

Expertise you can trust

By the Numbers: Third Quarter 2023

2023 continues to set a record pace. There were **175** breaches reported this quarter to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

While that is one fewer than the previous quarter, over **45 million records were impacted**, which is **nearly double** the number in the previous quarter.

The last two quarters' combined totals **rise to a level we haven't seen since 2015**, when two huge breaches sent the trend "off the chart" (see the "Historical Trends" graph, below).

Alarms should be going off for everyone responsible for safeguarding healthcare information.

Hacking and Unauthorized Access

Hacking or unauthorized access victimized **99.9%** of all individuals impacted, which is unchanged from Q2. Other event types continue to diminish in significance.

Email & "Other" Compete for 2nd Place

In this quarter, breaches in the "Other" category impacted **12 million individuals**, the second highest number of records compromised. By this metric, the Email category fell to third.

But when ranked by **number of data breaches**, email held onto the #2 spot with **28** events reported this quarter.

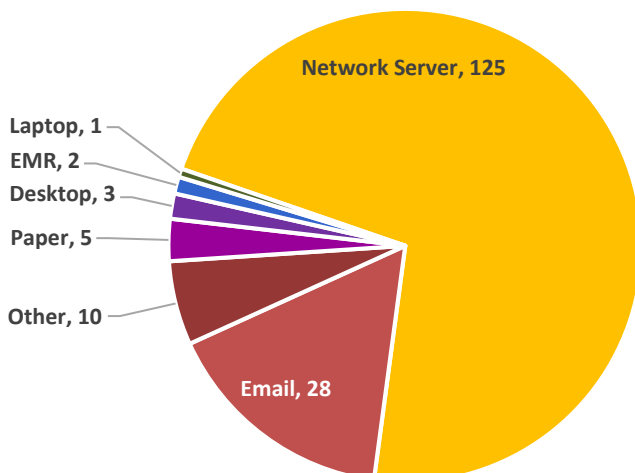
Secure your Network Servers!

Network servers continue to be the most common target for data breaches, with **125** reported events. This quarter, **33.2 million** individuals were exposed.

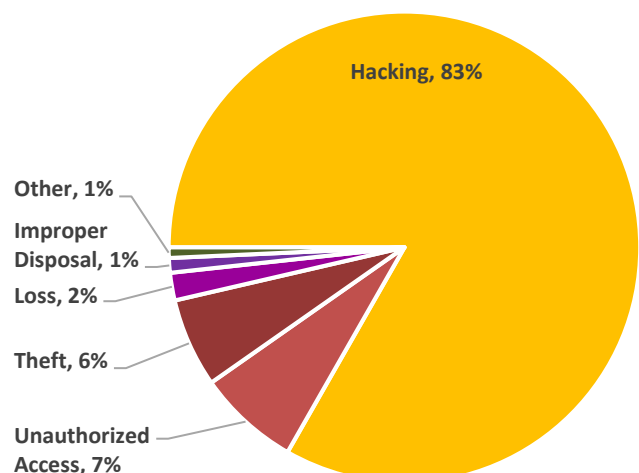
Business Associates Had a Rough Quarter

43% of breaches reported affected Business Associates, which is **9%** more than last quarter. This category accounts for **72%** of all individuals impacted this quarter! These large increases were primarily due to the [huge breach](#) at HCA Healthcare, an attack that targeted one of its Business Associates. *Will you be next?*

Q3 '23 Breaches - Data Location



Q3 '23 Breaches - Patient Impact

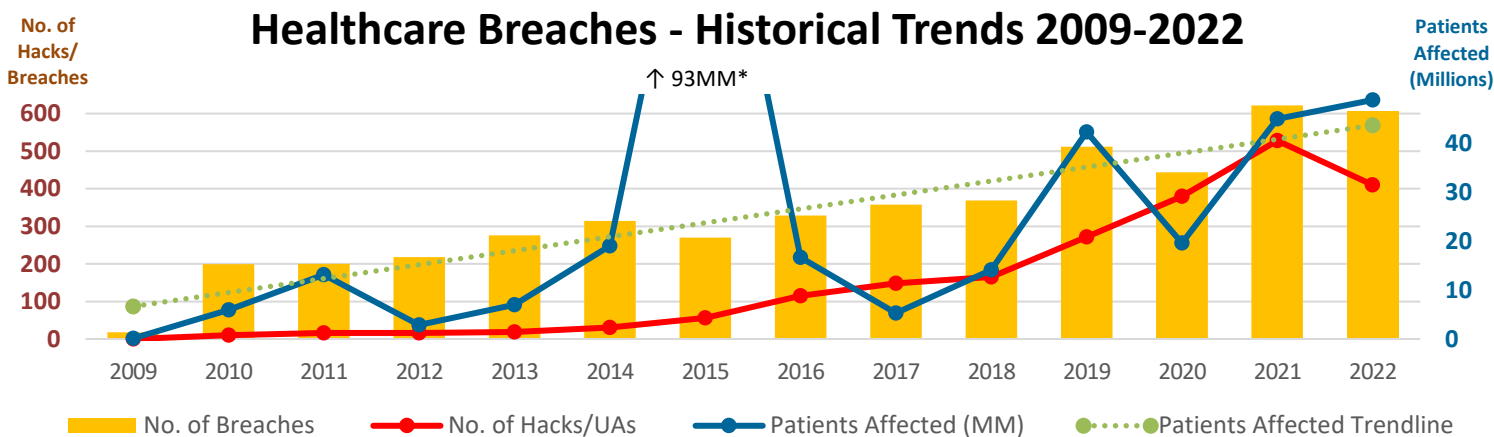


By the Numbers: Total to Date

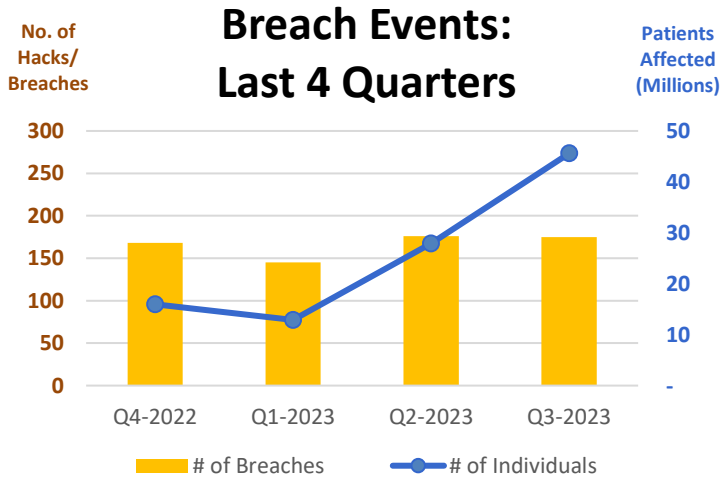
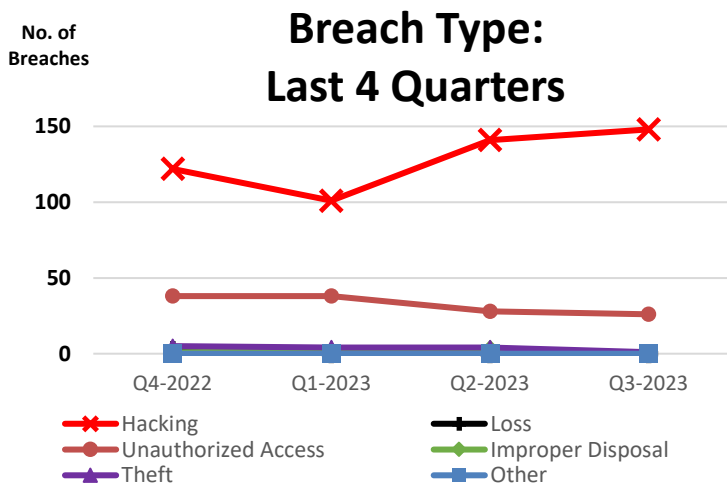
Since 2009 when reporting began through **September 30, 2023**, there have been **5,304 breaches** reported to HHS that impacted 500 patients or more, affecting **440,779,259** individuals in total.

There have now been **1331** incidents impacting Business Associates and Business Partners since reporting began. This is a **1%** rise which brings these categories up to **25%** of all reported events.

Nearly **33 million more** individuals have been affected, bringing the amount to **165,710,780**, or **38%** of the total.



**Off chart due to 78.8 million members impacted by 2015 Anthem breach*



Breach Breakdown: 2009 to Present

Exploit Type	Number of Incidents	% Total Incidents	Number of Patients	% of Patients
Hacking	2,613	49%	365,900,807	83%
Unauthorized Access	1,260	24%	34,421,609	7%
Theft	1003	19%	26,834,774	6%
Loss	226	4%	8,327,940	2%
Improper Disposal	113	2%	2,130,630	1%
Other*	89	2%	3,163,499	1%

Source: https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/breach/breach_report.jsf

* Category discontinued in 2010

Key Takeaways

- This quarter was a difficult one for information security, which had the largest number of individuals impacted in a single quarter **since 2015**.
- The HCA data breach that affected over **11 million individuals** is a stark reminder that covered entities must receive assurances that Business Associates are **conducting risk analyses** and **complying with the HIPAA security rule**.
- **Hacking is the greatest hazard** for business associates and healthcare organizations, responsible for 99.8% of all individuals impacted by data exposure.
- Business Associates continue to be targeted, and the severe impact of these data breaches clearly demonstrates the urgent need for **continuous information security vetting** of these partners.
- **Network servers and email** are the most common sources of data breaches, which is why **99%** of the individuals affected by data breaches have been victimized by **hacking and unauthorized access**.
- The term “email” is vague, but usually refers to **email-based phishing attacks**, demonstrating the critical need for staff training in **safe email usage**. (Because event categories are not precisely standardized, the breach type listed in the report is dependent on the facility’s choice of term when posting to the HHS website.)

Stay Safe, Everyone! Let’s be Careful Out There!