

Watson, J., Lacey, D., Kerr, D., Salmon, P., & Goode, N. (2019). Understanding the effects of compromise and misuse of personal details on older people. *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, 23. <https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v23i0.1721>

Review

This post publication review discusses the article by Watson, Lacey, Kerr, Salmon, and Goode (2019). That article raises important considerations for older people when they interact online. It is a thorough review of the non-financial considerations related to cyber safety for older people in Australia. The authors raise a few issues to consider for future research, but of course like everyone else in the world, they could not foresee the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has forced older people who previously had shied away from going online, into the online environment. They have been the most vulnerable in this crisis and the self-isolation has affected them more than other segments of the Australian population. Particularly for older people new to online interaction, they are potentially even more at risk of falling victim to cybercriminals. The Australian Computer Society recently warned all Australians that there has been a significant increase in cyber scams and criminal activity since the start of COVID-19 related self-isolation. I am interested therefore to explore with the authors of this excellent article what the implications of their study might be for vulnerable older Australians, struggling with online interactions, often for the first time, and how they can best avoid becoming victims of criminal activities online.

I know from my own research that legislated protections can be difficult to enforce (Burmeister, Islam, Dayhew, & Crichton, 2015; Thomas, Burmeister, & Low, 2019), and that certain groupings of people can be more vulnerable than others, due to societal discriminations that pre-exist, such as based on gender identity, culture, or chronic illness (Bennett et al., 2017; Burmeister & Kreps, 2018; Poulsen & Burmeister, 2019; Sayers, Cleary, Hunt, & Burmeister, 2017; Teipel et al., 2016). What might the authors of the (Watson et al., 2019) article propose to help particularly vulnerable segments of the older population, as opposed to treating all older people equally? Particularly for older people venturing into the online world for the first time due to COVID-19, how can we better educate them to ensure safe online interactions?

Some of the impacts discussed in the (Watson et al., 2019) article are about older people choosing not to engage online. However, that is not really an option in the COVID-19 environment. Instead, older people in particular are forced to interact, socially, financially and in all other ways. Furthermore, the authors raise the issue of the impacts on the mental health of older people, and arguably it is not just their mental health but also their social and emotional wellbeing (Burmeister et al., 2019; Sum, Mathews, Pourghasem, & Hughes, 2008), given that a cessation of online activity would further isolate them in the present pandemic era. What can be done by older people themselves and wider society to overcome the negative impacts of cyber-criminal activities?

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Author response

The authors would like to thank the reviewer for his comments on our article. We agree that COVID-19 has implications for the elderly's use of the internet and that vulnerable older Australians are particularly at risk. This is an important research area and there is a pressing need to educate vulnerable sections of society on how to avoid becoming victims of criminal activities in online environments. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of our current work which was undertaken as part of a PhD program focusing on the structure, function and constraints of the system with which victims interact following an incident of identity compromise and misuse. Consequently, we are not in a position to make recommendations about how older adults can protect themselves online.

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