The Rise of 'Can you just' –
the tech affliction sweeping our world

Time-sapped millennials are being increasingly called upon to provide tech support to an aging population that has grown up in a pre-technological era. It may have started with a single 'Can you just', but the demand has swiftly escalated to such an extent that it is now having a negative effect on family and friend relationships.

Foreword

Home technologies continue to rise. Just as we figure out how to use one device, another comes on the market to take its place. How it will transform our life for the better all sounds wonderful – if only we could get it set up and working correctly!

This study offers a truly global insight into the generational divide between those who feel they 'just can' when it comes to technology in the home and those who feel left behind.

Any psychotherapist will tell you that all studies of the human condition show that we are never wholly comfortable with change. We can be suspicious, and often wonder why we need to change something that is working well already. Also, our need to protect us from feeling vulnerable about getting older can manifest itself as a vortex of despair around no longer being able to keep up.

This research clearly shows the generational divide is real, with over a third of over 55s acknowledging their need for direct help with daily technological challenges.

What is clear to see is the emergence of the 'Hero Millennials', who willingly come to the rescue to attend to the technological needs of their older friends and relatives. What is also very apparent is that the younger generation is concerned around the safety of their less able, older relatives online.

There is a striking need for consumers to gain greater knowledge on how to protect their devices and how to install adequate security software to ensure their details and activity stay safe.

The adage 'give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime' never seemed more appropriate. Armed with guides to encourage and assist all generations across the globe may awaken our inner Bill Gates.

Kathleen Saxton,
Founder of Psyched Global & Psychotherapist

Methodology

An online survey of 11,000 consumers was carried out on behalf of Kaspersky Lab by Arlington Research. Respondents came from 13 different countries, including Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and the US.

The sample from each country consisted of adults aged 17 or over with nationally representative quotas set for gender, age and region. All respondents had to have online access to take part in this survey.

Introduction

Technology has transformed how we live our lives over the last decade. We now stream films direct to our devices, do our grocery shopping at the click of a button, and even have cars that drive themselves.

The relentless march of technology has, however, led to the older generation increasingly struggling with the everyday use of smart and connected devices. So much so that over a third (35%) of over 55s would struggle with daily technology challenges without some support. Due to this, they are turning to their younger friends and relatives (typically millennials, aged between 25 and 39) in increasing numbers, with regular cries of 'Can you just'.

> **"Can you just…**
>
> **… fix the internet?"**
>
> **… show me how to upload to the cloud?"**
>
> **… secure my online banking app?"**

In a recent Kaspersky Lab survey, two thirds (64%) of millennials said that they have helped someone older out with their technology woes. Whilst many millennials feel obligated to help, an astonishing 15% of the over 55s have bribed them to garner their help. This has led to a quarter (25%) of millennials admitting to avoiding family members they think may hassle them for help with technical issues.

This over-reliance on the younger generation by elder family members is simply papering over the cracks. With almost seven-in-ten (69%) millennials admitting to being worried about their parents getting scammed online when their back is turned, this report will analyse the 'Can you just' landscape and discuss what can be done to mitigate the spread of it in the future.

Key findings

The problem of 'Can you just' is widespread:

- **64% of millennials have helped an older relative with tech support**

- **55% of millennials feel obliged to provide tech support to family members**

- **Only one-in-five (19%) of the older generation would pay for help with technology; most rely on family and friends**

- **15% have bribed a family member for help**

- **A third (35%) would struggle with daily tech challenges without support**

- **Four-in-ten (41%) admit to calling up their children or other younger family members for remote IT support**

- **25% of millennials admit to avoiding family members they think want tech support**

- **Most have had to receive help on securing a router, installing cybersecurity protection or combatting computer viruses**

- **69% of millennials are worried about their parents being scammed online**

64% of millennials have helped an older relative with tech support

A daily struggle

We are more connected than ever before – a trend that shows no sign of abating. In fact, the total installed base of Internet of Things (IoT) connected devices is projected to infiltrate every aspect of our day-to-day lives and reach 75.44 billion worldwide by 2025[1] – or around 10 connected devices for every person on the planet.

This is just leading to more confusion among the over 55s. Just as the older generation get used to ordering groceries online, they are being told that it's time to simply call out their shopping list to a little white box in the corner of the kitchen and have it magically arrive at their door the next day. Figuring out how to use the various connected devices and gadgets that are supposedly designed to make our lives easier has become a daily struggle for many. In fact, only just over half (54%) of over 55s claim to have any level of knowledge of technology.

For many, it feels like a lost opportunity. With four-in-ten (40%) describing technology as 'empowering' or making them 'feel liberated', there is very much a fear of missing out (FOMO, for the younger generation) for those that feel they have been left behind by the speed of technological change.

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A third (35%) of the over 55s we spoke to admitted that they would struggle with today's breed of daily technology challenges without some element of support. However, rather than going to industry experts, the first port of call is generally a younger family member or friend.

The phrase 'Can you just' is becoming a blight on today's world. It is alienating millennials and unsettling the over 55s who are being turned from teachers to students, bit by bit and byte by byte.

1 https://www.statista.com/statistics/471264/iot-number-of-connected-devices-worldwide/

The dangers

Technology is now woven into the very fabric of our lives, no matter our age. We all now routinely bank, shop and socialise online via a multitude of devices, apps and sites. This dependence on technology has provided a broad attack surface for cybercriminals with all kinds of motives – whether that be financial theft, to steal data or reputational damage.

The threat landscape today has never been more active and ranges from highly sophisticated targeted attacks to opportunistic cybercrime. In 2018, Kaspersky Lab's web antivirus detected 21,643,946 unique malicious objects[2]. In addition to this, our findings show that not even half (47%) of consumers are confident that all of their devices have up-to-date, adequate security protection. This had led to almost a third (30%) of devices being subjected to at least one malware attack over the year.

30%

30% of computers were subjected to at least one malware attack last year
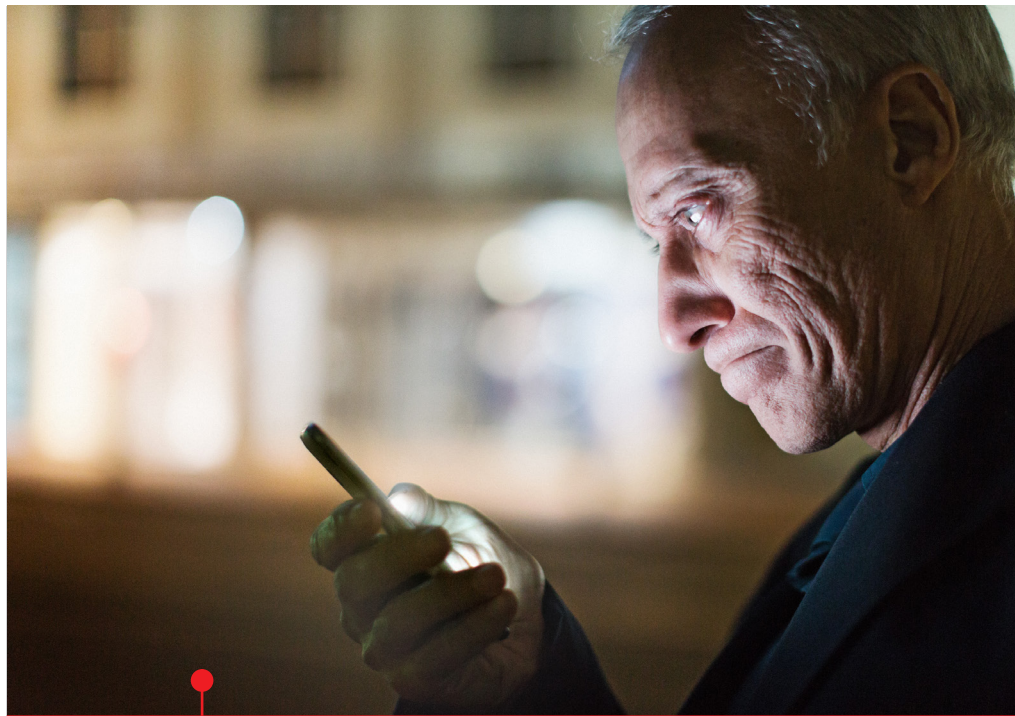
The older generation is being seen by some as the soft underbelly of our connected society. 69% of millennials in our survey said that they are worried about their parents being scammed online. More specifically, six-in-ten (59%) students admit to worrying their parents will not be able to do some tech tasks or risk being a victim of fraud without their tech support.

Whilst the intention of the older generation to protect themselves without external support may be there, the knowledge base simply isn't. The majority of those we spoke to have had to receive help in the past 12 months on either securing a router, installing cybersecurity protection or combatting computer viruses.

2   https://securelist.com/kaspersky-security-bulletin-2018-statistics/89145/

An unpaid workforce

Almost two-thirds (64%) of the millennials we spoke to said they have helped someone older with technology in the last year. This is leading to an interesting dynamic between the two generations. Whilst it may be a frustration for them, 55% of millennials say they feel obliged to provide tech support to family members when asked.

On the whole, this service is being done unpaid by family members, which is starting to cause an irritation to some. In fact, one-in-five (19%) millennials say that they would rather their family pay someone other than them to help them with their technology woes.

Whilst they wouldn't hesitate to send a broken-down car to a mechanic or call a plumber to fix a faulty boiler, only one-in-five (19%) of the over 55s say they would pay someone to help them with technology. Most prefer to rely on family and friends. In many ways, this is understandable. The very fact that it is a subject area they are unfamiliar with, plus plenty of media headlines stoking the fire of fear that anyone and everyone could be on the end of a cyberattack, means that they want someone they can trust to help keep them safe.

The issue is that many are taking advantage of good-natured younger family members. Only 13% of those we spoke to aged over 55 who need help with technology said they have ever given a present to a family member as a thanks. Instead, it appears that food is the most popular way to a millennials' heart. Half of those we spoke to said that they have had either something cooked for them or been taken out for a meal in return for helping an older family member with technology.

However, in their desire to get help from family members, some over 55s employ more questionable tactics. 15% even go so far to admit that they have bribed a family member in exchange for their help with a technology challenge in the past.

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An over-reliance on millennials

There is becoming an over-reliance on already time-sapped millennials to be the tech support warriors that provide support to the wider family unit. All this is coming at a time when they are trying to form their own identities – buying houses, having children and growing their careers. It may have just started with one single 'Can you just', but the situation has escalated in homes up and down the land. Today, two-thirds of millennials say their family ask them for help with tech a lot.

The research found that over a third have taken over a month after receiving a technology present to actually set it up, owing to its complexity and their lack of knowledge. Due to this, 30% of millennials said that they have started avoiding buying older family members technology as a present, because they know that they will be the ones lumbered with having to set it up. A quarter (25%) of millennials even admit to avoiding family members if they think they may want them to provide tech support. This could have a detrimental effect on the wider family unit.

Four-in-ten (41%) of over 55s admit to calling up their children or other younger family members for remote IT support. Yet, prioritisation may need to change for some. Fear of the potential of a cyberattack has led to an over-reliance on the younger generation to keep them safe. In fact, their desire for tech support has caused an astonishing 18% of over 55s to admit that they miss their children's tech support more than their company when they are not around.

It's not just blood relatives that are seemingly taking advantage of friends and family either. Half of technology-knowledgeable respondents (50%) have also provided technology help to their partner or spouse.

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25%

A quarter (25%) of millennials avoid family members if they think they want tech support

With the majority of the older generation admitting that they have had to receive help on either securing a router, installing cybersecurity protection, or combatting computer viruses, it is clear that better education is needed. It is time to break the cycle of 'Can you just'.

Kaspersky Lab is striving to further cybersecurity awareness of the over-55s and give time back to the millennial heroes, who are having to increasingly provide ongoing tech support – whilst trying to grow their own identities, furthering their careers, buying houses, becoming parents and more. A Kaspersky Lab series of 'Can you just' guides will empower the older generation to arm themselves against tech knowledge gaps and cyberattacks.

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