Mobile device infections surge in 2016

Nokia's Threat Intelligence Report has revealed a sharp rise in the occurrence of smartphone malware infections in the first half of the year. Issued twice per year, the report examines general trends and statistics for malware infections in devices connected through mobile and fixed networks.

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According to the report, smartphone infections nearly doubled between January and July compared to the latter half of 2015, with smartphones accounting for 78% of all mobile network infections. The malware infection rate hit an all-time high in April, with infections striking 1.06% of all mobile devices tracked. In addition, devices based on the Android operating system were the most targeted mobile platform by far, representing 74% of all mobile malware infections. The report also highlighted the emergence of new, more sophisticated malware that can be more difficult to detect and remove.

Key findings of the report include:

• **96% surge in smartphone infections:** The average smartphone infection rate increased 96% in the first half of 2016, compared to the second half of 2015 (0.49% vs 0.25%).

• **New all-time high:** In April 2016, mobile infections hit an all-time high, with 1.06 percent of devices infected by a range of malware, including ransomware, spyphone applications, SMS Trojans, personal information theft and aggressive adware.

• **One out of 120 smartphones infected:** In April, one out of every 120 smartphones had some type of malware infection.

• **Android OS hit hardest:** Android smartphones were the most targeted mobile platform, accounting for 74% of all malware infections compared to Window/PC systems (22%), and other platforms, including iOS devices (4%).

• **75% jump in malware samples:** The number of infected Android apps in Nokia's malware database soared 75%, from 5.1 million in December 2015 to 8.9 million in July 2016.

• **Mobile game infections detected within hours:** Downloaded mobile applications are a key conduit for malware attacks. The Nokia Threat Intelligence Lab detected infected copies of an extremely popular mobile game within hours after they were posted on untrusted third-party download sites.

• **More sophisticated malware:** Malware is becoming increasingly more sophisticated, as new variations attempt to root the phone in order to provide complete control and establish a permanent presence on the device.

• **Top three mobile threats:** The top three mobile malware threats were Uapush.A, Kasandra.B and SMSTracker, together accounting for 47% of all infections.

• **Fixed residential network infections rise:** The overall monthly infection rate in residential fixed broadband networks reached an average of 12% in the first half of 2016, compared to 11% in late 2015, primarily due to an increase in moderate threat level adware. These infections are mostly due to malware on Windows PCs and laptops in the home, but also include infections on smartphones using home Wi-Fi.

Kevin McNamee, head of the Nokia Threat Intelligence Lab, said: "Today attackers are targeting a broader range of applications and platforms, including popular mobile games and new IoT devices, and developing more sophisticated and destructive forms of malware."

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