

9 in 10 Have Put Personal Data at Risk in Past Year

Americans Say Identity Theft Worse Than Home Break-In

Austin, Texas – February 7, 2019 – More than 9 in 10 (92%) U.S. adults have been guilty of at least one risky data security behavior in the past year, according to a new CreditCards.com report. This is despite the finding that Americans are more concerned about identity theft than home burglaries. Click here for more information:

<https://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/data-security-poll.php>

The most common data security sin is re-using online passwords, a no-no that could contribute to identity theft. More than 8 in 10 (82%) are currently doing this, including 61% who use the same password at least half of the time and 22% who always do.

Other common risky behaviors include using a public Wi-Fi network (48%), saving passwords (45%) and payment info (35%) online, carrying a Social Security card in a purse or wallet (33%), throwing out/recycling mail containing personal information without shredding (28%), using an ATM located somewhere other than a financial institution (27%) and posting one's birthday on social media (20%).

While Americans are too often putting their data in jeopardy, they do profess to be worried about it. In fact, more people believe that having their identity stolen would be worse than having their home broken into (46% vs. 27%). The propensity to single out data security over home security increases with age; 51% of Baby Boomers (ages 55-73) think having their identity stolen would be worse than a home break-in (19%), while the gap for Millennials (ages 23-38) favors data security by only six percentage points (40% vs. 34%).

“You need to be your own advocate when it comes to data security,” said CreditCards.com analyst Ted Rossman. “There have been so many high-profile data breaches that I’d assume your personal data has already been compromised. Take smart steps to reduce your risk of identity theft, starting with a credit freeze, because that’s the best way to prevent a criminal from opening a new account in your name. In addition, monitor your credit scores and reports regularly to make sure everything looks right, and avoid re-using passwords.”

Although a credit freeze is an important proactive data security measure, just 24% of U.S. adults have ever frozen their credit. Men, Millennials, and those with higher income and education levels are more likely to have done so. Among those who have not frozen their credit, the most common reason is that they don't find a credit freeze useful (42%).

Americans are doing better when it comes to checking their credit scores and reports: 83% and 81%, respectively, have done so. But there's room for improvement here, as well. Six in 10 have failed to check their credit report within the past six months, and nearly 1 in 5 (19%) have never done so. Those with lower income and education levels are less likely to have checked up on their credit.

Methodology:

CreditCards.com commissioned YouGov Plc to conduct the survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,210 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken on January 11-14, 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all U.S. adults (aged 18+).

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