significant discount (21 percent) or to earn cash back (20 percent).

Most Americans (63 percent) admit to gambling with their online privacy in other respects as well. Top offenses include using the same password for multiple sites and apps (36 percent), using public Wi-Fi without using a VPN (34 percent), and failing to backup important files (21 percent).

Having said that, most Americans (77 percent) have also taken at least some precautions to protect their digital privacy and security. Most popular precautions include clearing browser history (55 percent) and clearing cookies (48 percent), but a minority of Americans are taking stronger precautions, like:

- Using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) – 12 percent
- Encrypting hard drive or other sensitive files – 9 percent
- Using a messaging app with end-to-end encryption – 9 percent

"With privacy and security concerns on the rise, Americans are increasingly turning to VPNs as a simple yet powerful shield against hacking, tracking and monitoring," said Harold Li, Vice President of ExpressVPN. "More than a third of Americans cited cybersecurity protection when using public Wi-Fi as a top reason they'd use a VPN; almost a quarter would use a VPN to prevent their ISP from seeing their browsing activity, and another 15 percent would use a VPN to protect against government surveillance. VPNs provide protection against many of these cybersecurity and privacy concerns by channeling internet traffic through an encrypted channel, safe from prying eyes."

Meanwhile, 90 percent of Americans have either not heard of the KRACK WPA2 Wi-Fi vulnerability—a flaw in WPA2's cryptographic protocols that could be exploited to steal data over Wi-Fi—or have heard of it but don’t know what it is. Only 5 percent of Americans know what it is and have taken appropriate security precautions.

When traveling, Americans remove sensitive data from devices they are taking with them (27 percent), backup their data before they travel (26 percent), leave electronics in hotel room safes (21 percent), and use a VPN when connecting to Wi-Fi networks (15 percent).

Free-Range Tweens
More than half of Americans rely on Google for email (59 percent). Another 37 percent use Yahoo, and a quarter (25 percent) use Microsoft.

More than one in five American parents say they let their tweens (children under 13 years of age) use Facebook. Another 17 percent let their tweens use Snapchat, and 13 percent say they don’t monitor their kids’ online life at all.

About ExpressVPN
One of the world’s largest providers of VPN services, ExpressVPN enables users worldwide to protect their privacy and security online with just a few clicks. The company's award-winning apps for Windows, Mac, iOS, Android, Linux, routers, and browsers secure user information and identities with best-in-class encryption and leak-proofing. With 1,800+ servers across 94 countries and new servers added each week, ExpressVPN provides a fast connection wherever you are and offers uncensored access to sites and services from across the globe. Based in the British Virgin Islands, ExpressVPN has been operating since 2009.

A vocal advocate for internet freedom and privacy, ExpressVPN is a proud financial supporter of non-profit organizations fighting to protect our digital rights, including the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the Internet Defense League, OpenMedia, and others.

To learn more about ExpressVPN’s privacy and security solutions, visit expressvpn.com
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