

# IS YOUR IDENTITY FOR SALE?

Before you sell your old phone, read this. You're on your laptop watching the last minutes of an eBay auction. The bids for your mobile are going up – \$100, \$200, \$300, sold! Sweet for you, but why would someone pay so much for a second-hand brick? The answer is scary...

Security software company Avast recently bought 20 used phones online to see how much personal data they could extract. They recovered over 40,000 pictures (yep, nude snaps included), 750 emails and text messages, 250 personal contacts and a completed loan application. What's worse is the phone owners believed that they had wiped their information clean.

"It was really simple," explains Jude McColgan, president of mobile at Avast. "We gave the phones to our engineers but they didn't use smart technologies to crack them. Someone who's 13 could have done it."

With 27,453 phones listed for sale on eBay at the time of print, the real questions is: are you at risk?

## RISKY BUSINESS

Despite last year's notorious celebrity iCloud hacking, Angus Kidman, editor of tech website lifehacker.com.au, points out that, we're still complacent about digital security. "The celebrity aspect can actually backfire," says Kidman. "People think no-one's going to care about their personal pictures."

Case in point 'The Snapping', which shook the digital world last October when 98,000 files were stolen from a photo sharing app linked to

Snapchat and published on hacker website 4chan (4chan.org). The images weren't of models or actresses, though, they were just everyday people who were named and humiliated.

Kidman says naughty selfies aren't the only concern. The more serious issue is when bank account and credit card details are recovered. Kidman explains there are online communities that trade personal data. "The going rate for this kind of financial data is fairly cheap. Credit card details are sold en masse, not individually, so by the time your card stops working they just move onto the next on the list."

About 40 per cent of security breaches are financially motivated and hacking is only getting easier to do, says Ty Miller, CEO of Threat Intelligence (threatintelligence.com), an ethical hacking company that has trained the FBI in cyber-hacking techniques. "Ten years ago the tools for hacking were so immature. Now, any young kid can search for instructions on YouTube or download software," he cautions.

To test it out, CLEO met with Dave Klein, a 24-year-old hacker who works in IT security. From a handful of used phones we collected, scarily, he was able to access more than 500 personal photos and contact details including phone numbers and addresses. Not a bad haul considering that the phone's owners thought they'd already cleared all of their data off the devices.

## TRASH TALK

So why isn't a simple phone reset enough? Klein explains that like with a computer, putting something in the 'trash' doesn't permanently remove it. "When you delete something it marks the area of memory as deleted so the system can free up space. In some phones that private information you thought was gone might actually be accessible as residual data," he says.

The good news for iPhone users is that your personal information is much more secure than on other phones.



Indeed, Avast's study was conducted using only Android phones such as Samsung, HTC and Microsoft devices.

"Android phones are not as secure," says digital forensic expert Phillip Russo of CIA Solutions ([ciasolutions.com.au](http://ciasolutions.com.au)). "There are so many operating types as opposed to iPhones, which all run on iOS. It becomes harder to moderate and keep them secure."



## TAKE THAT, HACKERS!

How do we protect our private data from going public? Megan lemma, AKA the 'tech translator' at Tech Coach HQ ([techcoachhq.com.au](http://techcoachhq.com.au)), says it's simple. She recommends making sure your SD and SIM cards are removed prior to passing on a device. "Try to save data, like photos and contacts, to your card rather than the device, so you can take it with you even after you've changed phones," she suggests.

"Next step is to perform a factory reset, which you'll find under 'Settings' on your phone." This is done to wipe the majority of information from the device, leaving only some residual data. Sounds easy, but it's more than likely that this was the point where the phone owners in our study stopped.

To be 100 per cent sure that your personal information is erased, lemma and Klein agree on one additional safety step. "Upload dummy data, like random pictures or video, to fill up the phone's memory, then do another factory reset," explains lemma. "It will act like the cement over the top of your personal data. You'd actually have to drill down pretty hard to access it."

And the resounding advice among our security experts? Don't sell your phones. Keep them as back-up, or better yet, recycle. Given that there are over 23.5 million unwanted phones in homes around Australia, Rose Read of Mobile Muster says it's the best option. "Every single phone donated to us is dismantled here in Australia and all SIM or SD cards are destroyed when the plastics and metals are recovered," she explains. "By all means keep one phone as a working spare, but any more is unnecessary and a waste of valuable materials that could be reused."

Whatever you choose to do with your old phone is your business, but one message is key. "Take 15 minutes to change your passwords and erase old data properly," urges lemma. You might not have an archive of cheeky snaps to rival J-Law, but if you take the time to protect yourself, your private data will stay just that – private. 📱

## SAY IT, SISTA!

Three celebs show us how to recover when an embarrassing snap goes public.



### 1. Kate Upton: 'Fess up.

Kate was one of the first stars to own up to the nude pictures leaked by hacker group 4chan. Others tried to deny the photos and ended up copping more attention (Ariana, we're looking at you).



### 2. Jennifer Lawrence: Don't say sorry.

"I started to write an apology, but I don't have anything to say I'm sorry for. It's my body, and it should be my choice." You go, girl. We completely agree with you, J-Law.



### 3. Kaley Cuoco: Be the first to laugh.

*The Big Bang Theory* star posted a cheeky faux nude snap on Instagram with the caption, "What a fun day that was, frolicking with my hubs on the beaches of Mexico! Feels like we forgot something?" Hilarious.

