

FOSTERING CYBER RESILIENCE

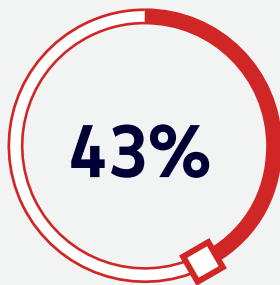


Payroll systems hold some of the most sensitive data in any organisation, such as personal identifiers, bank account details, salary information, and tax records. That makes them an attractive target for cybersecurity attacks.

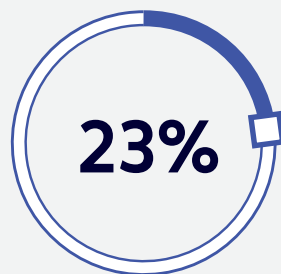
The global payroll survey, **The potential of payroll in 2026** reveals a significant increase in these kinds of incidents. Seventy percent of payroll leaders report at least one cybersecurity incident affecting their payroll operations in the past 24 months. That's up from 57% the previous year.

The 13-percentage-point jump suggests that the threat will continue to grow as attack strategies become more sophisticated.

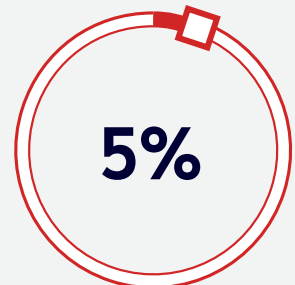
New technologies and tools, including artificial intelligence (AI) tools, can make it easier than ever to generate large amounts of phishing emails in one go, or create shockingly convincing spam calls. Payroll is assuming an increasingly strategic role in organisations, so resilient teams will become more important than ever.



have experienced one or two security incidents in the last 24 months which impacted their payroll



have experienced three or four security incidents in the last 24 months which impacted their payroll



have experienced five or more security incidents in the last 24 months which impacted their payroll



From awareness to readiness

Payroll teams are not blind to this risk. Most leaders understand the exposure they carry. Getting organisations to the point where they're prepared for this new reality is, however, still a work in progress.

Only 41% of organisations have a company-wide contingency plan in place for payroll. That means nearly

six in ten organisations — many of which have already experienced a security incident — are still operating without a coordinated response playbook.

Organisations are catching up, however. Forty-nine percent now have playbooks and plans in place for some of their countries, up from 33% last year.



Investing in dedicated security capability

The response to rising threats is increasingly built into payroll operations. Forty-seven percent of payroll teams now have dedicated data security resources. These are professionals who are focused specifically on protecting payroll data and systems. A further 37% say they would like to build this capability, suggesting broad recognition that security can no longer be the sole responsibility of IT teams.

Thirty-three percent of payroll leaders have named data security as a top global improvement priority for the next two to three years. This places it alongside compliance and reporting as a defining concern.



Building resilience on local and global levels

As payroll assumes an increasingly strategic role in organisations, resilient teams will become more important than ever. The organisations best positioned to manage cybersecurity threats are those that don't just respond reactively after an incident, but that have dedicated security expertise built into every level of their operations.

That means developing and testing contingency plans on both local and global levels, ensuring payroll has the expertise and authority to manage security issues, establishing clear incident response protocols — including with third-party vendors —, and maintaining close coordination with IT.

Organisations that treat data protection as a strategic driver — not just a compliance obligation — are better positioned to prevent incidents and recover faster when they occur.



41%

have developed a playbook and contingency plan across all of their countries



49%

have developed a playbook and plans for some of their countries



9%

have considered building plans, but have none in place at the moment



1%

have not considered building such plans

DISCOVER MORE

Learn how organisations are strengthening payroll security and building cyber resilience in the full report: [The potential of payroll in 2026: Global payroll survey.](#)

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