

The POPI Act glossary of terms: 15 terms

1. Biometrics

This is a form of personal identification using biological, physical, physiological and/or behavioural characteristics. Biometric information can include fingerprints, blood types, DNA analysis, voice recognition or retinal scanning.

2. Competent person

This refers to a person who can legally consent to decisions or actions regarding any matter that concerns a child under the age of 18 years.

3. Consent

This is a voluntary and informed expression of will where specific permission is given for the processing of personal information.

4. Data subject

A data subject is a person whose personal data is being collected, held or processed. Everyone becomes a data subject at some point; for example, when applying for a job, using their credit card or simply by browsing the Internet, they disclose some personal information.

5. De-identify

The act of deleting any information or data that could be used or manipulated to identify a person.

6. Direct marketing

Approaching someone in person, via mail or other electronic communication methods for the direct or indirect purpose of promoting or offering goods or services. This can also include asking people for donations for any sort of reason.

7. Electronic communication

The use of any text, image, voice or sound messaging that is sent via an electronic communications network.

8. Information matching programme

The manual or automatic comparison of any document that contains the personal information of 10 or more people.

9. Information officer

A public or private body, such as a company or governmental organisation.

10. Personal information

Information about a person that includes but is not limited to:

Race

Gender

Sex

Pregnancy

Marital status

National/ethnic/social origin

Colour

Sexual orientation

Age

Physical or mental health

Disability

Religion/beliefs/culture

Language

Educational/medical/financial/criminal or employment history

Further, any information including:

ID number
Email address
Physical address
Telephone number
Location
Biometric information
Personal opinions, views or preferences.

11. Processing

Any act of using, storing, organising or modifying personal information.

12. Re-identify

To resurrect any information that has been de-identified. This is information that either identifies the person the data belongs to or that can be manipulated in a way to identify them.

13. Responsible party

This can refer to a private or public body, single person or group of people who determine the purpose and means for processing personal information.

14. Restriction

To withhold personal information from circulation, use or publication, but to not delete or destroy it.

15. Unique identifier

The name or number – also known as an identifier – assigned to a particular data subject by a certain party responsible for processing personal information. Each responsible party has their own unique identifiers for data subjects.

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