

Media Release

Digital Lives of Australians: The Internet is invaluable but cyber security fears are keeping Australians offline

2 December 2021

According to new research released today by the .au Domain Administration (auDA), almost 90 percent of Australians say the Internet has a positive impact on their lives, and almost all small businesses (98 percent) depend on the Internet as an invaluable tool for generating revenue and connecting with customers. However, auDA's research also revealed Australian consumers and small businesses lack confidence in using the internet, with cyber security a top concern.

auDA's *Digital Lives of Australians 2021* research explores the online experiences of Australian consumers and small businesses. It was conducted via a survey of more than 1,500 consumer and 400 small business participants.

auDA CEO, Rosemary Sinclair AM, said "auDA is pleased to present the inaugural *Digital Lives of Australians* report, which provides a rich understanding of Australians online activities; the challenges they face; who they turn to for advice; and how they hope to use the Internet in the future.

"Overwhelmingly, Australians say the Internet delivers significant value. However, the report also highlights opportunities for more investment into education and support initiatives that will boost the digital skills and confidence of Australians.

"The research will shape how we continue to deliver a trusted .au domain for the benefit of all Australians, and we hope it sparks discussion and innovation between consumers, industry, business, government and academic institutions that will help Australians harness the full potential of the Internet."



The *Digital Lives of Australians 2021* report is the first in an ongoing longitudinal study by auDA that will explore Australians' online experiences over time and support an uplift in economic and social value delivered to Australians through the Internet.

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Note to media:

The Digital Lives of Australians 2021 report is available at www.auda.org.au/reports.

Methodology

The research was undertaken by SEC Newgate Research, with the findings drawn from a survey of 1,526 consumers and 404 small businesses undertaken between 14 and 26 October 2021. The sample was weighted to reflect population profile.

Both the consumer and small business surveys were administered online. The consumer survey also included telephone interviews (151 consumers) to provide broader coverage of the population. A detailed methodology overview is provided in the report.

Key consumer findings

- Most consumers (89 percent) feel that the Internet has a positive impact on their lives and has improved all aspects of their lives
- The majority of working Australians rely on the Internet, with 58 percent telling us they could not perform their job without it
- However, many Australians are not as confident as they could be; only 46 percent feel very confident online
- Cyber security is the dominant digital concern among consumers:
 - At least three quarters worry about the security of their personal information online (84 percent), the privacy of their online activities (81 percent) and the risk of falling for an online scam (75 percent)
 - The fear of being scammed or hacked (30%) is the main barrier stopping consumers from using the Internet more often
- Despite this, consumers could not cite a single authoritative or official source of information and support for cyber security. They instead rely on friends and family (49%) or information they can find via a search engine (37%).

Key small business findings

- Most small businesses use the Internet every day, and almost all small businesses (98 percent) feel the Internet is important to their business and is an invaluable channel for generating revenue



- 84 percent of small businesses value the Internet as an important channel for engaging with customers
- Cyber security is also a concern for small business, with just under a quarter (22 percent) reporting they do not use the Internet more frequently because they are worried about being scammed or hacked
- Despite this, small businesses do not invest heavily in cyber security, with:
 - Only 27 percent of small businesses having established cyber security practices or policies and 31 percent of businesses with employees providing their staff with cyber security training
 - Sole traders reporting they spend around \$200 annually on cyber security, compared with micro businesses (\$500) and small businesses (\$3,500).

For further information:

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About auDA:

.au Domain Administration Limited (auDA) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with a range of stakeholders including industry, government and the Australian and International community to develop the rules for and administer the .au country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD). The .au ccTLD is a key part of Australia's digital infrastructure, and auDA is endorsed by the Australian Government, and has an agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), to ensure that the .au domain is a secure, reliable and trusted Australian asset for all Internet users.