



Hackers Shift Focus to Unstructured Data



The number of healthcare records accessed by cyberattacks in 2016 is lower compared to the previous year's tally, according to a new report from IBM. In total, 12 million records were compromised in healthcare – keeping it out of the top five most-breached industries in 2016.

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The report, "2017 IBM X-Force Threat Intelligence Index", says the healthcare industry continued to be plagued by a high number of incidents, although the attacks were focused on smaller targets resulting in a lower number of leaked records. Some 100 million healthcare records were breached in 2015, which translates to an 88 percent drop in 2016.

Interestingly, a shift in cybercriminal strategies has been noted in the report. In 2016, a number of significant breaches related to unstructured data such as email archives, business documents, intellectual property and source code. This shift to unstructured data is viewed by security experts as "a seminal moment". Caleb Barlow, vice president of threat intelligence at IBM Security, explained:

"The value of structured data to cybercriminals is beginning to wane as the supply outstrips the demand. Unstructured data is big-game hunting for hackers and we expect to see them monetise it this year in new ways."

It was in 2015 when healthcare saw one of its largest-ever breaches with the hacking of health insurance company Anthem. That breach resulted in more than 80 million records being accessed.

But while healthcare saw declines, the total number of records compromised in 2016 across all sectors was at an all-time high at 4 billion records. By contrast, 2015 saw 600 million records accessed.

Information and communication services companies and government experienced the highest number of incidents and records breached in 2016, according to the report.

Source: [Healthcare IT News](#)

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