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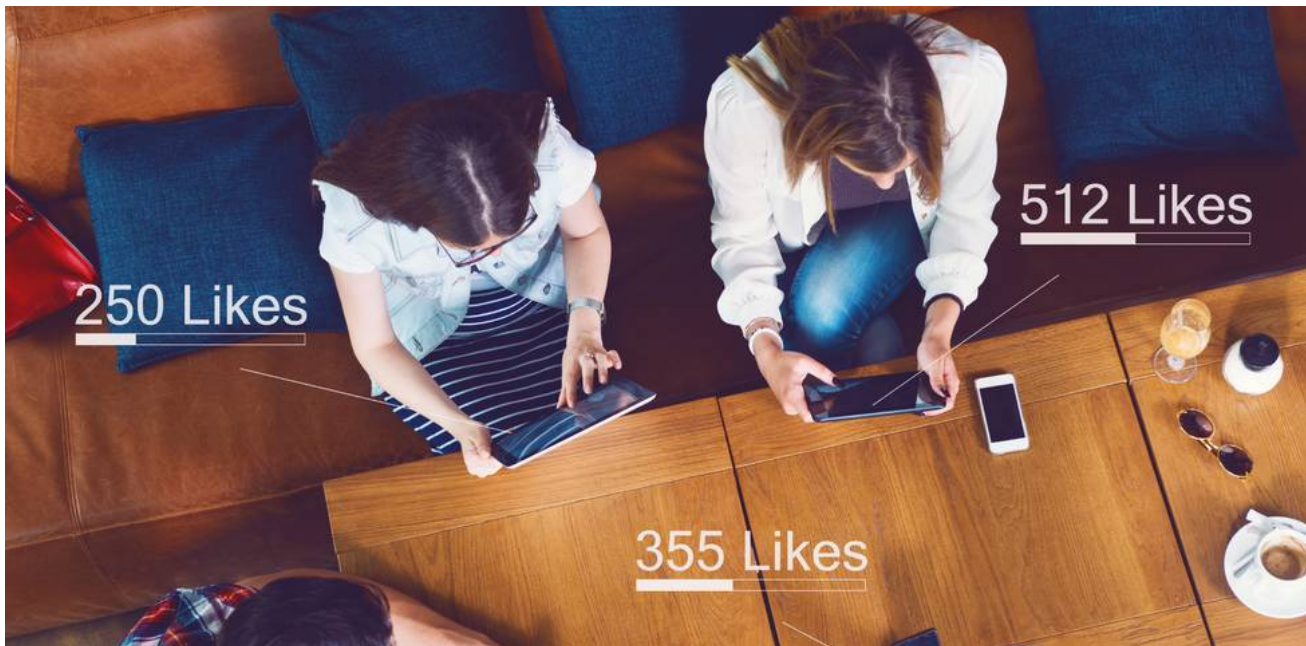


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SUNDAY TIMES LIFESTYLE BY AFP RELAXNEWS, 2017-01-20 16:23:41.0

1 in 5 of us secretly logs in to our friends' Facebook accounts



According to new research, 1 in 5 of us are secretly accessing friends' Facebook accounts.

Image: Tijana87/iStock

If you think your Facebook account has been hacked then there may be a chance that it was your friend that did it, according to the results of a new study by the University of British Columbia, Canada.

For their research the team surveyed 1,308 US adult Facebook users and asked them to answer questions on their behavior on social media.

After gathering the responses, the researchers estimated that 24% of participants implicitly

family members using the victims' own computers or cellphones.



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Twenty-one percent described themselves as victims who identified with the statement, "Somebody I know has used my device to access my Facebook account without permission."

The results also suggested that using mobile phones to snoop was more common among younger people, and by those who used smartphones more themselves for social media and private information.

"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," commented Wali Ahmed Usmani, lead author of the study and a computer science master's student.

In addition the team also found that as the age of the participants increased, the likelihood that they would carry out such attacks decreased. However the same association was not seen between age

and being a victim of such attacks.

However, for the likelihood of being a victim, the dependency on age is less pronounced and nearly flat.

The team also found that people admitted to hacking the account of their friends, family, and romantic partners out of simple curiosity or fun — for example playing a practical joke such as setting a victim's status or profile picture to something humorous.

However other motives were darker and more serious, 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 co-author Ivan Beschastnikh, before adding, "And the consequences are significant: in many cases, snooping effectively ended the relationship."

Kosta Beznosov, the paper's other senior author, also added that the study highlights not only how many people could be snooping and why, but also ineffectiveness of passwords and PINs in stopping hacking.

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

• ***The full report can be found [online](#).***

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