

Older Australians found to be the latest vulnerable victims online

McAfee research finds that Australians aged between 50-75 are the latest targets of cybercrime

Sydney, Australia, 11 November 2013 – New research has revealed that nearly one in five Australian internet users, aged 50-75 years, have been victims of online fraud including stolen credit card and bank details, email scams or online purchase scams. A further seven in ten have received emails from strangers asking for personal information.

The new research by McAfee titled, Silver Surfers Survey, was launched today ahead of the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA) Annual Conference this week to drive education and awareness about the growing need for cyber safety amongst this older demographic.

The survey also found more vulnerabilities with this age group, including on average, one in four have spoken to strangers online – a finding that is much higher than the teens and tweens' survey McAfee conducted earlier this year – where only 8 per cent and 19 per cent respectively chatted to a stranger online.[1]

Commenting on the Silver Surfers Survey, Keith Buckley Managing Director, McAfee Asia Pacific said, "We know from our research on teens and tweens that these two age groups are at a high risk due to their fast adoption of technologies, but now we're seeing the same trend with our older Australians and their internet behaviour – so cyber education at any age is critical."

Detective Superintendent Brian Hay from the Queensland Police Service says that he is seeing a huge representation of older Australians in those falling victim to romance-related scams. "Over 90 per cent of the millions of dollars of fraud money going to West African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana every month is from love scams. We also see older Australians getting caught up in lottery scams and much of this money goes to the US and Canada. Of particular concern is identity theft.

"So the key here is prevention and awareness. We must deliver ongoing education to the older community to encourage them to protect themselves and to be aware of the risks, as once scammers get their hooks in, the threats get deeper and deeper. It is also vital we educate family members, friends and support networks to look for the signs of trouble, as we know the earlier we intervene, the more successful the outcome."

While the internet is proving risky for this age-group, the Silver Surfers survey also revealed that the internet can be a rewarding experience, with seven in 10 citing its importance in keeping connected with family and friends. A further one in two have used the internet to connect with lost family and friends or traced family trees.

President of ASCCA, Nan Bosler agrees with this finding and echoes the important role the internet plays in connection, "Often you find that older Australians are isolated from loved ones, or they have lost family members, so the internet is a wonderful place to help fill this loneliness.

"But as this research highlights, there are risks, so ASCCA drives the same message as McAfee in ensuring education is in place for our members so they can enjoy the benefits of technology safely."

Internet and Device Usage Trends

- 85 per cent of older Australians log onto the internet daily and spend an average of 3.4 hours online each day – nearly the same amount of time as teenagers[2].
- Primarily, they use the internet for online purchases (82 per cent) and connecting with friends and family (79 per cent).
- Traditional desktop (46 per cent) and laptop (39 per cent) devices dominate.
- Smartphone and tablet internet usage is low (13 per cent).

Privacy Concerns Don't Outweigh Risky Behaviour

Despite 99 per cent of survey respondents saying they are careful about what information they post online, 76 per cent posted personal information including an email address, 51 per cent posted a mobile number and 47 per cent posted a home address.

But perhaps most worrying is that 44 per cent of this demographic don't consider sharing this personal information to be a risk to their privacy or security.

"Privacy is a hot issue right now in Australia, so this was a very surprising finding for us. To know that they are aware of their privacy yet they are still

willing to risk it online," said Mr Buckley.

Slowly Social

The research also explored the Silver Surfers use of social media and device usage and found that just over half (53 per cent) have a social media account, with 48 per cent using Facebook and 39 per cent using Google +. Photo sharing was the least common social tool amongst this age group.

Of those with social media accounts, 72 per cent said that social media puts them at greater risk of scams and identity theft and a third said they do not know all the people in their network.

The Education Gap

Nearly half (48 per cent) learnt about safe internet usage from family members, 33 per cent did their own research via websites, and a further 20 per cent have taken an internet course.

"This is a great insight from our survey," said Mr Buckley. "To know that there is a real desire among our older Australians for education is very encouraging. That's why McAfee and ASCCA are working together to ensure accessible education for Australians aged 50 and over.

"Our partnership with ASCCA will see us roll-out a module to equip older Australians with the tools they need to learn how to navigate the internet safely.

"McAfee has a number of cyber education initiatives in place including a free e-guide which offers practical advice about safety online, our volunteer program and our cyber education website. So today is just the start of driving the cyber safety message and greater awareness of the risks amongst this audience," concluded Mr Buckley.

USA Comparison

The Silver Surfers survey was recently conducted in North America, and revealed quite different habits than Australian seniors:

Silver Surfers - Australia

Silver Surfers - USA

Online usage

85% are daily users

3.4 hours online per day

97% are daily users

5 hours online per day

Social Media

53% are on social media

80% are on social media

Cyber safety – what they're sharing online

81% have posted personal information online 76% email

47% address

51% mobile

57% have posted personal information online 52% email

26% address

27% mobile

For more information on protecting customer privacy, visit <http://www.mcafeecybered.com/cybered>

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About the researchThe study Silver Surfers 2013 was conducted in October 2012 by global information and consultancy group TNS, a firm who have over 45 years of market research experience within Australia. The sample used was geographically representative of the Australian online population, consisting of 500 Australians aged between 50 and 75. 326 of respondents were under 65 years old and 174 were over 65 years old.

About McAfeeMcAfee, a wholly owned subsidiary of Intel Corporation (NASDAQ:INTC), empowers businesses, the public sector, and home users to safely experience the benefits of the Internet. The company delivers proactive and proven security solutions and services for systems, networks, and mobile devices around the world. With its Security Connected strategy, innovative approach to hardware-enhanced security, and unique Global Threat Intelligence network, McAfee is relentlessly focused on keeping its customers safe. <http://www.au.mcafee.com>

[1]Teens, Tweens and Technology Research, McAfee, 2013

[2]Secret Life of Teens, McAfee, 2012

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