

For Immediate Release

Data Protection Excellence Centre, research arm of Straits Interactive Releases Findings of Industry's First Comprehensive Data Protection Officer Survey in Singapore

Majority of Data Protection Officers "double-hat" with other functional roles and spend less than 25% of their time on data protection responsibilities

Singapore, 27 August, 2020 - The Data Protection Excellence (DPEX) Centre, the learning and research arm of Straits Interactive, today released the findings of the first comprehensive data protection officer (DPO) survey in Singapore.

The objective of the survey was to understand the issues and challenges faced by the data protection profession in Singapore. The study, which had close to 250 responses, was targeted specifically at only data protection professionals who had undergone training or obtained certifications in data protection, such as the IAPP certifications.

Survey Findings

According to the findings:

- 66% of DPOs double-hat with other functional roles
- 22% of DPOs are legal counsels
- 12% are dedicated DPOs

Of the DPOs who double-hat with other functional roles, the top three combined functions are:

- General business processes / continuity
- Compliance / Internal Audit
- Human Resources

63% of the DPOs who double-hat spend less than 25% of their time dealing with data protection matters, while another 27% of the DPOs spend less than 50% of their time dealing with data protection matters.

Challenges Faced

The top five challenges and difficulties faced by DPOs are:

1. Having insufficient bandwidth to do their DPO job effectively
2. Coordinating compliance across multiple stakeholders / departments
3. Implementing data protection policies
4. Conducting data protection impact assessments (DPIAs)
5. Getting support from senior management

Said Kevin Shepherdson, CEO, Straits Interactive, "The Personal Data Protection Act mandates the appointment of a DPO. The findings suggest that most organisations (likely the smaller SMEs) in Singapore combine the data protection function with one or more other functional roles, which implies there is very little emphasis on data protection. This is aggravated by the fact that there are still many untrained DPOs who hold the title only in name. Therefore, it is not surprising that DPOs do and will struggle to perform their operational day-to-day duties in safeguarding personal data and/or ensuring that their organisations are in compliance with the PDPA. Insufficient bandwidth to perform the DPO role, difficulty to get buy-in from management and stakeholders as well as implementing the required data protection impact assessment and policies are all important considerations leading to complaints to the PDPC sooner or later. Complaints lead to investigations about whether there has been a breach of the PDPA. PDPC investigations consume significant manpower and financial resources. Financial penalties meted out by the PDPC are rising. The overall effect is that not properly resourcing and supporting the DPO role is a high financial risk decision."

Recommendations

To address the survey findings, the DPEX Centre recommends that in addition to being familiar with the requirements of the PDPA, those appointed as DPOs or performing data protection functions should be:

- *locally certified*, that is, obtaining the Practitioner Certificate in Personal Data Protection which is awarded by the PDPC - or
- *internationally certified*, that is, obtaining the Certified Information Privacy Management (CIPM) credential which is awarded by the International Association of Privacy Professionals

These qualifications provide the requisite foundational skills to those tasked with effectively managing their organisation's data protection programme from the data protection management programme right through to the data breach response plan.

A web conference discussing these trends will be held on 10 September, 2020 at 2.30 pm. Those interested in signing up for the webinar can go to bit.ly/DPEXN1009. More information about the DPEX Centre can be found at www.dpexnetwork.org.

- End -

Data Protection Excellence (DPEX) Network

The Data Protection Excellence (DPEX) Centre is the research and education arm of the DPEX Network, a first of its kind facility in the ASEAN region whose aim is to provide leadership, best practices, training, research and support for all things surrounding data privacy from an operational perspective. This collaboration of partnerships comprises certification bodies, law firms, universities and organisations who provide professional services and technologies relating to data privacy. An ever-growing network, members currently include Straits Interactive, Singapore Management University, International Islamic University Malaysia, De LaSalle University, Philippines, IAPP, EXIN, OCEG and Lexxion amongst others. More information about DPEX Network can be found at www.dpexnetwork.org

About Straits Interactive

Straits Interactive delivers end-to-end governance, risk and compliance solutions that enable trusted business and responsible marketing, especially in the area of data privacy and protection. Recently Data Protection Trustmark (DPTM) certified, we help businesses achieve operational compliance and manage risks through a combination of cloud technology and professional services. Our quest for innovation has led to us being recognised and awarded Intercon's Top 50 Tech Companies (in recognition of the company's contribution to technology) and APAC Business Headlines' Company of the Year, 2019. Our software-as-a-service solutions include DPOinBOX and Governance, Risk & Compliance System (GRACIAs), all of which are supported by professional services that include advisory services, audits, and training. More information about the company can be found on www.straitsinteractive.com.



Media Contact

Straits Interactive/DPEX Network

Angela Schooling
Marketing & Communications Director
Mobile: + 65 98222625
Email: Angela@straitsinteractive.com

Clearstory International

Lauren Fetherstone
Account Executive
Telephone: +353 870660479
Email: Lauren@clearstoryinternational.com

APPENDIX

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Appendix – Singapore DPO Survey 2020

August 2020



DPEX Network Singapore DPO Survey

Objectives:

1. To understand the issues and challenges faced by the data protection profession,
2. To approximate the “bandwidth” allocated to data protection by the organisations
3. To gauge the current skillsets/competency of the profession in Singapore.

Method:

Online survey through Facebook, LinkedIn and email contacts.

DPEX Network Singapore DPO Survey

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Online survey through Facebook, LinkedIn and email contacts.

Period of Survey:

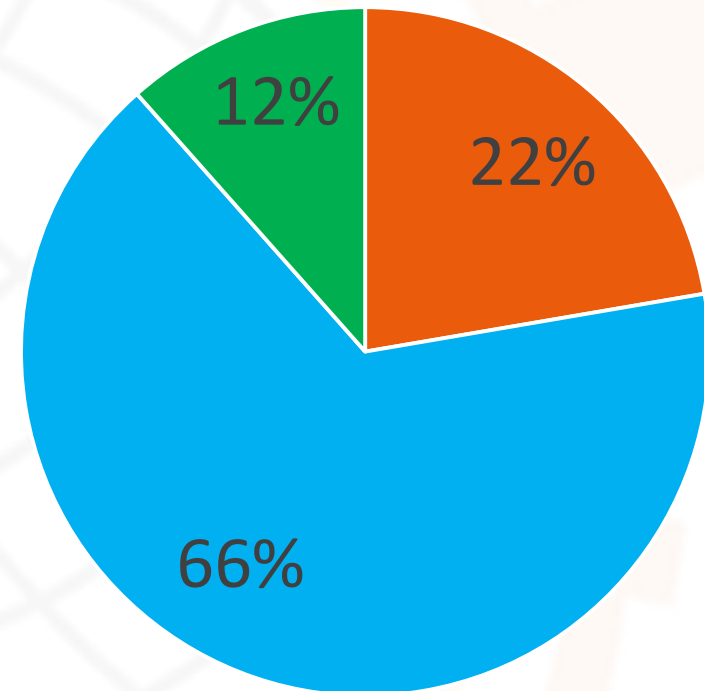
3rd March to 8th June 2020.

Total Responses:

Sample achieved, n = 237.

Data Protection Officers' Profile

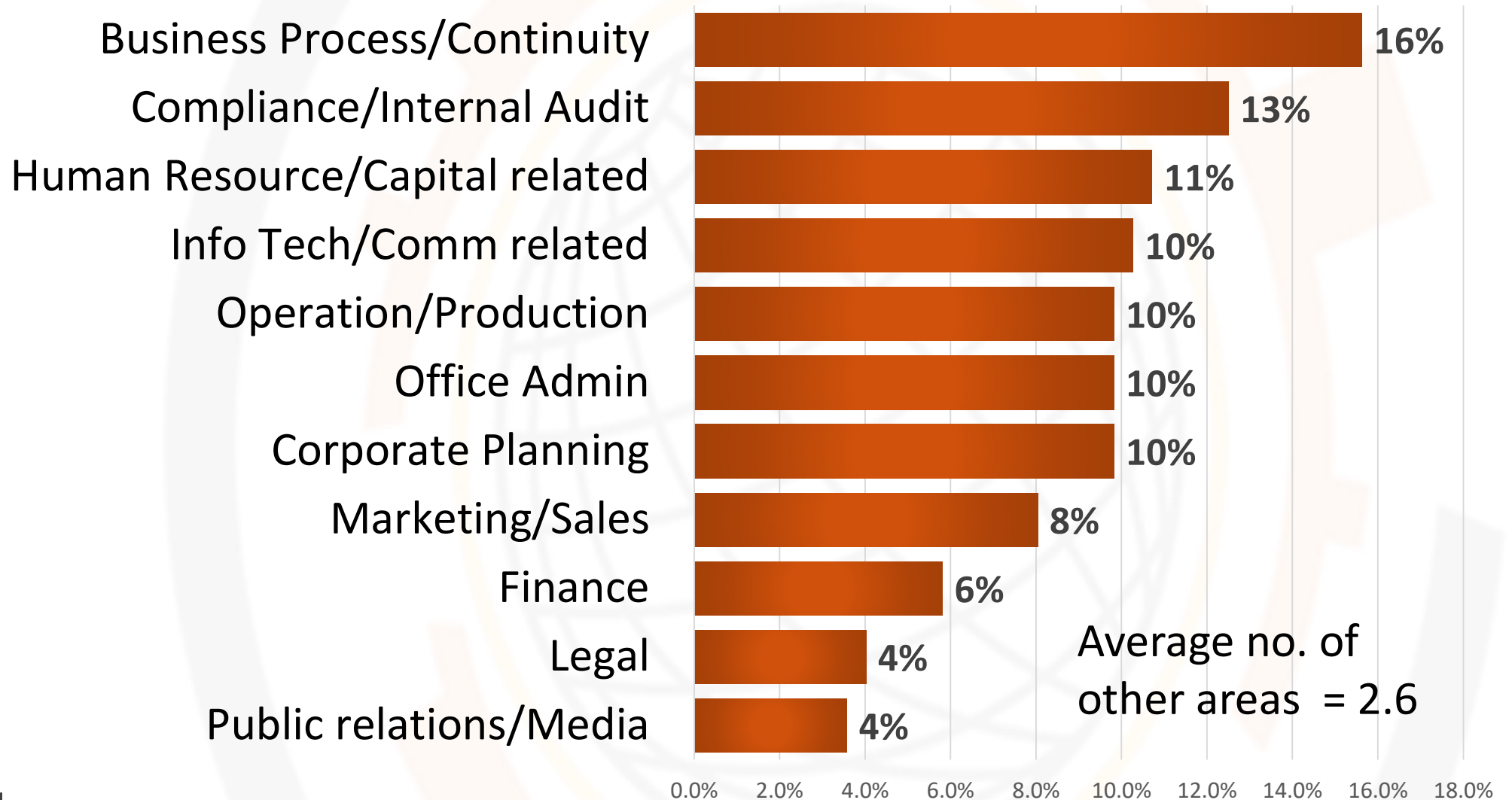
- I am a legal counsel with data protection responsibilities
- My main role is DPO and “double-hatting” with other functions
- My role is solely dedicated to looking into Data Protection and data security related matters.



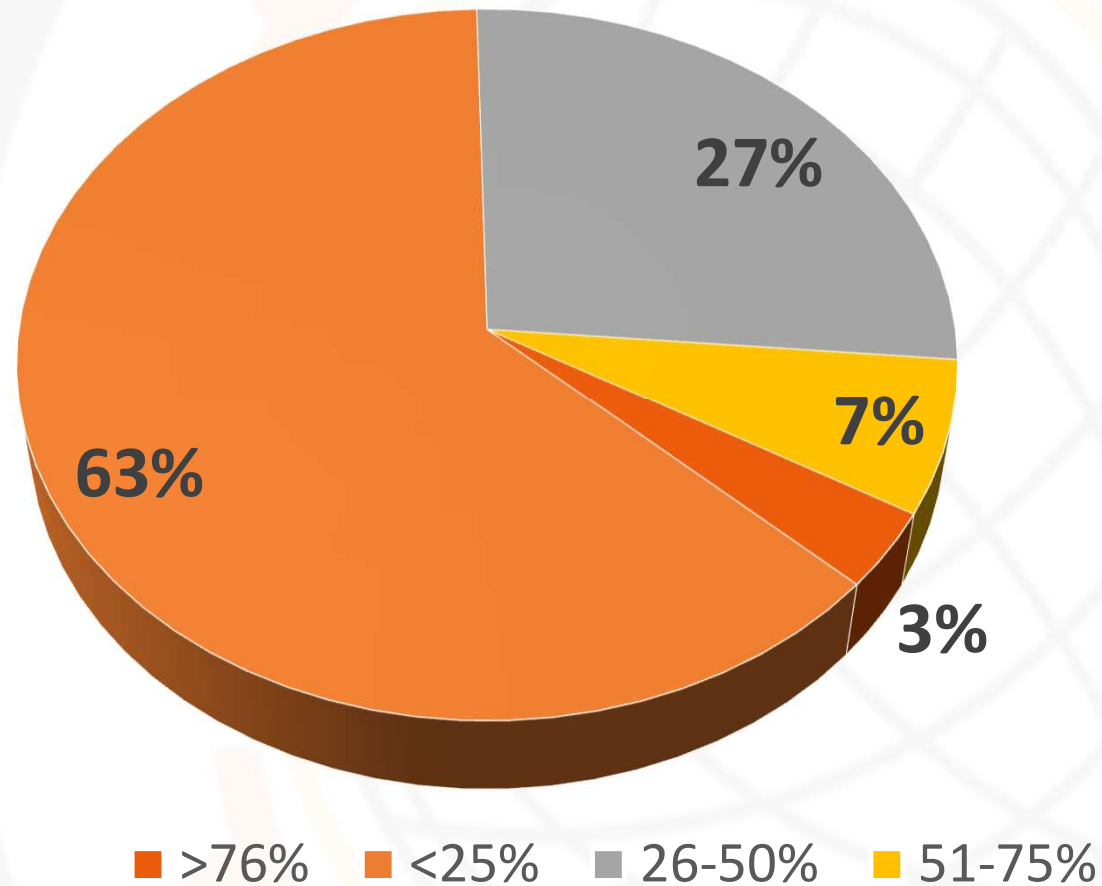
Excludes those

- Involved in data protection function but not DPO
- not working in data protection field.

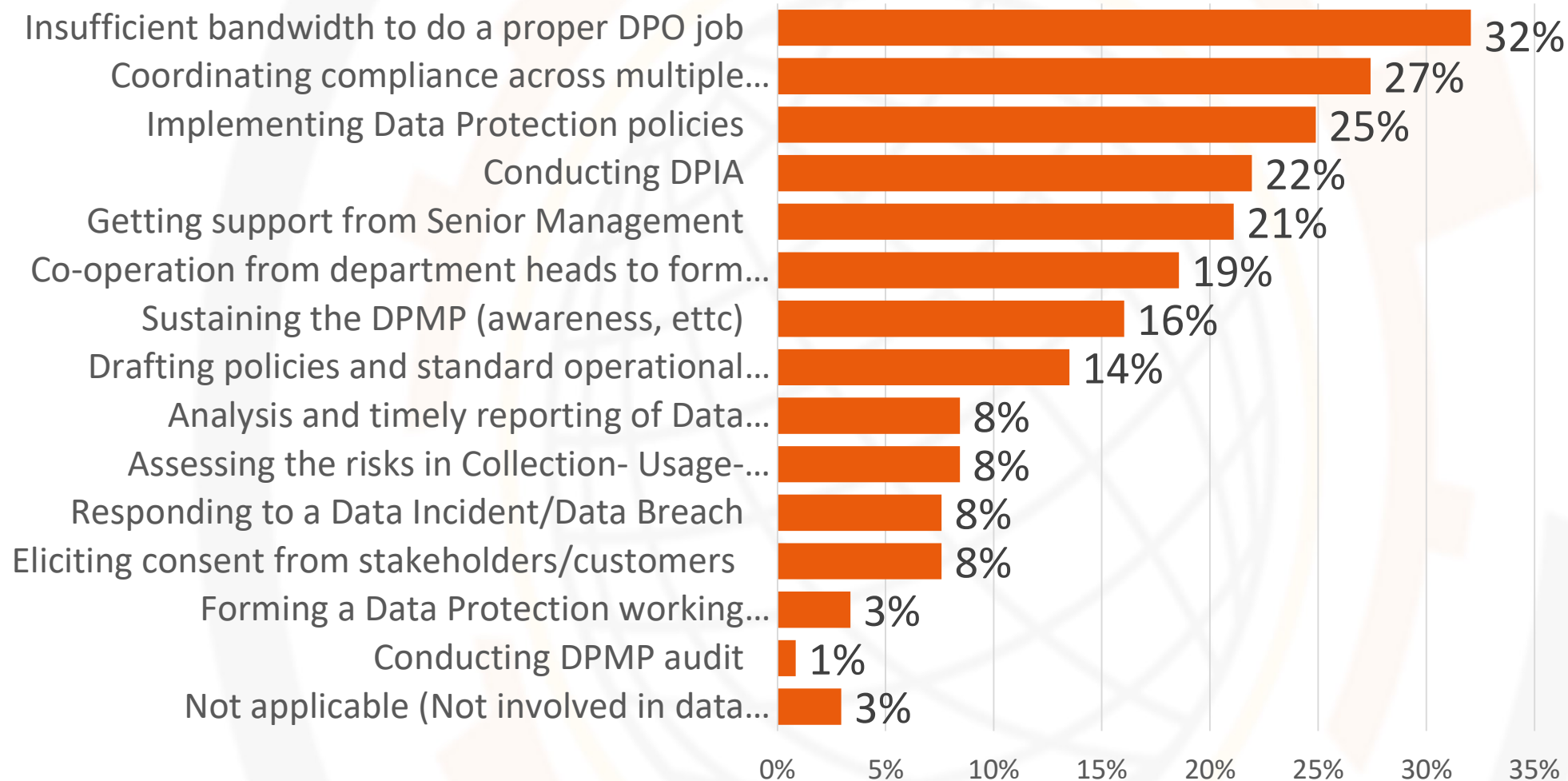
My main role is DPO, but “double-hat” with ...



What portion your time is used for work relating to data protection (percentage of time spent in DP role)?



Challenges & Difficulties faced in DP role



Topline Findings

- Most DPOs have more than one portfolio. Data protection is commonly combined with Business Continuity planning or Compliance role.
 - 66.2% Double Hating
 - 22.3% DPOs are legal counsels
 - 11.5% Dedicated DPO
- About 6% of DPOs have “regional” role. The understanding of “regional DPO” is that they oversee data protection outside Singapore as well, the most common being Asia Pacific, followed by EU and ASEAN.
- The challenges most DPOs face is the lack of bandwidth to perform their responsibility well. However a significant percentage also find it difficult to undertake DPO responsibilities.
- One in four DPOs are aware their organisation encountered a data breach/incident in the past three years. This is still somewhat lower than the global average of 28% in the past two years.
- Given that the PDPA will intensify enforcement (i.e. increase financial penalty), it is likely more DPOs will be required and they will need to spend more time to implement data protection management programme in their organisation.



THANK YOU!