The not-so-silent type Vulnerabilities in Chinese IME Keyboards' Network Security Protocols

Jeffrey Knockel*, Mona Wang[†], and Zoë Reichert*

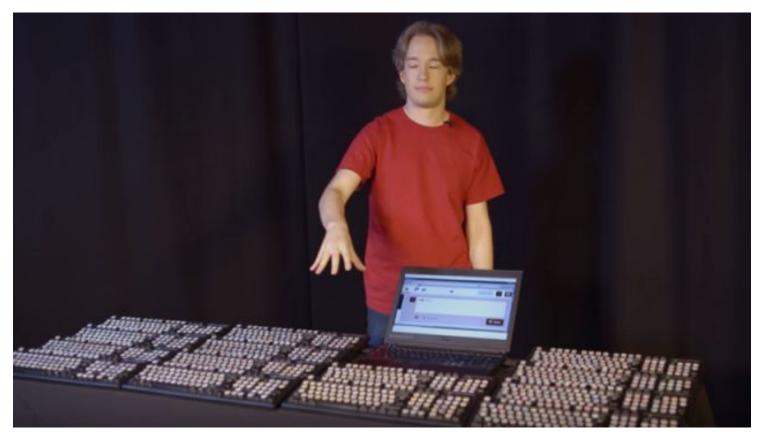
* Citizen Lab, University of Toronto† Princeton University

26 keys, 26 letters



1,000s of characters?

说問 222 2 -----中二 回北 出部 很当 些二 生靈 开二同二少日 们言后点二と 小二 对 点物 ala hyver 12 and restored 三品以品 见二机 一过二月二 作 高賞 几 学二十二 老 前篇 着 国 关篇 12 din 话品吗 明禄名之今 东四 住品 从當 果常 爱言 问 100 2 两智 长雪 清品 认 走出五日 事 别 次品 但意 PS 覚し E 544 2 ž 师二写二 发。第二 期二 怎些 让四 经品 地震而言 用雪路之 向 --24 一一一只 100 1000 11院端远也语言直感衣言空照穿言部 二完二眼 教品张 场雪影 种智 又二 笑品 白 被品 当 常堂 大い 20 成二 方品接品提品房 位二难二十二黑二红四 便二其之 欢黑号黑万品 妈正应照主品世品亮調变夢 祝二 站二校二错二平 121 La 三思。男ニ脑ニ 星記运 像黑实品 夫之始早 D 定品 者ニカーモー 务に然こ 头之岁 法二元二 「感感日」 使 ふ干 夢早 - 跟 条調 in. Note: 目 加具 业化 块 喝品总部足 备二试日记 sing 该 必二 或 相 共 文 122 *越二山 物品 啊 根馬 球 极 照 死 包載 办 钟言 12 21. 25 「新三 2 23 Tary July 41 四讲品跑品往過舞二组《贵 轻 习 满言 爸品 选二二二二 清 内 哥 南 刚雪 室二店言愿言 -Zi. -1 须二计 调品收益 议 交上留品 阿 光智史而差異突而白 何之 慢語任為神話民為杯話 等城等 Star 読护 140 奇。 示言 参 合語 图二故二美二许 台 跳馬脚馬菜二停口 导点角 管 卖言 查照处照将四量照并照论是尔非 响四 22 取品雨品 命器 注 敢出深端虽正 终四达品海品 受三确二 乎 换 左 全部 切 右口酒品婚二泉副假日 坏言言支 見毛言礼- 阴 鱼口度非父山赛二顾二東山集山止日 -2 2. 香靈造 低 够二 林二画 至二 士 20 10 miles 肉 则 入 旅 来 三失三精 份二环二 雪黑推 新草草 联 层四 床 性 境点 懂 旁與纸品般 洗二银三际 原品代。练二夏二汽。累非职品 黄黑亲三短部借品 破二超四持三 三简 思奉 200 較二制 笔品 静 改 招 普 伤雪密三戏二约二 2 血况 ま大言 100 24 Aug. And a 部長 随 奶 区 林 苦品茶言 金品群品纪山 品形な 100 200 --Paciel 育二排品 忘事費非不二织 质二律言 专端租 抱二牙 研二哭言 河 技 旧 铁品 云島 惊点词二否三绝 志二激一腿三疑三章四镜具修二 2 血察 牛展 ing 」梦四規二 传篇顿高 仅4 座1 板島 春 灯間 众二永二八二 24 谷 野ニ 科二具品 供福省四甚三养四迟三 速二党 择二水四 标二警点季 康二绍二典二 鲜富富 母二招二遍 Pe 北一卡 健二继一丽一颜 烧 按 险 醒 - 努二效二值二箱四车 新洋 finger. 输 蓝王败日 微言 温書 吸盖 盘問 细二范三仍言 掌二 m in the 味品讨是 皮 恐 印 騎三 限品 态二弹品 山田禁品慣言 日二既二硬日 The 1. 奖 秋 油 挺品释 软當 食品景点饿 100 340 B: 忠一毕 聪言 一場四篇 鞋品 桂品 散三鼻三 烟点 折 免二 瓜盖 俩 秀二诚 --精品 舒二 顺品 扫 货 陪 忽 冬二 Jang . 12 1040 航二孤 染之 爬 窗 渐 乘 圆 朵二 减品 尊二弱山 扬四 撞 愛言 逐 三厚語 20 --二汤四 -中二虎 奋二党二 一页二酸 脏需 碗品 倍 抬 默二 森品 of 24 Real Property lies ź 帽带 渡雪 暂 熊雪 扔 먜 售雪 猪 聊書 绩 础 140 10 and In al 一估二平 偶 彩言 藏 二 貌 欲 餘 い 纩 厨 他出 币 x 拒 糕 100 die 12 1th -二差 三頭 凉 帅 肥 耐 暖 植 距 址 肚 扰 扮 润 THE FIRST 1000 CHINESE CHARACTERS



How does one type/input Chinese?

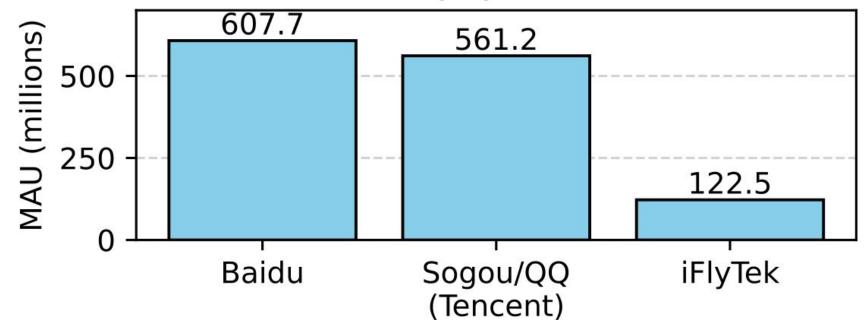
7:13 🔍	7:13		▼1	7:13		▼1
← Jeff └ :	← Jeff		5 E	÷	Jeff	5. E
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9 buttons, 26 letters!?



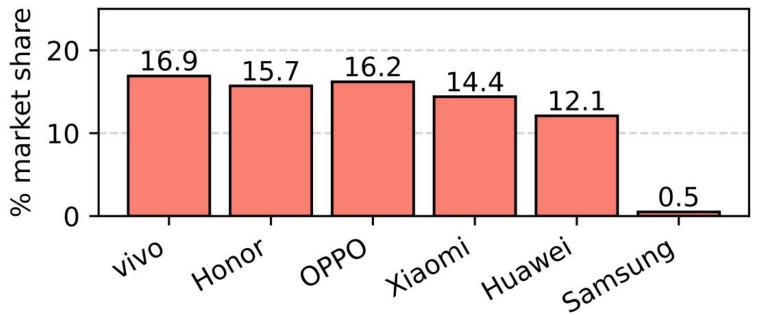
Landscape of Chinese IMEs

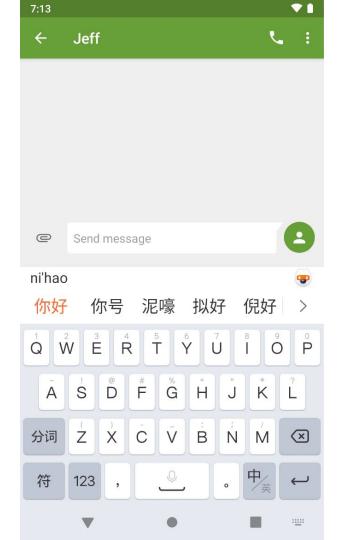
MAU of most popular IME in 2022



Landscape of Chinese IMEs

2023 market share of phone manufacturers in China





iflytek-typing.pcapng

File Edit View Go Capture Analyze Statistics Telephony Wireless Tools Help 📶 🔳 🖉 😳 🚞 🛅 🕱 🙆 🍳 < 🔈 🔈 📂 考 📃 📃 🔍 Q. Q. 🏦

http.request.method == "POST"

🛛 🗔 🔹 🔶 Host HTTP(2) Request

No.	Stream	Time	Source	Destination	TTL	IPID	Country	Protoco	Length	A STATE PRODUCTS		Method	*
25	1 1	13:53:19.94715	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22	6	64 0x3d5	China	HTTP	378	pinyin.voicecloud	.cn	POST	
25	3 2	13:53:20.04955.	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22	6	64 0xb63	China	HTTP	378	pinyin.voicecloud	.cn	POST	
25	71	13:53:20.35535	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22	6	64 0x3d5	China	HTTP	378	pinyin.voicecloud	.cn	POST	
26	1 2	13:53:20.81590.	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22		64 0xb63		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
26		13:53:21.11744.		183.192.161.22		64 0x3d5		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
26		13:53:21.15016.	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22		64 0xb63		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
27	7.0	13:53:21.64774	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22		64 0xb64		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
27	4 7	13:53:21.74995	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22		64 0xe5a		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
27		13:53:21.97310.	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22		64 0x3d5		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
28		13:53:22.21112	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22		64 0xb64		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
28		13:53:22.51204		183.192.161.22		64 0x3d6		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	-
• 31		13:53:23.36951		183.192.161.22		64 0xb64		HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud		POST	
31		13:53:23.70060.		183.192.161.22		64 0x3d6		HTTP	and the second second second second	pinyin.voicecloud	and the second	POST	
+ 32		13:53:23.90291.	STATUTE AND A	183.192.161.22		64 0xb64	a list for the second second	HTTP		pinyin.voicecloud	and the second sec	POST	
32	9 1	13:53:24.21863	. 10.42.0.123	183.192.161.22	6	64 0x3d6	China	HTTP	378	pinyin.voicecloud	.cn	POST	-
					10.000								
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		ength: 104\r\n			0090					6f 64 69 6e 67		Encoding	
		in.voicecloud.c			00a0					0a 43 6f 6e 74		tyCont	
		: Keep-Alive\r\			0050					20 31 30 34 0d		th: 104.	
	-	: okhttp/3.12.3	s/r/n	1	0000		Conf. (1997) 1997			69 6e 2e 76 6f		inyin.vo	
	\n	act UDT, http://		ud an 12time 1604	00d0	TARK AND TRACK		TE 10. 1917 (1977) 197		0d 0a 43 6f 6e		. cn · · Con	
		Jest 10/13]	/pinyin.voiceclo	ud.cn/:cume=1094	00e0					65 70 2d 41 6c 67 65 6e 74 3a		Keep-Al r-Agent:	
		Jest in frame: 3	17]		0100					32 2e 33 0d 0a		3.12.3··	
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	[Length		23703207002030221	0001100100001020	0160					79 4c bc 95 19		·0·vL···	
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4				E II	0110	10 01	00 00 10	20 05 05			6 00		

07 Data (data.data), 104 bytes Packets: 344 · Displayed: 24 (7.0%)

Profile: Default

Uh oh





See, e.g.: You Shouldn't Collect My Secrets: Thwarting Sensitive Keystroke Leakage in Mobile IME Apps (Chen et al.) USENIX Security 2015

They are keyloggers



This talk is **not** about how they are keyloggers



Threat model

- Attacks on Tencent's: CBC padding oracle
- All other attacks? **Passively decryptable.**





- * UCWeb mobile browser identification
 - * Discovered by GCHQ analyst during DSD workshop
 - * Chinese mobile web browser leaks IMSI, MSISDN, IMEI and device characteristics



Where is X-KEYSCORE?

Approximately 150 sites

Over 700 servers

TOP SECRET//COMINT//REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL

UCWeb – XKS Microplugin

UCWel														
Help	Actio	ins • F	Reports • View • 🔂 Ma	ap View										
0	State	Ð	Datetime +	Highlights	Datetime End	Browser Version	Email Address	Handset Model	BIEI	MSI	Global Title	Platform	Active User/T	Casenotation
1 🗆		1	2012-05-13 02:29:20	11	2012-05-13 02:29:23	8.0.3.107	2123movies	nokiae90-1			9379900100	java	1	E9DHL00000M0000
2 1		2	2012-05-13 06:00:59	10	2012-05-13 06:01:00	8.0.3.107	2123movies	nokiae90-1			9379900100	java	r	E9DHL00000M0000
3 🖸	1	4	2012-05-13 19:39:11	8	2012-05-13 19:39:11	7.9.3.103		HTC A510e				android	7	E98DE00000M0000
4 [1]	1	2	2012-05-14 12:29:53	19	2012-05-14 12:29:53	8.0.4.121	Indigol	NokiaE72-1				sis	7	E90HL00000M0000
5 🗇	.4	5	2012-05-14 17:46:46	11 25	2012-05-14 17:46:46	8.0.4.121	emobimasti	NokiaX6-00				sis	1	H5H125221450000
6		5	2012-05-15 18:28:19	11 22	2012-05-15 18:28:19	8.0.4.121	gmobimasti	NokiaX6-00			93781090013	sis	1	H5H125221450000
1		7	2012-05-15 20:02:58	11 12	2012-05-15 20:02:58	8.0.4.121	gmobimasti	NokiaX6-00			93781090013	sis	1	H5H1252214500C

XX working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for both **active and passive** eavesdroppers

X working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for an **active** eavesdropper

weaknesses present in cryptography implementation

no known issues

N/A product not offered or not present on device analyzed

Keyboard developer	Android	iOS	Windows
Tencent	×	v	×
Baidu	1	1	××
iFlytek	xx	V	~

XX working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for both **active and passive** eavesdroppers

X working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for an **active** eavesdropper

weaknesses present in cryptography implementation

no known issues

N/A product not offered or not present on device analyzed

Device manufacturer	Own	Sogou	Baidu	iFlytek	iOS	Windows
Samsung	××	✓*	××	N/A	N/A	N/A
Huawei	✓*	~	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Xiaomi	N/A	X *	××	xx	N/A	N/A
ОРРО	N/A	×	XX *	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vivo	✓*	×	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Honor	N/A	N/A	XX *	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Default keyboard on device

Baidu for Android (Preloaded onto Samsung)

20:21	Wed, Jan 3				ୠ 98% ੈ
Sett	ings	Q	< Pr	eloaded apps	÷
U	Screen time • App time	ers	du	Baidu IME	
0	Smart Manager Storage • Memory • D protection	evice		Best weather	
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samsung-baidu-typing.pcapng



udp.dstport == 4040

🛛 🗔 🝷 🔶 Host HTTP(2) Request

No.	Stream	Time	Source	Destination	TTL	IPID	Country	Protocol	Length	Host	Method
	1	19:59:03.01713	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0xfc1	China	UDP	282		
	2	19:59:03.01718	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0xfe0	China	UDP	282		
	3	19:59:03.10600	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0xfe0	China	UDP	282		
	7	19:59:03.43030	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0xfe1	China	UDP	282		
	9	19:59:03.72659	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0xfe2	China	UDP	282		
	11	19:59:04.01770	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0xfe7	China	UDP	282		
	13	19:59:04.36315	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0xfe8	China	UDP	282		
	15	19:59:04.65400	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	4 Oxfeb	China	UDP	282		
	17	19:59:05.23373	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	4 0xfec	China	UDP	282		
	19	19:59:06.03824	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	4 0xff8	China	UDP	282		
	21	19:59:06.45497	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	4 Oxffb	China	UDP	282		
	23	19:59:06.76345	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	4 0xffe	China	UDP	282		
-	25	19:59:07.34328	10.42.0.123	163.177.18.42	6	64 0x007	China	UDP	282		•
4											
		(a) A set of the se		bytes captured (Contraction of the second s					01 00 00 00 00	•*•7•••• •N•••••
				1a:8a), Dst: Aske						00 00 00 b4 00	x•9••••
				3, Dst: 163.177.1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1					00 00 00 00 00	•••••/• ••••••
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					the second second second	N DEPOSIT OF MANY			1000		Sector Annual Contraction of the

Packets: 26 · Displayed: 13 (50.0%)

Profile: Default

- 🗆 ×

```
1 signed int fastcall GA10 aesv1 encrypt(struct s cloud tool *cloud tool, int *plain crypt buf, int crypt len)
  2 {
   3
     struct s cloud tool *cloud tool ; // r5@1
     int *plain crypt buf ; // r4@1
     int plain len ; // r7@1
     signed int result; // r002
     int uninit1; // r2@4
     int uninit2; // r3@4
      int i; // r2@5
 10
      unsigned int8 fixed key[16]; // [sp+4h] [bp-2Ch]@6
 11
• 12
      cloud tool = cloud tool;
• 13
      plain crypt buf = plain crypt buf;
     plain len = crypt len;
• 14
15
      GA60(cloud tool);
16
     if ( !cloud tool
 17
        [] (unsigned int8)plain crypt buf & 3
 18
        [] get crypt len((int)cloud tool , *plain crypt buf ) != plain len )
 19
      {
0 20
       return -1;
 21
• 22
      GA61 generate key(cloud tool , plain crypt buf , uninit1, uninit2);
23
      GB02 encrypt(
 24
       cloud tool ->aes,
 25
        (unsigned int *)plain crypt buf + 5,
 26
        *plain crypt buf ,
 27
        (unsigned int8 *)plain crypt buf + 4);
0 28
      i = (unsigned int8)plain_crypt_buf_ & 3;
 29
      do
 30
        fixed key[i] = ~( BYTE)i ^ ((unsigned int)(1937 * i) >> (i & 3)) * (i + 11);
31
• 32
        ++1;
 33
      }
34
      while ( i != 16 );
• 35
      GB02 encrypt(cloud tool ->aes, (unsigned int *)plain crypt buf + 1, 16, fixed key);
36
     result = 0:
      *plain crypt buf ^= plain crypt buf [4] ^ plain crypt buf [1] ^ plain crypt buf [2] ^ plain crypt buf [3];
• 37
0 38
     return result;
• 39 }
```

Baidu for Android (Preloaded onto Samsung)

- Randomly generate "AES" key k_1
- "Generate" "AES" key k₂
- "AES"-encrypt k_1 with k_2
- Encrypt message with k_1
- Transmit encrypted k_1 and encrypted message

"Generate"?

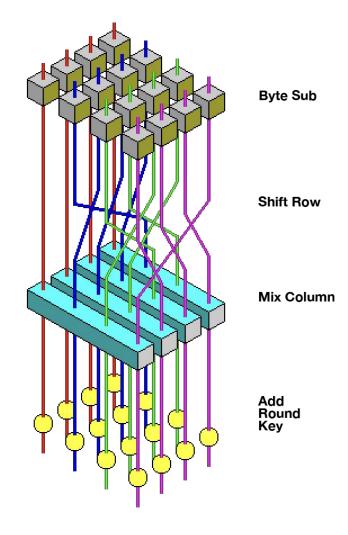
- How does recipient know k_2 ?
- Effectively a hard-coded key

```
void __cdecl generate_static_key(unsigned __int8 *output, bool flag)
{
    unsigned int i; // eax
    unsigned int v3; // edi
    unsigned int v4; // edx

    i = 0;
    v3 = 0;
    do
    {
        v4 = v3;
        v3 += !flag + 1937;
        butput[i] = ~(_BYTE)i ^ ((i + 11) * (v4 >> (i & 3)));
        ++i;
    }
    while ( i < 16 );
}</pre>
```

"AES"?

- Modified AES with additional permutations...
- Security through obscurity...



```
[800,
{0:
    1276,
     10,
     0,
     '92F8EE78F1DDCBE74CFEB1166F70883D%7C0',
     'a1|SM-T220-gta7litewifi|320',
     '8.5.20.4'
     'com.android.settings.intelligence',
     '1012497q',
     b''
     ['2你好惨又热大腿'],
     b''],
1: [0, b'',
            'nihaocanyoureadthis']}
```

Baidu cryptography for Windows

- Mostly cosmetic differences versus Baidu on Samsung
- "AES"v2
- Instead of additional permutations...
- One fewer round

```
[...]
2 {
    1: "nihaocanyoureadthis"
    5: 3407918
  }
3
    1: 107
    2: 10
    5: 1
4
    1: "1133d4c64afbf1feda85d3c497dd6164|0"
    2: "wn1||0"
    3: "6.0.3.44"
    4: "notepad.exe"
  }
[...]
```

Generalizing attacks

Attacks can generally be extended to...

- decrypting incoming data
- spoofing data
- modifying data

XX working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for both **active and passive** eavesdroppers

X working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for an **active** eavesdropper

weaknesses present in cryptography implementation

no known issues

N/A product not offered or not present on device analyzed

Keyboard developer	Android	iOS	Windows
Tencent	×	v	×
Baidu	1	1	××
iFlytek	xx	V	~

XX working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for both **active and passive** eavesdroppers

X working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for an **active** eavesdropper

weaknesses present in cryptography implementation

no known issues or all known issues fixed

N/A product not offered or not present on device analyzed

Keyboard developer	Android	iOS	Windows
Tencent	v	~	~
Baidu	1	1	1
iFlytek	~	~	~

XX working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for both **active and passive** eavesdroppers

X working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for an **active** eavesdropper

weaknesses present in cryptography implementation

no known issues

N/A product not offered or not present on device analyzed

Device manufacturer	Own	Sogou	Baidu	iFlytek	iOS	Windows
Samsung	××	✓*	××	N/A	N/A	N/A
Huawei	✓*	~	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Xiaomi	N/A	X *	××	xx	N/A	N/A
ОРРО	N/A	×	XX *	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vivo	✓*	×	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Honor	N/A	N/A	XX *	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Default keyboard on device

XX working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for both **active and passive** eavesdroppers

X working exploit created to decrypt transmitted keystrokes for an **active** eavesdropper

weaknesses present in cryptography implementation

no known issues or all known issues fixed

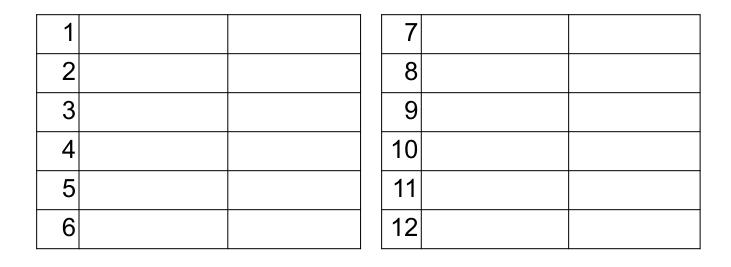
N/A product not offered or not present on device analyzed

Device manufacturer	Own	Sogou	Baidu	iFlytek	iOS	Windows
Samsung	~	✓*	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Huawei	✓*	~	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Xiaomi	N/A	✓*	1	~	N/A	N/A
ОРРО	N/A	~	!*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vivo	✓*	~	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Honor	N/A	N/A	XX *	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Default keyboard on device

Let's zoom out a bit!

Most downloaded apps in 2023?



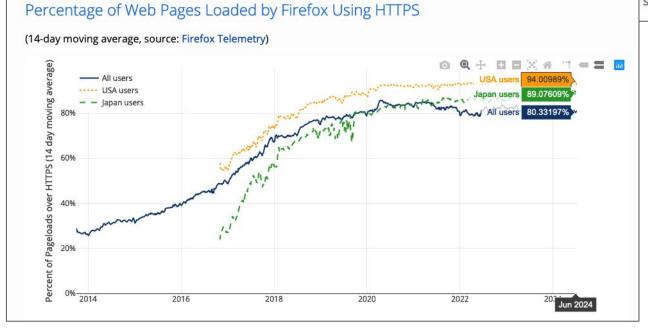
Most downloaded apps in 2023?

1	WeChat	1012	7	TikTok	654
2	Alipay	901	8	QQ	583
3	Taobao	795	9	Facebook	553
4	Pinduoduo	728	10	Baidu	491
5	Instagram	696	11	Kuaishou	480
6	Douyin	695	12	WhatsApp	475



HTTPS Is Actually Everywhere

SEPTEMBER 21, 2021



How many always use HTTPS/TLS?

WeChat	1012	TikTok	654
Alipay	901	QQ	583
Taobao	795	Facebook	553
Pinduoduo	728	Baidu	491
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X Pinduoduo	728	🗙 Baidu	491
🔽 Instagram	696	🗙 Kuaishou	480
Douyin	695	VhatsApp	475

*but they're also **not not** encrypting...

many of them are using proprietary cryptography

Oh no



Growing body of evidence

- Chinese browsers [1]
- Prominent Latin American apps [2]
- LINE [3]

[1] Privacy and Security Issues in BAT Web Browsers. (Knockel at al.)[2] Analyzing Prominent Mobile Apps in Latin America. (Kujath et al.)[3] Analysis of end-to-end encryption in the LINE messaging application. (Espinoza et al.)

Conclusions

- Large, understudied app ecosystems **still** have serious and easily exploited vulnerabilities in their cryptosystems
- These vulnerabilities may be under active exploitation
- More work is needed to further characterize the "shape" of this class of apps so that we can better predict which apps still need our attention and help fix them

Thank you!

Tons more details in the paper!

Questions?