

CYBERSECURITY: ABSOLUTE RECORD OF ATTACKS BETWEEN APRIL AND JUNE PA IMPROVES CYBERSECURITY

Exprivia's quarterly report counts almost double the number of cybercrime incidents compared to the first months of the year. Finance sector among those most affected by hackers. Reverse trend for PA, thanks to investments in protection policies. Entertainment industry at risk of attacks.

26 July 2023 – There was an absolute record number of attacks in Italy in the second quarter of the year, with a substantial upturn in security in the Public Administration thanks to improvements to its defence systems against hackers. This is what emerges from the new **"Threat Intelligence Report"** by the **Cybersecurity Observatory** of **Exprivia**, which looks at 129 open sources among the sites of affected companies, public sites of national interest, online news agencies, blogs and social media.

According to the report compiled by the Apulian ICT group, there was a **steady increase in cybercrime phenomena** between April and June, with a total of **672** cases, almost double the **308** in the previous quarter. In more detail, there were **569 attacks** (+196% compared to 192 in the previous quarter) - **an all-time high since Exprivia's Cybersecurity Observatory first started analysing data (January 2020) - with 82 incidents**, i.e. successful attacks, down 21% compared to the previous 104, and **21 privacy breaches** (+75% compared to 12 in the last quarter).

"We are facing a scenario of constant growth in cybercrime phenomena, yet even with a record number of attacks, we have detected a minimal number of incidents, meaning successful attacks," **comments Domenico Raguseo, Cybersecurity Director at Exprivia.** *"An optimistic interpretation might suggest that the defence systems are more effective, as is clear from the data of the Public Administration. However, it cannot be ruled out that incidents may occur in the next two months, as highlighted by past dynamics. Therefore, we must wait until the autumn to be certain of how successful the hackers have been in their attacks."*

According to the experts of Exprivia's Cybersecurity Observatory, which is committed to promoting a culture of cybersecurity also through training courses, the sector most targeted by attackers in the second quarter was again **Finance** (financial companies, banking institutions or cryptocurrency platforms), with **56% of cases (377)**, doubling from April to June. In second place is the **Software/Hardware** segment (ICT companies, digital services, e-commerce platforms, devices

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and operating systems), passing from 99 cases in the first quarter to **105**. **Retail** is in third place, understood as the market including sales activities by a company to the end consumer, which rose from 14 cases recorded in the first three months of the year, to **40** between April and June. On the other hand, the **Public Administration** sector dropped **from 89 to 65 cases**, thanks to investments in data protection policies and a greater awareness of IT security in public bodies. The **Industry** sector closes the ranking with 19 cases.

Data theft retains the top spot among the main types of damage caused by hackers, with **63% of total cases** (423), down slightly from 65% in the previous quarter. Data theft consists of the illegal storage or transfer of personal, financial or proprietary information such as passwords, software codes, algorithms and processes causing serious consequences for the persons or organisations impacted. In second place was the demand for **money**, with **about a 362% increase** compared to the previous quarter. This was followed by **service interruption** (halting normal operations of a network, application or a software service) with **5% of the cases**, sharply down from 15% in the previous quarter; while **invasion of privacy**, i.e. the disclosure of data by third parties without the consent of the data subject, stood at **4%**.

Phishing/social engineering, meaning the online or email grooming of inattentive or unaware users, is still the main type of attack, accounting for **60% of total cases** (406 occurrences compared to 145 in the previous quarter and **a 180% increase**); attacks using **malware** (malicious software that compromises or disrupts the use of devices) are also on the rise, currently in second place with **173 cases** compared to 104 recorded between January and March 2023. In particular, there is an exponential increase in RAT malware (Remote Access Trojans), which have a high capacity for evading detection tools and taking control of systems, then carrying out DDoS attacks or stealing confidential information, for example.

According to Exprivia's report, **cybercrime** remains the top threat to online security in Italy, with **617 cases** and a 142% increase over the previous quarter. **Data breaches** (security breaches resulting in the destruction, loss, modification, access or unauthorised disclosure of personal data) are at a considerable distance with 28 cases, and **hacktivism** (criminal activity with the aim of promoting a political or social cause) with 22.

The number of **IoT devices connected to the network (around eight million)** decreased slightly (-2%) and, according to the evaluation indexes elaborated by Exprivia's Observatory, cameras have the highest security risk, while the sector most exposed to attacks - and therefore where the least investment in cybersecurity is recorded - is the Entertainment industry (film, TV, sport, theme



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parks, etc.). This figure could be strongly influenced by the speed with which companies in this industry face technological progress, which does not always go hand in hand with the protection of the new solutions introduced.

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www.exprivia.com

Contacts

Exprivia SpA

Investor Relations

Gianni Sebastiano

gianni.sebastiano@exprivia.it

T. + 39 0803382070 - F. +39 0803382077

Press Office

Sec Mediterranea

T. +39 080/5289670

Teresa Marmo

teresa.marmo@secnewgate.it - Mobile +39 335/6718211

Gianluigi Conese

gianluigi.conese@secnewgate.it - Mobile +39 335/7846403

Sec and Partners

T. +39 06/3222712

Martina Trecca

martina.trecca@secnewgate.it - Mobile +39 334/1019671

Andrea Lijoi

andrea.lijoi@secnewgate.it - Mobile +39 329/2605000

