

INTERNET

## One in five adults secretly access partners' Facebook accounts



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**permission, researchers have said.**

Nearly one in five adults snoop on the Facebook accounts of their friends, romantic partners or family members, using the victims' own computers or cellphones with motives ranging from simple curiosity to jealousy, according to a new survey.

Most people are concerned about the prospect of their social media accounts being hacked, but the study found that it is actually people we know who frequently access our accounts without our permission, researchers said.

In a survey of 1,308 US adult Facebook users, scientists at University of British Columbia (UBC) in Canada found that 24 % had snooped on the Facebook accounts of their friends, romantic partners or family members, using the victims' own computers or cellphones.

"It's clearly a widespread practice. Facebook private messages, pictures or videos are easy targets when the account owner is already logged on and has left their computer or mobile open for viewing," said UBC computer science graduate student Wali Ahmed Usmani.

People admitted to spying on their friends, family, and romantic partners out of simple curiosity or fun – for example, setting a victim's status or profile picture to something humorous. However, other motives were darker, such as jealousy or animosity.

"Jealous snoops generally plan their action and focus on personal messages, accessing the account for 15 minutes or longer," said computer science professor Ivan Beschastnikh.

"And the consequences are significant. In many cases, snooping effectively ended the relationship," Beschastnikh said.

The findings highlight the ineffectiveness of passwords and device PINs in stopping unauthorised access by insiders, said professor Kosta Beznosov.

"There's no single best defence – though a combination of changing passwords regularly, logging out of your account and other security practices can definitely help," said Beznosov.

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