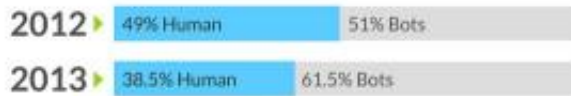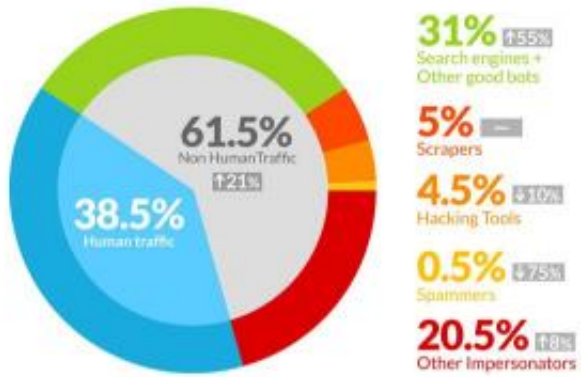# Incapsula reports that web bots now account for 61% of web traffic

December 13 2013, by Bob Yirka

Bot Traffic Report 2013
Bot visits are up by 21% to 61.5% of all website traffic

Bot/Human Traffic Distribution

61.5% Non Human Traffic ↑21%

38.5% Human traffic

31% ↑55%
Search engines +
Other good bots

5% —
Scrapers

4.5% ↓10%
Hacking Tools

0.5% ↓75%
Spammers

20.5% ↑8%
Other Impersonators

2012 ▶ 49% Human | 51% Bots
2013 ▶ 38.5% Human | 61.5% Bots

Malicious Bots by Type

Scrapers

The Damage
- Content theft and duplication.
- Theft of email addresses for spam purposes.
- Reverse engineering of pricing and business models.

The Target
Anyone.
Most commonly travel industry websites, classifieds, news sites, e-stores and forums.

Hacking Tools

The Damage
- Data (e.g. credit card) theft.
- Malware injection and distribution.
- Website/Server hijacking.
- Website defacement and content deletion.

The Target
Anyone.
Most commonly CMS based websites (WP, Joomla, Vbulletin, Magento, etc.)

Spammers

The Damage
- Posting of irrelevant content that annoys legitimate visitors.
- Posting of malware/phishing links that can harm your visitors.
- Turning the site into a "link farm", causing Search Engine blacklisting.

The Target
Blogs, forums and all other websites that allow comment posting.

Impersonators

The Damage
- Marketing intelligence gathering.
- Layer 7 DDoS attacks, which result in service degradation and website downtime.
- Bandwidth consumption and service degradation (Parasitic drag).

The Target
Anyone.

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Credit: Incapsula

(Phys.org) —Cloud based application delivery platform provider Incapsula is reporting via [blog post](#) that web bots now account for 61 percent of all web traffic, an increase of 21 percent over last year.

Web bots, are of course, programs that are run on connected computers that scour the Internet looking for [web pages](#). What they do once they find them depends on what their programmers have in mind. Some are considered "good" such as the bots run by Google or Amazon to provide listings for search engines or to track visitor stats, while others are considered bad or malicious because they are used to scrape (steal data), hack (add malware), spam (leave spam in comment sections) or impersonate legitimate users.

On a positive note, Incapsula reports that the proportion of good bots is rising—their tests indicate that they now make up 31 percent of traffic (up from 21 percent last year). They also suggest that the majority of the increase in bot activity is likely due to more activity by existing bots rather than the introduction of new ones.

One area of concern the company found is an 8 percent uptick in the number of impersonator bots—those that try to fool websites into believing they are ether good bots or legitimate users. They are generally the worst sort of bot because their purpose is generally to cause harm to the web site itself, generally through denial of service attacks.

To come to these conclusions, Incapsula captured data from every visit to every one of its 20,000 client web sites over a 90 day period (amounting to 1.45 billion visits) and then analyzed the results. It should be noted that Incapsula offers its clients security services, thus the numbers it is reporting may not be a fair representation of the world-wide-web in general. What is also not clear are what other impacts bots may be having on the web, such as whether they cause slowdowns or if their sheer numbers are causing a skewing of the metrics they deliver. If

over half of all visitors to [web](#) sites are bots, for example, how does that play for those that are receiving advertising revenue for site visits?

While it's not clear just how many bots there really are compared to real users, what is apparent from the Incapsula report is that bots have become a major part of [web traffic](#) and that they are becoming more sophisticated, which suggests perhaps, that maybe an organization should be set up to monitor, track and perhaps work with law enforcement to identify those seeking to do harm, before they cause serious problems.

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Citation: Incapsula reports that web bots now account for 61% of web traffic (2013, December 13) retrieved 11 July 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2013-12-incapsula-web-bots-account-traffic.html