Religious websites are the most attacked by hackers

by **Bob Allen** in the **May 30, 2012** issue

Online religion may be good for your soul but dangerous for your computer, according to a new report.

The study by Symantec, a company that sells computer-security software, finds websites devoted to religion or other ideologies to be the ones most targeted by malicious hackers.

Infected religious websites averaged 115 threats, most commonly fake antivirus software, reported Symantec. That was three times the rate of hosting and personal hosted websites and four-and-one-half times that of pornographic sites.

The safest places for web surfing are sites about sports (average 13 threats per infected site), automotive (11) and shopping (9).

Symantec says it blocked over 5.5 billion malware (malicious software) attacks in 2011, an 81 percent increase over 2010. An average of 82 targeted attacks takes place each day, and you are more likely to be infected by malware placed on a legitimate website than one created by a hacker, the report says.

Mobile phones are becoming increasingly susceptible to malware attacks, with smart phone sales projected to reach 645 million in 2012. The report said 232 million identities were stolen in 2011. The most frequent cause of data breaches was not online but the theft or loss of a computer.

Macs are not immune from attack, and spammers are starting to use Quick Response, or QR, codes to trick users into installing Trojans—benign programs that conceal another malicious program—onto their Android phones.

The report advises computer users to use up-to-date security programs and become educated about hacker tricks like getting them to believe that their computer is infected and can be fixed with an automatic download or offering "free" or pirated versions of computer programs. —ABP