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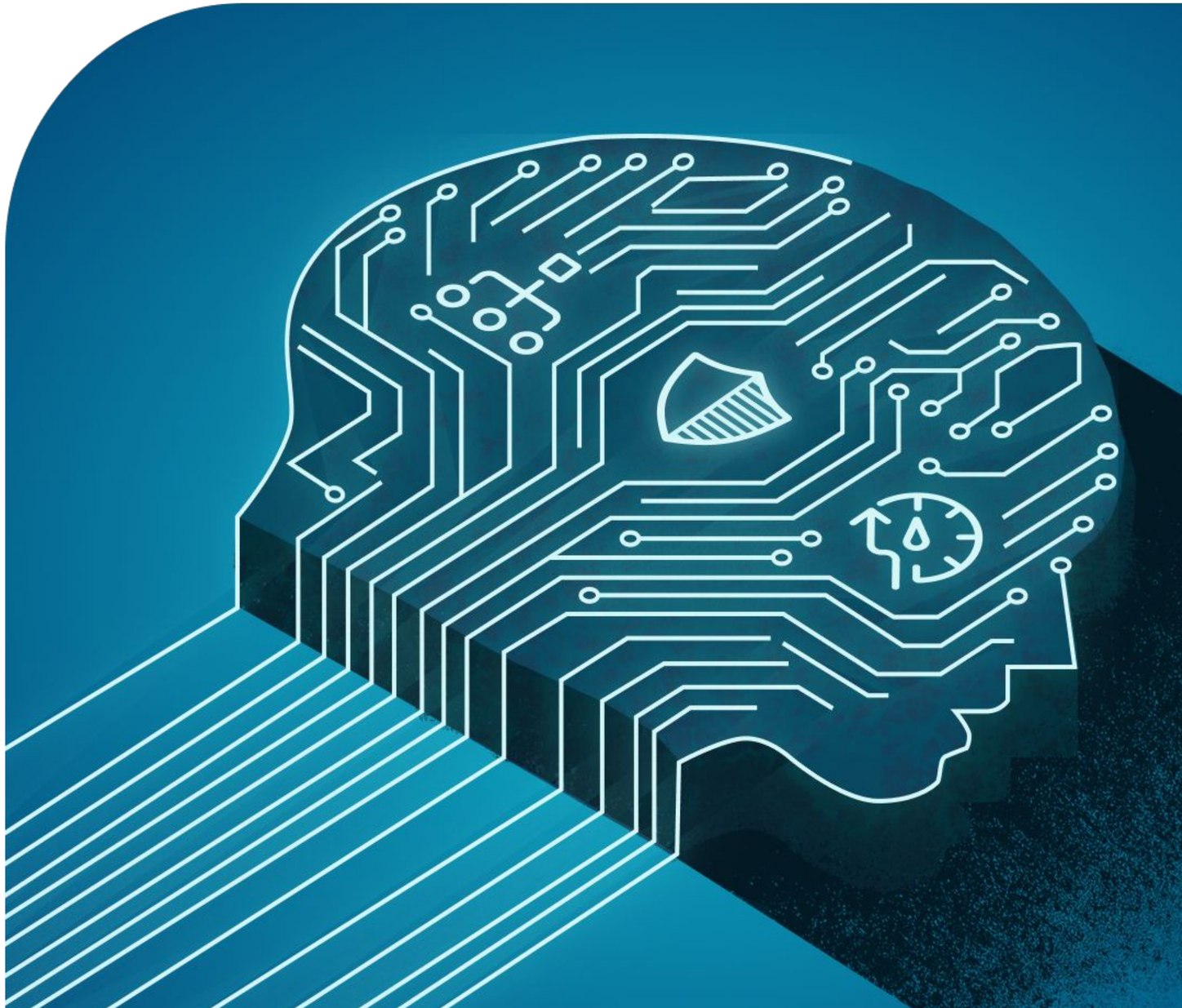
2025 Web Traffic Trends Report

The New Strategic Imperative: Intelligent Traffic Management



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The landscape of the internet has undergone a rapid and significant transformation.

With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically LLMs and Agents, website strategies need to focus on intelligent traffic management.

The cost of inaction

The rise of AI-driven bot traffic, which accounts for 30% of traffic, may consume up to 70% of the most costly dynamic resources such as hosting, environment, and performance.

This has transformed traffic management from an optimization task into a critical financial imperative. Ignoring the bot-to-human ratio is accepting inflated operational costs.

Security in the context of unverified bot activity

The 25% lag in security maturity for smaller entities is creating a systemic vulnerability for the entire web ecosystem. Security is no longer optional or reactive; it is a structural necessity that is inseparable from performance.

AI-driven traffic's impact on performance

Half of the top websites are still not leveraging foundational technology like CDNs, costing them critical seconds in load time and widening the gap between the fastest and slowest sites.

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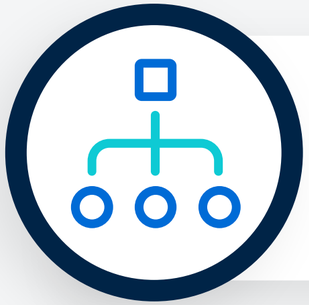


Intelligent traffic management

Security maturity

Performance parity

Three Pillars of Success

The new reality requires evolving how web teams at both brands and agencies approach building and using websites.

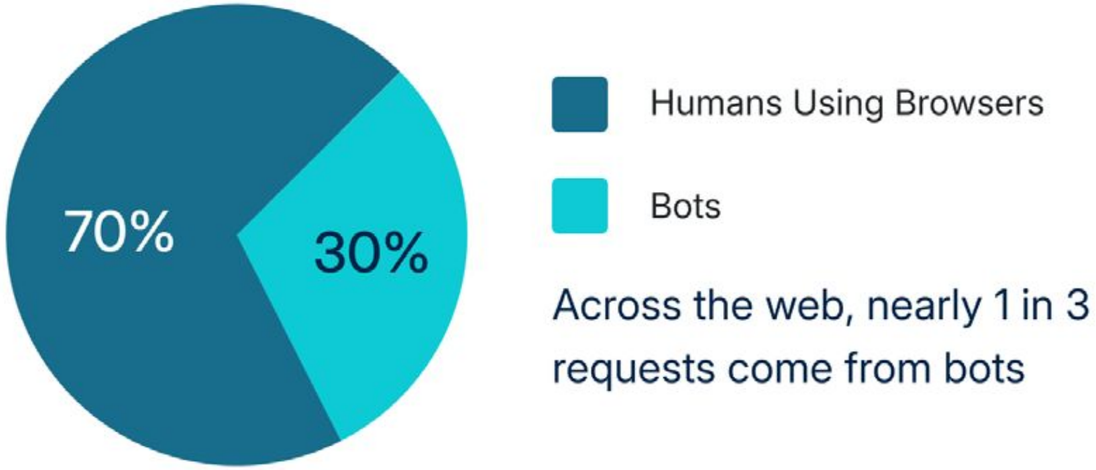
Optimizing Traffic at the Edge

The AI-driven economy is redefining traffic.

The composition of web traffic has undergone a fundamental change with the rise of automated, unverified bot traffic.

Simply put, this involves minimizing issues by proactively controlling the traffic that comes to your site.

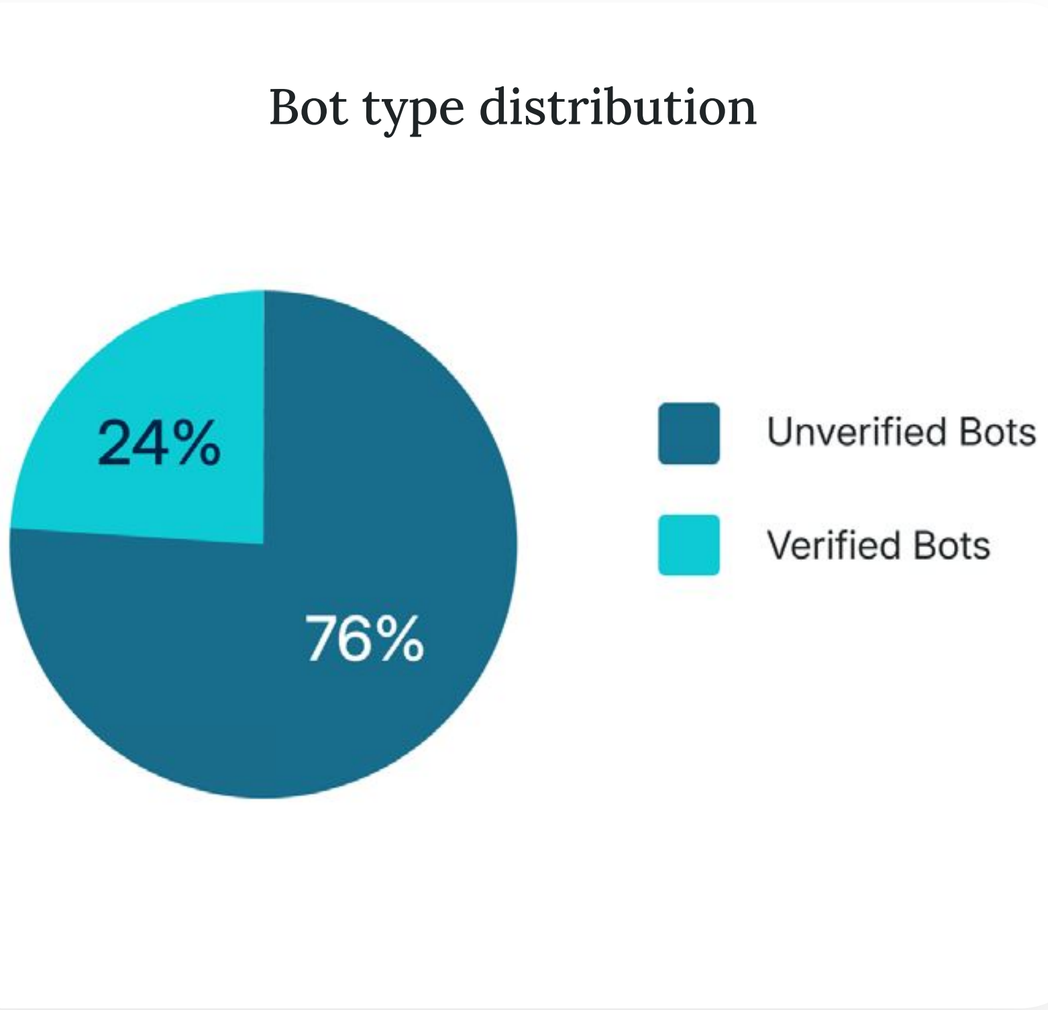
Global web traffic composition



Bot Traffic and Its Security Impacts

A larger and fluctuating percentage of bot traffic now comes from unverified sources. An unverified bot is an automated program that hasn't completed a platform's official identity or security check, meaning its developer hasn't met all criteria.

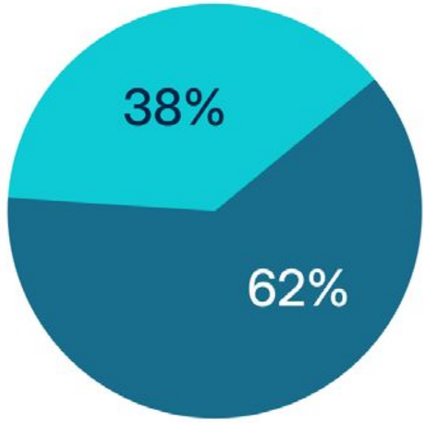
This can signify potential security risks, data misuse, or a lack of trustworthiness.



Bot Traffic Management Trails Security Maturity

Bot traffic management appears to still be maturing; however, a clear divide exists between proactive, security-minded customers and those leaving potential performance and security gains on the table, presenting a strong opportunity for differentiation.

Adoption of dedicated solutions



Users not Leveraging Add-ons

Users Leveraging Add-ons

Only 38% use dedicated solutions for bot-mitigation, security, and performance.

> Navigating this new frontier shifts the strategic imperative to proactive intervention.

Proactive Strategies for Bot Mitigation

- **Factor bot activity into planning.**
  Teams can then adjust hosting environments to scale appropriately in response to human traffic volumes while using mitigation to reduce the financial impact of bot bursts.

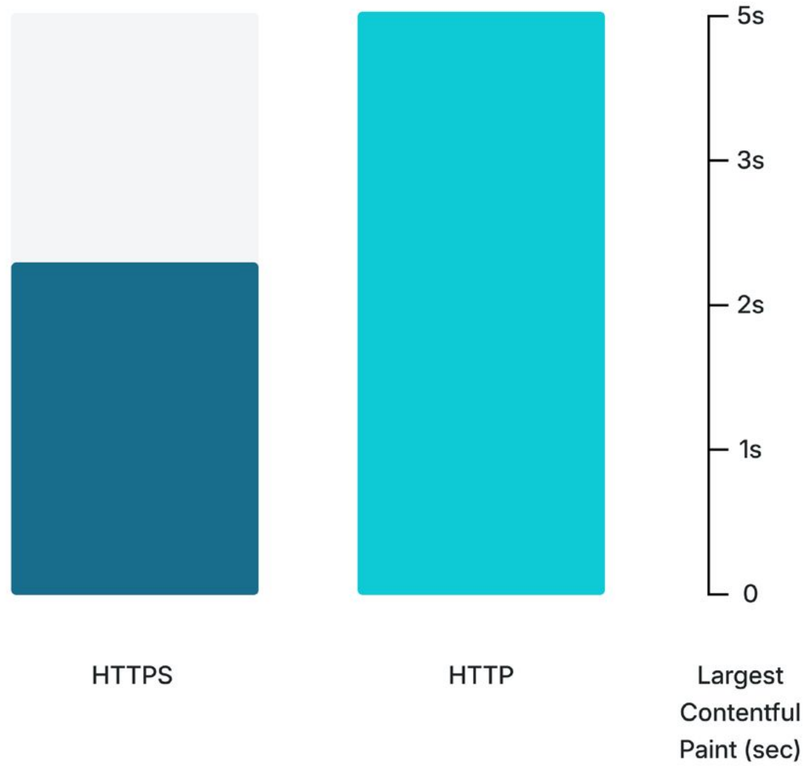
- **Leverage edge security tools.**
  Web teams need to use advanced bot mitigation that uses sophisticated techniques like fingerprint-based identification (JA/3 and JA/4). This is essential for accurately distinguishing between bots, crawlers, and malicious attacks.

- **Implement LLMs.txt.**
  This structured, AI-ready index helps large language model (LLM) providers like ChatGPT understand your site's most important content and how they should interact with the site.

Maintaining Security Maturity

HTTPS and GES helps bring parity regardless of size.

Security and speed are shown to be inseparable star players in a unified performance stack.



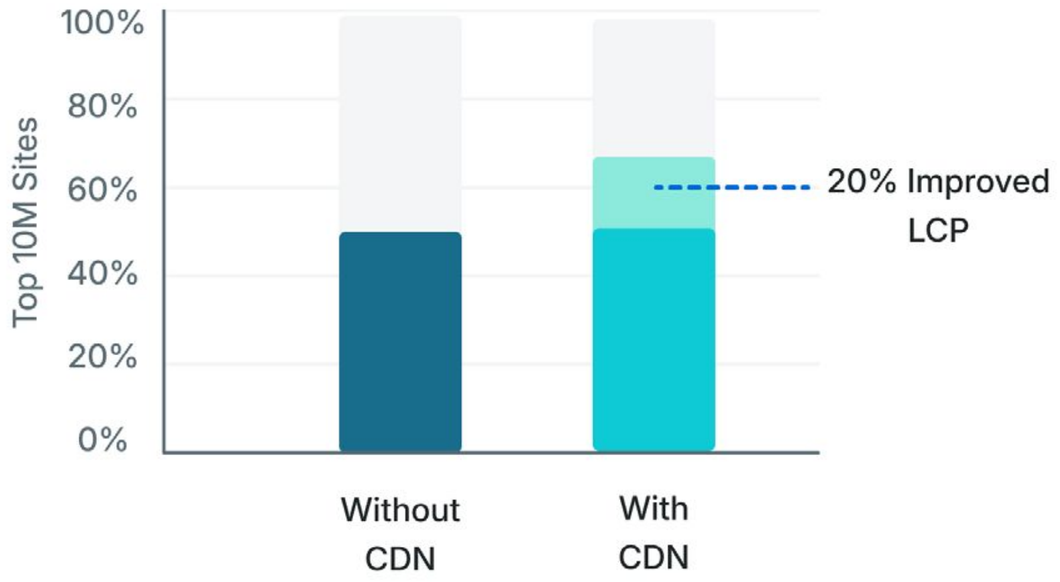
Proactive Security Strategies

- Enforce 2FA or MFA across all team members
- Integrate vulnerability and security scanning across services and development, including CI/CD pipelines
- Regularly validate backups
- Automate core and plugin updates
- Develop a proactive security culture focused on foundational components and deployment

Geography, Mobile, Plugins, and CDNs Shape Web Performance

Report findings indicate that the location of users, the devices they use, and whether sites utilize CDNs and edge caching all significantly impact load times and user experience.

CDN impact on performance



Commonly Used WordPress® Plugins by Region

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Top 5 Priorities for Web Teams in 2026

Priority	Why It Matters	Action Steps
Manage AI and bot traffic	Two-thirds of all traffic is automated; AI bots now drive most costly requests.	• Publish LLM.txt or crawler policies. • Implement bot management via Cloudflare or WP Engine. • Monitor bot-to-human ratios and adjust bandwidth planning.
Build security maturity into operations	Larger teams excel with 2FA and automated updates; smaller setups lag 25%.	• Enforce MFA across all users. • Automate plugin and core updates. • Integrate security scans into CI/CD pipelines.
Treat HTTPS as a performance enabler	Encryption now directly correlates with speed; HTTPS-only sites load 1–5 seconds faster.	• Enforce HTTPS everywhere. • Upgrade to TLS 1.3 and HSTS. • Combine HTTPS with fingerprint-based bot mitigation.
Re-engineer for lean, cached pages	Sites with fewer static requests (<5) and lighter payloads (<400 KB) achieve faster LCP and lower costs.	• Audit plugins, scripts, and image weight. • Use lazy loading and modern formats. • Make static request count a key KPI.
Optimize for a mobile-first, global audience	Mobile is now the dominant traffic source, yet global users (especially outside North America) still experience slower performance.	• Enable multi-region CDNs and edge caching. • Monitor LCP/TTFB by region and device. • Localize assets for key markets.

Putting the Top Priorities into an Action Plan:

Proactively manage bot traffic

- ☐ Publish LLMs.txt or crawler policies to control unwanted crawlers and opt out of training use.
- ☐ Implement bot management tools via Cloudflare, GES, or similar edge security providers.
- ☐ Factor AI bot activity into hosting and bandwidth costs by monitoring the bot-to-human ratio.

Elevate security culture

- ☐ Embed security practices into DevOps workflows.
- ☐ Use managed hosting or implement DevSecOps pipelines that include vulnerability scanning and backup validation.
- ☐ Implement and enforce Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) across all users.

Make security a performance strategy

- ☐ Adopt HTTPS everywhere.
- ☐ Treat encryption as part of the speed stack, essential for performance and trust.
- ☐ Upgrade to the latest, faster protocols, such as TLS 1.3.

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Putting the Top Priorities into an Action Plan:

Strategize globally

- ☐ Choose a server location near the largest (human) audience.
- ☐ Reduce traffic from unexpected regions using bot management technology.
- ☐ Adopt caching at the edge whenever possible.
- ☐ Select a host that scales both to human traffic volume and to reduce the impact of bursts of bot traffic.

Re-engineer for leaner, faster experiences

- ☐ Audit plugins, scripts, and image weight to minimize static requests.
- ☐ Optimize image delivery using modern formats and lazy loading techniques.
- ☐ Treat page weight (<400KB) and static calls (<5 per page) as key performance KPIs.

Modernize for mobile and global audiences

- ☐ Deploy edge caching and multi-region CDNs.
- ☐ Monitor LCP and TTFB across different geographies and devices to identify and systematically address performance gaps.
- ☐ Localize assets and hosting for key markets to ensure proximity hosting.

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Thank you

Research Methodology

The conclusions and recommendations in this report are based on proprietary first-party data from WP Engine with third-party data from Google CrUX Data and Cloudflare Bot Management. The research covers data from Q3 2025 and the period from September 2024 to September 2025 across global regions (North America, Asia-Pacific including Australia, Europe including the UK) and four focus areas: The Global Speed Gap, CMS & Plugin Trends, Security & Resilience, and Traffic Management Best Practices.

Download a single page version of the Action Plan checklist here.