**Information sensitivity**

(Redirected from [Sensitive information](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sensitive_information&redirect=no))

The examples and perspective in this article or section may not represent a [**worldwide view**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Countering_systemic_bias).

**Sensitive information** is [information](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information) or [knowledge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge) that might result in loss of an advantage or level of security if revealed ([disclosed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disclosure)) to others who might have low or unknown trustability and/or indeterminable or hostile intentions.

Loss, misuse, modification or [unauthorized access](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Access) to sensitive information can adversely affect the [privacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privacy) of an individual, [trade secrets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_secret) of a business or even the [security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_security), [internal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_affairs) and [foreign](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_affairs) affairs of a nation depending on the level of sensitivity and nature of the information.

**Types of sensitive information**

The term [classified information](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classified_information) generally refers to information that is subject to special security classification regulations imposed by many national governments. The term *Unclassified* as used in the table below refers to information that is not subject to security classification regulations.

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| **N o n - c l a s s i f i e d** | **Public information**  This refers to information that is already a matter of public record or knowledge. For public information, further disclosure **can do no harm**.  **Personal information**  This is information belonging to a private individual, but the individual commonly may share with others for personal or business reasons. This generally includes contact information such as addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and so on. It may be considered a breach of privacy to disclose such information, but for most people its disclosure is not considered a serious matter.  However, there are situations in which the release of personal information could have a negative effect on its owner. For example, a person trying to avoid a stalker will be inclined to further restrict access to such personal information.  **Private information**  Information is *private* if it is associated with an individual and its disclosure might not be in the individual's best interests. This would include a broad range of information that could be exploited to cause a person damage.  A person's [SSN](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SSN), credit card numbers, and other financial information should be considered private, since their disclosure might lead to [crimes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime) such as [identity theft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_theft) or [fraud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraud).  Some types of private information, including records of a person's [health care](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_Insurance_Portability_and_Accountability_Act), education, and employment may be protected by [privacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privacy) laws in some cases. Disclosing private information can make the perpetrator liable for civil remedies and may in some cases be subject to criminal penalties.  **Routine business information**  This includes business information that is not subjected to special protection and may be routinely shared with anyone inside or outside of the business.  **Confidential business information**  *Confidential* business information refers to information whose disclosure may harm the business. Such information may include [trade secrets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_secret) as described in the "Economic Espionage Act of 1996 (18 USC 1831-39)". In practice, it may include sales and marketing plans, new product plans, and notes associated with patentable inventions. In publicly held companies, confidential information may include "insider" financial data whose disclosure is regulated by the [United States Securities and Exchange Commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Securities_and_Exchange_Commission). |  |
| **C l a s s i f i e d** | **RESTRICTED**   * Level 2 (light blue) * requires some protection * requires level 2 security clearance or higher * public disclosure **could have undesirable effects or do some harm**.   **CONFIDENTIAL**   * Level 3 (blue) * requires protection * requires level 3 security clearance or higher to access * unauthorized disclosure **could damage national security** e.g. compromise information that indicates the strength of armed forces or disclosure of technical information about weapons, such as performance characteristics, test data, design, and production data.   **SECRET**   * Level 4 (red) * requires substantial protection * requires level 4 security clearance or higher to access * unauthorized disclosure **could seriously damage national security**. * Wrongful disclosure could lead to a disruption of foreign relations, impair a program or policy directly related to national security, reveal significant military plans or intelligence operations, or compromise significant scientific or technological development relating to national security. * most classified information falls into this category * penalty can be a large fine and/or a 5 year to [life imprisonment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_imprisonment) sentence   **TOP SECRET (TS)**   * Level 5 (orange) * requires the highest degree of protection * requires level 5 security clearance * unauthorized disclosure **could severely damage national security** * wrongful disclosure could lead to war against a nation or its allies, disrupt vital relations, compromise vital defense plans or cryptologic and communications intelligence systems, reveal sensitive intelligence operations, or could jeopardize a vital advantage in an area of science or technology. * penalty can range from 5 years to [life imprisonment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_imprisonment) or even the [death penalty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_penalty) if considered [treason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treason).   **"ULTRA SECRET" or** [**SCI**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensitive_Compartmented_Information)   * Level 6 (yellow) * requires exceptionally high or special protection * requires level 5 security clearance and special (Q) clearance and or invitation. * unauthorized disclosure **could existentially damage national security, international stability or wartime advantage** * wrongful disclosure could lead to loss or prolongation of a war, provide enemies with secret weapon technology or inform them of compromised top secret information. * penalty will most likely be [capital punishment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment) due to [treason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treason). |  |

Information can be **reclassified** to a different level or **declassified** (made available to the public) depending on changes of situation or new intelligence.

**Sensitivity Indicator in the USA**

In the intelligence community the **sensitivity indicator** (aka. sensitivity label) specifies the [level of secrecy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classified_information) of a [project](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project), [document](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Document) or piece of information by its relevancy to [national security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_security). Only those with appropriate [**security clearance**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security_clearance) can access information of certain sensitivity and might face additional **special access restrictions**.

The indicator can also be the **name of a classified project** such as "[Project Blue Book](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Blue_Book)" or "[ULTRA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ULTRA)", further restricting access to or handling of information.