



EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY

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2  
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**SONICWALL**  
**CYBER THREAT**  
**REPORT**

Cyber threat intelligence for navigating  
the new business reality



**SonicWall Capture Labs threat research teams** arm enterprises, small- and medium-sized businesses, government agencies and other organizations with actionable threat intelligence to safeguard their boundless workforces against an ever-expanding attack surface.

By providing a comprehensive look at this data, the *2021 SonicWall Cyber Threat Report* offers a glimpse into how cybercriminals think and operate, helping organizations better prepare to meet the threats of tomorrow. This *Executive Summary* offers a high-level overview of the full report.

**GET THE FULL REPORT**

[sonicwall.com/threatreport](https://sonicwall.com/threatreport)



### **MALWARE FALLS TO LOWEST POINT SINCE 2014**

When threat data noted a 6% decline in malware at the end of 2019, it was unclear whether this was a temporary blip or the start of a greater trend. With the release of the 2020 threat data, we have our answer. Not only has malware continued to fall, it's dropped with remarkable consistency across every region. **Researchers recorded 5.6 billion malware attacks in 2020, a decrease of 43% over 2019's totals.**

But even though malware finished 2020 at near-historic lows, these attacks have been more targeted than ever as cybercriminals refine their tactics. Worse, these decreases coincide with record or near-record *highs* in other types of cybercrime.



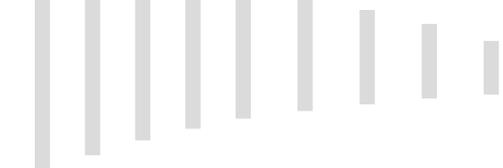
### **FASTER IDENTIFICATION OF 'NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN' MALWARE**

Speed and accuracy are critical to identifying and mitigating new threats. Based on data from VirusTotal, a market-leading malware repository, SonicWall is identifying never-before-seen malware variants **a full day before VirusTotal receives samples — sometimes as many as 60 days.**



### **RANSOMWARE HITS RECORD HIGH**

Ransomware skyrocketed in 2020, **showing a 62% increase from 2019.** This increase coincides with a high-water mark in the price of Bitcoin, the cryptocurrency of choice for ransomware groups. As the pandemic began to take hold, so did an increase in attacks on hospitals and healthcare facilities, as cybercriminals looked to once again exploit the most vulnerable targets.



▲ 74%



### **DEEP MEMORY INSPECTION MORE FORMIDABLE THAN EVER**

In 2020, SonicWall Real-Time Deep Memory Inspection™ (RTDMI) technology discovered **268,362 'never-before-seen' malware variants, up 74% from 2019**. Each year, RTDMI leverages proprietary machine learning capabilities to become extremely efficient at recognizing and mitigating cyberattacks never seen by anyone in the cybersecurity industry.

▲ 3YH



### **CRYPTOJACKING MAKES A COMEBACK**

On the heels of a massive 78% drop in the second half of 2019, cryptojacking made a massive comeback this year. With cryptocurrency prices at record highs, cybercriminals returned to illegal mining, not only regaining the ground they lost in second half of 2019, but **pushing cryptojacking to a three-year high**.

▲ 66%



### **IOT MALWARE UP 66%**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it an acceleration in the growth of connected devices, leading to a spike in IoT infections observed on wireless networks. SonicWall Capture Labs threat researchers recorded a **66% increase in these attacks in 2020, including a 152% increase in North America**.

▲ 20%



### **INTRUSION ATTEMPTS SHOW MODEST INCREASE**

Intrusion attempts in 2020 showed a slow and mostly steady rise, marked by fairly uniform growth across regions. With every month but January exceeding 2019's high point, **intrusion attempts were up 20% overall**.

As a best practice, SonicWall routinely optimizes its methodologies for data collection, analysis and reporting. This includes improvements to data cleansing, changes in data sources and consolidation of threat feeds. Figures published in previous reports may have been adjusted across different time periods, regions or industries.

## **About SonicWall**

SonicWall delivers Boundless Cybersecurity for the hyper-distributed era and a work reality where everyone is remote, mobile and unsecure. By knowing the unknown, providing real-time visibility and enabling breakthrough economics, SonicWall closes the cybersecurity business gap for enterprises, governments and SMBs worldwide. For more information, visit [www.sonicwall.com](http://www.sonicwall.com) or follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



**SonicWall, Inc.**  
1033 McCarthy Boulevard | Milpitas, CA 95035

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