

Government Announces Internet Fraud Statistics

According to recent research by the Government's Get Safe Online project, around 12% of internet users fell prey to fraudsters in 2006, a figure that equates to around 3.5 million people. The report, entitled 'Internet Safety: The State of the Nation', found that on average fraud victims lost £875 as a result.

Additionally the survey found that, of the UK's 29 million adult internet users, 6% had experienced fraud when shopping online, 5% had experienced general online fraud, and 4% had suffered fraud involving their bank account or credit cards as a result of online activity.

The survey suggests that many instances of online fraud are the result of people being careless with their passwords – just 9% said they protected their website passwords carefully and only 1% were cautious with their email address. By comparison, 56% said they took great care to protect their wallet/purse and credit cards, indicating a general lack of caution when it comes to protecting ourselves from potential online attack.

Although these figures suggest internet fraud has risen alarmingly, so have the number of regular internet users in the UK. Around 93% say they use the web every day, spending over £1000 every year on goods and services purchased online. Many believe their bank or ISP should hold responsibility for their online safety.

Pat McFadden, Minister with responsibility for Transformational Government, is quoted as

saying: "As we make more services available online so we need users to take the same basic precautions in using the internet as they would when making transactions in the high street – such as not sharing your bank details or passwords."

An interesting statistic thrown up by the survey suggests users are at least aware of the dangers of online fraud: 53% believe there should be some kind of online safety test to help warn users of potential dangers when surfing the net, and 78% said they believed schoolchildren should be educated about the risks of internet use to help them stay safe.

