

Experts map out future malware creation hotspots

Images show e-crime evolution revealing Mexico, India and Africa as next hotbeds of Internet crime

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Most of today's Internet criminals are operating from Russia, China and Southern America. Over the next five years, there will be a significant increase in attacks from Central America, India, China and Africa, according to a prediction from security specialists.

The researchers at F-Secure's Security Labs have mapped the shifts in Internet crime trends since 1986. The three maps below depict how computer crime has evolved and show a shift from Europe and North America to emerging markets. **The Past (1986-2003):** Old-school virus writers operating from areas in Europe, United States, Australia and India. Era characterised by opportunistic 'hobbyists' learning their craft. **Recent history (2003-2007):** Hobbyism replaced by professional, targeted attacks. Malware creation hotspots growing in the former Soviet countries (such as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Latvia). Other major areas of criminal activity are Brazil and China, which have large numbers of individuals with sophisticated computing skills but without the job opportunities to make a living for themselves in the IT sector. Online crime often presents a more lucrative path to raising living standards for people like these. **The Future (2008 onwards):** New e-criminal groups likely to appear in Mexico and Africa. Internet crime becoming even more sophisticated with targeted attacks and exploits. This is a result of the alignment between broadband penetration and socio-economic factors such as economic development and lack of IT employment opportunities. Internet usage is growing fastest in Asia, followed by Africa. IT job growth will be lacking behind, creating a breeding ground for online criminals. In many countries there will be a delay before the legal system catches up with developments in the IT sector. Computer criminals may also be able to escape the law more easily in countries which are undergoing serious political and security problems.

Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer at F-Secure, believes malware creation hotspots are defined by a number of socio-economic causes - particularly in terms of job opportunities.

'Within the last few years, Internet take-up in emerging markets has been phenomenal. For example, Brazil now has over two million Internet users,' says Hypponen. 'And coincidentally, since 2003, computer crime has really taken off in Brazil, China and the former Soviet countries.'

'The trend is expected to continue and spread into areas such as Africa, India and Central America,' predicts Hypponen. 'This is partly due to the limited IT job prospects in these markets. People are developing sophisticated computer skills, but have limited opportunities to profit from them legally.'

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About F-Secure Corporation

F-Secure Corporation protects consumers and businesses against computer viruses and other threats from the Internet and mobile networks. F-Secure's award-winning solutions are available as a service subscription through more than 150 Internet service providers and mobile operator partners around the world, making F-Secure the global leader in this market. The solutions are also

available as licensed products through thousands of resellers globally. F-Secure has received the Frost & Sullivan 2007 award for Distribution Strategy Leadership. The company aspires to be the most reliable security provider, helping make computer and smartphone user's networked lives safe and easy. This is substantiated by the company's independently proven ability to respond faster to new threats than its main competitors. Founded in 1988 and headquartered in Finland, F-Secure has been listed on the OMX Nordic Exchange Helsinki since 1999. The company has consistently been one of the fastest growing publicly listed companies in the industry. The latest news on real-time virus threat scenarios is available at the F-Secure Data Security Lab weblog at <http://www.f-secure.com/weblog/>.

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