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What We Miss if We Dont Talk to People: Understanding Users Diverse and Nuanced Privacy Needs

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Abstract: In security and privacy research, we usually think about protecting against powerful adversaries who have substantial resources and strong technical abilities. Those types of threats are important to address, but are often not well-aligned with typical users privacy concerns. Instead, users frequently worry about information disclosure to their friends, family, coworkers, or employers; and they may face tradeoffs between their desires for privacy and other goals such as convenience, financial security, and personal connection. For example, despite the risks it can pose, people using online dating apps may decide to share personal, potentially sensitive information to increase their chances of finding a romantic partner. ¡br¿¡br¿ will discuss my prior and ongoing work, which takes a human-centered approach to understanding and addressing security and privacy concerns that affect users on a daily basis. First, I explore how real users smart home devices may introduce risks — including to stakeholders who had no choice in their installation or configuration (e.g., children, visitors, neighbors, or household employees such as babysitters). Next, I discuss how online status indicators – a UI element that communicates when users are actively online – can lead to interpersonal tensions or make users contort their behaviors to achieve a desired self-presentation. In each project I show that users have nuanced and diverse technology goals and risk profiles, and that existing technologies fail to sufficiently support users. I discuss potential solutions and outline future research directions.

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