

Steganos survey reveals users' and companies' privacy and data at risk due to careless use of USB keys and limited use of encryption

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- 78% of computer users never encrypt emails; a fifth are 'unsure' if they have encryption software installed; a third admit to losing USB keys -

26 January 2009 – Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, UK - A privacy and encryption survey conducted by Steganos, a software provider trusted by several million consumers and SMEs worldwide, has found that consumers are not using encryption to protect their online identity.

Steganos surveyed 120 consumers in America and Britain, asking them about how they protect their privacy online, including their use of encryption, and how they protect their data in transit via email or USB key.

Almost a third (32%) of those questioned admitted that they had lost a USB key in the past. Of these, only 14% had encrypted the contents of the portable drive, and nearly three quarters (71%) had left their data unprotected from the eyes of others. 15% of those questioned did not know if their data was protected or not.

Despite this, just under half of those questioned (47%) felt that the privacy of the information they stored on their USB keys was adequate. 28% thought they did not use adequate protection, 22% did not know and 3% of questionnaire participants stated that they did not use USB keys.

When asked if they had encryption software installed on their computer, just over a fifth (22%) admitted they were 'unsure' or 'didn't know' if they did, despite the alarming trend of increased identity theft, phishing attacks, and other online risks that drives the need for users to adopt encryption.

78% of the survey admitted they had never encrypted an email, with less than a tenth (8%) confirming that they regularly encrypt emails.

41% of survey participants made sure they protect their printed data, revealing that they own a paper shredder. However, less than a quarter of all respondents (11%) use a file shredder. When files are deleted, they are still retrievable and can be reconstructed from fragments left on the hard drive. Users can protect themselves by using a digital shredder to ensure data is fully destroyed, but 83% stated that they did not shred their sensitive files. 6% did not know whether they had one or not.

"Consumers wouldn't leave their diary or wallet open for anyone to see in a public place, and yet they don't seem to take the same care when online," said Michael Marzy, managing director for Steganos. "We all store so much confidential data on portable devices such as laptops, notebooks and PDAs. The increasing risk of theft means that everyone, be it a home computer user or business user, needs to take responsibility for protecting data, both by encrypting current files and shredding those that are no longer needed."

About Steganos

Since 1996, Steganos has been providing highly secure and user friendly solutions that secure static data and online communications. Several million users worldwide already depend on Steganos software. Innovations such as the world's first commercial steganography software (which hides data in pictures and music), or the first encryption software to use the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES), have made Steganos one of the market leaders for consumer encryption software. Steganos products are regularly recognized with national and international press awards and the Steganos brand is synonymous with protecting sensitive data. For more information, visit www.steganos.com

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