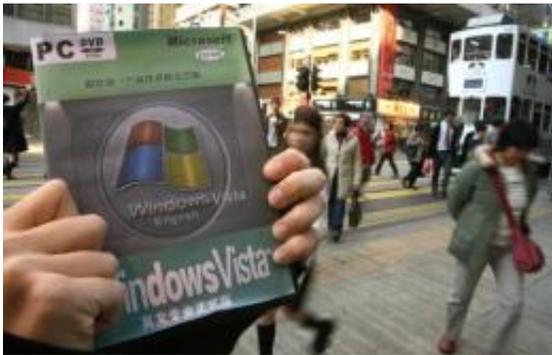


China says software piracy declines -- to 19 billion dollars

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A pirated copy of Microsoft Windows Vista readily available in southern China is shown in Hong Kong. China said Monday that software piracy had dropped off slightly last year, but admitted the thriving market was still valued at nearly 19 billion dollars.

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A total of 128.9 billion yuan (18.9 billion dollars) was spent on pirated software last year, accounting for 12 percent of the country's total software market, a survey funded by the State Intellectual Property Office showed.

In 2008, software knock-offs were valued at 131.8 billion yuan,

according to the survey covering more than 4,600 individual and corporate respondents across the country, carried out by Internet research firm Chinalabs.

"Measures to protect [intellectual property rights](#) were forcefully implemented and personal computer makers have almost completed a project to pre-install authorised operating systems", it said.

China's counterfeit and piracy market is the biggest in the world, and [copyright infringement](#) in the Asian nation has long been a sticking point in Sino-US relations.

The US government said late last month that the level of theft of copyrights and patents in China "remains unacceptable" and kept Beijing on a "priority watch list" for [intellectual property protection](#).

An annual report by the Office of the US Trade Representative said China's enforcement regime "remains largely ineffective and non-deterrent" and that US industries ranging from software and movies to publishing to footwear "report severe losses" due to piracy in China.

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