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Microsoft publishes piracy report

Kids are worst offenders

by Katie Scott published on 15 July 2008

Microsoft has carried out its very own research on illegal downloads and it seems 11-16-year-olds are amongst the most likely pirates in operation over the Internet today in Britain.

According to the research, "this age group admitted they knew what piracy was and that it was against the law - but that that wouldn't stop them doing it again".

The survey is part of a wider bid by Microsoft to try and raise awareness of the implications of illegally downloading material from the Internet.

It says in a press statement: "Having grown up with computers and - more specifically - an internet connection in the home, today's young pirates know how to find pirated files on the internet that are often cheaper than the genuine equivalents; but don't necessarily understand the risks involved in downloading counterfeit files".

It adds: "Research has shown downloads from file sharing sites, for instance, are more than twice as likely to contain malware or spyware, increasing the risk of data loss, ID theft or viruses on the home computer".

The stats were unsurprising.

1 in 4 children say they know buying fake goods is illegal but they'd do it again; and almost 60% of children claim they opt for pirated goods because legal versions are too expensive, and over 20% say they see no difference between fakes and the real thing.

54% of children use file-sharing sites, whilst one in five children have bought illegal goods online or through open auction websites.

Amongst adults, over a third have consciously bought imitation products ranging from football



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shirts and designer handbags to music and software.

But almost half of adults questioned (43%) considered purchasing counterfeit goods as tantamount to theft, and claimed they would never knowingly do it again.

Michala Wardell, head of anti-piracy at Microsoft in the UK, says that parents need to take steps now to ensure they know how their children are using home computers.

"File sharing is a great technology, but parents should make sure that their children are doing it legally."

"We know that there are dangers associated with downloading illegal software; research has shown that computer running pirated software is more likely to catch viruses - leaving the back gate open to identity fraud or the loss of photos and other files saved on the computer."

"And there are plenty of risks out there beyond the gate: the volume of malware detected across the internet increased 253% in 2007. Similarly, 2007 was the worst year for data breaches with more than 125 million personal financial records compromised."

"Parents need to convince their kids to use their technical abilities wisely, so they don't put themselves or their families at risk; we know the younger generation is tech-savvy - but we need to make sure they're street-savvy too."