

Italian: a Difficult Language? Not for Hackers!

A Cambridge University researcher, Joseph Bonneau, recently asked which languages are best suited to creating hacker-resistant passwords. To answer the question, he analyzed a sample of 70 million Yahoo accounts, strictly anonymized, using a program based on dictionaries in different languages.

The researcher calculated how many passwords were discovered after one thousand attempts: Italian ranked second among the easiest languages to crack, with 7.2% of passwords decrypted, behind only Indonesian.

"Incredible," someone might think, "for once Italy is near the top of a ranking!" Beyond this unenviable record, the point deserves attention: the password is often the only barrier protecting our digital identity, and too often we sacrifice security for convenience.

A recent Economist article reported that many people still use passwords that even a child could crack, such as "123456" or "password". The purpose of the research was not to push us toward Chinese or Korean keywords, apparently the safest languages, but to identify which users are generally more careful.

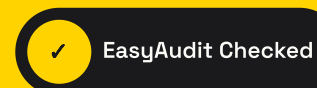
Italian may be slightly easier to decrypt for several reasons: it uses only 21 letters instead of 25, and almost every Italian word ends in a vowel, limiting possible variants. These language features are not insurmountable obstacles for anyone who wants a secure password.

Even if "mamma" or "pizza" are statistically a little easier to guess than "mother" or "wurstel", you can make life harder for the attacker without using exotic words: add numbers or punctuation and mix uppercase and lowercase letters. Try something like "ARC!P£L\$G=" and no one will break your account easily.

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