

# 28 - Mental models of security; Software updates

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*Usable Privacy and Security*

Carnegie  
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# Today!

- Mental Models of Security
- Unpublished Study on Software Updating

# Mental Models Study

Rick Wash, “Folk Models of Home Computer Security” (SOUPS 2010)

# Wash 2010

- How users *perceive* and *understand* computer security
- Understand the *mental models* of users

# Wash 2010

- 33 semi-structured interviews
- About 45 minutes each
- Broad questions
- Hypothetical scenarios

# Wash 2010

- Folk models used to decide whether to follow security advice
- For example, “Use anti-virus software” was viewed as *important* to users who saw viruses as supporting crime and *less important* to users who viewed viruses as buggy software

# Wash 2010: Viruses

- “Virus” as general term for malware
- Generically bad
- Buggy software
- Virus as annoyance
- Support crime
- Multiple of the above

# Wash 2010: Hackers

- “Hacker” term used for malicious actors
- Digital graffiti artists
- Burglars
- Criminals who target valuable targets
- Contractors who support criminals
- Employees of offensive teams in nation-state governments
- Multiple of the above



# Wash 2010

- Main takeaway: How users perceive threats can affect their security-related behavior.
- Users often do not understand threats the same way that sophisticated users do.
- Users may take actions that only make sense if you understand their behavior.

# Updating Behavior and Sentiment of Windows Home Users

Originally by Rich Shay  
(unpublished study)



[www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com)

# What is Updating?

*Patches are additional pieces of code developed to address problems (commonly called “bugs”) in software. Patches enable additional functionality or address security flaws within a program.*

– NIST 2005

# What is Updating?

*A security update is a widely released fix for a product-specific, security-related vulnerability.*

– Microsoft

# Why do we care?

*Successful attacks on unpatched software vulnerabilities have caused billions of dollars in damage.*

– Robert Dacey, directory of GAO, 2003

# Why do we care?

*According to CERT/CC, about 95 per- cent of all network intrusions could be avoided by keeping systems up to date with appropriate patches; however, such patches are often not quickly or correctly applied.*

– Robert Dacey, directory of GAO, 2003

# Why do we care?

*In spite of their high cost and the headaches they cause, many security breaches are easily avoidable. The security fixes are available, but users don't get them installed quickly enough (or at all)*

– Microsoft 2008



# Observation

- Timely updates important to security
- Most updating research focused on organizational setting
- Dearth of research on home-users

# Study Goal

- Study behavior and sentiment of Windows home users on updates
- Offer insights to software-writers with large population of home users

# Windows Update

- Mechanism for Windows users to do updates
- Can be configured from control panel
- Recommendation: Automatic update and install



# Methodology

# Target Participants

*Participate in a Carnegie Mellon University research study about computer updating. You must be at least 18 years old and own a personal computer you bought and maintain yourself. It must run a legal copy of Windows and not be primarily used for work.*



# Recruitment

# Survey Administration

- Survey Gizmo
- Duplicates prevented
- 28 cents per participant

**4. Using my computer is enjoyable.\***

Strongly  
disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Neutral

☐

Agree

☐

Strongly agree

☐

**5. I regularly use a computer at work or at school.\***

Strongly  
disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Neutral

☐

Agree

☐

Strongly agree

☐

**6. Using my computer is often difficult.\***

Strongly  
disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Neutral

☐

Agree

☐

Strongly agree

☐

# Likert Questions



# Survey Overview

# Study Overview

- Demographics (eg, age, technical expertise)
- General computer usage
- Updating behavior
- Updating sentiment

# Results and Findings



Removing Subjects  
from 647 to 542

# Demographics

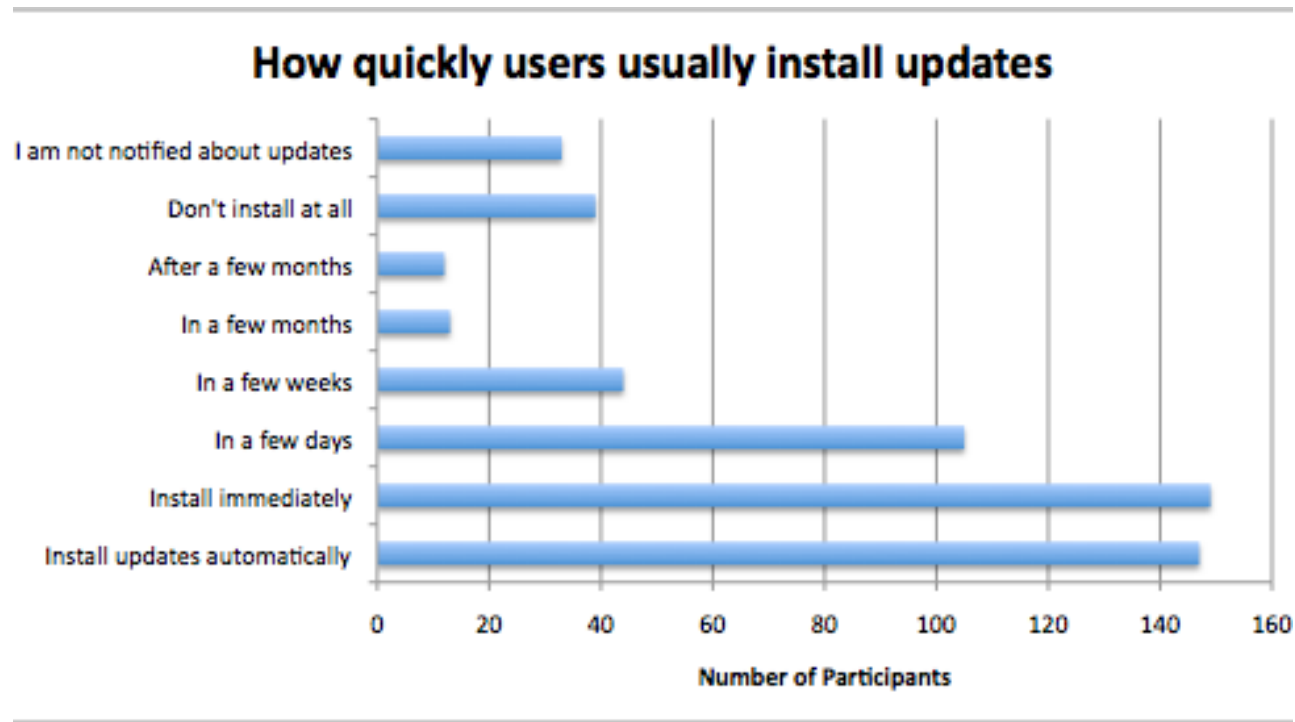
- 337 male, 205 female
- Mean age 31 years
- 230 from India, 191 from USA
- Most regularly use a computer at work/school

# Computer Usage

- Mean time 31 hours
- Most popular OS: Windows XP, Windows 7
- Computer use enjoyable, not difficult
- Most victims of Malware

# Updating Behavior

- 55% changed default settings
- 88% receive notification about updates
- Mean 7.11 updates in three months
  - Installed 4.24



# Waiting to Install



# What users liked

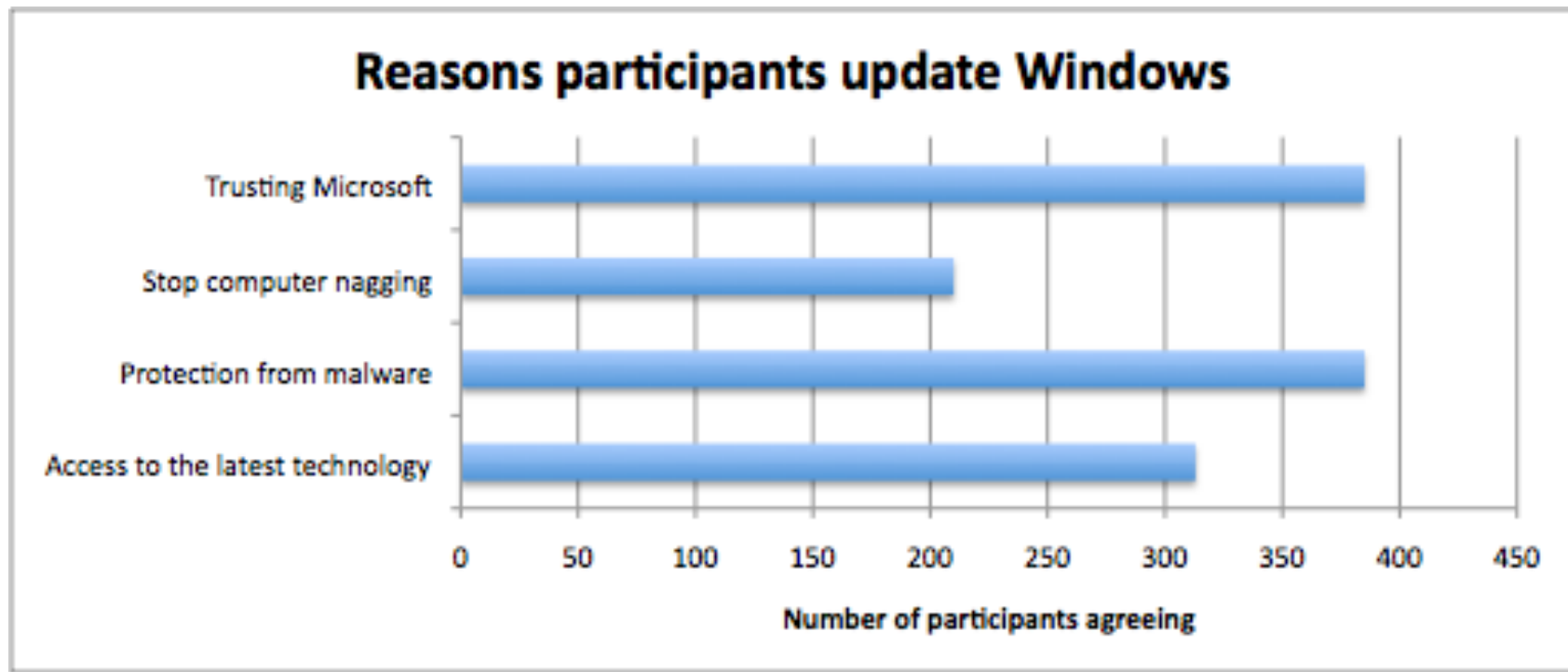
- 75% felt updates made them more secure
- 59% generally felt they knew what a given update would do

# What users disliked

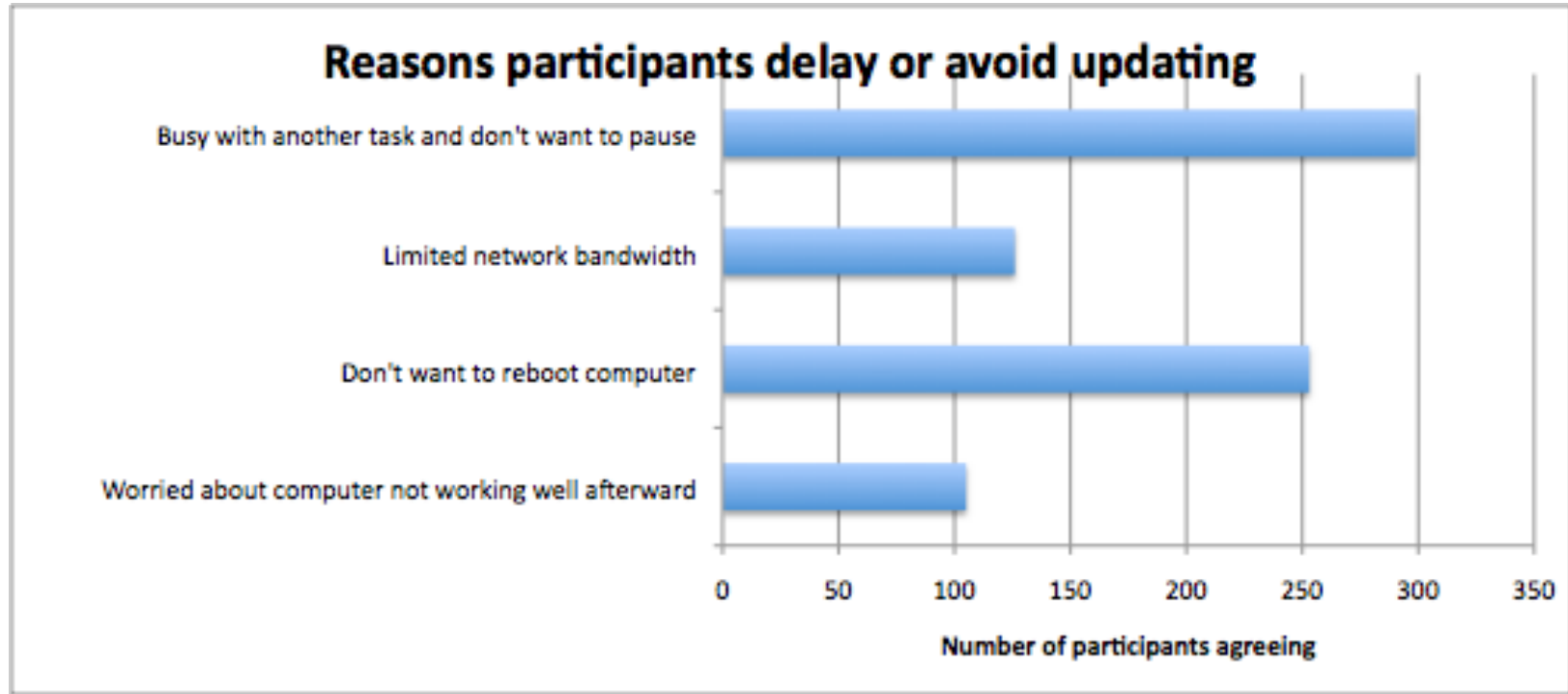
- 48% agreed to wanting computer to download and install updates automatically
- 65% found rebooting for updates annoying

# Beyond Windows

- 61% agreed with more programs having automatic update feature
- 42% agreed with Microsoft handling all of their software updates (even from other companies)



# Why Update



# Delay/Avoid Updating

# Technical Users

# Technical Participants

*Are you majoring in or do you have a degree or job in computer science, computer engineering, information technology, or a related field?*

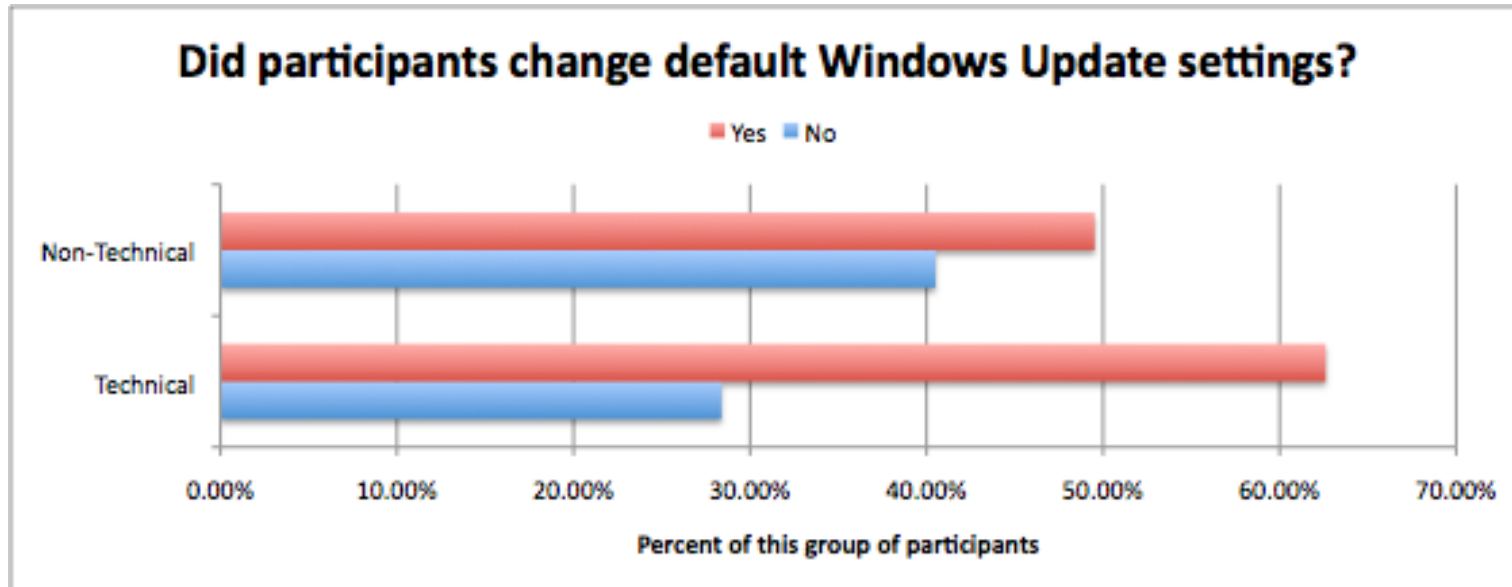
# Technical Participants

- More likely use computer at work/school
- Less likely to use Vista
- Install updates no more or less quickly



# Technical Differences

- More concerned with malware
- Less annoyed by reboots
- More wish MS would handle all updates
- Less likely to avoid updates due to rebooting or being in middle of a task



# Changing Defaults

# Main Findings

- Participants showed generally positive attitude toward updates
- Trusting Microsoft and fear of malware primary motivators to update
- Many participants wish other organizations offered automatic updates

*but...*

# Main Findings

- Many participants changed default settings
- Many disabled automatic installation
- Participants indicated task interruption a main reason to avoid updates
- Participants found forced reboot annoying