Digital Transformation   Mobility   Posts   Privacy

App users value security over convenience – and biometrics over passwords, IBM finds

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A recent IBM survey indicates that when logging into mobile apps, the majority of users prefer security over convenience, though millennials especially prefer the more convenient security of biometrics over passwords.

According to the IBM Future of Identity Study, released earlier this year, while security trumps convenience for the majority of users, there is a pronounced generation gap when it comes to how users prefer to ensure their security: For example, 75 per cent of millennials reported being comfortable using biometric technology such as facial or fingerprint scans, versus 58 per cent of respondents over 55.

Older adults had developed more secure password habits, with the average using 12 passwords (younger respondents averaged five), only 31 per cent repeating them across sites (versus 41 per cent of millennials), and 49 per cent incorporating special characters, numbers, and letters into their passwords (versus 42 per cent of millennials) – which "could be an indication that younger generations have less

confidence in passwords and are instead looking to alternative methods to secure their accounts," IBM noted.

"As the percentage of millennial and Gen Z employees continues to grow in the workforce, organizations and businesses can adapt to younger generations' proclivity for new technology by allowing for increased use of mobile devices as the primary authentication factor and integrating approaches that substitute biometric methods or tokens in place of passwords," the company wrote in a Jan. 29 release.
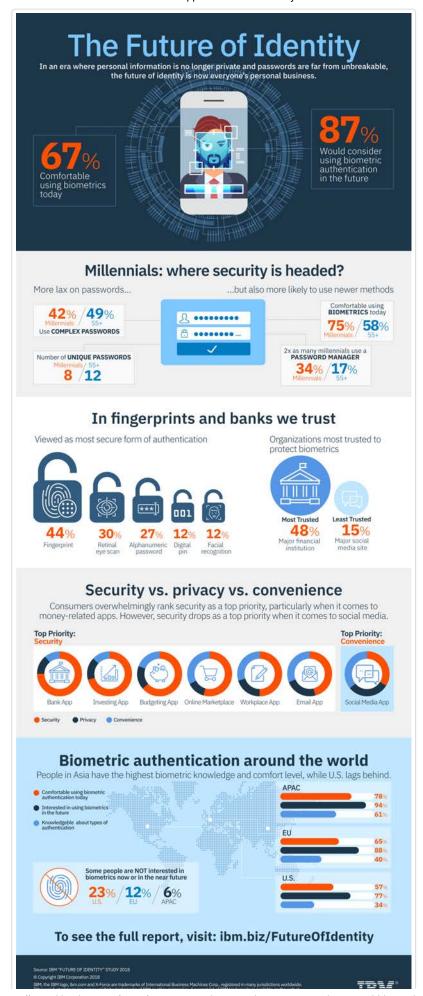
Overall, however, respondents ranked security as their highest priority before logging into the majority of mobile apps, particularly financial apps, online marketplaces, workplace apps, and email, IBM said, and while 67 per cent of respondents said they were comfortable using biometric authentication today, 87 per cent anticipated being comfortable with the technology in the future.

The study also found that young adults were the users most likely to prize convenience over security, with 47 per cent of respondents under 24 indicating they would prefer a faster sign-in experience to a more secure type of authentication – possibly illustrating their comfort with biometrics, IBM noted.

Convenience also had a slight lead (36 per cent) over security (34 per cent) and privacy (30 per cent) when it came to social media apps.

IBM's Future of Identity Study collected online survey responses from 3,977 adults across the U.S., U.K., E.U., Australia, India, and Singapore between Oct. 21 and Nov. 5, 2017. Canada was not included.

The company summarized its findings in a handy infographic which you can check out below (click for a full version), or you can download the full report here.

The Future of Identity

In an era where personal information is no longer private and passwords are far from unbreakable, the future of identity is now everyone's personal business.

67% Comfortable using biometrics today

87% Would consider using biometric authentication in the future

Millennials: where security is headed?

More lax on passwords... ...but also more likely to use newer methods

42% Millennials / **49%** 55+
Use COMPLEX PASSWORDS

Comfortable using BIOMETRICS today
75% Millennials / **58%** 55+

Number of UNIQUE PASSWORDS
Millennials / 55+
8 / **12**

2x as many millennials use a PASSWORD MANAGER
34% Millennials / **17%** 55+

In fingerprints and banks we trust

Viewed as most secure form of authentication

44% Fingerprint

30% Retinal eye scan

27% Alphanumeric password

12% Digital pin

12% Facial recognition

Organizations most trusted to protect biometrics

Most Trusted
48% Major financial institution

Least Trusted
15% Major social media site

Security vs. privacy vs. convenience

Consumers overwhelmingly rank security as a top priority, particularly when it comes to money-related apps. However, security drops as a top priority when it comes to social media.

Top Priority: Security

Bank App — Investing App — Budgeting App — Online Marketplace — Workplace App — Email App

Top Priority: Convenience

Social Media App

● Security ● Privacy ● Convenience

Biometric authentication around the world

People in Asia have the highest biometric knowledge and comfort level, while U.S. lags behind.

● Comfortable using biometric authentication today
● Interested in using biometrics in the future
● Knowledgeable about types of authentication

APAC
78%
94%
61%

EU
65%
88%
40%

U.S.
57%
77%
34%

Some people are NOT interested in biometrics now or in the near future
23% U.S. / **12%** EU / **6%** APAC

To see the full report, visit: ibm.biz/FutureOfIdentity

Source: IBM "FUTURE OF IDENTITY" STUDY 2018
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About Eric Emin W ood

Associate editor at IT World Canada. When not writing about the tech industry enjoys photography, movies, travelling, the Oxford comma, and will talk your ear off about animation if you give him an opening.

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