Norton Special Report Finds Young Americans Are Twice as Likely to Cyber Stalk

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In Modern Day Romance, 60% of Young Americans Ages 18-39 Who Have Been in a Romantic Relationship Admit to 'Stalking' an Ex or Current Partner Online

Norton Labs Research Sees 63% Increase in Devices Infected with Stalkerware Between September 2020 and May 2021

TEMPE, Ariz.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- NortonLifeLock (NASDAQ: NLOK), a global leader in consumer Cyber Safety, today unveiled new findings from a global study examining consumers' online creeping behaviors, which is defined as following someone persistently online. The new study uncovers striking generational differences among Americans' cyber stalking tendencies in modern day relationships. Three in five Gen Z and Millennial American adults who have been in a romantic relationship (60% of those ages 18-39) admit to 'stalking' an ex or current partner online by checking in on them without their knowledge or consent, more than double the percentage of Americans 40 years old or older (24%).

Perhaps most alarming, two in five of these younger Americans (42%) who currently have a romantic partner believe their significant other is at least somewhat likely to download an application – otherwise known as creepware or stalkerware – on their device(s) to monitor activity such as text messages, phone calls, direct messages, emails, and photos. This figure is three times the percentage of Americans aged 40 or older (14%).

The new findings are published today as a special addendum to the 2021 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report (NCSIR), Norton's flagship consumer survey that examines the impact of cybercrime and consumers' online behaviors and concerns related to their online security, privacy and identity. Conducted in partnership with The Harris Poll, the 2021 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report: Special Release – Online Creeping surveyed over 10,000 adults 18+ across 10 countries[1], including 1,000 U.S. adults, to assess consumers' online habits and whether it diverges into cyber stalking.

The study's results show more than one-third of Americans ages 18-39 believe it is harmless to stalk a current or former partner online (35%), while just one in 10 Americans who are 40 or older agree (11%). Younger Americans are also three times more likely than those 40 or older to agree online stalking is okay if one or both partners have cheated or are suspected of cheating (39% vs. 11%) and admit they would be more likely to stalk a lover or an ex online if they knew they would not get caught (36% vs. 11%). Of note, more than one in 10 Americans between the ages of 18 and 39 who have been in a romantic relationship (14%) acknowledge they have used an app to secretly monitor their significant other's device activity.

"We issue warnings to customers alerting them of potential stalkerware apps on their devices, and our latest threat telemetry shows that use of this invasive technology is steadily climbing. Between September 2020 and May 2021, our research team found a 63% uptick in the number of devices infected with stalkerware,

amounting to more than 250,000 compromised devices per month," remarked Kevin Roundy, technical director and stalkerware specialist with Norton Labs, NortonLifeLock's research division. "It's alarming to think about this increase within the context of our study. Many young Americans are saying it is at least somewhat likely these invasive apps will be part of their current romantic relationships (42%). With recent depictions of online stalking and stalkerware technology featured in TV shows and other pop culture, it's concerning to think that these romanticized dramatizations may be influencing dating standards in modern day romance."

Cyber stalking is a critical Cyber Safety issue, and NortonLifeLock firmly stands against this abusive, invasive behavior. In 2019, NortonLifeLock became a founding member of the Coalition Against Stalkerware, joining over 30 organizations from technology providers to nonprofits serving domestic violence victims to pool tools and resources in the fight against this invasive, dangerous technology. Together with the Coalition, NortonLifeLock is actively working towards goals like improving detection and mitigation of stalkerware, developing best practices for ethical software development, and increasing technical capacity of survivors and advocacy organizations.

"When online creeping manifests into a compulsive pattern or evolves to use technology and tactics to discreetly track activity on someone's personal device or harass them online, it becomes a serious issue of cyber stalking," said Roundy. "Cyber stalking can take on many forms, but the common denominator is that it is unwanted, invasive, and obsessive."

Additional findings from the 2021 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report: Special Release – Online Creeping include:

- **Nearly one in 10 Americans admit to using stalkerware or creepware to keep tabs on a partner .** 8% of Americans who have been in a romantic relationship acknowledge they engage in this invasive behavior. Further, nearly one in four Americans who currently have a significant other believe it is at least somewhat likely that their partner will use stalkerware or creepware to stealthily monitor their device activity (24%).
- **In the U.S., men are three times as likely as women to use invasive apps to spy on a significant other.** 13% of men who have been in a romantic relationship have used creepware or stalkerware to monitor an ex or current partner's phone, compared to just 4% of women. Men are also more likely than women to track a current or former partner's location (14% vs. 8%) and physical activity (10% vs. 3%) online.
- **Although many couples may be spending more time together in lockdown, the most common online stalking behaviors remain the same.** Checking their current or former partner's phone (19%) and reviewing their partner's search history on one of their devices (16%) without their knowledge or consent are the top two most common forms of online stalking among Americans who have been in a romantic relationship. These actions are consistent with the top behaviors reported before the pandemicas observed in a previous NortonLifeLock study[2].
- **Across the globe, cyber stalking isn't unusual** [1] **.** 34% of global consumers who have been in a romantic relationship admit to checking on a former or current partner online without their knowledge or consent, including more than a third of Americans (37%) who confessed to partaking in this behavior.

To view the study's full results and accompanying visual assets, please visit the 2021 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report: Special Release – Online Creeping press kit at: https://www.nortonlifelock.com/us/en/newsroom/press-kits/2021-norton-cyber-safety-insights-report-special-release-online-creeping/.

About the 2021 Norton Cyber Safety Insights Report: Special Release – Online Creeping

The research was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of NortonLifeLock among 10,030 adults

(aged 18+) in 10 countries, of which 8,002 have been in a romantic relationship. The survey was conducted February 15-28, 2021 in Australia (n=1,005), France (n=1,000), Germany (n=1,001), India (n=1,000), Italy (n=1,000), Japan (n=1,020), Netherlands (n=1,000), New Zealand (n=1,004), United Kingdom (n=1,000), and United States (n=1,000, including 808 who have been in a romantic relationship). Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, internet usage, household size, and household income to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. India was weighted to the population of those who are online. Weighted variables varied by country and included one or more of the following: age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, internet usage, household size, household income, size of place, and propensity to be online. A global postweight was applied to ensure equal weight of each country in the global total. Population projection estimates cited are calculated based on adult population (age 18+) figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 International Data Base and Pew Research Center 2017 Global Attitudes Survey. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About NortonLifeLock Inc.

NortonLifeLock Inc. (NASDAQ: NLOK) is a global leader in consumer Cyber Safety, protecting and empowering people to live their digital lives safely. We are the consumer's trusted ally in an increasingly complex and connected world. Learn more about how we're transforming Cyber Safety at www.NortonLifeLock.com.

[1] Australia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States.
[2] NortonLifeLock 2020 Online Creeping Survey. Conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of NortonLifeLock from December 18-20, 2019 among 2,050 U.S. adults ages 18 and older.

Jenna Torluemke
NortonLifeLock Inc.
(650) 527-6015
Jenna.Torluemke@nortonlifelock.com

Heaven Lampshire
Edelman for NortonLifeLock Inc.
(541) 852-7885
Heaven.Lampshire@edelman.com

Source: NortonLifeLock Inc.