



The Ultimate Guide to Microsoft Secure Score

In the era of digital business, robust cybersecurity is critical. Today, all organizations need reliable security defenses to safeguard their assets from clever cyber criminals and their sophisticated attack weapons. But to implement such defenses, they must first understand their security posture.

Security posture refers to the security status of enterprise networks, software, hardware, and information systems. It also refers to cybersecurity readiness: the controls and capabilities implemented to defend the organization from cyberattacks.

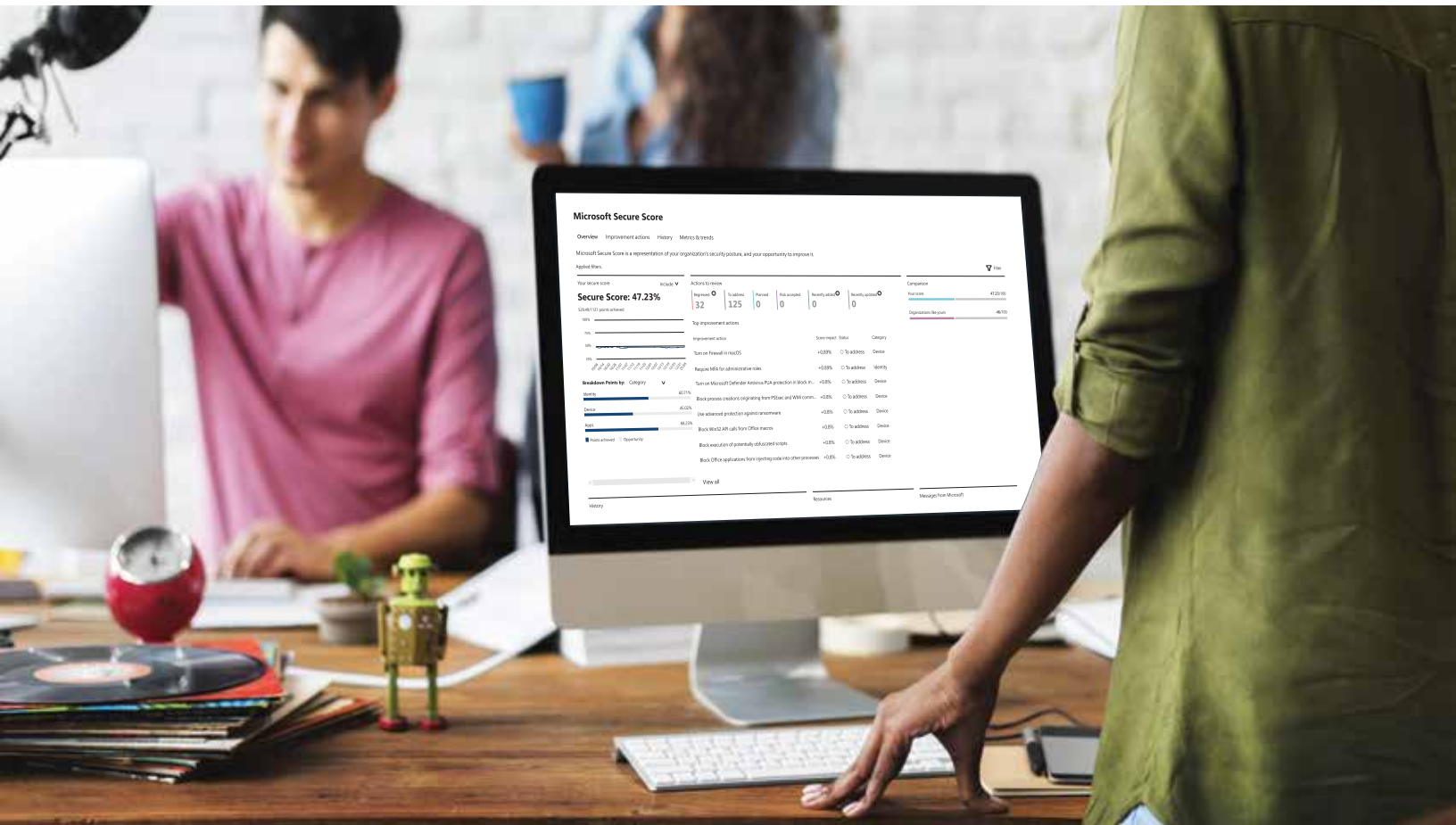
A business that understands its security posture has good visibility of its attack surface and can leverage this visibility to detect, contain, and recover from attacks. That's why measuring your security posture and taking action to eliminate gaps is critical.

Here's where a measurement tool like Microsoft Secure Score can help.

What Is Microsoft Secure Score?

Microsoft Secure Score is a baked-in, quantitative measurement tool in the Microsoft security suite that helps businesses express their security posture through a universal metric. It can't be gamed and encompasses devices, identities, apps, infrastructure, and data in the Microsoft cloud and outside of it. It allows you to compare your security posture to other organizations of the same size and industry.

The tool provides intelligent insights and guidance to help businesses optimize their security posture, implement security improvements, and proactively strengthen their ability to withstand cyberattacks.



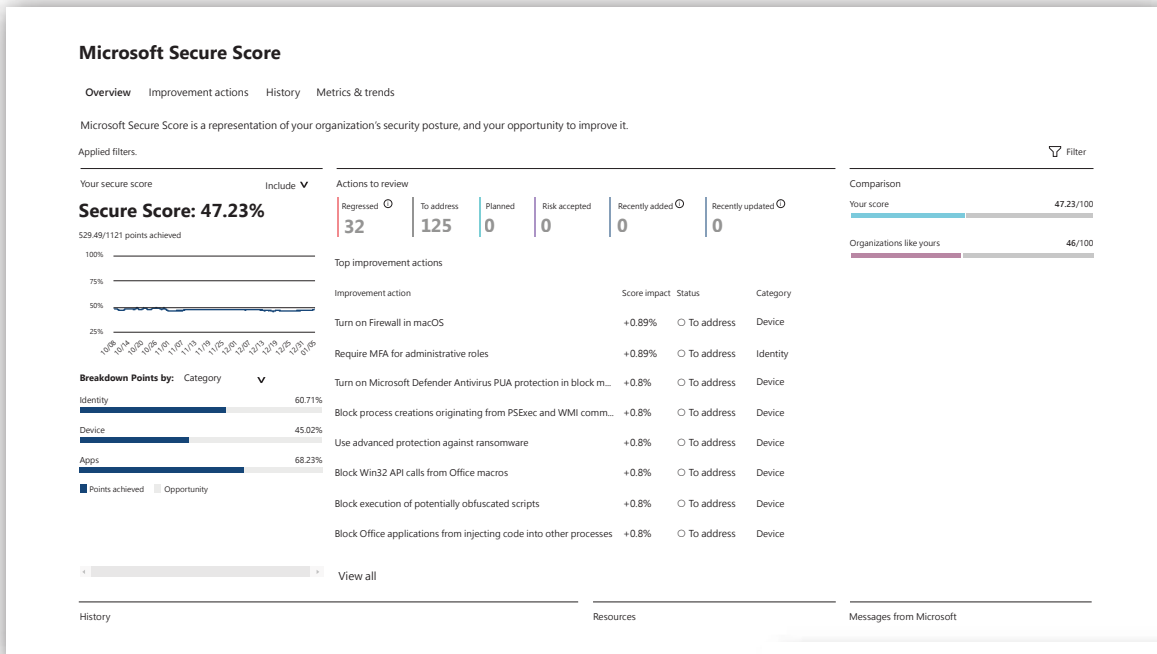
How Does Microsoft Secure Score Work?

Microsoft Secure Score and its recommendations are visible in the Microsoft 365 Defender portal. Secure Score works on a points system. Organizations are assigned points for implementing security actions, such as configuring security features (e.g., multi-factor authentication), creating a security policy, or strengthening a third-party application.

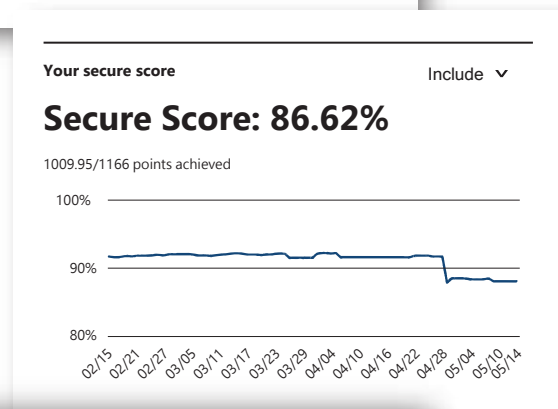
Each action is worth up to 10 points. As the company implements more recommendations, its Secure Score goes up. Scoring is dynamic and typically adjusts within 24 hours of an activity. A higher score indicates that the company has acted on the provided recommendations and improved its security posture by offsetting security risks.

Key Features of Microsoft Secure Score

Microsoft Secure Score includes numerous features that help organizations assess and improve their security posture. The score itself is a percentage value and is visible on the Defender dashboard.



Next to the score, the “Include” drop-down arrow allows you to see the projected score if the organization completes its planned actions. This projection helps with progress tracking and reporting.



Your secure score Include

- Planned score**
Show projected score when planned actions are completed
- Current license score**
Show score that can be achieved with your current Microsoft license
- Achievable score**
Show score that can be achieved with your Microsoft licenses and current risk acceptance

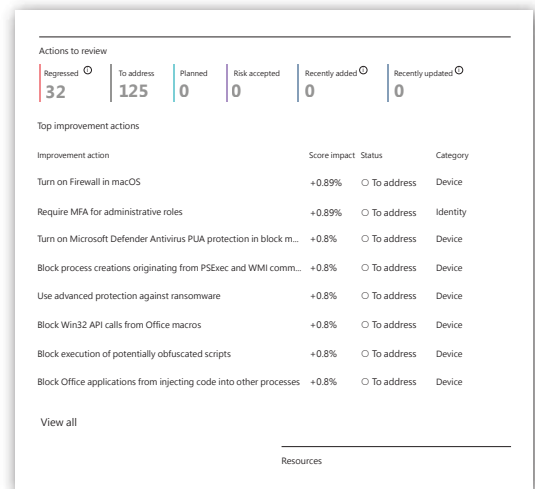
The “Achievable score” provides the potential score if the organization accepts some risks despite the recommendations of Microsoft Secure Score. A trend of accepted risks is visible in the “Metrics & trends” section.

Actions to Review

Next to the score, the “Actions to review” section provides guidance for improving the score. In addition, a prioritized list of “Top improvement actions” shows how a particular action will impact the score.

A full list of improvement actions, score impact, points achieved, status, and the affected product is available under the “Improvement actions” tab. The most impactful changes appear at the top, allowing companies to focus on the actions with the highest potential (positive) impact on the score.

On the main dashboard, a line chart visually shows the score for the previous 90 days, allowing the organization to see how – or if – it has improved its security posture. In addition, a comparison section shows how the score compares to other organizations.



Metrics and Trends

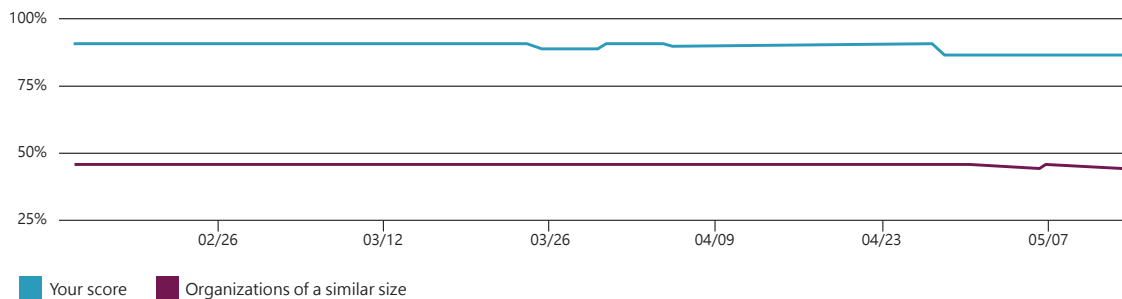
A more detailed and visual 90-day comparison is provided within the “Metrics & trends” section. The “Metrics & trends” section also shows how the score has changed based on points achieved or regressed. A regression trend displays how many points were lost (due to configuration/user/device changes), thus affecting the score and leading to a regression in the overall security posture.

Metrics & Trends



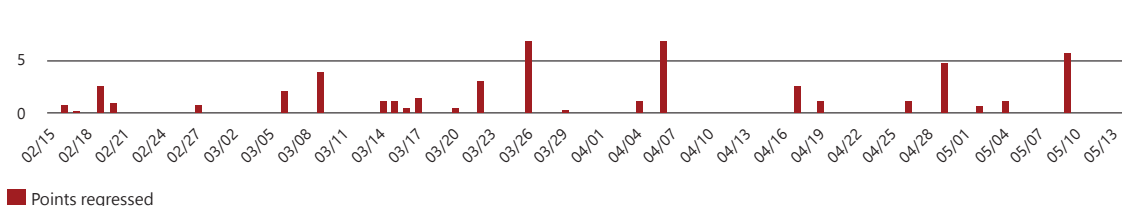
Comparison trend

How your organization's Secure Score compares to others' over time.



Regression trend

Timeline of points that have regressed due to configuration, user, or device changes.





5 Compelling Benefits of Microsoft Secure Score

Here are five ways organizations can benefit from Microsoft Secure Score:

#1: Improve Overall Security Posture

Microsoft Secure Score provides detailed visibility into a business's security posture. By assessing threat-prioritized insights and implementing recommended actions, organizations can make tangible improvements to their score and boost their security posture.

#2: Streamline Security Program

The tool can help streamline and simplify your security program. For example, the Texas Bankers Association (TBA) leveraged Microsoft Secure Score and its recommendations to unify its security capabilities and improve its security program. With the support of GCS Technologies, TBA successfully leveraged Secure Score's cutting-edge AI and machine learning to achieve iron-clad security for their networks, endpoints, applications, users, and data.

#3: Boost Cyber Insurance Eligibility

Cyber insurance protects a business from the financial repercussions of cyber incidents. A strong security posture is vital for getting cyber insurance at the best terms and costs because insurance companies provide posture-based rates to businesses. However, quantitatively measuring companies' security posture has historically been challenging for cyber insurance auditors and compliance officers. This is one reason why cyber insurance companies have embraced Microsoft Secure Score, leveraging it as a pre-vetting tool for security posture.

#4: Address Threats by Priority

Microsoft Secure Score's recommendations are designed to help IT teams focus on the specific security tasks that can mitigate the risks and threats most likely to lower their score, weaken their security posture, and prevent them from withstanding attacks. When used with Microsoft Defender Vulnerability Management, Secure Score helps IT teams focus efforts on remediations and proactive configurations for both potential and existing vulnerabilities and threats.

#5: Reduce Cybersecurity Costs

Because Secure Score makes it easy to see which security measures you need, it can help you avoid spending resources unnecessarily, especially when supported by a managed security service provider (MSSP).

Customer Example

The Texas Bankers Association (TBA) leveraged GCS' expertise to drive quick and cost-effective improvements. Together, Microsoft Secure Score and GCS enabled TBA to determine the potential user impact of each recommendation and implement robust controls to strengthen their security posture without increasing the cost of the security program.

Does Your Business Need Microsoft Secure Score?

If your organization licenses a supported Microsoft product, you can benefit from Microsoft Secure Score. As of March 2023, these products provide a Microsoft Secure Score and recommended actions:

- Microsoft 365 (including Exchange Online)
- Azure Active Directory
- Microsoft Defender for Endpoint
- Microsoft Defender for Identity
- Microsoft Defender for Cloud Apps
- Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Secure Score provides recommended security best practices, threat-prioritized insights, and tailored guidance to enable you to improve your security posture and reduce the size of your threat landscape — regardless of your Microsoft product's license edition, subscription, or plan.

The score helps you set benchmarks to measure whether your security posture has improved over time and compared to other organizations in your industry. You get specific recommendations based on your threat landscape, risk appetite, IT setup, and Microsoft products used. Implementing these recommendations will help you:

- ✔ Understand the current state of your security posture across the entire digital estate
- ✔ Implement stronger controls to improve your overall security posture and maintain it at a desired level
- ✔ Identify and prioritize attack vectors and create workable mitigation plans
- ✔ Stay ahead of many types of cyber threats, such as malware and MFA bombing
- ✔ Keep the “back door” locked on your Microsoft Office 365 estate
- ✔ Understand if your third-party solutions have addressed recommended actions to protect your organization from attacks that may otherwise target them

Talk to Your Expert Microsoft Partners and Boost Your Secure Score

GCS Technologies is a Certified Microsoft partner and MSSP based in Austin, Texas. As one of the largest managed service providers in Austin, we have helped hundreds of organizations across central Texas leverage the power of Microsoft Secure Score. With our support, companies have taken concrete steps to improve their security posture and implement reliable, iron-clad cybersecurity.

Contact us today if you want to boost your cyber defenses and mitigate future threats.

