

FEWER AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED THAT PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION WILL NOT BE KEPT PRIVATE AND SECURE ON THE INTERNET

(BETHESDA, MD) - Sixty-eight percent of the public is concerned that their personal and financial information would not be kept private and secure if it were placed on the Internet, down from 83 percent in a similar national poll conducted nine years ago.

The surveys were commissioned by Taxsoftware.com, a Bethesda-Md. based company which developed the first guaranteed secure Internet-based income tax preparation program. Taxsoftware.com stores data on the user's computer, ensuring that the user has ownership and control of their own tax information.

Taxsoftware.com spokesperson Edward Segal observed that a growing number of people are apparently becoming complacent about Internet security. "The marked decrease in concern over online security suggests that new generations of Internet users may be making unwarranted assumptions about the safety of the information they share online," he said.

The latest survey results were announced as millions of Americans continue working to meet the April 17 deadline for filing their state and federal income tax forms.

"When it comes to protecting their personal information and sensitive financial data, the overwhelming majority of Americans continue to believe that the Internet may be the equivalent of a giant sieve, and offers little peace of mind on matters related to privacy and security," Segal said.

In 1997, the public's concerns about Internet security were shaped by, among other things, a warning from a presidential commission that nation's computer networks were vulnerable to attack and sabotage and news reports of hackers who were known to have tampered with or illegally accessed information on the Internet sites of such security conscious institutions as the Pentagon, CIA and FBI.

"Based on the Internet's proven and continued vulnerability to vandalism, tampering and break-ins over the last nine years, the American people have good reason to continue to be more worried and skeptical -- not less -- about cyber-security. Until adequate and fool-proof protective measures are in place, it's doubtful that the Internet will ever be able to achieve its full potential or be completely trusted by those who use it," Segal said.

The poll of 1,000 adults was conducted March 17 – 19, 2006 by Synovate, and has a margin of error of plus or minus four percent. The survey found that 68% of all Americans are "very" or "somewhat" concerned that, if they prepared their income tax returns on the Internet, their personal and financial information would not be kept private and secure. Thirty percent said they had no concerns.