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Editor's Notes

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Allan Dyer

This month, legislators in Hong Kong call internet access a "basic living need", necessary for children to learn, and a security company, F-Secure, publishes survey results showing only 7% of parents think their children are safe online. What are we doing? Are we mad, giving children something that might harm them, or are we frightened of our own shadows? How can the vast playground and time-waster that is the internet be classed with food, water and shelter?

As a parent, I am aware that my children are never totally, perfectly safe, regardless of whether they are holding my hand, crossing the road, or surfing the internet using content-filtering software. In each case, I have to do the best I can, and try to teach them to take care of their own safety. The internet, like roads, are a technological advance with great benefits that outweigh the dangers if reasonable precautions are employed.

It may seem ridiculous to classify internet access as a basic need when, in some parts of the world, students do not have electricity, or even clean water, but that is not a reason to put students at a disadvantage when compared to their local peers. Fast access to information is necessary for homework, and a skill that everyone in a technological society should develop.

More Information

[HK Politicians Classify Internet Access as "Basic Living Need"](#)

[F-Secure News: Parents Still Worry](#)

HK Politicians Classify Internet Access as "Basic Living Need"

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Politicians at the Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation meeting held at the Legco Building on 5th March called for the inclusion of internet charges in the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance scheme (CSSA) to enable poor students to use the internet in their studies. However,

Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare Cheung Doi-ching rejected the idea, emphasising that the CSSA only provides "basic living needs". He pointed out that the Education Department already provides recycled computers for the 21,000 CSSA students who need them, and includes one-year free internet access in the programme.

Legco member Alan Leong Ka-kit said that the CSSA's definition of "basic living needs" was out of date, having not been reviewed since 1996. Deputations at the meeting, including Sze Lai-shan of the Society for Community Organization and Internet Society chairman Charles Mok Nai-kwong pointed out that, at around HK\$150 to HK\$200 per month, an internet connection costs more annually than a computer, and is beyond the means of half the CSSA students.

More Information

[Cyber plea for poor students
Subcommittee on Poverty Alleviation](#)

F-Secure News: Parents Still Worry

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F-Secure's second annual Online Wellbeing survey has added Hong Kong, Italy and India to the countries surveyed. It found that only 7% of parents feel their children are totally safe on the Internet. This third-party survey of Internet users aged 20-40 in the US, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, India and Hong Kong, tested respondents' awareness of online security threats for themselves and their children. It also found that the majority of respondents are still apprehensive about using their credit cards over the Internet. In general, people feel more secure during online banking transactions than when using a credit card for online purchases.

The survey uncovered Internet users' feelings of personal online security with regards to online banking, children's safety while surfing the web, and credit card information when shopping online. Overall, 50% of respondents were confident about their security when banking online. However, only 6% of respondents felt secure in making credit card purchases online.

Web surfing and phishing e-mails

Phishing can appear in the form of what looks like an e-mail from a well-known bank, which in reality is a scam seeking personal information. On average, 54% felt fairly or very confident they would not fall for a phishing email. However, 27% of respondents do not know whether or not they can spot phishing emails. In Hong-Kong, 26% of respondents feel they cannot spot phishing emails. Although in other countries such as the UK (68%), Canada (60%), and Italy (67%) respondents are far more confident in their ability to spot such emails.

Children and the Internet

At the core of F-Secure's "Online Wellbeing" is family security when using the Internet. Parents are increasingly worried about their children not being protected from unsuitable content including pornography and violent imagery. When asked the question, "My kids are safe when they are online", over a third of respondents across all countries could neither agree or disagree with the statement. Parents and guardians do not know whether children are safe online or not. The vast majority (54%) of respondents did not agree that their children were safe online. Only 2% (strongly agree) of respondents in India feel their children are safe. In Germany, 69% strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement.

Antti Reijonen, Vice President of Consumer Business and Marketing at F-Secure Corporation said: "As the survey showed, parents simply do not know whether their children are safe or not. We will do all we can to develop services that support parents in keeping their children safe online. There is also a lot of uncertainty in performing financial transactions, but it seems the basis for these sentiments is not necessarily founded on a good understanding of the real threats.

Part of F-Secure's Online Wellbeing Suite of solutions and services, including Anti-Virus, Internet Security and Home Server Security, are aimed at addressing these issues both in terms of raising awareness and continuously developing enhanced products adapted to the evolving threats."

Online banking

Surprisingly, respondents feel safer during online banking than when using their credit card for shopping online. In all eight surveyed countries, the majority agree that they are safe during online banking transactions. The countries that have the most confidence are France (62%) and the US (63%), but in Germany, 39% still do not have confidence in online banking. On a whole, 31% of all respondents were still unsure of their safety.

The survey was carried out by a third party in December 2008 across 2019 Internet users aged 20-40 in USA, Canada, France, Germany, UK, Italy, India and Hong Kong. There were approximately 200 respondents surveyed per country. F-Secure asked respondents a series of basic online security questions and, using a Likert scale, asked them to rate the extent to which they were confident in the security of given online activities.

More Information

[F-Secure survey finds people still insecure online](#)

[F-Secure News: Parents Worry](#)

Give your computer a spring cleaning to avoid malicious exploits

[<web-link for this article>](#)

Is your computer due for a spring cleaning? F-Secure data shows that users' computers often contain old versions of software which are not up to date or no longer being used. This out-of-date software can make computers vulnerable to malicious exploits.

F-Secure data indicates that what is making computers most vulnerable to exploits are unpatched or out-of-date versions of the most widely-used software for PCs. Between 80-90% of users have security holes in their systems with on average 5 different vulnerabilities in the software on their computers. Users don't remove the old versions of their programs and the vulnerabilities in them can leave the computer wide open to malware or malicious software.

Trojans are a typical example of the kinds programs which take advantage of vulnerabilities. They are malicious applications which appear to do one thing but actually do another, giving the criminal access to your computer.

Sean Sullivan from F-Secure Labs explains: "A lot of the software on users' computers has been updated and patched to make it safe. People are using these new versions, but if they do not delete the old or unused versions from their computers, they may still be open to exploits. F-Secure's data shows that people have lots of old software lying about on their PCs, unused, and creating possible problems."

"The best way to keep your PC safe from exploits is to make sure your software is updated with the latest patches. Many software applications will do this automatically. You should also make sure you only have programs you actually use installed on your computer. Old versions or unused programs should simply be removed," Sullivan advises.

In addition to the other programs on your computer, Web browsers can also be vulnerable to exploits. Sometimes these vulnerabilities are used by criminals before an update is available from the manufacturer.

F-Secure Exploit Shield recognizes attempts to exploit a known web-based vulnerability and shields the user against them. It also works against new, unknown vulnerability exploits by using generic detection techniques based on the behavior of exploits. F-Secure Exploit Shield is a free beta tool and can be [downloaded](#)

F-Secure compiles the data of common vulnerabilities from F-Secure Health Check logs. F-Secure Health Check is run on over 100 000 computers monthly worldwide. It is a [free tool](#) which can be used to check that your computer's security software is up-to-date and that you don't have any security holes in your other software or applications.

When giving your computer a spring cleaning, make sure

- Your software is updated with the latest patches
- You only have programs you use installed on your computer
- You remove old versions or unused software
- Your security solution is up-to-date

More Information

[Give your computer a spring cleaning to avoid malicious exploits](#)

[Show your computer that you care](#)



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