



**Hong Kong
Security Watch Report**

Q4 2014

Foreword

Better Security Decision with Situational Awareness

Nowadays, a lot of “invisible” compromised computers are controlled by attackers with the owner being unaware. The data on these computers may be mined and exposed every day, and the computers may be utilized in different kinds of abuse and criminal activities.

The Hong Kong Security Watch Report aims to provide the public a better “visibility” of the situation of the compromised computers in Hong Kong so that they can make better decision in protecting their information security.

The data in this report is about the activities of compromised computers in Hong Kong which suffer from, or participate in various forms of cyber attacks, including web defacement, phishing, malware hosting, botnet command and control centres (C&C) or bots. Computers in Hong Kong are defined as those whose network geolocation is Hong Kong, or the top level domain of their host name is “.hk” or “.香港”.

Capitalizing on the Power of Global Intelligence

This report is the fruit of the collaboration of HKCERT and global security researchers. Many security researchers have the capability to detect attacks targeting their own or their customers’ networks. Some of them provide the information of IP addresses of attack source or web links of malicious activities to other information security organizations with an aim to collaboratively improve the overall security of the cyberspace. They have good practice in sanitizing personal identifiable data before sharing information.

HKCERT collects and aggregates such valuable data about Hong Kong from multiple information sources for analysis with Information Feed Analysis System (IFAS), a system developed by HKCERT. The information sources (Appendix 1) are very distributed and reliable, providing a balanced reflection of the security status of Hong Kong.

We remove duplicated events reported by multiple sources and use the following metrics for measurement to assure the quality of statistics.

Type of Attack	Metric used
Defacement, Phishing, Malware Hosting	Number of security events on unique URLs within the reporting period
Botnet command and control centres (C&C)	Number of security events on unique IP addresses within the reporting period

Bots	Sum of the number of individual bots as recorded with the reporting period. The number of individual bots is the maximum of the daily number of security events on unique IP addresses.

Better information better service

We will continue to enhancing this report with more valuable information sources and more in-depth analysis. We will also explore how to use the data to enhance our services. *Please send us your feedback via email (hkcert@hkcert.org).*

Limitations

The data collected in this report is from multiple different sources with different collection method, collection period, presentation format and their own limitations. The numbers from the report should be used as a reference, and should neither be compared directly nor be regarded as a full picture of the reality.

Disclaimer

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Highlight of Report

This report is for Quarter 4 of 2014.

In 2014 Q4, there were 12,437 unique security events related to Hong Kong used for analysis in this report. The information is collected with IFAS¹ from 19 sources of information.² They are not from the incident reports received by HKCERT.

Trend of security events

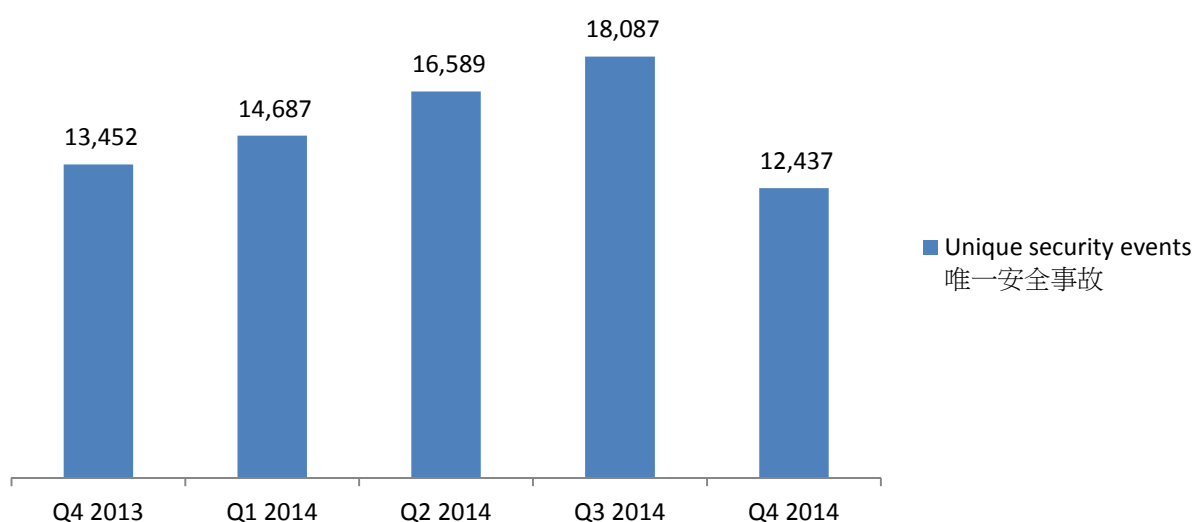


Figure 1-Trend of security events³

The total number of security events in Q4 2014 dramatically decreased. It was the first decrease since Q3 2014.

Server related security events

Server related security events include malware hosting, phishing and defacement. Their trends and distributions are summarized below:

¹ IFAS Information Feed Analysis System is a HKCERT developed system that collects global security intelligence relating to Hong Kong for analysis.

² Refer to Appendix 1 for the Sources of Information

³ The numbers were adjusted to exclude the unconfirmed defacement events

Trend and Distribution of server related security events

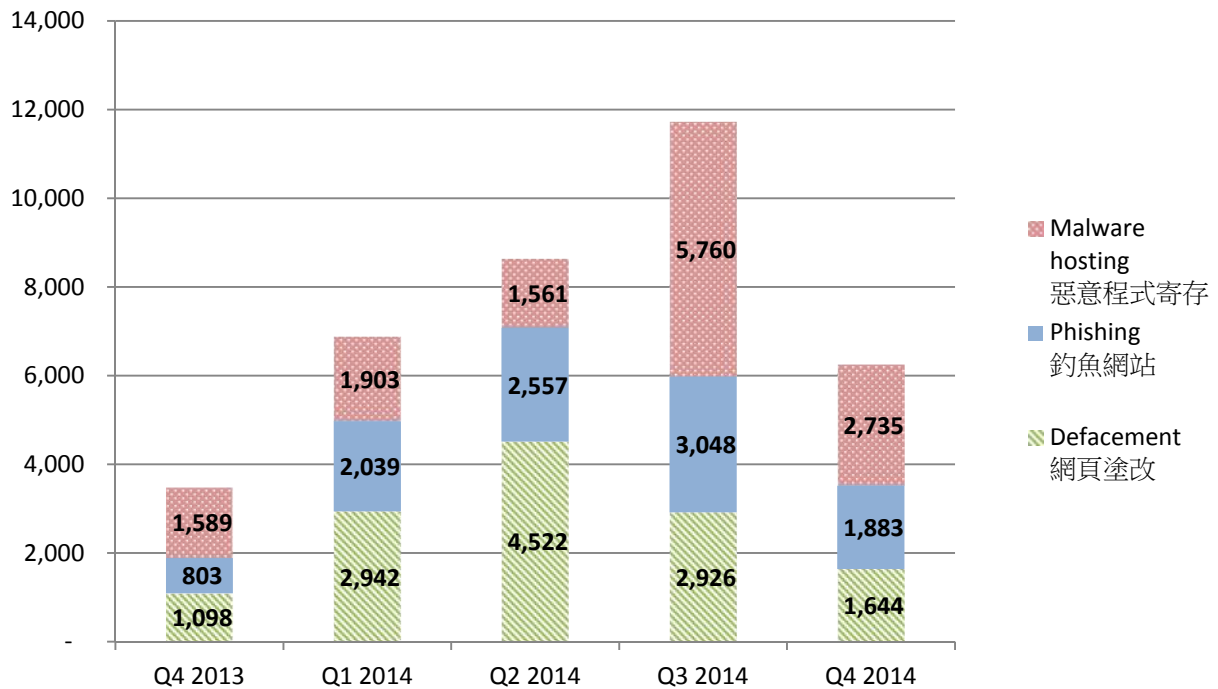


Figure 2 –Trend and distribution of server related security events⁴

The number of server related security events significantly decreased by 47% in Q4 2014.

In this quarter, the number of defacement events, phishing events and malware hosting events decreased by 44%, 38% and 54% respectively.

Though the number of total phishing events decreased, the number of phishing sites with top level domain .tk increased a lot. The number of related events increased 272% to 160 events. Among which, most of them are targeting taobao.com or alipay.com.

.tk was intended to be used by Tokelau, a territory of New Zealand. However, since the domain is available to individuals and small businesses free of charge, it was actually used by people all over the world. This domain is infamous of being abused for unwanted behaviours such as phishing and spam. According to a report of Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG)⁵, .tk contributed for 22% of all malicious domain registrations in the second half of 2013. Internet users should pay more attentions to this top level domain.

Abuse of another top level domain, .pw also increased significantly. The malware hosting events using .pw increased 110 folds to 331 events.

⁴ The numbers were adjusted to exclude the unconfirmed defacement events

⁵ http://docs.apwg.org/reports/APWG_GlobalPhishingSurvey_2H2013.pdf

.pw was originally delegated to the Pacific island nation of Palau in 1997. But later it was redelegated. Similar to .tk, now the .pw domain is open to the public, known as the Professional Web. .pw was infamous for a source of spam mail⁶. However, we discovered that its use in malware hosting is increasing.



HKCERT urges system and application administrators to protect the servers.

- patch server up-to-date to avoid the known vulnerabilities being exploited.
- update web application and plugins to the latest version
- follow best practice on user account and password management
- implement validation check for user input and system output
- provide strong authentication, e.g. two factor authentication, at administrative control interface
- acquire information security knowledge to prevent social engineering

Botnet related security events

Botnet related security events can be classified into two categories:

- Botnet Command and Control Centres (C&C) security events – involving small number of powerful computers, mostly servers, which give commands to bots
- Bots security events – involving large number of computers, mostly home computers, which receive commands from C&C.

Botnet Command and Control Servers

The trend of botnet C&C security events is summarized below:

⁶ <http://www.symantec.com/connect/blogs/rise-pw-urls-spam-messages>

Trend of Botnet (C&Cs) security events

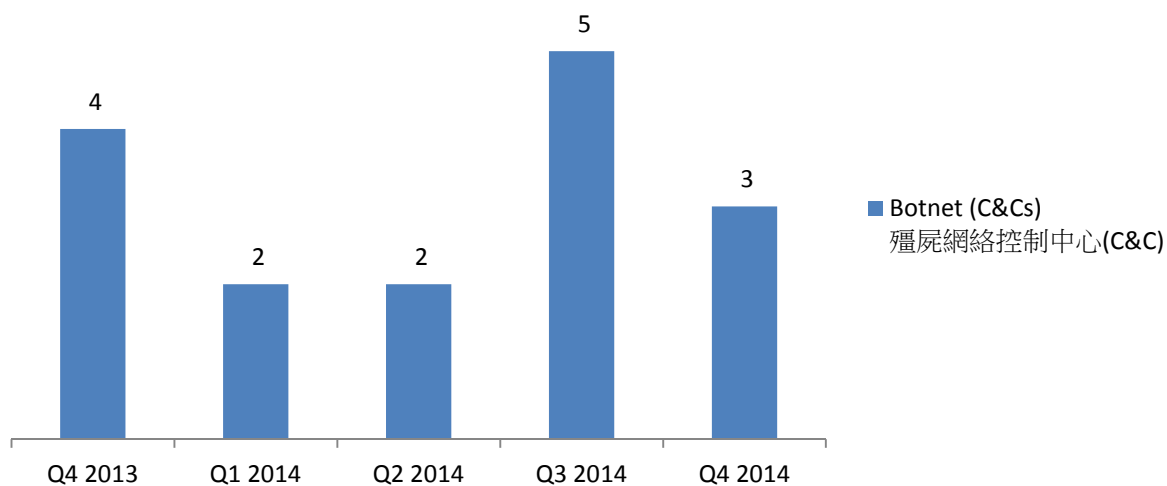


Figure 3 –Trend of Botnet (C&Cs) related security events

The number of botnet Command and Control Servers decreased this quarter.

There were 3 C&C servers reported in this quarter. One of the reported servers was identified as Zeus C&C server, while the other two were identified as IRC bot C&C servers.

Botnet Bots

The trend of botnet (bots) security events is summarized below:

Trend of Botnet (Bots) security events

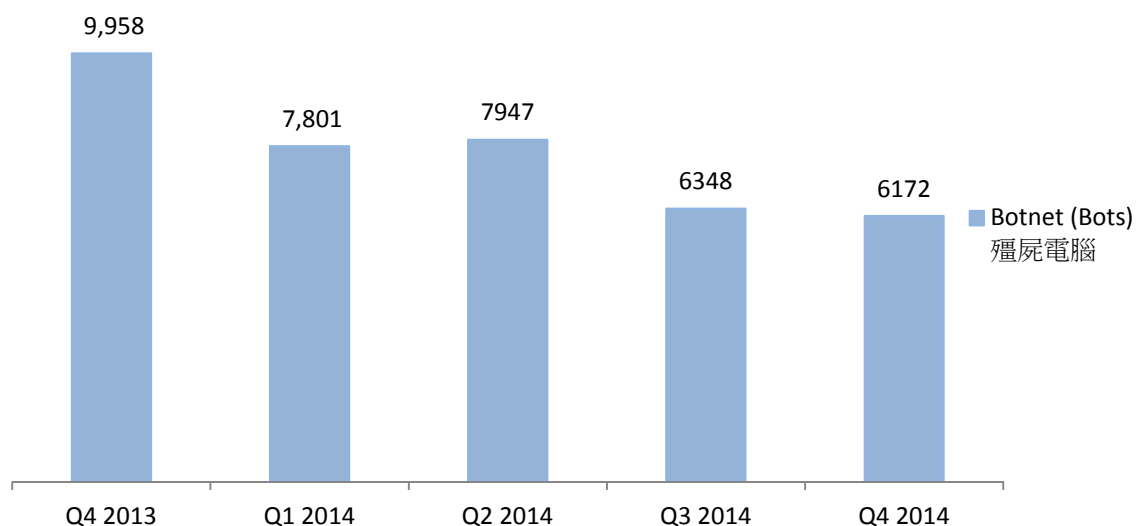


Figure 4 - Trend of Botnet (Bots) security events⁷

Number of Botnet (bots) on Hong Kong network decreased in this quarter.

In Q4 2014, the number of botnet infections in Hong Kong slightly decreased by 2.8%. 7 of the top 10 botnets had their numbers decreased. However, the other three had their numbers increased significantly. (Figure 12)

The top three botnets, Conficker, Zeus and ZeroAccess continued their dropping trends (Figure 13). The number of ZeroAccess events dropped to below 1000 for the first time, which matched our previous prediction.

On the other hand, Virut, Pushdo and bankpatch botnets recorded a significant increase this quarter. Pushdo has been one of the largest botnet on the planet for a long time. It used to be the fourth botnet in Hong Kong but the number of Pushdo events dropped dramatically this year, reaching a record low in the previous quarter. However, researchers⁸ discovered a new version of Pushdo in late September. Though very little, if any, improvement or new functionality could be found, it may be a framework for further improvements. This reflected the malware authors were putting new efforts on the malware. It may explain the sudden

⁷ The number botnet(bots) security events in Q4 2013 was adjusted due to the update of numbers of the Zeus botnet

⁸ <https://blog.fortinet.com/post/a-new-version-of-the-3rd-generation-of-pushdo>

increase of the number.

Virut sends spams, launches DDoS attacks and conducts fraud and data theft. Pushdo sends spams, launches DDoS attacks and downloads other banking malwares. Bankpatch monitors specific banking websites and harvest user's passwords, credit card information and other sensitive financial data

HKCERT has been following up the security events received and proactively engaged local ISPs for the botnet clean up since June 2013. Currently, botnet cleanup operations against major botnet family - Pushdo, Citadel, ZeroAccess and GameOver Zeus are still in action.



HKCERT urges users to protect computers so as not to become part of the botnets.

- patch their computers
- install a working copy of security software and scan for malware on their machines
- set strong passwords to avoid credential based attack
- do not use Windows, media files and software that have no proper licenses
- do not use Windows and software that have no security updates

HKCERT urges general users to join the cleanup acts. Ensure your computers are not being infected and controlled by malicious software.

Protect yourself and keep the cyberspace clean.



Users can use the HKCERT guideline to detect and clean up botnets

- Botnet Detection and Cleanup Guideline
<https://www.hkcert.org/botnet>

Report Details

1. Defacement

1.1 Summary

Trend of Defacement security events

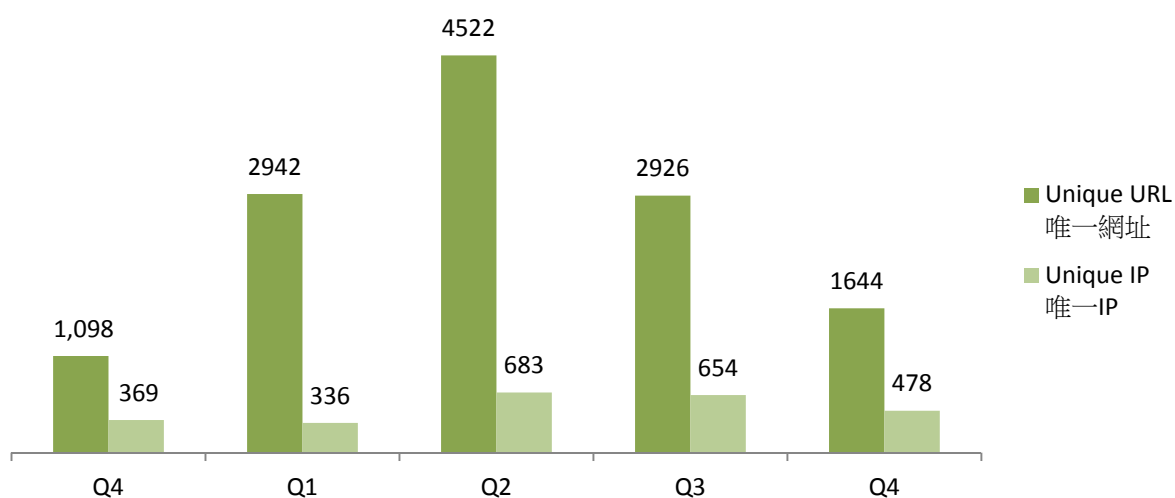


Figure 5 –Trend of Defacement security events⁹



What is defacement?

- Defacement is the unauthorized alteration of the content of a legitimate website using hacking method.

What are the potential impacts?

- The integrity of the website content is damaged.
- Original content might be inaccessible
- Reputation of the website owner might be damaged
- Other information stored / processed on the server might be further compromised by the hacker to perform other attacks.

⁹ The numbers were adjusted to exclude the unconfirmed defacement events

URL/IP ratio of Defacement security events

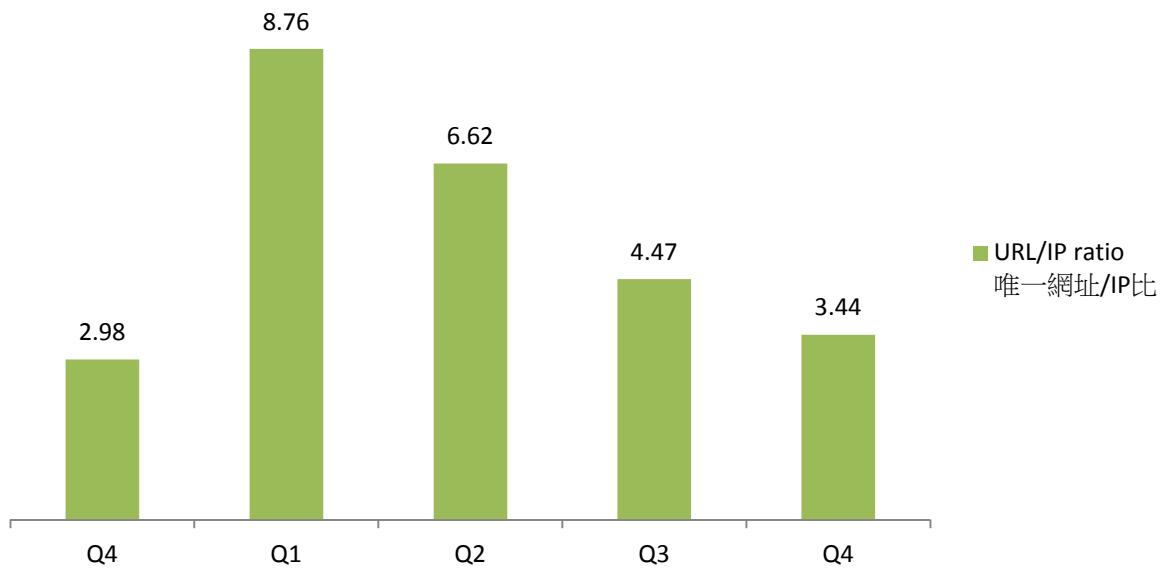


Figure 6 - URL/IP ratio of defacement security events



What is URL/IP ratio?

- It is the number of security events count in unique URL divided by the number of security events count in unique IP addresses

What can this ratio indicate?

- Number of events counted in unique URL cannot reflect the number of compromised servers, since one server may contain many URL
- Number of events counted in unique IP address can better related to the number of compromised servers
- The higher the ratio is, the more mass compromise happened

Sources of Information:

- Zone - H

2. Phishing

2.1 Summary

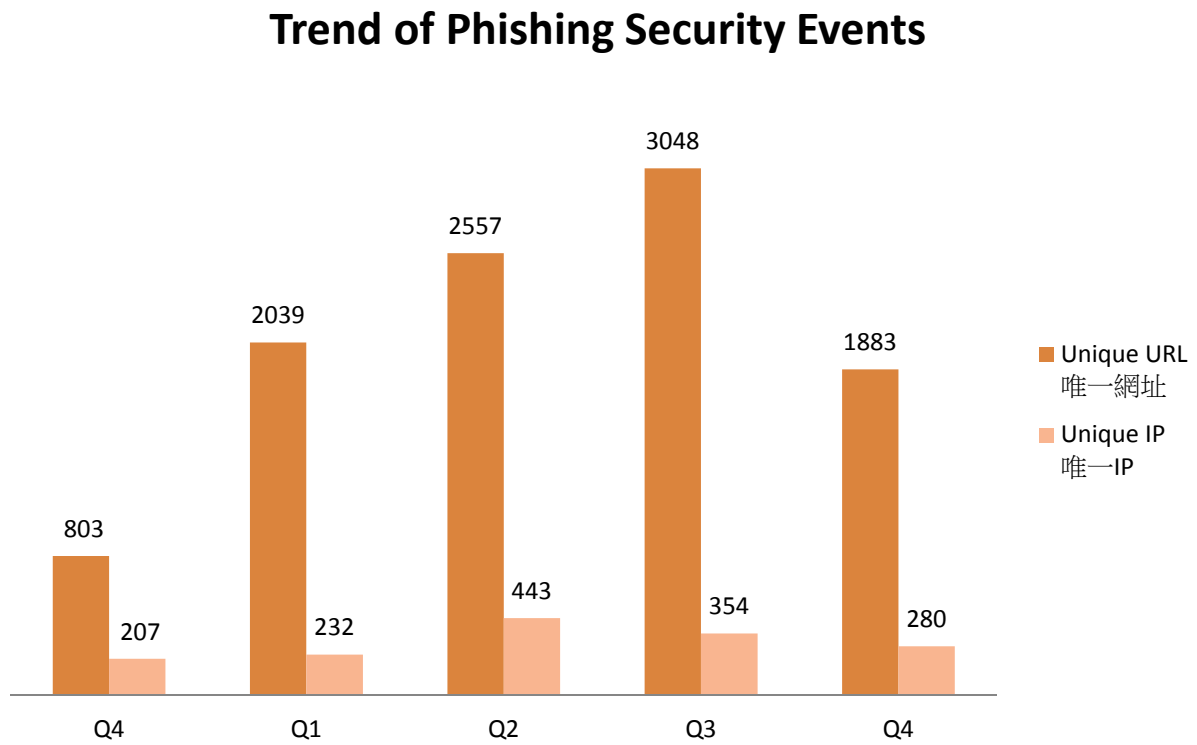


Figure 7 –Trend of Phishing Security Events



What is Phishing?

- Phishing is the spoofing of a legitimate website for fraudulent purpose

What is the potential impact?

- Personal information or account credentials of visitors might be stolen, leading to financial loss.
- Original content might be inaccessible
- Reputation of the website owner might be damaged
- Server might be further compromised to perform other attacks.

URL/IP ratio of Phishing Security Events

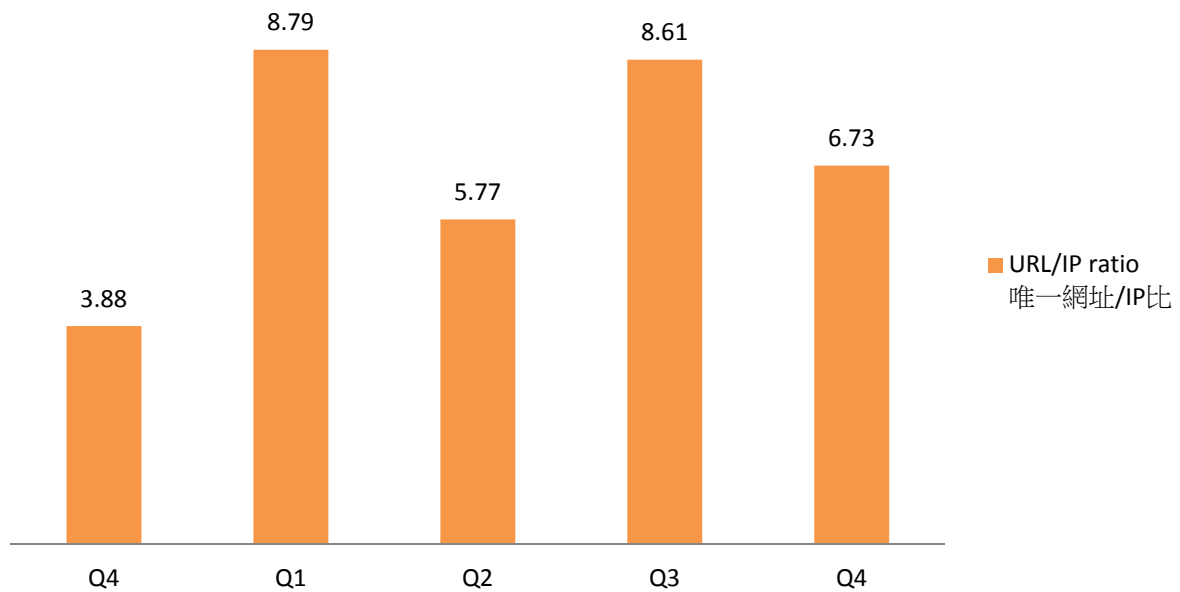


Figure 8 - URL/IP ratio of phishing security events



What is URL/IP ratio?

- It is the number of security events count in unique URL divided by the number of security events count in unique IP addresses

What can this ratio indicate?

- Number of events counted in unique URL cannot reflect the number of compromised servers, since one server may contain many URL
- Number of events counted in unique IP address can better related to the number of compromised servers
- The higher the ratio is, the more mass compromise happened

Sources of Information:

- ArborNetwork – Atlas SRF
- CleanMX – phishing
- Millersmiles
- Phishtank

3. Malware Hosting

3.1 Summary

Trend of Malware Hosting Security Events

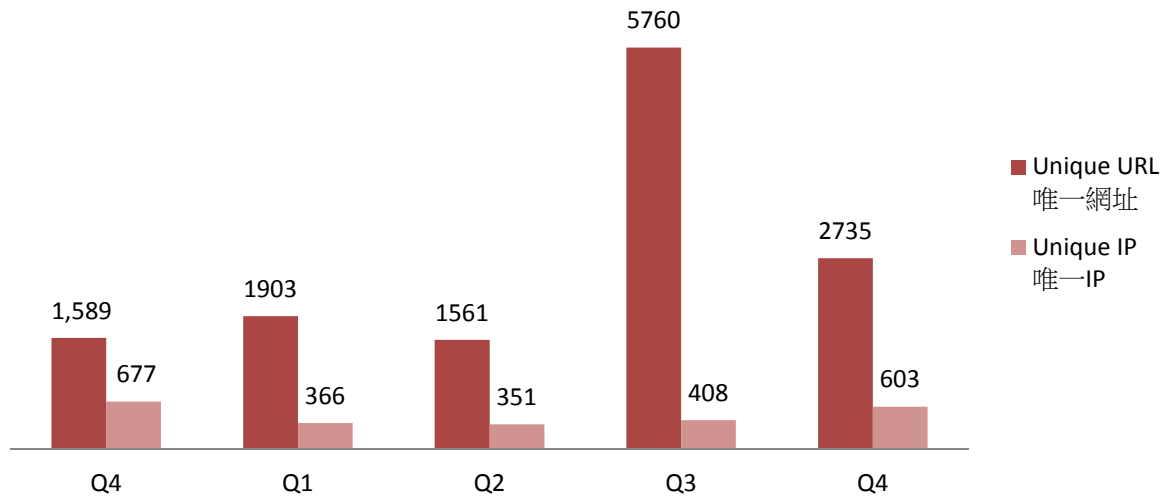


Figure 9 –Trend of Malware Hosting Security Events



What is Malware Hosting?

- Malware Hosting is the dispatching of malware on a website

What is the potential impact?

- Visitors might download and install the malware, or execute the malicious script to get compromised.
- Original content might be inaccessible
- Reputation of the website owner might be damaged
- Server might be further compromised to perform other criminal activities.

URL/IP ratio of Malware Hosting Security Events

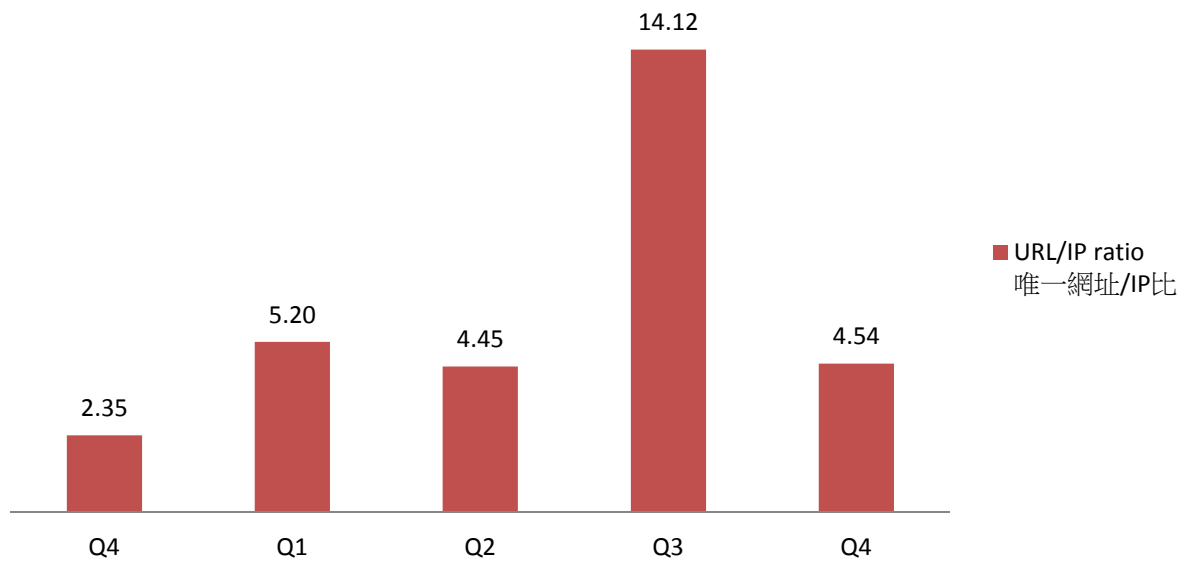


Figure 10 - URL/IP ratio of malware hosting security events



What is URL/IP ratio?

- It is the number of security events count in unique URL divided by the number of security events count in unique IP addresses

What can this ratio indicate?

- Number of events counted in unique URL cannot reflect the number of compromised servers, since one server may contain many URL
- Number of events counted in unique IP address can better related to the number of compromised servers
- The higher the ratio is, the more mass compromise happened

Sources of Information:

- Abuse.ch: Zeus Tracker – Binary URL
- Abuse.ch: SpyEye Tracker – Binary URL
- CleanMX – Malware
- Malc0de
- MalwareDomainList
- Sacour.cn

4. Botnet

4.1 Botnets – Command & Control Servers

Trend and Distribution of Botnet (C&Cs) security events

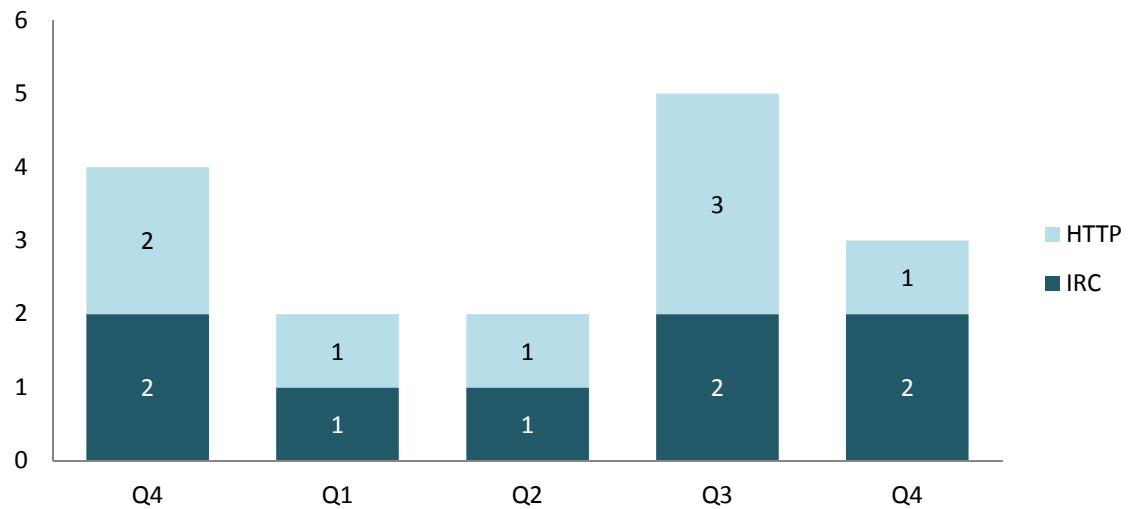


Figure 11 –Trend and Distribution of Botnet (C&Cs) security events



What is a Botnet Command & Control Centre?

- A Botnet Command & Control Centre is a server used by cybercriminals to control the bots, which are compromised computers, by sending them commands to perform malicious activities, e.g. stealing personal and financial information or launching DDoS attacks.

What is the potential impact?

- Server might be heavily loaded when many bots connecting to it.
- Server might contain large amount of personal and financial data stolen by other bots.

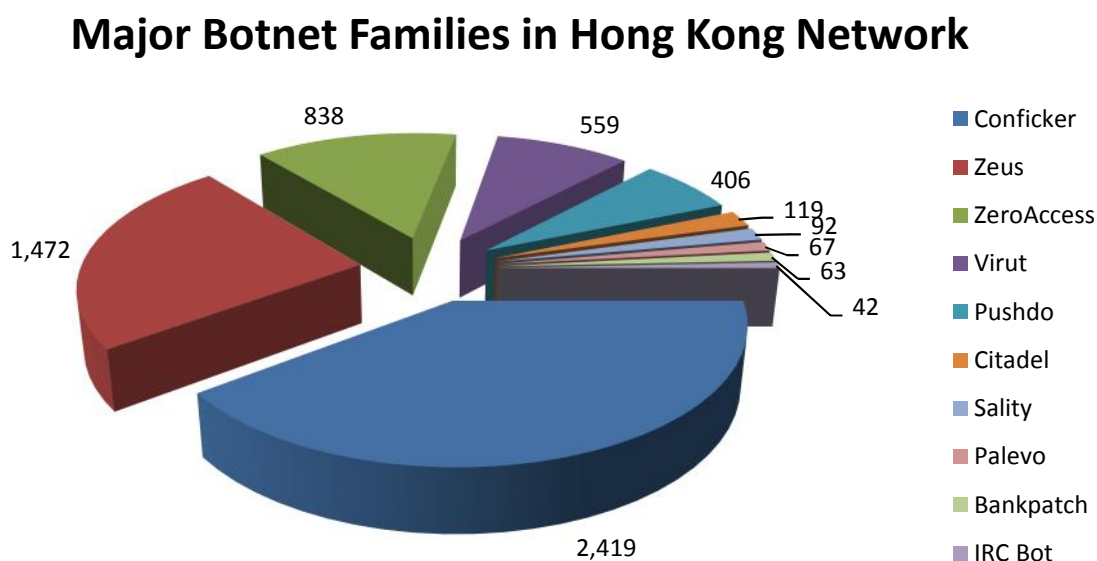
Sources of Information:

- Zeus Tracker
- SpyEye Tracker
- Palevo Tracker
- Shadowserver – C&Cs

4.2 Botnets – Bots

4.2.1 Major Botnet Families¹⁰ found on Hong Kong Networks

Individual botnet’s size is calculated from the maximum of the daily counts of unique IP addresses attempting to connect to the botnet in the report period. In other words, the real botnet size should be larger because not all bots are powered on within the same day.



Rank	↑↓	Concerned Bots	Number of Unique IP addresses (Max count in a Quarter)	Changes with previous period
1	-	Conficker	2,419	-7%
2	-	Zeus	1,472	-22%
3	-	ZeroAccess	838	-21%
4	-	Virut	559	113%
5	↑	Pushdo	406	544%
6	-	Citadel	119	-16%
7	-	Sality	92	-17%
8	↓	Palevo	67	-65%
9	↑	Bankpatch	63	600%
10	↓	IRC Bot	42	-43%

Figure 12 –Major Botnet Families in Hong Kong Networks

¹⁰ Major Botnet Families are selected botnet families with considerable amount of security events reported from the information sources constantly across the reporting period.

Trend of Top 5 Botnet Families in Hong Kong Network

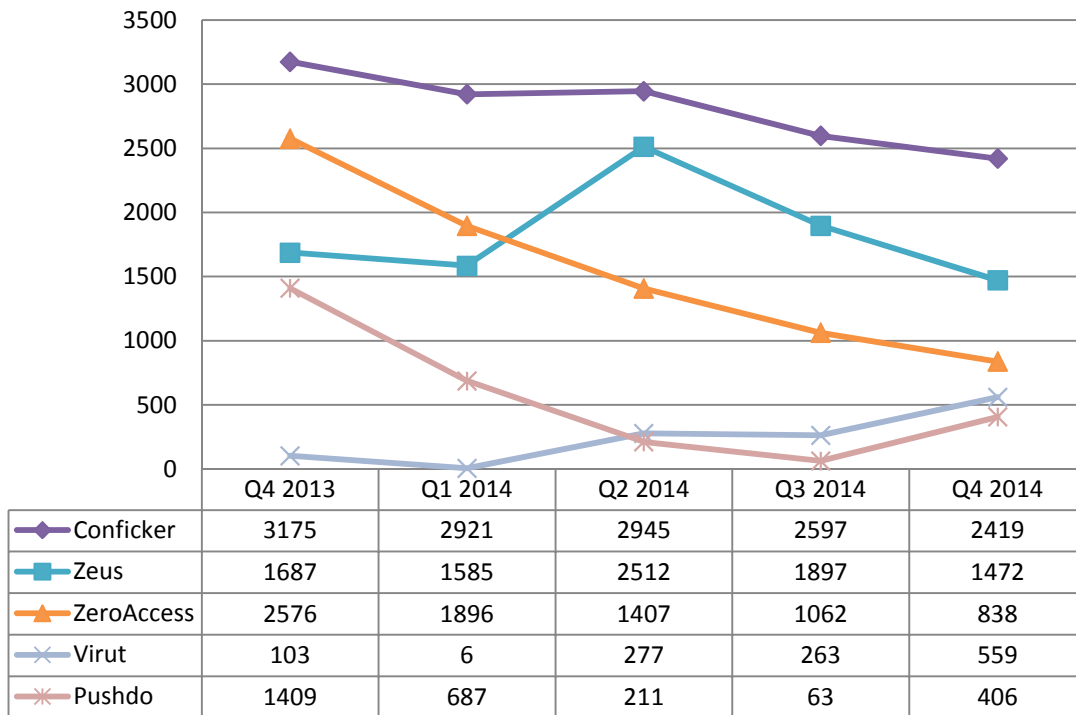


Figure 13 – Trend of Top 5 Botnet Families in Hong Kong Network¹¹



What is a Botnet - Bot?

- A bot is usually a personal computer that is infected by malicious software to become part of a botnet. Once infected, the malicious software usually hide itself, and stealthy connect to the Command & Control Server, to get the instruction from hackers.

What is the potential impact?

- Computer owner's personal and financial data might be stolen which may lead to financial loss.
- Computer might be commanded by attacker to perform other criminal activities.

Sources of Information:

- ArborNetwork – Atlas SRF – conficker
- ShadowServer – botnet_drone
- ShadowServer – sinkhole_http_drone
- ShadowServer – Microsoft_sinkhole

¹¹ The numbers of Virut events in Q2 and Q3 were adjusted.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sources of information

The following information feeds sources

Event Type	Source	First introduced
Defacement	Zone - H	2013-04
Phishing	ArborNetwork: Atlas SRFPhishing	2013-04
Phishing	CleanMX – Phishing	2013-04
Phishing	Millersmiles	2013-04
Phishing	Phishtank	2013-04
Malware Hosting	Abuse.ch: Zeus Tracker – Binary URL	2013-04
Malware Hosting	Abuse.ch: SpyEye Tracker – Binary URL	2013-04
Malware Hosting	CleanMX – Malware	2013-04
Malware Hosting	Malc0de	2013-04
Malware Hosting	MalwareDomainList	2013-04
Malware Hosting	Sacour.cn	2013-04
Botnet (C&Cs)	Abuse.ch: Zeus Tracker – C&Cs	2013-04
Botnet (C&Cs)	Abuse.ch: SpyEye Tracker – C&Cs	2013-04
Botnet (C&Cs)	Abuse.ch: Palevo Tracker – C&Cs	2013-04
Botnet (C&Cs)	Shadowserver C&Cs	2013-09
Botnet(Bots)	Arbor Network: Atlas SRF–Conficker	2013-08
Botnet(Bots)	Shadowserver botnet_drone	2013-08
Botnet(Bots)	Shadowserver sinkhole_http_drone	2013-08
Botnet(Bots)	Shadowserver microsoft_sinkhole	2013-08

Appendix 2 – Geolocation identification methods

We use the following methods to identify if a network's geolocation is in Hong Kong.

Method	Last update
Maxmind	2014-10-22

Appendix 3 – Major Botnet Families

Major Botnets	Alias	Nature	Infection Method	Attacks / Impacts
BankPatch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MultiBanker • Patcher • BankPatcher 	Banking Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • via adult web sites • corrupt multimedia codecs • SPAM e-mail • chat and messaging systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor specific banking websites and harvest user's passwords, credit card information and other sensitive financial data
BlackEnergy	Nil	DDoS Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rootkit techniques to maintain persistence • uses process injection technique • strong encryption and modular architecture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • launch DDoS attacks
Citadel	Nil	Banking Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid and disable security tool detection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • steal banking credentials and sensitive information • keystroke logging • screenshot capture • video capture • man-in-the-browser attack • ransomware
Conficker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downadup • Kido 	Worm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domain generation algorithm (DGA) capability • communicate via P2P network • disable security software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploit the Windows Server Service vulnerability (MS08-067) • brute force attacks for admin credential to spread across network • spread via removable drives using "autorun" feature
Glupteba	Nil	Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drive-by download via Blackhole Exploit Kit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • push contextual advertising and clickjacking to victims

IRC Botnet	Nil	Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate via IRC network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • backdoor capabilities that allow unauthorized access • launch DDoS attack • send spams
Palevo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rimecud • Butterfly bot • Pilleuz • Mariposa Vaklik 	Worm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread via instant messaging, P2P network and removable drives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • backdoor capabilities that allow unauthorized access • steal login credentials and sensitive information • steal money directly from banks using money mules
Pushdo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutwail • Pandex 	Downloader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hiding its malicious network traffic • domain generation algorithm (DGA) capability • distribute via drive by download • exploit browser and plugins' vulnerabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • download other banking malware (e.g. Zeus and Spyeye) • launch DDoS attacks • send spams
Sality	Nil	Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rootkit techniques to maintain persistence • communicate via P2P network • spread via removable drives and shares • disable security software • use polymorphic and entry point obscuring (EPO) techniques to infect files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • send spams • proxying of communications • steal sensitive information • compromise web servers and/or coordinating distributed computing tasks for the purpose of processing intensive tasks (e.g. password cracking) • install other malware

Slenfbot	Nil	Worm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spread via removable drives and shares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • backdoor capabilities that allow unauthorized access • download financial malware • sending spam • launch DDoS attacks
Torpig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sinowal • Anserin 	Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rootkit techniques to maintain persistence (Mebroot rootkit) • domain generation algorithm (DGA) capability • distribute via drive by download 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • steal sensitive information • man in the browser attack
Virut	Nil	Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spread via removable drives and shares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send spams • Launch DDoS attacks • Fraud • Data theft
Wapomi	Nil	Worm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spread via removable drives and shares • infects executable files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • backdoor capabilities • download and drop additional destructive payloads • alter important files causing unreliable system performance • gather computer activity, transmit private data and cause sluggish computer

ZeroAccess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • max++ • Sirefef 	Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rootkit techniques to maintain persistence • communicate via P2P network • distribute via drive by download • distribute via disguise as legitimate file (eg. media files, keygen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • download other malware • Bitcoin mining and click fraud
Zeus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gameover 	Banking Trojan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stealthy techniques to maintain persistence • distribute via drive by download • communicate via P2P network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • steal banking credential and sensitive information • man in the browser attack • keystroke logging • download other malware (eg. Cryptolocker) • launch DDoS attacks