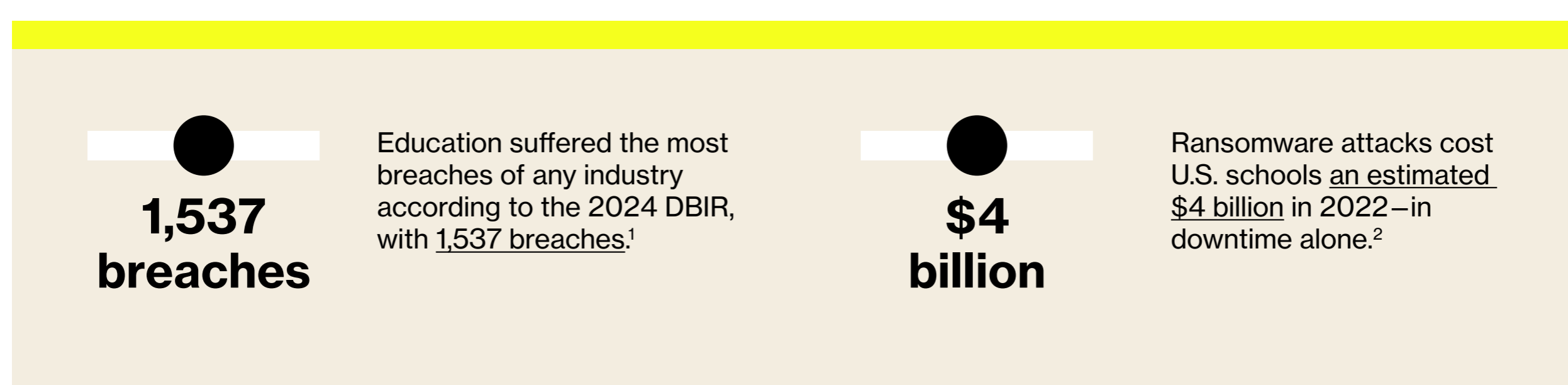


School district ransomware attack: How to prepare



A school district ransomware attack is a growing challenge facing overworked and understaffed educators. Learn more about how ransomware attacks on schools may impact your school and how to help prepare for them.

Ransomware attacks on schools are rising



Why do criminals target schools?

- Schools may use old and outdated devices and applications.
- School IT departments are often understaffed.³
- Schools often lack cybersecurity budgets and personnel.
- Schools collect highly valuable information.

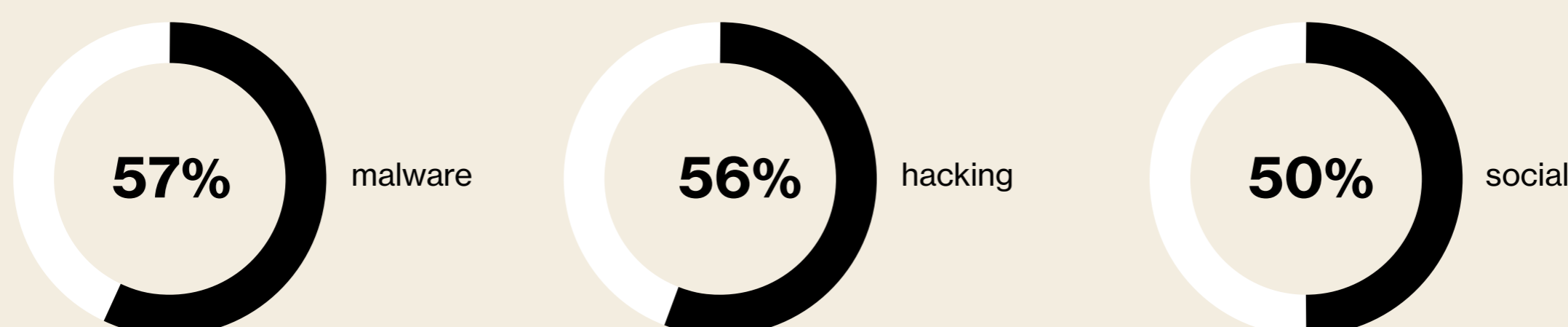
Data collected by schools may include:

- Student social security numbers and addresses
- Health data
- Disciplinary records
- Staff payroll
- Family payment information

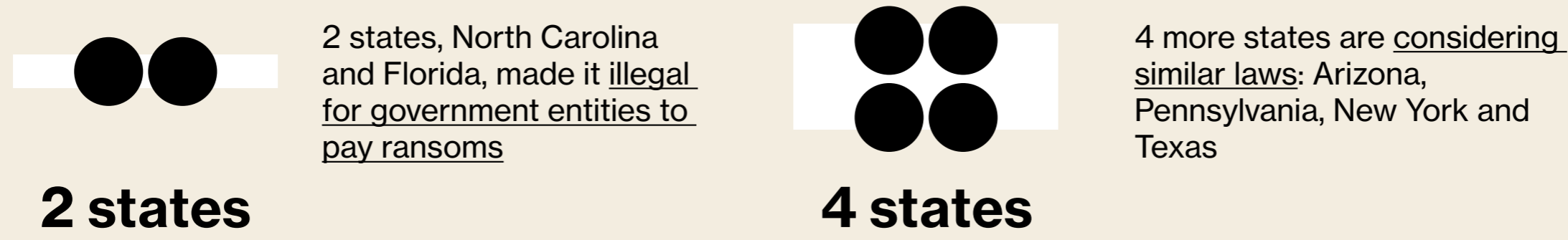
Are schools paying the ransom?



Education services were affected by malware (Backdoor – 57%), hacking (Exploit vulnerabilities – 56%) and social (Extortion – 50%) as noted in the 2024 DBIR.⁵



In some states, it is now illegal to pay a ransom:



How to help prepare for a school district ransomware attack

Best practices for mitigating a school district ransomware attack include:⁶

- Regularly update and patch all software and operating systems
- Remove any unnecessary access to administrative systems
- Conduct regular penetration and vulnerability tests
- Create redundant, offline systems that are backed up frequently
- Use a host-based firewall
- Consider cybersecurity insurance
- Build a strong incident response plan
- Require cybersecurity awareness training for all faculty and staff

What to include in cybersecurity awareness training:

- How to create strong, unique passwords
- Use multi-factor authentication (MFA)
- Never share logos, passwords or passcodes
- Do not click on any unknown or suspicious links (and train all users to do likewise)
- Verify information by going directly to sites instead of clicking through an email

Learn more about how Verizon can help your school district with cybersecurity mitigation against ransomware attacks on schools.

The author of this content is a paid contributor for Verizon.
¹ CI Verizon, 2024 Data Breach Investigations Report, page 57.
² Verizon, Paying the Price, Ransomware in Education, 2023, page 4.
³ Ibid, page 7.
⁴ Verizon, 2024 Data Breach Investigations Report, page 32.
⁵ Ibid, page 61.
⁶ Verizon, Paying the Price, Ransomware in Education, 2023, page 11.

