Despite Increases In Cybercrime And Growing Skills Gap, Most Americans Aren't Interested In Cybersecurity Careers, Survey Finds

(NAPSA)—The United States has experienced a constant uptick in personal and business data breaches in recent years, according to a report by Symantec.[1] Consequently, companies are increasing cybersecurity spending, which is expected to grow to nearly $100 billion in 2018, up seven percent from last year, technology research firm Gartner finds.[2]

To keep pace with cyberattacks, a more robust workforce of skilled cybersecurity professionals is vital. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that career growth for cybersecurity professionals is increasing nearly three times as fast as the national average compared to the growth rate of other careers.[3] There are currently nearly 300,000 open cybersecurity jobs, per Cyberseek.[4] What's more, cybersecurity research company Cybersecurity Ventures predicts 3.5 million cybersecurity jobs are expected to go unfulfilled by 2021.[5]

Despite this workforce shortage, a new survey by University of Phoenix's College of Information Systems & Technology found that only 18 percent of U.S. adults surveyed expressed an interest in a career in cybersecurity.[7] A meager one percent of respondents to the survey actually work in the industry.

Dennis Bonilla, executive dean of the University's College of Information Systems & Technology and School of Business, called the trend "distressing."

"The nation may soon find itself unable to keep pace with the number of attacks if we cannot bolster the workforce," Bonilla said. "Companies are pouring money into solutions,[6] which is helping combat hackers for the time being. But, if we do not increase the workforce by implementing more effective education and training programs, the money spent on technologies is useless if there are not enough trained professionals to operate them. Without these professionals, it is akin to restaurants purchasing food but not hiring chefs."

The University of Phoenix survey found that nearly half (43 percent) of U.S. adults have experienced a personal data breach in the past three years. As a result, only 24 percent said they feel more secure from cyberattacks today than they did five years ago. Forty-six percent feel less secure, while the perception of 30 percent of respondents has not changed in the last five years.

In addition to a lack of personal cybersecurity, more than half (56 percent) of those surveyed feel the country as a whole is also less secure than five years ago. Large data breaches, such as medical and voter records, credit bureau data

Anyone looking for a new or alternate career should be glad to learn cybersecurity is a field with many job openings for those with the skills and knowledge to fill them.

and large retail attacks, have exposed millions of personal records. Additional attacks may be looming, Bonilla warns. He said the solution is increased awareness and a workforce that is trained not only on how to use the technologies companies have invested in but also how to think strategically to stay ahead of attackers.

"Cybersecurity is a career of the future. Unfortunately, what we are doing now to grow the workforce is not working," he said. "We need to approach cybersecurity education differently and this starts with changing the perception, making it more inclusive and enticing to everyone. Only then are we going to see a shift where these critical positions of data protection are filled."

According to Bonilla, cybersecurity education should start as early as kindergarten to encourage younger generations to pursue careers in cybersecurity. He also said that people working in other industries, such as education, construction and retail, can use the experience and expertise from their careers along with cybersecurity education to lay the groundwork for a new career.

Unfortunately, despite the need for trained professionals, the majority of respondents to the University of Phoenix survey said that they do not have any interest in seeking a job in cybersecurity. Nearly all said they would need more education to get a job in the field, but the survey found that the top barriers preventing Americans from pursuing an education or career in cybersecurity include time (52 percent), cost (50 percent) and a lack of knowledge (42 percent).

For people interested in a cyber education or career, University of Phoenix's College of Information Systems & Technology prepares cyber professionals to combat increasing cybercrimes. The University offers associate, bachelor's and master's degrees that teach the risk management and information assurance skills vital to an organization's success.

[1] https://www.symantec.com/content/dam/symantec/docs/reports/gistr22-government-report.pdf
[2] http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/3784965
[3] https://www.bls.gov/ooh/computer-and-information-technology/information-security-analysts.htm#tab-6
[4] http://cyberseek.org/heatmap.html
[5] https://cybersecurityventures.com/jobs
[6] http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/3784965
[7] This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Poll on behalf of University of Phoenix between August 24 and September 1, 2017 among 2012 US adults, including 944 who say they have experienced a personal data breach in the past 3 years. Figures for age, race/ethnicity, education, region, and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online. For more information, please contact cooper.nelson@phoenix.edu.