

Here's what Ashley Madison members have told me

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About

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I found myself in somewhat of a unique position last week: I'd made the Ashley Madison data searchable for verified subscribers of [Have I been pwned?](#) (HIBP) and now – perhaps unsurprisingly in retrospect – I was being inundated with email. I mean *hundreds* of emails every day with people asking questions about the data. Not just asking questions, but often giving me their life stories as well.

These stories shed a very interesting light on the incident, one that most people are not privy to and one that doesn't come across in the sensationalist news stories which have flooded every media outlet in recent days. When sent to me as an unknown third party in a (usually) foreign location, people tended to be especially candid and share stories that really illustrate the human impact of this incident. I thought I'd share some of those here – de-identified of course – to help people understand the real world impact of this incident and 'for those caught up in it to realise that they're among many others going through the same pain.

I responded to every legitimate email I received. Very early on I wrote up a Q&A and the following is the canned response I sent in response to almost every query:

My apologies for not being able to respond to you personally, I'm addressing questions of this nature via a Q&A you can find here: <http://www.troyhunt.com/2015/08/ashley-madison-data-breach-q.html>

Here's what I've been asked:

Please erase me from the internet

You can understand the sentiment and for those who don't get how the web works, this would appear to be an entirely reasonable request:

I wonder if you could offer advice for trying to hide it again, take it off, remove it etc. or can this even be done?

Can i please unsubscribe my email so no one else can search me?

Do you know the reasoning why the company has not been successful in removing the material on Pastebin through the Digital Millenium law?

Could you assist in getting [redacted] off the AM dark web list?

As someone said to me in one of the comments on my blog, trying to remove your data from the web is "like trying to remove pee from a swimming pool". I added the DMCA comment in there as well because this has come up many times in the press. There's a good piece on it in [an article that emerged after news of the attack first broke last month](#) (paradoxically, stating that DMCA is the reason the full data hadn't been leaked), do read Parker Higgins' comment about the "fraudulent" use of the act in terms of its' use for removing data breaches. Regardless, a US law will in no way

Suspicious wives

There's no question of gender equality here; very close to 100% of the emails I got were about men having accounts on the site. Understandably, there were many suspicious wives asking me to check up on their husbands:

I wanted to know if you can search my husband's name/info for the Ashley Madison hack. I have found the AM site shown 2 times on his iPad history & a MILF hook up site when I looked at the history He claims they were "pop-ups" from porn sites.

That said, I have 20 years of my life invested with my husband & my gut tells me he is lying about it being on the iPad & there are other things that lead me to believe he was a "member".

stop the mass distribution of this data, particularly via a decentralised mechanism like torrents.

There's a lot of speculation about what the actual split between men and women on the site was (although I've not seen much on sexuality so am working on the assumption of predominantly heterosexual relationships), much of it relating to [fake female accounts possibly created by Ashley Madison](#) or accounts created by sex industry professionals to lure men into paying for services. It's all very conceivable and whilst we'll never know the actual numbers, I can say with great confidence that AM is very heavily male biased.

To read the rest of this piece visit: <http://www.troyhunt.com/2015/08/heres-what-ashley-madison-members-have.html>