Since January 2020 Elsevier has created a COVID-19 resource centre with free information in English and Mandarin on the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The COVID-19 resource centre is hosted on Elsevier Connect, the company's public news and information website.

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system adds new palm print recognition to Interpol’s existing face and fingerprint ID capabilities, and will enable officers to carry out up to 1 million forensic searches a day.

IDEMIA claims this makes the MBIS the top-performing automated biometric ID system currently available. It will also enable Interpol to extend access to the system beyond police investigations, to border control officers from its member countries as well.

The new system provides better capabilities such as higher matching accuracy and more user-friendly interfaces, and is designed to enable police officers across Interpol’s member states to carry out an unlimited number of searches and analysis.

It comes after Interpol renewed a contract with IDEMIA that began 20 years ago. IDEMIA initially provided the agency with an automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) in 2000, than added facial recognition in 2016. Interpol used the MBIS to identify over 300 suspects in 2019.

Cyril Gout, Interpol’s director of operational support and analysis, said: “In the same way that criminals use ever more sophisticated ways to avoid detection, law enforcement must also benefit from the latest advances in technology, especially in biometric security, to better combat all forms of transnational crime.”

IDEMIA executive vice president Philippe Barreau said the company was “thrilled to cement our long-standing alliance with Interpol who share our purpose to make people’s lives safer around the world”. IDEMIA provides identity authentication systems to clients from the financial, telecom, public security and IoT sectors in 180 countries.

A new international study has shown that the Covid-19 pandemic has created a boom in demand for biometric technology, but users are increasingly worried about the security threat from spoofing such systems.

The ‘2021 Biometric Survey’ captures the views of 220 organisations that have deployed or are thinking of deploying biometrics. It found that due to Covid-19, 64% of the respondents have increased their prioritisation of technology that supports remote onboarding and mobile apps. As a result, 45% have increased their use of biometrics to counter the pandemic.

But 40% of those surveyed believe biometric spoofing presents a high or very high threat. When asked about how high they feel the threat will be in two years, this percentage increased to 54%. As a result, over 90% of the respondents said that liveness detection is important in combating biometric spoofing attacks.

The study was carried out by research firm Goode Intelligence and sponsored by voice and face biometrics specialist ID R&D.

“This survey offers important insight into how organisations are viewing biometrics in the Covid-19 era,” said Goode Intelligence CEO Alan Goode. “Even before Covid, organisations have been increasingly turning to biometrics to balance convenience and security for identity verification, authentication and fraud detection. We expect increasing levels of adoption of biometric technology to combat fraud and support frictionless user experience across all digital channels.”

Just over half the respondents said that their company currently uses biometrics. Of these, 69% use the technology for authentication, 75% for identity verification and 31% for fraud detection.

“The survey results are evidence of companies adopting biometrics to provide users with the convenience and security they demand,” said ID R&D president Alexey Khitrov.

* A new study from Juniper Research predicts that some 1.4 billion people worldwide will be using facial recognition for payments authentication by 2025 – compared to just 671 million in 2020. “This rapid growth of 120% demonstrates how widespread facial recognition has become,” Juniper said, fuelled by its low barriers to entry and the growing ubiquity of front-facing cameras in mobile devices.

The study credits Apple’s introduction of FaceID with accelerating the growth of the wider facial recognition market, despite the challenges presented by face mask use during the Covid pandemic. But backing up the Goode survey findings, this study also recommends that facial ID vendors implement robust AI-based verification checks to ensure the validity of user identity – or risk losing people’s trust in this authentication method as spoofing attempts increase.

**COVID-19**

Firms push on with digital passports

Biometric tech vendors are continuing to play a lead part in the planned rollout of secure digital Covid vaccination passports worldwide.

In the UK, the Government has adapted the existing National Health Service (NHS) app, which is supplied by biometric systems vendor iProov, to also function as a Covid digital passport offering vaccination and test data. iProov CEO, Andrew Bud, has said that any Covid status credential scheme must be inclusive, convenient, secure and respectful of people’s privacy to sustain public confidence.

In the US, ID specialist CLEAR has secured a high-profile deal with the NBA (National Basketball Association) to make its Health Pass technology available to NBA teams, enabling them to carry out Covid-19 health screenings in all their arenas.

The Health Pass connects an individual’s verified identity to their Covid-related information, including test results. As vaccines are increasingly rolled out across the US, CLEAR said that “Health Pass will soon offer the ability to link an individual’s vaccination records to their Health Pass account”.

A third of all NBA teams have already started using Health Pass to check employees or fans.

Augmented identity firm IDEMIA has also launched a Health Travel Pass, which will enable international travellers to store and show their Covid-19 credentials, including test results and vaccine certificates. The solution is based on ICAO1 standards for travel-related public health evidence. IDEMIA said: “Health certification is key to restoring trust for both governments and travellers, and reducing public health risks when travelling.” Its system is currently being tested in the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, ID solutions provider SICPA, and its partner firm ELCA, have been selected by the Swiss Government to develop a vaccine certificate system for its citizens. The technology is expected to be rolled out by the end of this month. SICPA said the solution will provide a forgery-proof QR code, which can be stored on a smartphone or in a printed version, and will offer health certificates such as vaccination or test results, using ELCA’s trustID system.