# Mobile App Survey

## Introduction

With 68% of Americans owning smartphones and more than 2 million apps available in each of the major app store platforms today, notice and transparency about how apps collect, use, protect, and share users' personal data is critical for consumer trust.

- A **privacy policy** is an essential tool in communicating with consumers and establishing organizational accountability.

- When a policy is **linked from the app store**, users can assess apps' privacy practices before they download or purchase.

- The iOS App Store and Android Google Play store **require** apps that collect personal data to have a privacy policy.

Since previous FPF Mobile App Studies in 2011 and 2012, apps have become even more embedded in consumers' daily lives.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the most popular mobile apps provided users with access to a privacy policy, and whether the privacy policy was linked from the app's listing page on the iOS and Android app stores.
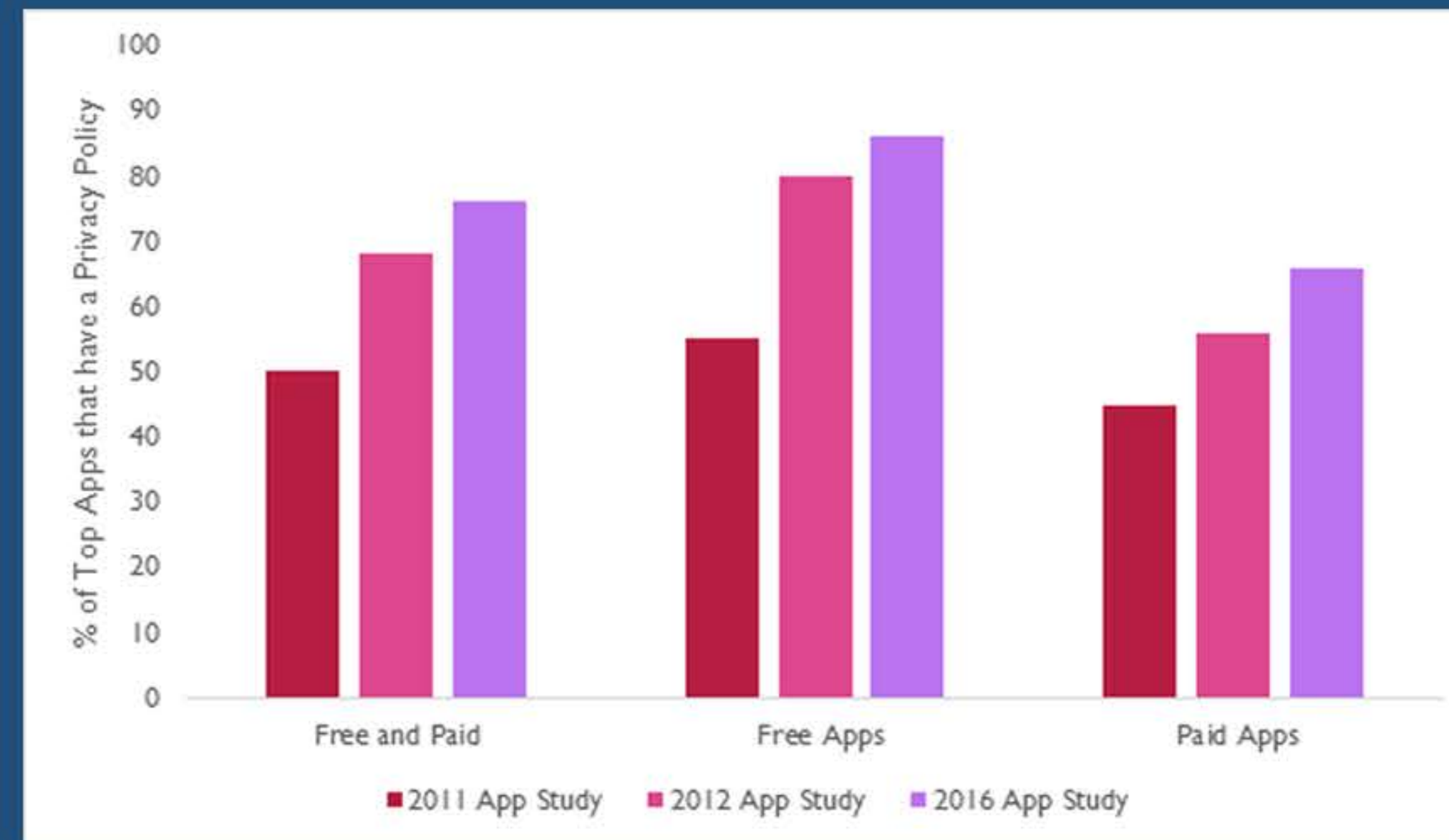
## Methodology

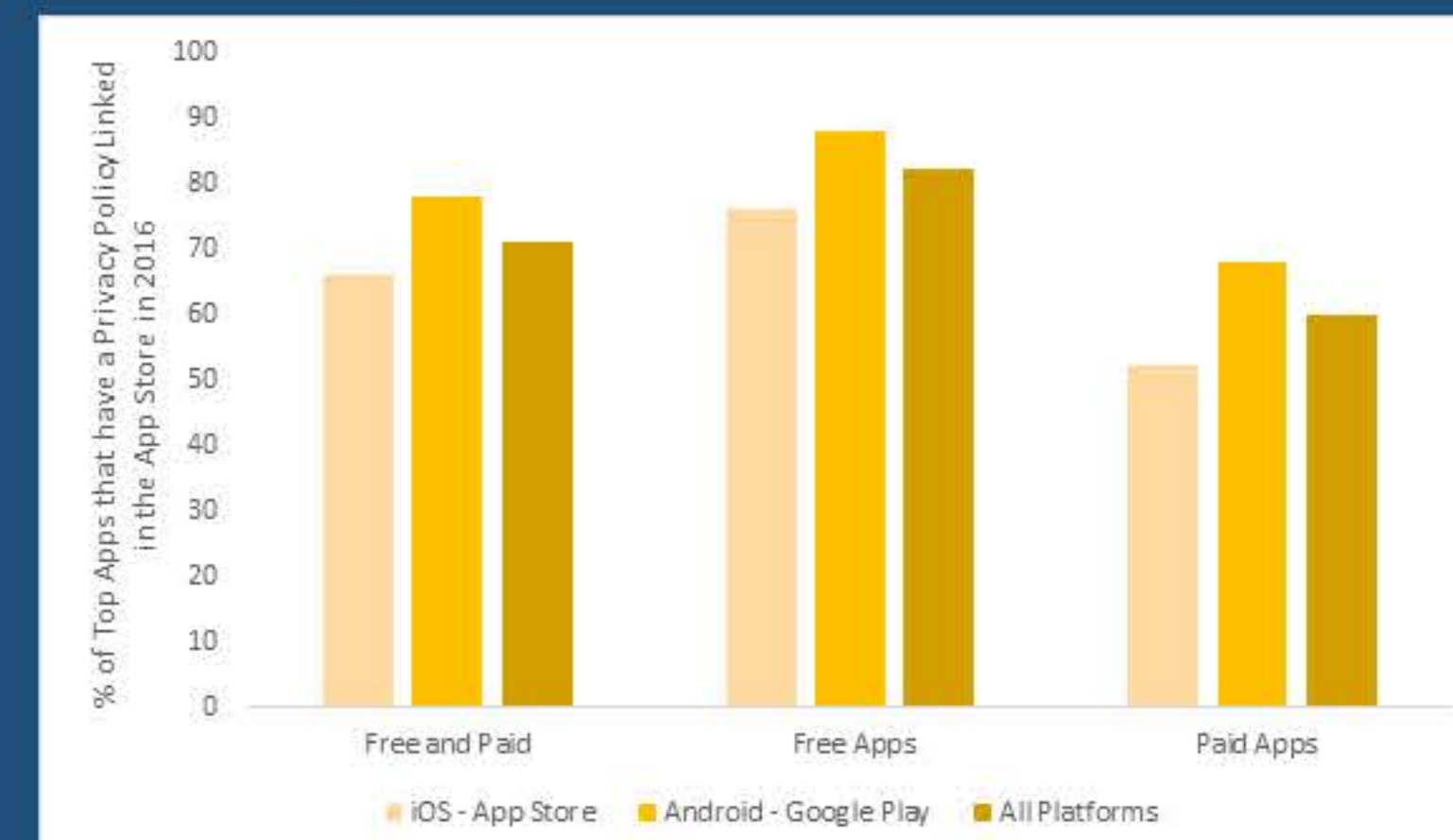FPF used app analytics to identify the most popular free and paid apps

Popular apps were taken from both the iOS App Store and the Google Play Store

## Report

For resources and best practices see **FPF Mobile Apps Study** section IV.

https://tinyurl.com/jhxfr2n

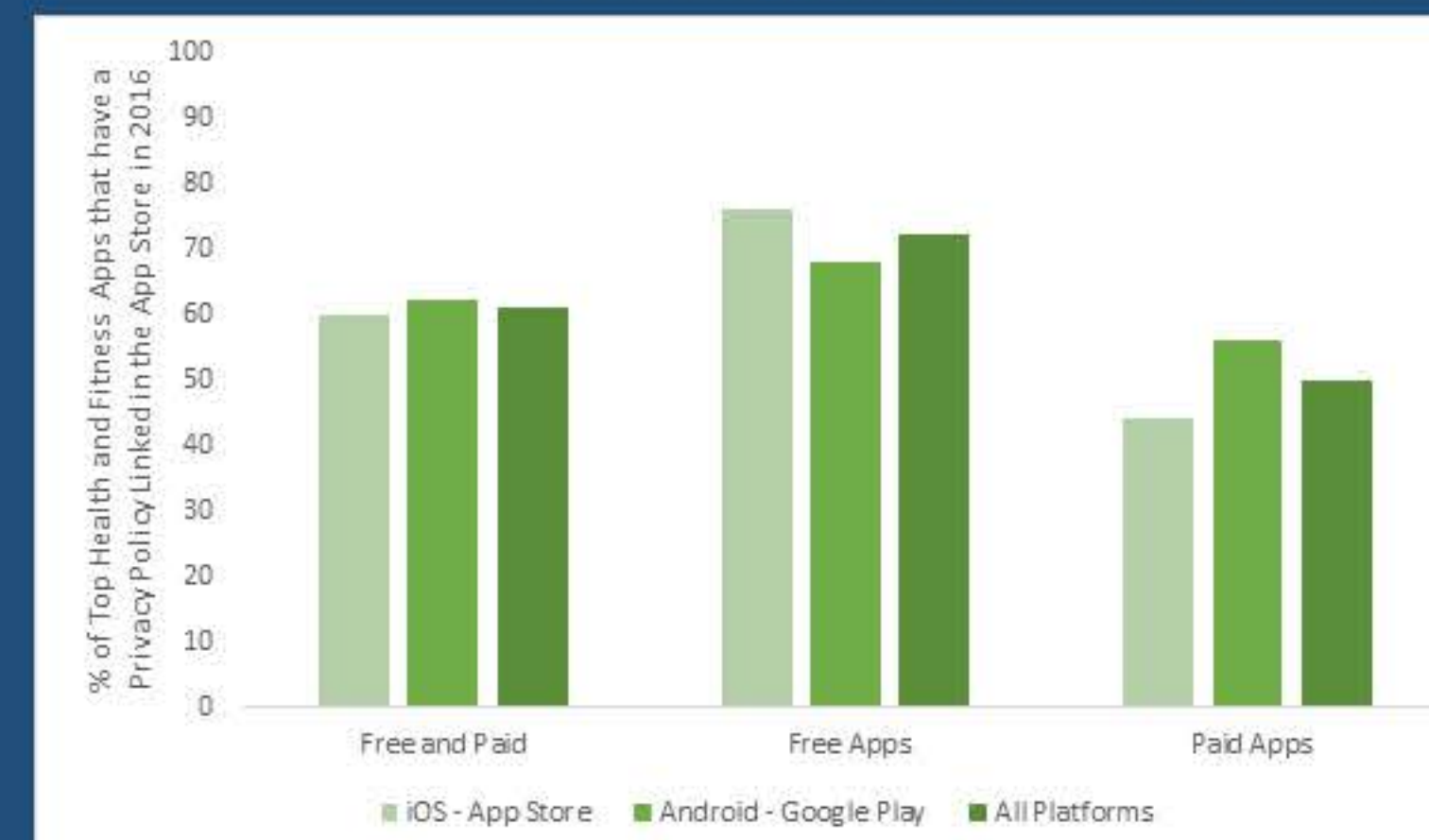## % of Apps with Privacy Policies Over Time



## % of Apps with Policies Linked in App Store
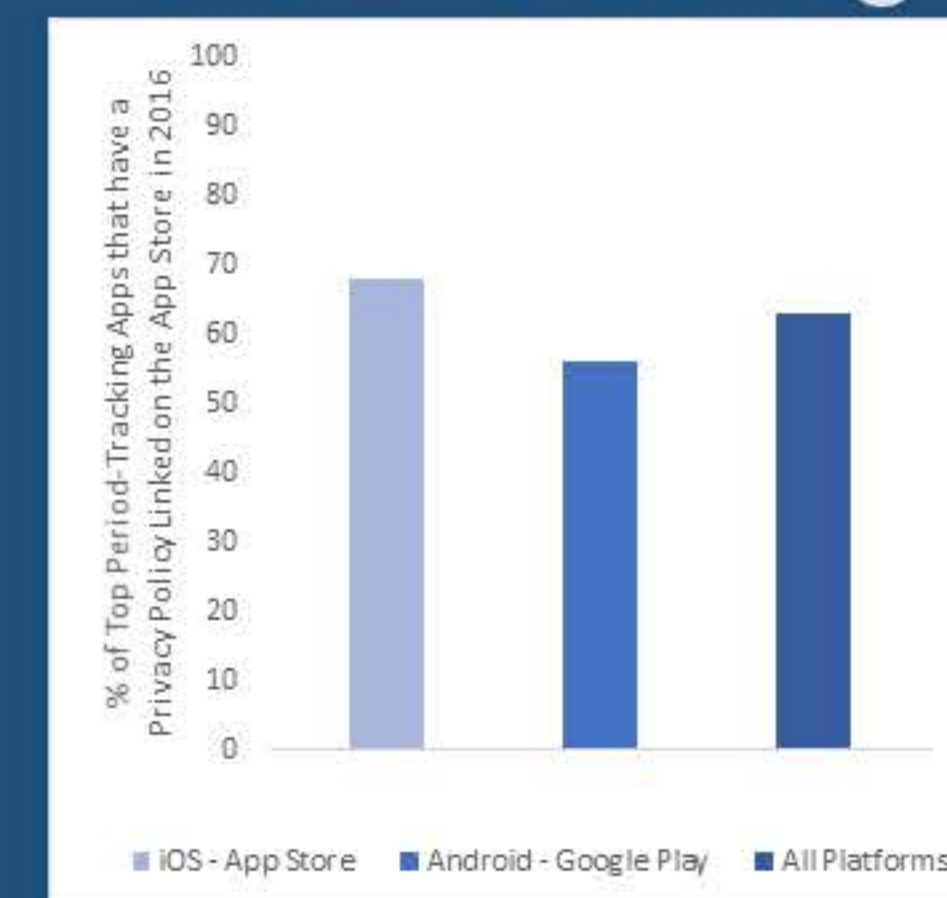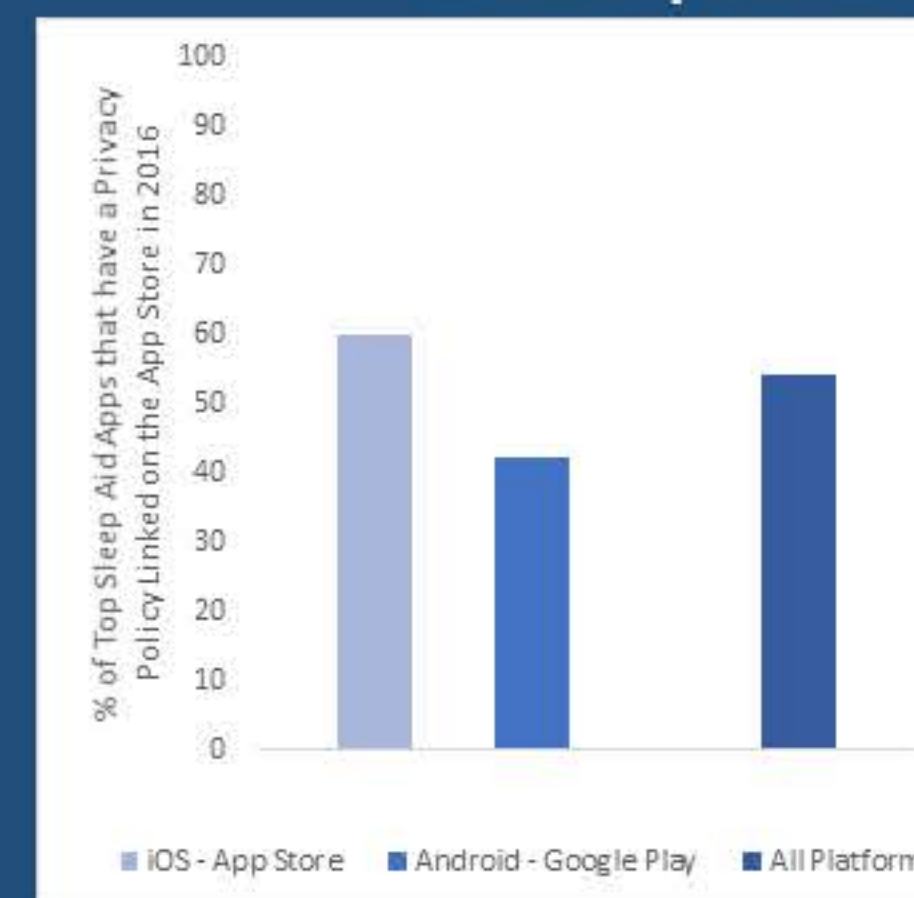
### Top Apps



### Health and Fitness



### Period-Tracking



### Sleep Aid



## Conclusions

This study concludes that leading app developers have continued to heed consumers' and regulators' call for privacy policies, and increasingly have worked to make them available to users prior to purchase or download via links on the app platform listing page.

**Privacy Policies Are Trending Upwards**
Comparing the results of our 2016 study against our previous studies, the total percentage of top apps that have a privacy policy continues a clear upward trend.

**Not All Privacy Policies Are in the App Store**
While more apps may have privacy policies today than in years past, they are not always easily accessible by consumers. A privacy policy that is only accessible on the developer's website or after an app has been downloaded or purchased is less helpful to consumers wanting to make informed decisions about sharing their personal data.

**Health and Fitness Apps Trail in Providing Basic Transparency to Users**
Health and fitness apps are largely designed to collect, share, and analyze personal data about their users, including data points such as individuals' health status, detailed exercise and fitness activities, sleep habits, food and drink consumption, and a wide range of other health and lifestyle indicators. Only 70% had a privacy policy. Only 61% of health and fitness apps included a link, a 10% lower rate than top apps across all categories.

**Mixed Results For Other Sensitive Health Apps**
Some apps that can collect particularly intimate details of a user's life showed mixed results in this study. Users of sleep aid apps are particularly unlikely to be able to make informed choices about which sleep apps to use before purchasing or downloading them. On the other hand, apps dedicated to helping women track their fertility and menstrual cycles appeared more likely than any category of apps to have a privacy policy.

## Contact

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