

## F-Secure Reveals Consumer Attitudes Toward Internet Security Across Europe and North America

*First "Online Wellbeing Survey" shows consumers have misplaced confidence in their antivirus updates*

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F-Secure, the global leader in providing security as a service through mobile operators and Internet Service Providers, today announced the results of its first annual Online Wellbeing Survey. This third-party survey of Internet users aged 20-40 in the US, Canada, the UK, France and Germany, tested respondents' knowledge of online security issues (their 'security IQ') and gauged their confidence in the safety of basic online activities. The results revealed that while most respondents have security software installed on their PCs, many remain unsure that their email is free of malware and other threats. The survey also showed that few consumers realize how frequently their security software's antivirus definitions need updating, and most respondents revealed a misplaced confidence that their definitions were up-to-date.

The survey showed that Internet users in North America and Europe had a basic understanding of online security issues, but still don't have confidence in the security of basic online activities. While the results revealed similar levels of security knowledge and online confidence across those surveyed, German consumers showed markedly less confidence in the security of e-commerce and online banking than respondents in other markets. German respondents also revealed a significantly better understanding of how frequently anti-virus definitions need to be updated.

F-Secure's findings included the following:

### **Understanding Antivirus Protection**

Though most respondents believed that their antivirus software is up to date with the latest definitions, few correctly identified the frequency with which these definitions must be updated, suggesting a misplaced confidence. However, a majority of respondents correctly indicated that online security requires more than just antivirus protection. On average:

- 19% of respondents understood that antivirus definitions need to be updated many times per day
- German respondents scored highest on this issue, with 31% answering correctly, nearly twice other markets surveyed
- 76% of respondents were confident their security software's antivirus definitions were up to date
- 73% of respondents recognize that their computers can become infected with malware if they rely on antivirus protection alone, even if their security software's antivirus definitions are up to date

### **Email Security**

Consumers across all markets showed low confidence in the safety of basic email activities. On average:

- Only 10% of respondents are confident that they can open email attachments without infecting their computers with malware

- Confidence was lowest in the US, at 7%
- Just 9% of respondents are confident that they can open links sent via email without infecting their computers with malware
- Confidence was highest in the UK, at 15%, and lowest in France, at 4%
- 24% of respondents are confident that they are safe from malware sent via email
- Confidence was highest in Germany, at 31%, and lowest in Canada at 17%

### **General Knowledge of Online Risks**

The survey revealed that respondents have a basic understanding of online risks and the ways in which their computers could become infected with malware. Expectedly, the great majority of consumers reported having security software installed on their computers. However, with their understanding of online risks, respondents expressed a lack of confidence in the security of basic online activities. On average:

- 95% of respondents have security software installed on their computers
- 73% of respondents recognize that computers running antivirus software with up-to-date virus definitions can still become infected with malware
- 88% of respondents realize that malware can add their computers to a botnet used to send spam without their knowledge
- 16% of respondents are confident that files they download from websites are free from malware
- 18% of respondents are confident that they are safe from malware spread by Web sites

### **Consumers showed generally low confidence in their ability to identify phishing scams. On average:**

- 37% of respondents were confident they could spot a phishing email  
Confidence was lowest in France, at 26%
- 27% of respondents were confident they could identify a phishing site  
Confidence was lowest in France, at 21%

### **Perceived Security of Online Transactions**

Respondents showed greater confidence in the safety of online banking than in the security of credit cards used for online shopping. In both of these areas, German consumers reported significantly less confidence than other respondents.

- 50% of respondents in the US, Canada, the UK, and France felt their credit cards were secure when shopping online, in contrast to:
  - 15% of respondents in Germany felt their credit cards were secure when shopping online
- 65% of respondents in the US, Canada, the UK, and France were confident in the security of their online banking, whereas:
  - 28% of respondents in Germany were confident in the security of their online banking

'It's concerning to see that so many consumers believe their antivirus definitions are up to date while not understanding how frequently they need to be updated; this really shows why it's essential for consumers to make sure they acquire their security from a reliable source and make sure it includes professional service as well,' said Mikko Hypponen, Chief Research Officer at F-Secure. 'Email security certainly isn't a new issue. Email remains one of the most popular ways to spread malware,

and users understandably remain concerned that attachments may infect their computers. While malware is still being spread via email attachments, we've also seen an increase in the use of other techniques, like 'drive-by-downloads', and it's important that consumers be aware that email attachments aren't the only way malware is spread. Security software should empower users to take full advantage of the Internet and their email without worrying about vulnerabilities or security risks - it should provide true online wellbeing.'

The survey was carried out by a third party in January 2008 across 1,169 Internet users aged 20-40 across the US (225 respondents), Canada (228 respondents), the UK (227 respondents), France (256 respondents) and Germany (224 respondents). 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.

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About F-Secure Corporation

F-Secure Corporation protects consumers and businesses against computer viruses and other threats from the Internet and mobile networks. F-Secure's award-winning solutions are available as a service subscription through more than 160 Internet service provider and mobile operator partners around the world, making F-Secure the global leader in this market. The solutions are also available as licensed products through thousands of resellers globally. The company aspires to be the most reliable security provider, helping make computer and smartphone users' connected lives safe and easy. This is substantiated by the company's independently proven ability to respond faster to new threats than its main competitors. Founded in 1988, and headquartered in Finland, F-Secure has been listed on the OMX Nordic Exchange Helsinki 1999. The company has consistently been one of the fastest growing publicly listed companies in the industry.

The latest news on real-time virus threat scenarios is available at the F-Secure Data Security Lab weblog at <http://www.f-secure.com/weblog/>

**For more information, Please contact:**

**Rupali Ghadge**

account executive - CMCGIndia

24450991

91-22-24450991

You can also visit [www.f-secure.com](http://www.f-secure.com) for more information.