



Issued 7/5/18

Are Privacy and Personal Identity Impossible to Protect?

While consumers and businesses expand their use of social media and electronic services to record levels, many of America's most knowledgeable security professionals don't believe that individuals will be able to protect their privacy and online identity, even with precautionary measures and new regulations such as GDPR.

These findings are outlined in Black Hat USA's new research report entitled, *Where Cybersecurity Stands*. The report, compiled from the fourth installment of Black Hat's Attendee Survey, includes critical industry intel directly from more than 300 top information security professionals.

Is privacy a lost cause?

Now more than ever cybersecurity professionals are questioning the future of privacy and the safety of personal identity as a result of the recent Facebook investigation, development of GDPR and various data breach reports.

Influenced by these factors, only 26% of respondents said they believe it will be possible for individuals to protect their online identity and privacy in the future – a frightening opinion as it comes from experts in the field, who in many cases are professionally tasked with protecting such data. They've also reconsidered their Facebook usage – with 55% advising internal users and customers to rethink the data they are sharing on the platform, and 75% confessing they are limiting their own use or avoiding it entirely.

IT security professionals have very little confidence in the federal government's ability to understand and respond to critical cybersecurity issues. Only 13% of respondents said they believe that Congress and the White House understand cyber threats and will take steps for future defenses.

Respondents also cite foreign affairs as an issue – 71% said that recent activity emanating from Russia, China, and North Korea has made U.S. enterprise data less secure. And with the upcoming elections in mind, more than 50% believe that Russian cyber initiatives made a significant impact on the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Last year, Black Hat reported that 60% of security professionals expected a successful attack on U.S. critical infrastructure – that data point has risen almost 10% in 2018. Who do they think will likely be behind such an attack? More than 40% of those surveyed believe that the greatest threat is by a large nation-state such as Russia or China.

The thought that such an attack will be successful, again, stems from the industry's lack of confidence in the current administration – only 15% of respondents said they believe that U.S. government and private industry are adequately prepared to respond to a major breach of critical infrastructure.