We often hear reference to the “deep” or “dark” web. What exactly is the deep or dark web? Is it as illicit and scary as it is portrayed in the media? This article will provide a brief overview and explanation of different parts of the web, and will discuss why you just might want to go there.

The SURFACE WEB
The surface web or “Clearnet” is the part of the web that you are most familiar with. Information that passes through the surface web is not encrypted and users movements can be tracked. The surface web is accessed by search engines like Google, Bing or Yahoo. These search engines rely on pages that contain links to find and identify content. Search engine companies were developed so that they can quickly index millions of web pages in a short time and to provide an easy way to find content on the web. However, because these search engines only search links, tons of content is being missed. For example, when a local newspaper publishes an article on its homepage, that article can likely be reached via a surface web search engine like Yahoo. However, days later when the article is no longer featured on the homepage, the article might be moved into the site’s archive format, and therefore, would not be reachable via the Yahoo search engine. The only way to reach the article would be through the search box on the local papers web page. At that time, the article has left the surface web and has entered the deep web. Let’s go there now...

The DEEP WEB
The deep web is a subset of the Internet and is not indexed by the major search engines. Since the information is not indexed, you have to visit those web addresses directly and then search through their content. Deep web content can be found almost anytime you do a search directly in a website - for example, government databases and libraries contain huge amounts of deep web data. Why does the deep web exist? Simply because the Internet is too large for search engines to cover completely. Experts estimate that the deep web is 400-500 times the size of the surface web, accounting for over 90% of the internet. Now lets go deeper...

The DARK WEB
The dark web or “darknet” is a subset of the deep web. The dark web refers to any web page that has been concealed because it has no in-bound links, and it cannot be found by users or search engines unless you know the exact address. The dark web is used when you want to control access to a site, need privacy, or often because you are doing something illegal. Virtual private networks (VPNs) are examples of dark web sites that are hidden from public access unless you know the web address and have the correct log in credentials.

One of the most common ways to access the dark web is through the Tor network. The Tor network can only be accessed with a special web browser, called the Tor browser. Tor stands for “The onion router” and is referred to as “Onionland.” This “onion routing” was developed in the mid-1990s by a mathematician and computer scientists at the United States Naval Research Laboratory with the purpose of protecting U.S. intelligence communications online. This routing encrypts web traffic in layers and bounces it through random computers around the world. Each “bounce” encrypts the data before passing the data on to its next hop in the network. This prevents even those who control one of those computers in the chain from matching the traffic’s origin with its destination. Each server only moves that data to another server, preserving the anonymity of the sender.

Because of the anonymity associated with the Tor network and dark web, this portion of the Internet is most widely known for its illicit activities, and that is why the dark web has such a bad reputation (you might recall the infamous dark web site, Silk Road, an online marketplace and drug bazaar on the dark web). It is true that on the dark web you can buy things such as guns, drugs, pharmaceuticals, child porn, credit cards, medical identities and copyrighted materials. You can hire hackers to steal competitors secrets, launch a DDOS attack on a rival, or hack your ex-girlfriends Facebook account.

However, unlike the size of the deep web, the dark web accounts for only about .01% of the web.

Some would say that the dark web has a bad rap as not everything on the dark web is quite so “dark”, nefarious or illegal. Some communities that reside on the dark web are simply pro-privacy or anti-establishment, who want to function anonymously, without oversight, judgment or censorship. There are many legitimate uses for the dark web. People operating within closed, totalitarian societies can use the dark web to communicate with the outside world. Individuals can use the dark web news sites to obtain uncensored new stories from around the world or to connect to sites blocked by their local Internet providers or surface search engines. The site is used by human rights groups and journalists to share information which could otherwise be tracked. The dark net allows users to publish web sites without the fear that the location of the site will be revealed (think political dissidents) Individuals also use the dark web for socially sensitive communications, such as chat rooms and web forums for sensitive political or personal topics.

TAKEAWAY:
Don’t be afraid – dive deeper! Download the Tor browser at www.torproject.org and access the deep/dark web information you have been missing. Everything you do in the browser goes through the Tor network and doesn’t need any setup or configuration from you. That said, since your data goes through several relays, it can be slow, so you might experience a more sluggish internet than usual when you use Tor. However, preserving your privacy might be worth the wait. If you are sick of mobile apps that are tracking you and sharing your information with advertisers, storing your search history, or figuring out your interests to serve you targeted ads, give the Tor browser a try.

www.sociusinsurance.com