

IOT COMMUNICATION SECURITY: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the obstacles and resolutions concerning the security of communication in the Internet of Things (IoT). It commences with a discussion of the remarkable proliferation of internet-connected devices, ranging from personal computers to mobile devices, and now to the era of IoT and IoE. The paper illuminates the impact of IoT on network addresses, leading to the depletion of IPv4 addresses and the necessity for address translation services. Subsequently, the article delves into the risks confronted by IoT systems, encompassing physical and digital assaults, unauthorized access, system failures, as well as diverse forms of malicious software. The significance of IoT security in industrial and agricultural systems is underscored. Finally, the paper concludes by presenting strategies to combat these risks, including antivirus countermeasures, safeguards against Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks, and security considerations in IoT systems for agriculture. In essence, this paper offers valuable insights into the challenges and solutions associated with ensuring the security of IoT communication.

Keywords: IoT, Internet of Things, IoE, Internet of Everything, Network Security

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent years have witnessed a remarkable proliferation of information technology and a surge in the number of Internet-connected devices on a global scale. The period from 1995 to 2000 was dominated by the prevalence of desktop computers, commonly known as personal computers (PCs) (Hannu et al., 2023). Subsequently, from 2000 to 2011, the era of mobile devices and the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) concept took center stage (Cheerag et al., 2022). This was followed by the era of the Internet of Things (IoT) from 2011 to 2020, which

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has now transitioned into the ongoing era of the Internet of Everything (IoE). In the year 2000, the number of devices connected to the worldwide Internet amounted to 200 million (Yufi & Cahaya, 2022). The results of this exponential growth in internet-connected devices are depicted in the example of Polish users in Fig. 1 - with a substantial increase to 10 billion by 2011, and further escalated to 50 billion in 2020 (Marzano et al., 2017). At present, video data traffic accounts for a staggering 80% of all Internet traffic, and along with audio data traffic, it is highly sensitive to latency and packet loss. The convenience of learning and entertainment is primarily facilitated by platforms such as YouTube and Netflix, offering a diverse range of videos and courses (Gama et al., 2021). Companies operating across various locations worldwide leverage videoconferencing to connect their employees, enabling collaborative work (Smith, 2004). The concept of the Internet of Everything encompasses interconnected devices, individuals, data and processes that dynamically interact and influence one another (DaCosta & Henderson, 2013). As we look forward, the future of the Internet is envisaged to be a metaverse, a virtual representation of life wherein individuals and corporations will possess virtual avatars and subsidiaries (Far et al., 2023).

The impact of the Internet of Things has been profound in amplifying the number of networked devices. Smart homes and factories have eagerly embraced IoT devices such as sensors, cameras and control panels (Umair et al., 2021). Consequently, previously underserved areas of the world have witnessed digitization and computerization efforts, leading to the depletion of IPv4 protocol addresses in 2019 (Hughes, 2022). The challenge was addressed through the introduction of NAT/PAT address translation services; however, this posed difficulties for Internet users attempting to access local network services (Ghosh, 2020). In the future, manufacturers will strive to outshine one another in terms of innovation, resulting in the ability to remotely configure every household appliance (Pratheesh et al., 2022). Despite the myriad benefits brought forth by IT technologies and products, they also harbor potential risks, necessitating the implementation of security-related standards and updates through appropriate policies in order to alleviate these concerns.

In today's world, there has been a paradigm shift in the multidimensional approach to security, which is now viewed as a product. In the face of global challenges, there is an urgent need to assess the sense of security and ability to maintain it (Szykuła-Piec & Piec, 2020).

The primary objective of this manuscript is to elucidate the prevailing challenges and potential solutions pertaining to the security of IoT systems. The scope of this work encompasses an in-depth analysis of security issues, including viruses and worms, destructive attacks, denial of service (DoS) attacks, and security considerations within the realm of industrial IoT systems.

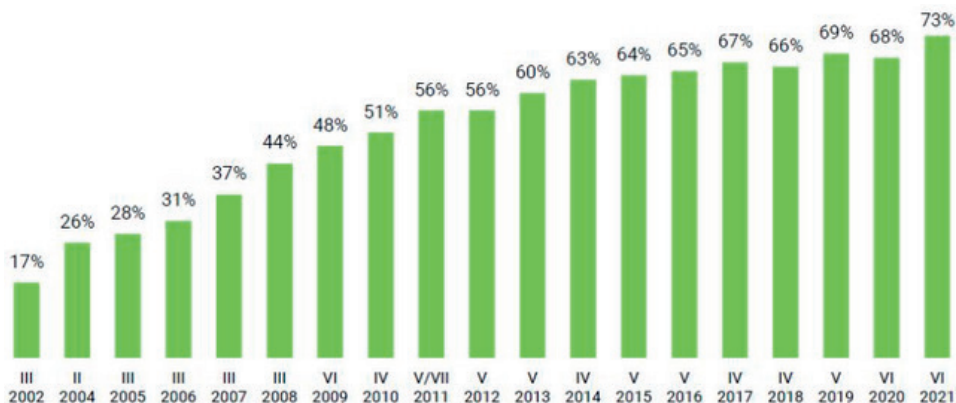


Figure 1. Survey about internet usage by Polish users in years 2002–2021, positive answers (Wojciechowska, 2022)

2. INTERNET OF THINGS – DEFINITION, COMPONENTS, AND APPLICATIONS

The term “Internet of Things” (IoT) was first introduced in 1999 (Ashton, 2009). It pertains to distinctively identified devices that are interconnected via a computer network, enabling the gathering, exchange and processing of information (Mukhopadhyay & Suryadevara, 2014). The concept of IoE (Internet of Everything) encompasses the inclusion of processes and individuals within the Internet of Things, with their interdependence and dynamic nature (DaCosta & Henderson, 2013). The constituents of the Internet of Things comprise control panels, cameras, sensors, as well as actuators (such as gates, doors, windows, radiators, fans and air conditioners). For these elements, it is necessary to establish schedules and regulations that govern their operations, for instance, regulating the actuators based on the prevailing time and the data acquired from the sensors (Rayaes & Salam, 2022).

The Internet of Things (IoT) plays a pivotal role in numerous areas such as smart cities (Pawłowicz et al., 2019), industrial operations, medical monitoring, smart homes, autonomous vehicles, Personal Area Network devices, and the management of gas and electricity transmission systems (Li et al., 2020). Its functionalities include controlling urban traffic lights through data from intersection cameras (Tchuitcheu et al., 2020), monitoring factory machinery for maintenance needs (Parpala et al., 2020), tracking patient health parameters in real time (Sangeethalakshmi et al., 2023), automating the remote operation of home appliances (Gunge & Yalagi, 2016), aiding decision-making in self-driving cars using environmental sensors (Bautista, & Mester, 2023), managing personal gadgets like smartwatches and Bluetooth headsets from smartphones (Takiddeen & Zualkernan, 2019), and also regulating the performance of energy transmission networks (Sanchez-Sutil & Cano-Ortega, 2021).

3. SECURITY VULNERABILITIES IN INTERNET OF THINGS (IOT) ARCHITECTURE

In the realm of Internet of Things (IoT) systems, a spectrum of security vulnerabilities exists. Physical threats involve the alteration or destruction of devices, potentially leading to the introduction of malicious configurations, such as unauthorized network ports activation (Dul et al., 2023). Such destruction can be accidental or deliberate, often resulting from local natural disasters (Jakubczak, 2022). Digital vulnerabilities are manifold, encompassing malware, exploits, Denial of Service (DoS) attacks, and strategic multi-phased directional attacks aimed at device hijacking and confidentiality breaches (Milosevic et al., 2016). This category extends to information manipulation where data integrity is compromised for financial or disruptive purposes.

Unauthorized intrusions in IoT systems typically become manifested through ‘man-in-the-middle’ attacks (Cekerevac et al., 2017), either passive (eavesdropping) or active (forging communications). Additionally, session hijacking (Humaira et al., 2020) and network eavesdropping are prevalent (Liao et al., 2018) where attackers surreptitiously gather data about network characteristics. System failures, another critical concern (Ahmad et al., 2018), arise from loss of power (Synowiec, 2019), communication (Krupanek & Bogacz, 2018) or essential services, often due to suboptimal hardware and software choices (Chen et al., 2016), external disruptions, or adverse environmental conditions (Gómez et al., 2017), with functionality generally resuming once these issues are resolved (Synowiec, 2019).

Software-related issues also pose significant risks, including inadequate configurations (Baker, 2021), coding errors (Makhshari & Mesbah, 2021), weak or static passwords, absence of multi-factor authentication (Yu et al., 2020), and lack of data encryption (Dul et al., 2023). Moreover, external catastrophes and conflicts, such as natural disasters and hybrid warfare tactics targeting communication infrastructures and energy supplies, can lead to extensive damage to network and power infrastructure, further exacerbating the security challenges in IoT systems (Jakubczak, 2022).

3.1. MALWARE – DEFINITION AND TYPES

Malware, a term that comprises a variety of malicious software, notably worms (spreading using the network architecture) and viruses (spreading via infected media), operates covertly to perform harmful actions unbeknownst to the user (Zieliński, 2018). These attacks are generally non-targeted, affecting all vulnerable devices rather than specific ones. Their impact includes altering, damaging or stealing data (Wangen, 2015). In the Internet of Things (IoT) systems, the interception or modification of data from a single sensor can lead to significant damage due to the interconnected nature of these systems where the output of various sensors might depend on the data from the corrupted one (Husamuddin

& Qayyum, 2017). The proliferation of malware has been graphically depicted in Fig. 2, which presents annual detections of new malware worldwide from 2015 to May 2019, reflecting a steady increase over the years.

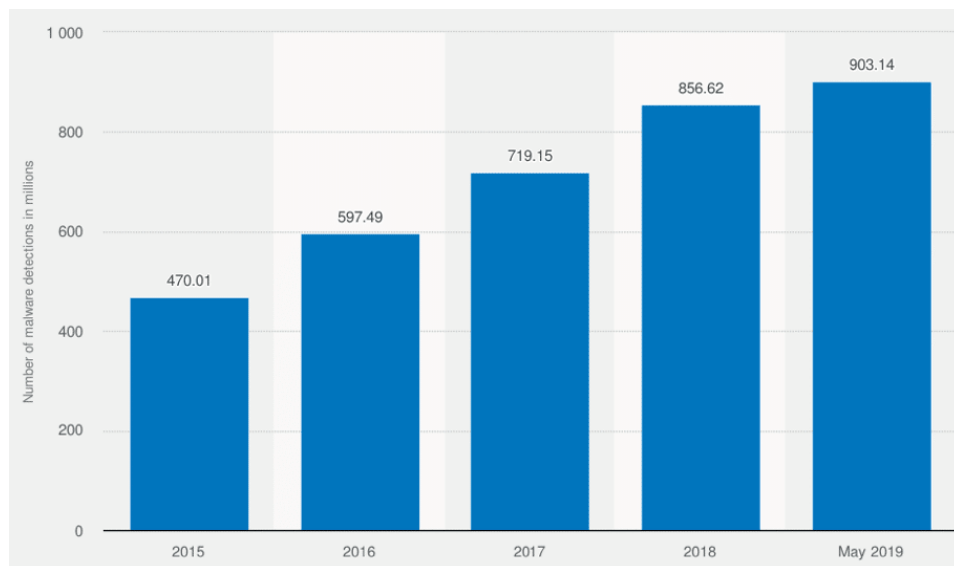


Figure 2. Annual detections of new malware worldwide from 2015 to May 2019 – in millions (Cantrell, 2022)

3.1.1. COMPUTER VIRUSES AND COMPUTER WORMS

Macro viruses, a subset of viruses that affect text documents, are notably difficult to detect due to their resistance to standard access control protections and their ability to propagate through email communications (Bontchev, 1998). Their universality poses a serious risk to various hardware platforms and multiple versions of text applications, underscoring the need for advanced protection mechanisms within text editing software. Viruses are made of distinct components: the payload, which carries out the intended functions of the virus; the trigger, the code that seeks the right conditions to activate the virus; and the infection code, or the infection vector, which is responsible for the virus replication. The virus lifecycle includes a dormancy phase, propagation phase, activation phase and execution phase, each representing different stages of virus activity from inactivity to the execution of harmful actions (Szappanos, 2002).

There are two primary classifications of viruses: simple and compressed ones. Simple viruses are single-segment codes that are generally less harmful and more easily detectable due to their static nature. Compressed viruses, on the other hand, are capable of spreading to other objects and inflicting significant damage during the host's operation (Gupta et al., 2022). Their modus operandi includes searching for specific file types, compressing them, inserting their code, decompressing the files, and then

executing the infected files. Viruses may employ self-encryption, polymorphism and metamorphism to conceal themselves, complicating their detection. Infection vectors are diverse, including files, RAM, disk boot sectors and macros within application files, such as those found in text editors (Serazzi & Zanero, 2003).

While computer viruses are software that spreads via infected media, computer worms are malicious software that spreads using the network infrastructure. Computer worms are highlighted as a particularly destructive standalone form of malware that exploits system vulnerabilities independently of a host file. These worms not only strain infrastructure resources but also facilitate the transfer of additional malware and can lead to the compromise of sensitive user data and settings (Smith et al., 2009).

3.1.2. OTHER ATTACK METHODOLOGIES

The change in malware tactics is reflected in Fig. 3, which shows a decline in the number of attacks on non-standard ports to 9% in 2021, suggesting an adaptation in attack methodologies. The malware taxonomy also includes Trojan horses (Denning, 1988), exploits (Miller, 2008), keyloggers (Singh & Choudhary, 2021), rootkits (Kim et al., 2012), backdoors (Zhang & Paxson, 2000), flooders (Sim, 2018), spammers (Song et al., 2011), adware (Gao et al., 2019), bots/zombies (Choo, 2007), logic bombs (Dusane & Pavithra, 2020), portable codes (Rad et al., 2012), autorooters (Pang et al., 2004) and downloaders (Rossow et al., 2013). This diverse array of malware types, as depicted in Fig. 4, indicates that backdoor attacks are currently the most common ones, dominating the landscape of cybersecurity threats and reinforcing the critical need for multifaceted security defenses.

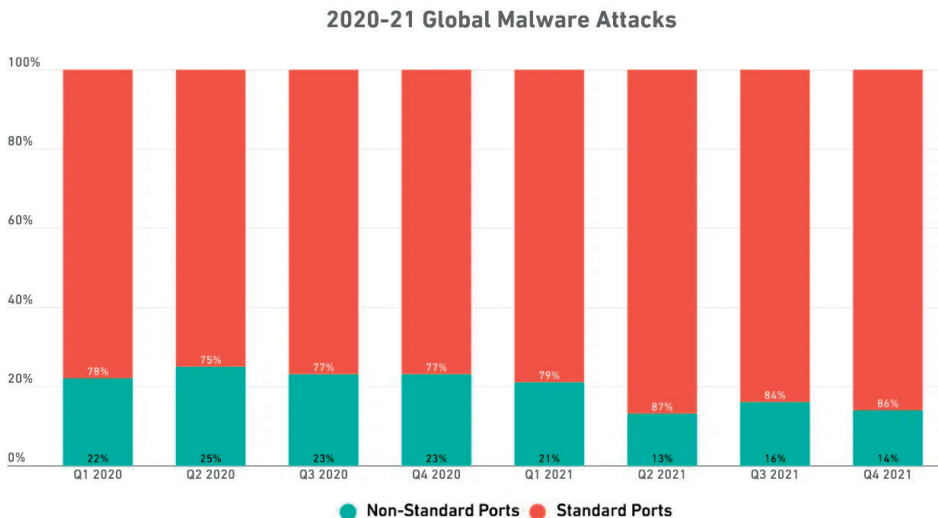


Figure 3. The number of attacks on non-standard ports dropped to 9% in 2021 (Comparitech, 2023)

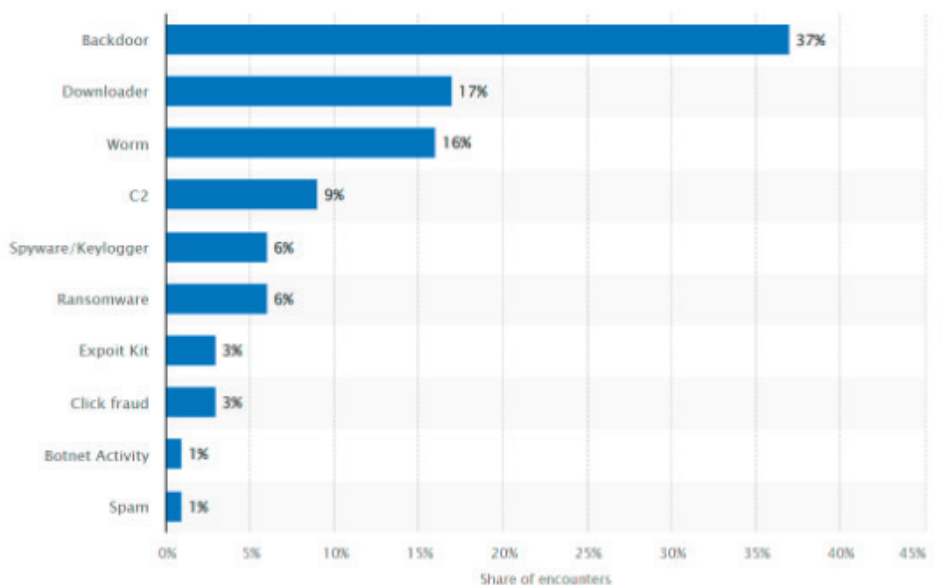


Figure 4. Backdoor attacks lead in number (Petrosyan, 2023)

3.2. DESTRUCTIVE ATTACKS

In the field of cybersecurity, destructive attacks are those that aim to incapacitate electronics or infrastructure of a system via direct physical assault. Utilizing high-energy electrical pulses to damage electronic circuitry is the most common tactic (Moran, 2012). Such methods were not only theoretical concerns but have had real-world applications (Jakubczak, 2022), as evidenced by Fig. 5, which depicts the bombing of critical infrastructure in regions of Ukraine during the autumn of 2022. Adversaries may exploit the power supply network to introduce destructive electrical pulses, thereby overwhelming and damaging electronic devices (Moran, 2012). Electromagnetic pulses, although more costly, offer a high-impact alternative, potentially disabling electronics across vast areas when deployed via military-grade technology or nuclear explosions (Szubrycht & Szymański, 2005).

Destructors are key instruments in such attacks, designed to deliver destructive currents into the electrical grid, with some being capable of releasing up to 300 megajoules of energy (Świętochowski, 2018). To mitigate such threats, Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS) systems of various types and configurations are deployed. These systems range from offline to online, with the latter providing seamless power continuity in the event of grid failure. Despite these defenses, the sustained integrity of a power supply of a system remains a critical challenge in view of sophisticated destructive attacks (Alqinsi et al., 2018).



Figure 5. Regions of Ukraine where critical infrastructure was bombed in autumn 2022 (Lukiv, 2022)

3.3. DENIAL OF SERVICE ATTACKS

A Denial of Service (DoS) attack aims to exhaust critical system resources, thus disabling computer systems or services. These resources include computational power, memory, disk storage and network bandwidth. DoS attacks fall into three categories: targeting limited network resources, destroying physical network infrastructure, or disrupting network configuration. A Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack is an escalated assault that uses a network of compromised machines to flood a target with traffic, rendering services inaccessible to intended users (Protasowicki, 2018). Key DDoS attack techniques involve SYN packets that exhaust server resources and ICMP ECHO requests that generate overwhelming traffic (Gupta et al., 2016). Execution of such attacks requires malware, knowledge of system vulnerabilities, and the ability to scan and exploit unprotected computers (Kumar & Jain, 2023). Notable tools for DDoS include Trinoo (Dittrich, 1999), TFN, TFN2K, and Stacheldraht (Nagpal et al., 2015). Fig. 6 provides a statistical representation of the distribution of DDoS attacks across different countries in 2018, illustrating the global scale and targeted nature of these cyber threats.

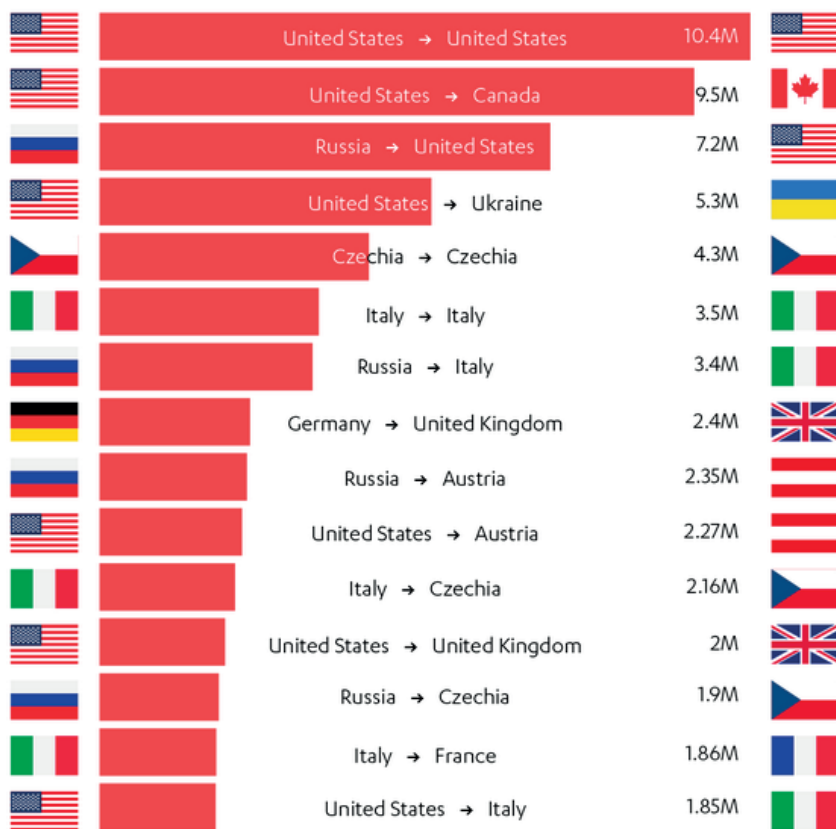


Figure 6. Breakdown of the number of DDoS attacks between countries in 2018 (Michael, 2019)

4. SECURITY ISSUES IN SELECTED IOT BRANCHES

Within the range of industrial domains, the integration of Internet of Things (IoT) technologies is becoming increasingly prevalent. These sectors include agriculture (Stoćes et al., 2016), automotive industry (Ghosh et al., 2022), finance (Khanboubi et al., 2019), construction (Gamil et al., 2020), education (Szabłowski, 2023), healthcare (Kwiatkowska, 2016), manufacturing, mining (Szozda, 2017), and retail (Krysiński, 2016). IoT devices deployed across these fields are instrumental in the systematic collection, transmission and processing of information. They also play a critical role in data storage and the execution of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms for enhanced decision-making (Rathee, 2020). Evidence of this widespread IoT utilization is underscored in Fig 7.

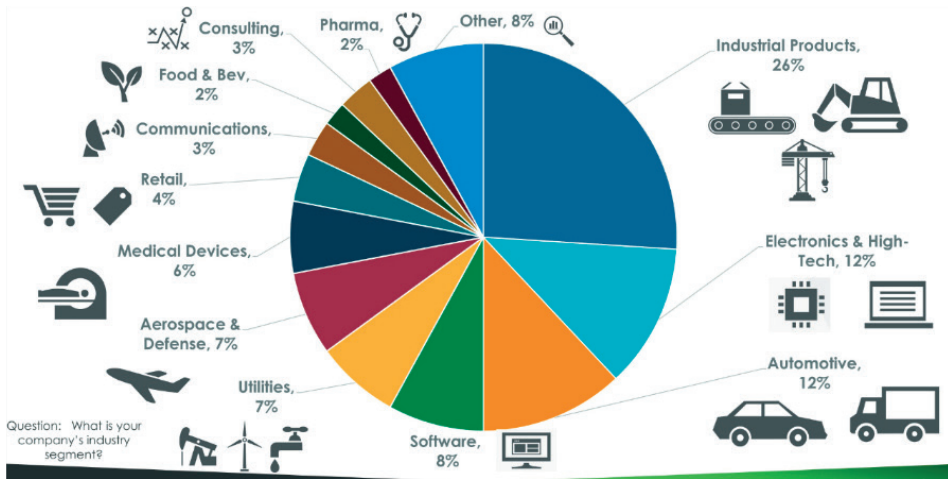


Figure 7. Results of the user survey for ThingWorx, PTC's industrial IoT platform (Immerman, 2022)

4.1. INDUSTRIAL IOT (IIOT)

In the industrial Internet of Things (IoT) landscape, an amalgamation of advanced technologies is essential for operational efficiency. This includes machine-to-machine communication for data exchange (Walczak et al., 2012), artificial intelligence for autonomous decision-making (Kuraś et al., 2023), and real-time monitoring systems for network security (Strzałka et al., 2021). The infrastructure is bolstered by distributed computing resources, including cloud storage, and is further enhanced by robotics for tasks like assembly and resource harvesting (El-Sayed, 2017). Predictive maintenance algorithms and Big Data analytics are critical for equipment monitoring and data analysis (Rysz, 2020). However, this technological sophistication renders Industrial IoT systems vulnerable to various cyber threats. Communication interception between controllers and actuators can lead to data leaks (Herzberg & Kfir, 2019), while sensor manipulation might cause system disruptions (Zhu et al., 2011). Actuator compromise can affect manufacturing processes (Perner et al., 2016), and IoT management systems are susceptible to attacks like DDoS and software exploitation (Protasowicki, 2018).

Vulnerabilities in communication protocols can lead to unauthorized system access and data theft, and power supply system attacks can disrupt device functionality (Matejkowski & Szmyd, 2023). Moreover, vulnerabilities in communication or management protocols can be exploited to gain privileged system access, install backdoors, or facilitate data theft (Bator et al., 2023). Attacks executed via direct console access can cause the commandeering of additional devices within the company's network (Zaddach, 2013). Power supply systems are not immune, with attacks manipulating battery level readings leading to rapid energy depletion or disorganized equipment operation, either through physical

damage or malware introduction (Case, 2016). Additionally, the uniformity of devices within large enterprise IoT networks presents a risk of botnet formation, potentially leading to extensive DDoS attacks. These multifaceted vulnerabilities underscore the imperative for robust security measures within industrial IoT infrastructures, to safeguard against the diverse array of cyber threats inherent in these technologically advanced systems.

4.2. IOT SYSTEMS IN AGRICULTURE

Contemporary agricultural practices increasingly utilize satellite imagery and drone surveillance for crop monitoring. These technologies enable farmers to assess crop conditions and efficiently plan field operations (Nakalembe et al. 2021, Mogilie et al., 2018). Advanced agricultural machinery, equipped with satellite navigation, is semi-autonomous, facilitating precise field cultivation and optimizing the coverage area. Integrated sensors in these machines measure the distribution of fertilizers, seeds and water, enhancing resource efficiency and environmental sustainability (Rahmadian & Widyartono, 2020). Additionally, sensor technology is employed to monitor machinery wear and tear. Crop surveillance extends to camera systems and sensors that gauge soil moisture, temperature and other environmental parameters like rainfall, light intensity and atmospheric CO₂ levels (Lee et al., 2010). Solar-powered multifunctional sensors prove to be particularly effective in these applications (Bogue, 2012). In granaries, stables and barns, sensors play a crucial role in monitoring temperature and humidity levels, essential for optimal storage conditions and animal welfare (Zhang et al., 2016). Motion-activated video surveillance systems with audio deterrents are also used to protect crops from wildlife (Jeon et al., 2019).

The expansive nature of agricultural lands necessitates efficient data transmission protocols. LoRaWAN, with its long-range capabilities (up to 15 km) and low throughput, is well-suited for connecting field sensors to central stations (Davcev et al., 2018). Power efficiency is crucial due to the limited availability of power sources in agricultural settings. The Hub and Spoke network topology is adopted, where data is collected from sensors by a hub and transmitted to the control panel, often on a scheduled, energy-saving cycle, such as hourly one (Singh et al., 2020). Farm security comprises both physical measures, like fencing and video surveillance, and discreet deployment of sensors and IoT devices (Baranwal & Pateriya, 2016). Redundancy in sensor deployment ensures reliability, allowing rapid anomaly detection if a sensor is compromised (Shen & Wu, 2011). While agricultural machinery is advancing towards automation, it is recommended that these systems provide data and recommendations to operators rather than fully autonomous operation, ensuring human oversight in decision-making processes related to navigation and field operations (Stoćes et al., 2016).

5. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO CYBERTHREATS IN IOT

The economic impact of computer system downtime is multifaceted, encompassing halted employee productivity, disrupted service provision, and the need for specialized system restoration expertise (Oostenbrink, 2015). This complexity is exemplified in Fig. 8, which illustrates the average losses incurred by a company fully reliant on cloud services after just one hour of system failure. The rapidly evolving IoT landscape presents significant security challenges. The continuous release of new solutions by various manufacturers causes delayed and fragmented security standard adoption. The wide array of devices, each collecting sensitive data, amplifies the potential impact of cyber-attacks.

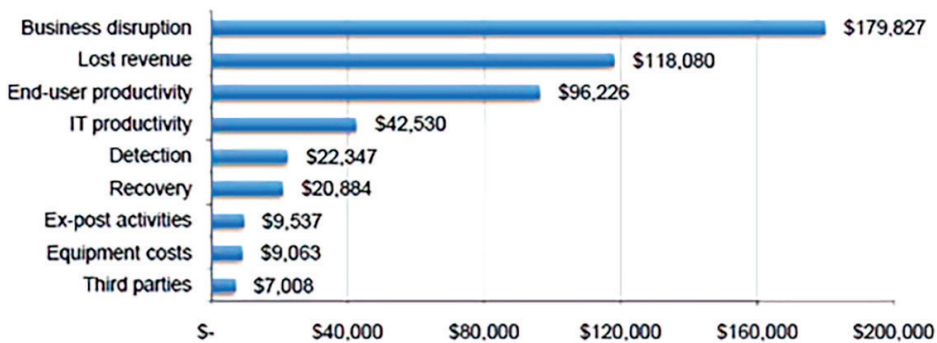


Figure 8. Average losses after 1 hour of failure for a company fully dependent on cloud services (Cohen, 2019)

Cost-reduction strategies in critical infrastructure management have led to the integration of low-cost IoT solutions, raising national security concerns. The diversity of hardware platforms necessitates varied development approaches, often at the expense of security (De Felice & Petrillo, 2018). Partial upgrades in IoT devices further compromise security, necessitating policy adaptations. The lack of clearly defined security responsibilities, coupled with inadequate legislation and standards, exacerbates these challenges (Stoll & Breu, 2012). Competitive market pressures often lead to compromises in security subsystems due to cost-cutting measures.

Furthermore, the IT and cybersecurity sectors face a talent shortfall (Paidant, 2023), complicating the management of the diverse IoT environment. In industrial settings, the integration of legacy equipment with modern IoT devices exposes new security gaps (Rosas et al., 2017). The prioritization of productivity over security in business models (Adamkiewicz, 2005), complex supply chains and the selection of flawed IT solutions due to insufficient knowledge among personnel further heighten security risks. Enterprise security, spanning physical, information and production aspects, are challenged by the mass production of IoT devices,

often resulting in oversimplified security measures. The necessity of staff training is emphasized, as untrained personnel are vulnerable to social engineering attacks (Zwilling et al., 2022).

5.1. COMBATING THREATS

Standard virus countermeasures in cybersecurity involve the detection, identification and elimination of viruses, with the aim of restoring the system to its pre-infection state. This process is typically executed by commercial antivirus software (Chen & Carley, 2004). The primary defense mechanism includes the deployment of a dedicated firewall at the Internet entry point and the utilization of a blocking server. This server, running a streamlined operating system, analyzes network traffic and tests suspicious processes in a sandbox environment. The configuration of the server and response protocols are managed by network administrators (Tudosi et al., 2023). In cases of post-infection digital resilience, response actions are initiated upon detection of suspicious activity by antivirus software. This involves transmitting infection reports to an analysis unit, which then formulates and disseminates a remediation plan to local network administrators and infected hosts.

Given the different nature of the worms, as this type of malware uses the network infrastructure to spread, worm containment strategies encompass a variety of approaches, including signature-based detection, content examination of worm commands, blocking of anomalous connections, and payload analysis within network packets. Proactive Worm Containment (PWC) leverages a security management station to dynamically configure firewalls and routers (Jhi et al., 2010). Additionally, network-based protection employs sensors both locally and remotely to detect irregular activities, with a correlation server analyzing these alerts to confirm worm attacks.

DDoS attack mitigation involves real-time detection and filtering of attack traffic, coupled with post-event investigations to identify and neutralize the source. Comprehensive system protection extends beyond internal measures to include physical security of power supply networks, requiring collaboration with electricity suppliers and stringent control of network equipment at distribution points (Da Silva Cardoso et al., 2018). To counteract electromagnetic interference, adherence to standards like ISO is crucial. This includes strategic placement of cables, grounding of distribution points, and maintaining minimum installation distances for various types of cables and devices to mitigate the impact of electromagnetic emissions from common office equipment (Boteanu et al., 2019).

6. SUMMARY AND THE FUTURE OF IOT

The Internet of Things (IoT), now evolving into the Internet of Everything (IoE), represents a paradigm shift in technological integration across diverse sectors. This transformation encapsulates a comprehensive network where not only traditional computing devices but also everyday objects are interconnected, facilitating the collection, processing and analysing of data. This expansive network permeates various domains, including manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare and banking. The proliferation of IoT devices, which now extend to IoE, occurs in both private and public sectors, including private enterprises, government offices and critical infrastructures. These devices, ranging from standard computers to mobile devices, often serve dual purposes, catering to both professional and personal uses. This ubiquity of IoT/IoE technologies introduces significant security challenges, as their unregulated infiltration creates vulnerabilities within organizational systems (Pietrek & Skelnik, 2023). The competitive landscape in the IoT/IoE industry, marked by a multitude of manufacturers vying for market dominance, often results in cost-cutting measures that compromise information security. The absence of a distinct demarcation between IoT security, information security and physical access security further complicates the establishment of robust protective measures (Gołębiewska et al., 2022). Hastily developed standards and the need for continual adaptation of security protocols reflect the dynamic nature of this field (Słota-Bohosiewicz, 2019). Moreover, the focus on operational efficiency and functionality often leads business owners to overlook critical security considerations (Wiercioch, 2022). This prioritization presents a stark contrast to the escalating risks associated with the expanding IoT/IoE landscape. As this sector continues to grow, the integration of comprehensive and adaptive security strategies is becoming increasingly vital to safeguard the integrity of both private and public digital infrastructures.

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