

Reputation VIP - Right to be forgotten: two years on

In May 2014, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), passed the so-called "**Right to be forgotten**" ruling, allowing individuals to request and obliging search engines to delist information that is "inaccurate, inadequate, irrelevant or excessive".

This decision sparked numerous debates. Some people claim that it brings the protection of privacy into conflict with the public's right to information. "At [Reputation VIP](#), we believe that the two are compatible, which is the reason why we immediately reacted by creating [Forget.me](#), a site that allows users to exercise their right to be forgotten efficiently and easily," explains Bertrand Girin, President of Reputation VIP.

Since the Forget.me site was launched on 24 June 2014, we have sent over 130,000 URLs to Google and Bing. This has allowed us to compile **statistics about the right to be forgotten** and the manner in which the two search engines go about managing it.

Google's implication in the right to be forgotten

In the period from 29 May 2014 (the date when Google made its form available) to 29 April 2016, Google received 423,974 requests for delisting related to 1,479,174 URLs¹. This equates to 605 requests per day, up from 500 requests per day at the 1-year anniversary of the right to be forgotten ruling.

Forget.me sent 8.3% of these URLs to Google (122,653). The statistics that follow provide data on these URLs to shed light on how Google processes information.

Google continues to shorten the processing time for requests

Over the first year of the ruling, we saw improvements in Google's processing times: cut from 49 days to 20 days on average. The search engine has deployed resources to continue the trend, reducing the lapse to 14 days in the first quarter of 2016.

Quarter sent	Processing time (days)
2014-Q2	49
2014-Q3	50
2014-Q4	60
2015-Q1	30
2015-Q2	20
2015-Q3	16
2015-Q4	17
2016-Q1	14

¹ Google's Transparency Report

Quarter sent	Yes	No
2014-Q2	57%	43%
2014-Q3	37%	63%
2014-Q4	27%	73%
2015-Q1	28%	72%
2015-Q2	26%	74%
2015-Q3	26%	74%
2015-Q4	24%	76%
2016-Q1	26%	74%
Total	29%	71%

Google refuses over 70% of requests

The relatively low rate of refusal at the outset (43%) reached **over 70%** within 6 months. Over the past 12 months, this figure has stabilised around 75%.

Invasion of privacy remains the most common reason for a request

Overall trends in the reasons for requests have remained fairly constant over the years.

The "Invasion of privacy" category, which includes the disclosure of private addresses and religious or political opinions against a person's will, has gained five points, increasing from 57% in 2014 to 62% at present.

Type of requests	% of URLs
Invasion of privacy	62.1%
Damage to reputation	9.6%
Damage to image	4.2%
Legal proceedings	3.0%
Identity theft	2.9%
Violation of the presumption of innocence	1.3%
Deceased persons	1.1%
Homonyms	0.8%
Other	14.9%
Total	100%

Type of refusal	% of URLs
Concerns your professional activity	29.7%
You are at the origin of this content	19.9%
The information is about another person	9.4%
No name on page	8.4%
Your profile on a social network	7.6%
Topical and in the public's interest	7.4%
Relevant, topical and in the public's interest	6.3%
Does not refer to a physical person	5.8%
You are a public personality	3.5%
Government data	1.6%
Others	0.5%
Total	100%

Ever more links are refused due to links to an individual's professional activity

Google appears to be particularly reticent when a URL is related to a person's professional activity. A year ago, 26% of refusals were for links concerning professional activities, compared to 29.7% today.

The categories "You are at the origin of this content" and "Your profile on a social network" represent a smaller percentage of

refusals (27.5% versus 35% a year ago). This is perhaps an indication of a better understanding of the remit of the right to be forgotten.

Media sites are relatively unaffected by requests²

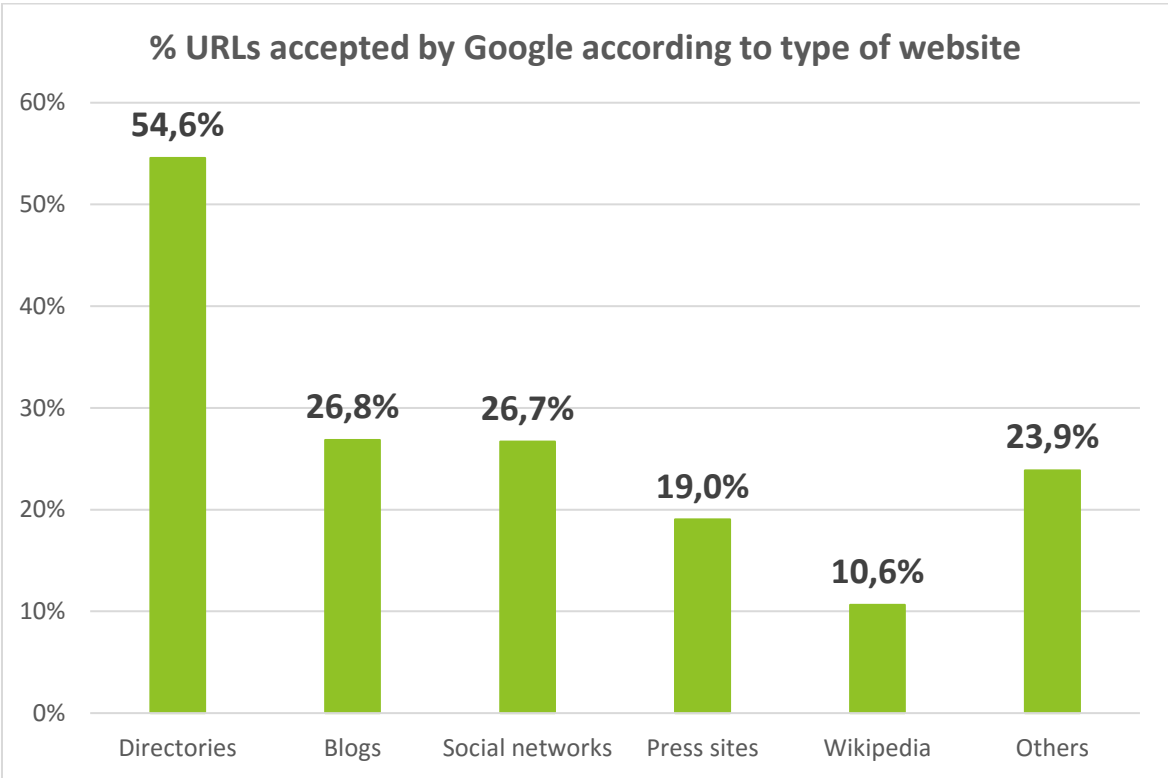
3.8% of requests related to pages on press websites compared to 19% for social networks.

Directories account for 13% of requests. These requests are made by people who do not want private data, such as their address or telephone number, published on the internet.

Breakdown of URLs by type of web site

Type of site	Number of URLs	% of URLs
Social networks / communities	15 911	19,0%
Directories / Content aggregators	10 896	13,0%
Blogs	3 443	4,1%
Press sites	3 151	3,8%
Wikipedia	115	0,1%
Others (real estate, e-commerce, adverts, events, etc.)	50 270	60,0%
Total	83 786	100%

Percentage of positive responses for delisting from Google according to type of web site



² Figures based on 83,786 URLs sent to Google by Forget.me from four European countries: France, the UK, Germany and Spain

Directories received the highest percentage of positive responses from Google for delisting, indicating the search engine’s comprehension of the concern for individuals. Blogs and social networks each have a 27% rate of acceptance from Google.

The UK and Germany continue to represent more than 50% of requests

The 10 countries that make the most requests for the right to be forgotten are shown below. Germany has overtaken the UK who sent 26.5% of requests a year ago and France has taken the third spot ahead of the Netherlands that previously represented 11.1% of requests.

	Country	% of total URLs sent	# of URLs sent
#1	Germany	28.1%	34 474
#2	UK	23.6%	28 918
#3	France	14.5%	17 741
#4	Netherlands	7.3%	8 918
#5	Belgium	3.7%	4 533
#6	Spain	2.2%	2 653
#7	Romania	2.0%	2 497
#8	Sweden	1.8%	2 165
#9	Austria	1.6%	1 999
#10	Switzerland	1.6%	1 919

And what about Bing?

Google is the search engine of choice for Europeans (in April 2016, Google held 90.75% of the European search engine market compared to 4.47% for Bing³).

Not surprisingly therefore, Forget.me sent fewer requests to Bing: 8,261 URLs compared to 122,653 sent to Google. Bing therefore represents 6% of all the URLs sent by Forget.me. On average, users also make fewer URL requests to Bing: 3.7 URLs per user for Bing compared to 10.7 URLs per user for Google.

³ Statistics from StatCounter: http://gs.statcounter.com/#search_engine-eu-monthly-201504-201604

Invasion of privacy: the most frequent type of request on Bing

The "Invasion of privacy" category accounts for 62.8% of requests on Bing, which is in line with requests to Google (62.1%).

Type of requests	% of URLs
Invasion of privacy	62.8%
Damage to reputation	7.6%
Damage to image	5.3%
Legal proceedings	3.9%
Identity theft	2.1%
Violation of the presumption of innocence	1.9%
Deceased persons	1.2%
Homonyms	1.0%
Other	14.3%
Total	100%

Quarter sent	Processing time (days)
2014-Q3	132
2014-Q4	100
2015-Q1	88
2015-Q2	51
2015-Q3	34
2015-Q4	47
2016-Q1	41
Total	73

Bing is slower to treat requests

While the overall trend in processing time has decreased for Bing, it still takes 41 days on average to answer a request, compared to 14 days for Google.