State of Cybersecurity 2021

Despite Disruptive Pandemic Year, Cybersecurity Workforce Challenges and Opportunities Remain Consistent

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that devastated many industries and career fields, cybersecurity remained relatively unscathed, according to new research from global IT and cybersecurity association ISACA.

But that's not to say everything is rosy. More than 3,600 cybersecurity leaders report consistent challenges finding qualified, well-rounded candidates—and understaffed teams are an increasingly common problem, number of cyberattacks. Despite years of effort by government, industry and academia, and major financial investment to develop a strong pipeline of cybersecurity candidates, little has changed.

Although cybersecurity jobs are in high demand, few organizations offer entry-level opportunities, limiting entry points into the field. How can we, once and for all, begin making a significant impact to the ongoing skills gap?


Hiring Managers Struggle to Find Qualified Candidates

58% say hiring managers struggle to find qualified candidates.

27% say HR regularly understands their cybersecurity hiring needs.

31% say HR regularly understands their cybersecurity hiring needs.

72% of those reported that more than half of their applicants are well-qualified have unfilled positions longer than three months.

47% say demand for technical candidates with cybersecurity skills is going to increase in the next year.

44% say it takes 3-6 months—up from 30% last year

56% say it takes less than six months—down from 39% last year

WANTED:
Well-rounded Candidates
While technical skills remain in significant demand, employers are seeking well-rounded candidates with solid soft skills—but finding them is a challenge.

47% say all or most of their unfilled positions are at that level.

79% say demand for technical candidates with cybersecurity skills is going to increase in the next year.

16% say less than 50% have unfilled cybersecurity positions—down from 39% last year

In 2021, only 36% of organizations were able to fill cybersecurity positions, down from 44% in 2020.

Prior hands-on cybersecurity experience

99%

TOP SKILLS:

36% Security controls
33% Software development
31% Cyber-related topics
31% Coding skills

1
56% Soft skills

2
34% Security controls

3
33% Software development

4
31% Cyber-related topics

5
31% Coding skills

Training main security staff who are interested in moving to security roles (43%)

Increasing use of contract employees or outside consultants (37%)

Increasing use of reskilling programs (23%)

Increasing reliance on AI/automation (22%)

Biggest skills gaps:

1. Training main security staff who are interested in moving to security roles (43%)

2. Increasing use of contract employees or outside consultants (37%)

3. Increasing use of reskilling programs (23%)

4. Increasing reliance on AI/automation (22%)

5. Increasing an interest in moving security roles (22%)

How organizations are addressing them:

 Say it takes longer than six months to hire a technical candidate, down from 11 months last year.

46%