PRESS RELEASE - For Immediate Release

Source: Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland – Hotline.ie Service

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Social engagement - primary reason for Irish Adults to go Online daily

A recent ISPAI Hotline.ie Nationwide Public Survey shows that Irish adults' predominant online **daily** behaviour revolves around online conversations: eMail usage (88%), followed by social networks related activities (63%) and news browsing (54%).

Aside from online daily activities, the top 3 uses on a **weekly basis** are: product search (44%), Internet banking (42%) and educational research (30%). If we zoom out more, top 3 online **monthly** activities are: online shopping (67%), eLearning (40%) and Internet banking related (36%).

Broadly these results seem to show that Irish love to talk a lot about things with each other and using the news as conversation generators - but this traditional trait is increasingly moving online. We now use the handiness of the Internet to research what we are thinking about buying but actually buy online more sparingly. It also looks like we check to see how the bank balance is holding up weekly and at the end of the month!

Frivolities aside, whether daily, weekly or monthly activities, these have one thing in common: our **Personal Data**.

Whereas we all realise that banking PINs and transactions are personal data and we're pretty careful not to disclose that information, users are often oblivious to the personal data they are potentially sharing when they sign up to many other services.

Paul Durrant CEO of ISPAI and Manager of Hotline.ie says, *"there is no such thing as "small" pieces of personal information as "small" pieces can be pieced together to build a much bigger picture. Each one of us should bear in mind that on the Internet "Private" is often still Public."*

Throughout 2013, ISPAI Hotline.ie registered an increase in reports related to Financial Scams - 47 cases compared 15 cases in 2012. *"One might think that's a tiny amount, but do bear in mind that Hotline.ie service's remit is primarily to deal with **illegal content** online. That is, Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and content that incites hatred (e.g. racist hate-speech). However, to help safeguard our members' customers we accept reports of fraudulent online content with a clear Irish connection. These aren't the "ordinary" Internet scams like your email has been drawn in the some International Lottery promotion or the African bank that has finally tracked you down to inherit 35 million dollars left by a mysterious distant relative; but emails or websites that purport to represent well know Irish institutions or companies."* said Durrant.

30 out of the 47 cases, assessed by Hotline.ie in 2013, were variations of the police "Ransom-Ware" Trojan which locks your computer and displays a message purporting to be from An Garda Síochána, ordering that a "fine" be paid for viewing illicit content like CSAM, and when received the computer will be unlocked. Not one person that paid the "fine" managed to retrieve his/her money – and unfortunately there were a good many caught out.

14 cases were various notices purporting to originate from Irish Service Providers, Banks or State Institutions such as: Revenue (Tax Refund Online), eircom, Vodafone, Bank of Ireland, but are "phishing" for Personal Data which criminals gather to build up your personal / financial identity which, when complete, they can then use.

Only 3 cases were actually related to online shopping such as fake websites of well-known high street shops in Ireland. *"We suspect that the numbers are much higher in reality but there is a tendency not to report these if*

money is recovered from the Bank – but that doesn't help others, please report them as we want to take these fake websites down." added Durrant.

A study conducted by iReach Market Research in April 2014 showed that 65% of Irish adults are concerned about giving their Personal Data online. ISPAI Hotline.ie has compiled the following list of tips to help Internet Users of all ages protect their Personal Data:

- When receiving unexpected eMails or phone calls from Service Providers requesting to perform any activity involving Personal Data always verify the identity of the sender / caller before following the instructions.
- Ensure that any website requiring Confidential/Personal Information is using a secure connection. Always look for **https** and **a pad-lock** in the address bar of the browser window. Also, pay attention to error messages that the browser gives when it says a site cannot be trusted.
- Always read or at least glance over Terms & Conditions and Disclaimers before engaging or providing Personal Information.
- Install and update anti-virus software to restrict unauthorized access to data and protect that data from corruption. Ensure that security features, including a firewall are turned on, set to automatic scan and updated regularly to protect against the latest threats.
- Establish a separate eMail account that can be used to sign up to websites and social networks.
- Don't put Personal Information on the Internet or on any Social Networking site.
- If you find any Personal Information posted on the Internet without your consent demand that it be removed by the owner of the site.
- Always ensure that all the information is completely erased from old devices (PCs, laptops, phones etc.) before disposing of them.
- Never write down secret pins or passwords. Change passwords on a regular basis.
- Monitor your bank account / credit card statements regularly and immediately query any inconsistency with your Bank.
- Do not give Personal Information over the phone, Internet or by mail, unless you are the one who made contact and you know for sure that you are dealing with the right entity.

Last but not least we would like to encourage all Internet Users to report suspected illegal content encountered on the Internet, by using www.hotline.ie Service.

Editorial Notes

✓**ISPAI** – Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee of its members. Since November 1999, ISPAI runs the Hotline.ie Service under agreement with the Department of Justice and Equality, An Garda Síochána and oversight from the Office for Internet Safety. *Further information available on* www.ispai.ie

✓**Hotline.ie Service** is part-funded by ISPAI and currently under receipt of grant support from the European Commission, through the Safer Internet Programme (2009-2013). **Hotline.ie Service** (www.hotline.ie) provides a confidential online platform whereby the Irish public may **anonymously report suspected illegal material**, especially child pornography, encountered on the Internet. If Hotline.ie assesses the material to be probably illegal under Irish law, the location of the illegal material is then traced. If found to be hosted or distributed from Ireland, An Garda Síochána and the relevant ISPAI member are notified, so the material can be removed from public Internet access and law enforcement investigation may be initiated. *Further information available on* http://www.hotline.ie/

✓**Nationwide Survey conducted by iReach Market Research on behalf of ISPAI Hotline.ie –** the Study conducted in Spring 2014 was part of iReach Consumer Omnibus Survey. Sample Size=1,000 respondents. Demographics: Gender - 53% female & 47% male, Age: 18+

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