**News release**

3 October 2023

**INTERNET USERS SLEEPWALKING INTO TROUBLE:**

**TWO THIRDS IN THE DARK ON BASIC INTERNET TERMS AS ONLINE SCAMS SOAR**

The DNS Research Federation today calls on the Government to commit to a major investment in Internet education. This comes on the back of new research, which reveals that less than a third of Brits can identify the correct meaning of a range of basic Internet terms.

The findings come at a time when people’s dependency on the Internet is at a record high. The UK has one of the highest Internet penetration rates in the world (predicted to reach 65 million monthly users by 2026)[[1]](#footnote-1), an estimated 82% of the UK population do some form of shopping online[[2]](#footnote-2) - and more than half of children under 16 now own a mobile phone[[3]](#footnote-3). Furthermore, recent data from The DNS Research Federation highlighted the serious impact of Internet crime on UK households. Nationally, as many as 30% of families in the UK have lost money to Internet scams – the equivalent of 5.7 million families across the country – with the average amount of money lost to Internet scammers hitting a national average of £1,169 per person and 7% claiming to have lost more than £7,500.

Public awareness of how the Internet works and knowledge of key Internet terms is an important safeguard for people online. With this in mind, The DNS Research Federation led a study to assess the level of consumer understanding of a range of Internet terms. A nationally representative sample of 2,151 adults was presented with 11 terms and 11 statements and asked to match-up each term to the correct statement.

The results revealed that less than one in four people (24%) knew what a URL was, only 19% could define what a computer virus was and only 17% knew what a Cookie was - this despite Internet users having to ‘accept cookies’ when visiting most websites.

The findings also suggested that, for many of the terms researched, the under 25 age group were least likely to be able to define the terms put to them. This was a surprise given younger people tend to use the Internet the most.

**Percentage of people that could correctly define various Internet terms (by age group)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | National average | 18-25 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55+ |
| Firewall | 29% | 24% | 25% | 24% | 27% | 35% |
| Metaverse | 29% | 34% | 29% | 27% | 30% | 28% |
| Phishing | 26% | 22% | 23% | 24% | 31% | 28% |
| URL | 24% | 25% | 23% | 26% | 25% | 28% |
| Ransomware | 21% | 22% | 19% | 18% | 23% | 26% |
| Cache | 19% | 20% | 16% | 18% | 22% | 18% |
| Virus | 19% | 24% | 17% | 16% | 18% | 19% |
| HTML | 18% | 19% | 18% | 19% | 18% | 21% |
| Cookie  | 17% | 22% | 22% | 16% | 14% | 16% |
| Malware | 16% | 11% | 14% | 15% | 20% | 18% |
| Deepfake | 14% | 21% | 17% | 11% | 13% | 15% |

**Lucien Taylor, Chief Strategy Officer at The DNS Research Federation** commented: *“We know from previous research that around 53% of Brits hate tech terms and would like to see a whole raft of tech jargon removed from the English language. We agree with this when terms invented by the tech community create barriers to understanding and engagement with the consumer.*

*“Our latest data presented a representative sample of the UK public with common Internet terms. The low levels of understanding among the public are a cause for concern. It’s certainly not the consumer’s fault if they don’t understand tech jargon, but a concerted effort needs to be made to improve consumer understanding of Internet terms because, without this, millions of people will be sleepwalking into the hands of Internet scammers. Consumer empowerment is the keystone to protecting the future of the free and open Internet and the wonderful outcomes it can deliver to people every day. But we need government, policymakers and educators to step up to the task of improving Internet education, and we invite them to join our journey.”*

**For more information on DNS Research Federation or to request interviews with Lucien Taylor, contact:**

Guy Bellamy / Abi Guest - elephant communications

07766 775216 / 07908 551589

Guy@elephantcommunications.co.uk

jim@elephantcommunications.co.uk

**Notes to editor:**

The research was conducted by Sago research among a nationally representative sample of 2,151 adults in June 2023. The research was conducted online.

**About the DNS Research Federation:**

The first organisation of its kind, The DNS Research Federation is a not-for-profit organisation that sits at the intersection of policy and technology. With a mission to advance the understanding of the Domain Name System's impact on cybersecurity, policy and technical standards, the Federation funds research, engages in technical standards, and brings technical tools and objective data relating to the internet's unique identifier systems - especially the DNS - to researchers, public safety and industry stakeholders.

Exploring the linkages between traditional internet governance, the strategic importance of technical standards, and contemporary policy challenges, the DNS Research Federation connects up islands of scholarship and communities of expertise. The Federation gives a voice to the data and is inviting collaboration and partnership from key stakeholders from all aspects of the DNS ecosystem to participate as partners and supporters.

-ENDS-

1. https://www.statista.com/topics/3246/internet-usage-in-the-uk/#topicOverview [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/united-kingdom-ecommerce [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.sellcompare.co.uk/resources/half-uk-children-mobile-phone [↑](#footnote-ref-3)