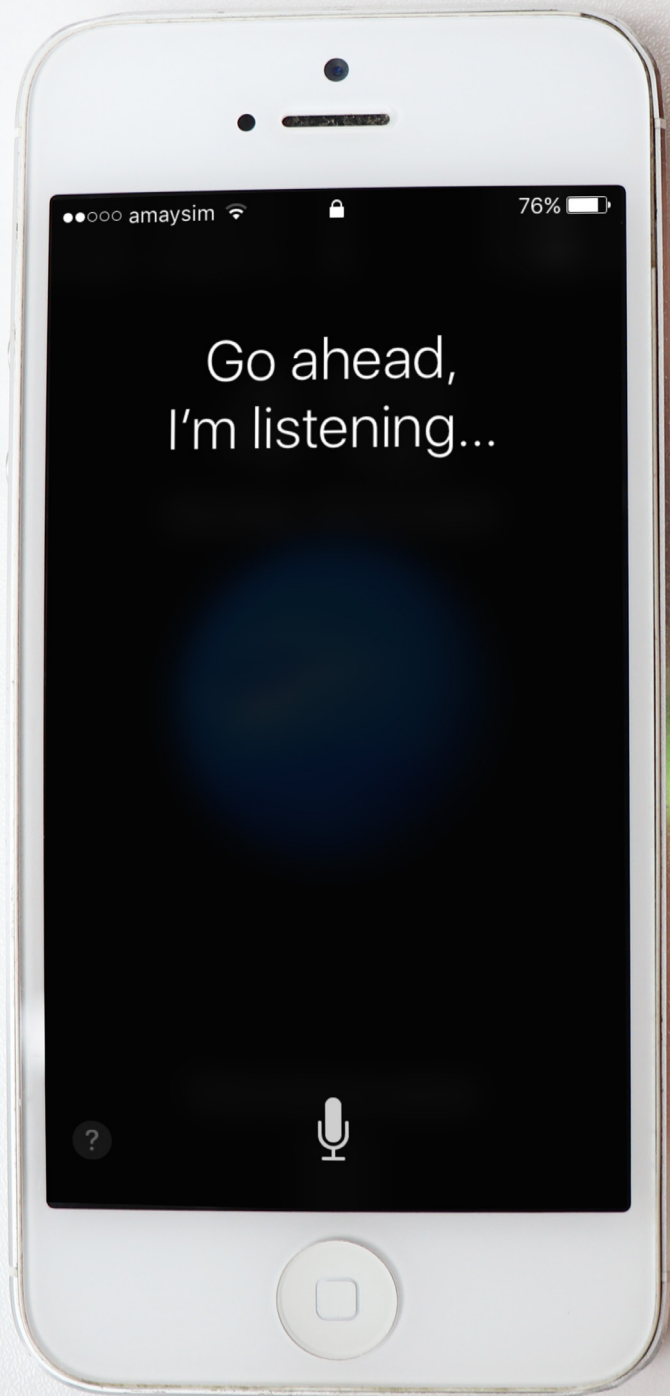


Ingrid Watt

Safe and Sound

In a world of limited privacy, have Siri users bitten off more than they can chew?



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Introduced in 2011, Siri revolutionised the way we use our phones and paved the way for newer digital assistants. Siri has scheduled meetings, searched the web, made phone calls, and performed numerous other tasks to make lives easier. However, there could be a price to pay for the ease and convenience, one which could compromise the privacy of millions.

The 21st century's digital landscape has been fraught with frequent hacker attacks and constant breaches of privacy. Smartphone users are more alert than ever to just how much data they are giving away, and how easily it can be taken and misused. A study was recently conducted amongst fifty-three US college students over a period of ten weeks, in regards to attitudes towards phone privacy. Overall, 43% were unconcerned about phone privacy, whilst 57% expressed moderate to high concerns about privacy. Currently, more than five-hundred million customers actively use Siri on a regular basis. As a result, Apple is one of the latest companies to rise up and dismiss claims that they have supported



private data collection, as their reputation and brand loyalty is threatened.

According to a 2017 survey, 88% of Australians now own some form of smartphone. 95% of eighteen to thirty-four year olds own a smartphone, yet the sixty-five to seventy-five year old demographic is catching up extremely quickly. However, older members of the population have proven to be more cynical in regards to trusting companies with their personal data than younger generations. Considering how many young people own mobile phones, this could place them more at risk of being exploited by untrustworthy parties. Additionally, whilst 43% of phone users are aware of voice assistants, only 14% actually employ a form of voice assistant. Females are much less likely to use a voice assistant (potentially due to a lack of male voice assistants), with 11% of females and 14% of males utilising one.

Apple keeps your Siri voice recordings for up to two years. The clip is sent to Apple for analysis, and a random number is generated to represent the user. After six months has

elapsed, the clip is disassociated from the user. Despite this, they keep the file for an additional eighteen months afterwards for “testing” purposes. Apple spokesperson, Trudy Muller states, “If a user turns Siri off, both identifiers are deleted immediately along with any associated data.” However, this may not all be good news. Users are advised to be cautious about what they say in case it can be linked back to them. Apple is able to share information like your name, contacts, locations, and even your choice of music with their unnamed “subsidiaries and agents”. This could include hundreds, if not thousands, of people or companies.

In 2014, Apple introduced the first of many series of smart watches to come. Therefore, they have recently been focused on improving Siri’s privacy and functionality. Siri is behaving more like artificial intelligence, providing more prompts to users based on pre-existing habits and activities. Additionally, Siri is more competent at recognising and understanding what users say, before acting upon their speech. However,

Apple maintains their firm stance against distributing data that can immediately identify users, and the collection of personal data by advertisers or law enforcement. This appears to be a step in the right direction when compared to the recent data collection and distribution scandals of Facebook and Google. Some believe that not keeping users’ personal data in the cloud may be hindering Siri’s capabilities as a digital assistant.

Altogether, Apple has maintained that customer peace-of-mind and privacy is their highest priority. However, users also have a right to be concerned about their data and who is able to access it. They are able to opt out of using Siri whenever they like in order to protect their privacy. The future of Siri will hopefully include more steps towards functioning effectively without compromising user data or distributing it.

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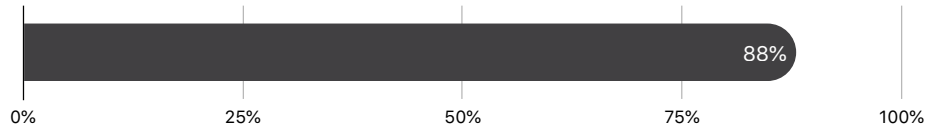
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“We’re able to deliver a very personalised experience . . . without treating you as a product that keeps your information and sells it to the highest bidder. That’s just not the way we operate.”

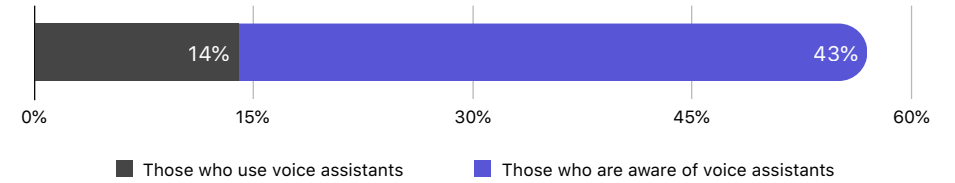
*- Greg Josiwak, VP
Product Marketing*



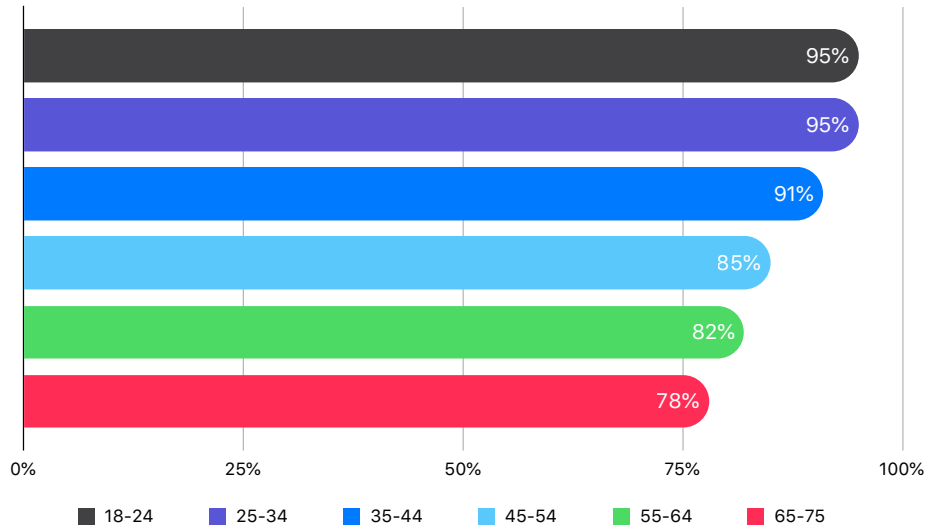
Percentage of Australians that own smartphones



Percentage of users aware of voice assistants



Percentage of smartphone users by age group



Percentage of voice assistant users by gender

