# The Cost of Reading Privacy Policies

Aleecia M. McDonald and Lorrie Faith Cranor[*]

**Table 1: Times to read entire privacy policies for average readers**

|  | Word Count | | Reading Rate | | Time to Read One Policy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Short Policy (First Quartile)** | 2,071 | / | 250 WPM | = | 8 minutes |
| **Medium Policy (Median)** | 2,514 | / | 250 WPM | = | 10 minutes |
| **Long Policy (Third Quartile)** | 3,112 | / | 250 WPM | = | 12 minutes |

**Table 7: Annual time estimates for reading and skimming online privacy policies**

| Estimate | Individual time to read | Individual time to skim | National time to read | National time to skim |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Lower bound** | 181 hours / year | 81 hours / year | 39.9 billion hours / year | 17.9 billion hours / year |
| **Point Estimate** | 244 hours / year | 154 hours / year | 53.8 billion hours / year | 33.9 billion hours / year |
| **Upper bound** | 304 hours / year | 293 hours / year | 67.1 billion hours / year | 64.8 billion hours / year |

| Estimate | Individual cost to read | Individual cost to skim | National cost to read | National cost to skim |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Lower bound** | $2,533 / year<br><br>(work: $1,970; home: $563) | $1,140 / year<br><br>(work: $886; home: $253) | $559.7 billion / year<br><br>(work: $435 B; home: $124 B) | $251.9 billion / year<br><br>(work: $196 B; home: $56 B) |
| **Point** | $3,534 / year<br><br>(work: $2,791; home: $743) | $2,226 / year<br><br>(work: $1,758; home: $468) | $781 billion / year<br><br>(work: $617 B; home: $164 B) | $492 billion / year<br><br>(work: $389 B; home: $103 B) |
| **Upper bound** | $5,038 / year<br><br>(work: $4,203; home: $835) | $4,870 / year<br><br>(work: $4,063; home: $807) | $1.1 trillion / year<br><br>(work: $929 B; home: $184 B) | $1.1 trillion / year<br><br>(work: $898 B; home: $178 B) |