

**News release**

**16 March 2011**

**40% of home Wi-Fi users don't understand security settings, says  
ICO**

40% of people who have Wi-Fi at home do not understand how to change the security settings on their wireless (Wi-Fi) networks, an online survey commissioned by the Information Commissioner's Office has shown.

To highlight the need for a greater understanding of the security measures available to wireless network owners, the ICO has today published new guidance which will help people to better protect themselves against the dangers of cyber crime and identity theft.

The survey, carried out online by YouGov, has also revealed that, despite most internet service providers now setting up and installing their customers' Wi-Fi security settings for them, 16% of the people surveyed with a home Wi-Fi network are either unsure or are already aware that they are using an unsecured network.

The new guidance from the ICO explains how people can check the security settings on their Wi-Fi router and provides information on how to make the network more secure, including setting up a strong password to stop other people accessing the network and making sure the information sent over the device is encrypted.

The ICO is also calling for Internet Service Providers (ISPs), retailers and manufacturers to make sure the guidance supplied with their Wi-Fi equipment is clear to the end user and fully explains the risks of people using an unsecured connection.

Steve Wood, Head of Policy at the ICO said:

“People wouldn’t go out and leave their front door unlocked, but many are still surfing the internet without adequate protection for their personal information. The fact that Google’s Street View cars were able to pick up payload data from unsecured Wi-Fi networks as a by-product of their signals mapping exercise has further highlighted that more people need to take their Wi-Fi security settings seriously.

“Leaving your Wi-Fi connection unsecured allows people easy access to your network. This increase in traffic could reduce the speed of your connection or cause you to exceed a data cap imposed by the service provider. However even more worryingly, it also leaves you open to the actions of rogue individuals who may be using your Wi-Fi to carry out potentially criminal actions without your knowledge. Today’s new guidance aims to get people thinking about whether they are doing enough to ensure their wireless networks are secure.”

Today’s guidance from the ICO on the use of Wi-Fi networks is available here:

[http://www.ico.gov.uk/for\\_the\\_public/topic\\_specific\\_guides/wifi\\_security.aspx](http://www.ico.gov.uk/for_the_public/topic_specific_guides/wifi_security.aspx)

## **ENDS**

If you need more information, please contact the ICO press office on 0303 123 9070 or visit the website at: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Information Commissioner's Office upholds information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.
2. The ICO has specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
3. The ICO is on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and produces a monthly [e-newsletter](#). Our [For the media](#) page provides more information for journalists.
4. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles of the Data Protection Act, which make sure that personal information is:
  - Fairly and lawfully processed
  - Processed for limited purposes
  - Adequate, relevant and not excessive
  - Accurate and up to date
  - Not kept for longer than is necessary
  - Processed in line with your rights
  - Secure
  - Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection
5. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 1998 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2 to 4 March 2011. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).