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Scammers lurk as M'sians gear up for 11.11



A person holds a smartphone displaying a padlock, a skull icon, and the word "HACKED" on its screen on July 25, 2026. — Picture by Raymond Manuel/MM

KUALA LUMPUR: Barely 4 per cent of Malaysians feel their smartphones are genuinely secure against hackers and scammers, according to a survey by digital wealth platform Versa, published just days before the annual 11.11 shopping blitz.

The survey of 1,022 local users revealed that 78 per cent had crossed paths with a scam over the preceding two years, either falling victim themselves or seeing family and acquaintances targeted.

Among the 798 respondents who encountered these rackets, nearly three in four pointed to their mobile phones as the primary point of contact. Direct phone calls and SMS messages proved the most persistent channels, cited by 80 per cent of affected respondents, while messaging apps trailed closely behind at 76 per cent.

Versa warned that syndicates deliberately exploit the fast-paced frenzy of year-end flash sales and bogus parcel delivery texts. Rushed buyers frequently tap dubious tracking links or surrender personal banking credentials without second thought.

The survey findings align with grim data from federal police. Bukit Aman's Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) reported that online crime almost doubled in 2025, topping 66,000 cases and draining RM2.97 billion from victims nationwide.

That momentum has barely slowed in 2026. Police tracked 16,880 online scams siphoning more than RM555.7 million in the first quarter alone, including 4,858 cases tied to e-commerce fraud. During the first half of the year, another 5,134 QR-code fraud cases bled RM28.67 million from consumers.

Practical defences before checking out

To safeguard shoppers ahead of the 11.11 sales, Versa outlined several critical precautions. Consumers should first verify unfamiliar recipient bank accounts and phone numbers on the police's Semak Mule portal before making any direct funds transfer.

Purchases should remain strictly within established e-commerce platforms, with any seller request to switch to WhatsApp or pay via manual bank transfer treated as an immediate red flag.

Shoppers must also resist artificial urgency, such as countdown timers and low-stock alerts designed to rush buyers past basic security checks. Sensitive credentials, including OTPs, TAC codes, and banking passwords, should never be disclosed, as legitimate merchants and courier services will never ask for them.

When considering financial products, consumers must verify that the platform holds a valid licence using the Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) Investment Checker, ensuring the firm does not appear on the SC Investor Alert List. In the event of a suspected breach, victims should act swiftly by freezing their accounts through bank fraud desks, contacting the National Scam Response Centre at 997, and filing an official police report.

"This sale season, the strongest financial defence is simply taking a five-second pause to double-check where your money is actually going," Versa chief executive and co-founder Teoh Wei Xiang said.

The fintech platform has also rolled out an educational video starring brand ambassador Khairy Jamaluddin, featuring a dramatised encounter with an operative from a scam syndicate.

Versa noted that the 4 per cent security confidence score and the 78 per cent exposure rate originate from an in-app survey conducted among its registered user base in February 2025.

Because the dataset relies on self-reported answers from platform members collected over 18 months ago, the findings provide an indicative snapshot rather than an exhaustive representation of the entire Malaysian population. – MM