

# **Upgrading HTTPS in Midair: An Empirical Study on Strict Transport Security (HSTS) and Public Key Pinning (HPKP) in the Wild**

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# Takeaways Up Front

- HSTS and HPKP are being used
  - *Used by over 12,500 sites (~1% of top million)*
  - *500% increase in preload list in the past 4 months*
- *Still better than HTTPS only*
- Many errors in implementation
  - *59.5% of sites set HSTS incompletely*
  - *47.8% still leak cookies due to HSTS/HPKP hole*
- Standards contribute to issues
  - *Better defaults*
  - *Developer testing during process*

# Agenda

- Background on HSTS and Pinning
- Study methodology
- Current deployment
- *High-level overview of errors*
- Takeaways from study

**Check out the paper for more details:**

[http://www.jbonneau.com/doc/KB15-NDSS-hsts\\_pinning\\_survey.pdf](http://www.jbonneau.com/doc/KB15-NDSS-hsts_pinning_survey.pdf)

# HTTPS attacks in *practice*

- Attacks against TLS

- *Implementation attacks*
- *Protocol flaws*
- *Compromise of private keys*



*POODLE*

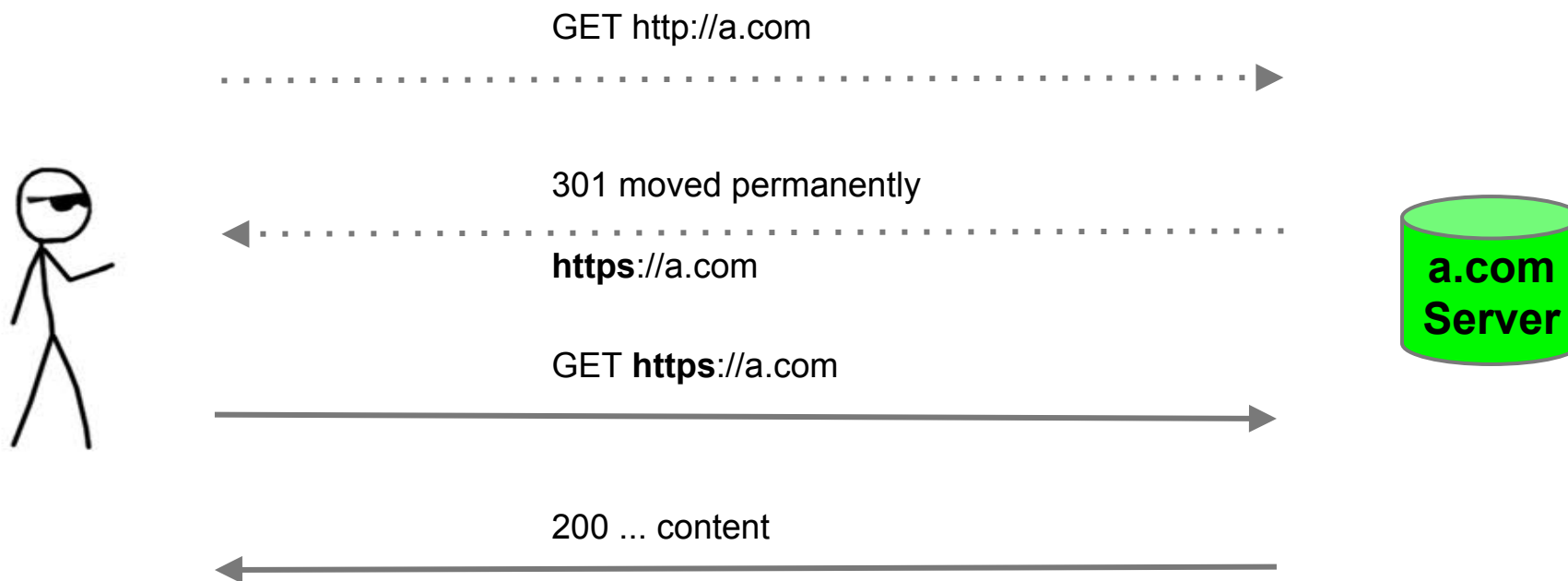
- Inconsistent or incomplete deployment

- *Mixed content*
- *Stripping attacks*  *HSTS*

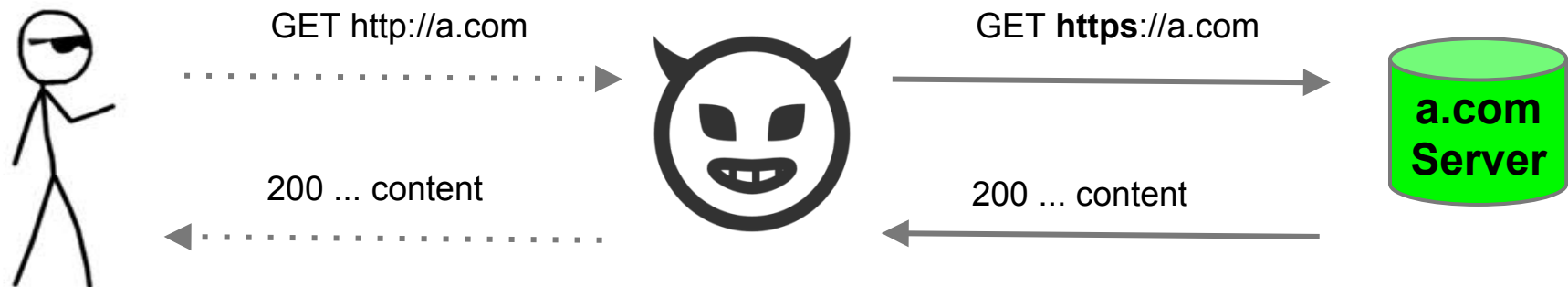
- Failures by Certificate Authorities

- *Rogue certificates*  *HPKP*

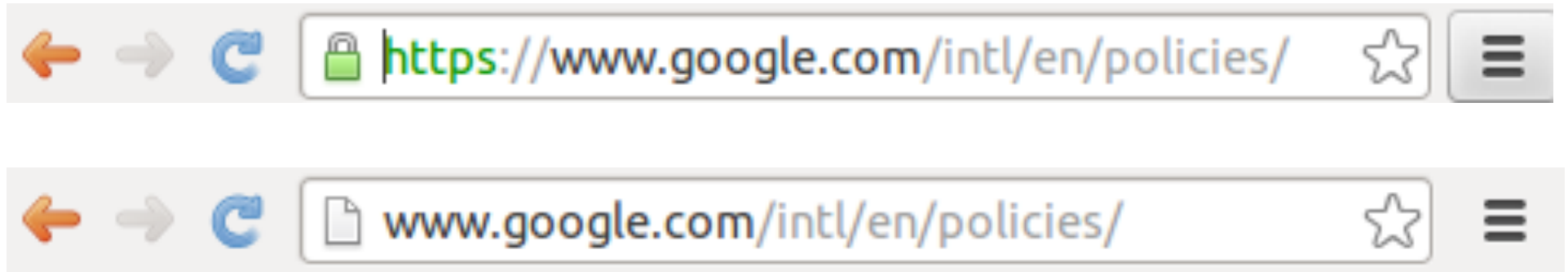
# Problem 1: HTTPS stripping



# Problem 1: HTTPS stripping



# Users do not notice HTTPS stripping



- **<10% notice** [[Schechter et al. 2007](#)] and others
- Automated tools available – can even do lock

# Solution #1: HSTS

## (HTTP Strict Transport Security)

- *Mandatory* HTTPS at "HSTS domains"
  - Upgraded by browser in initial request
  - Converts HTTPS soft errors into hard errors
- Two methods of enabling
  - *Preloaded* via embedded browser list
  - *Dynamically* via HTTP Header
    - Must be set over HTTPS (trust on first use)
    - Policy expires based on included age
- Can set `includeSubdomains` token



# HSTS in Action:



GET **https://a.com**



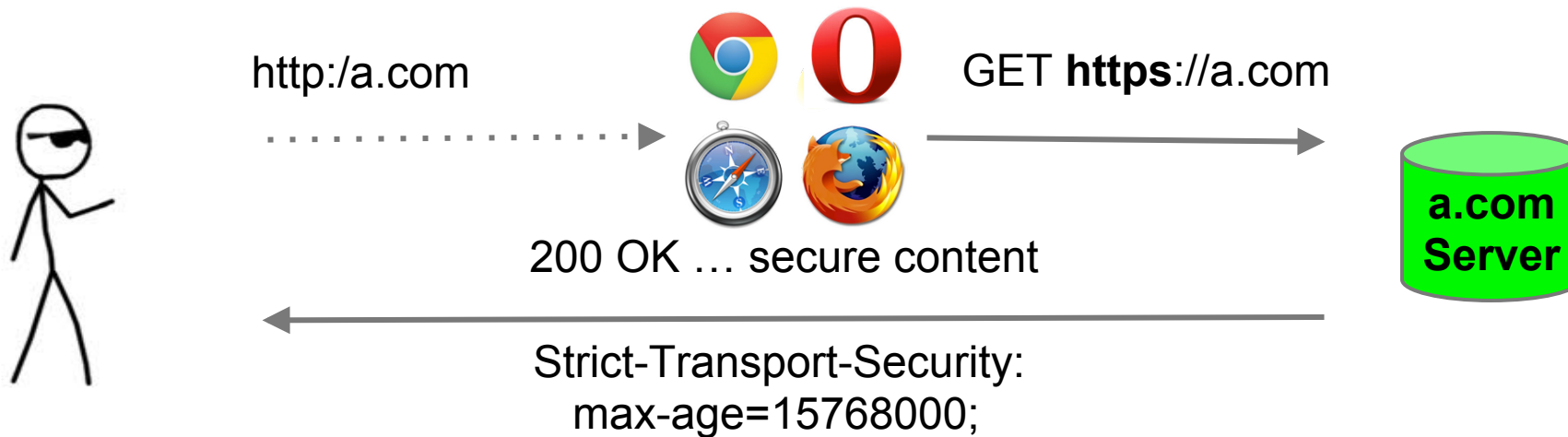
200 OK ... secure content



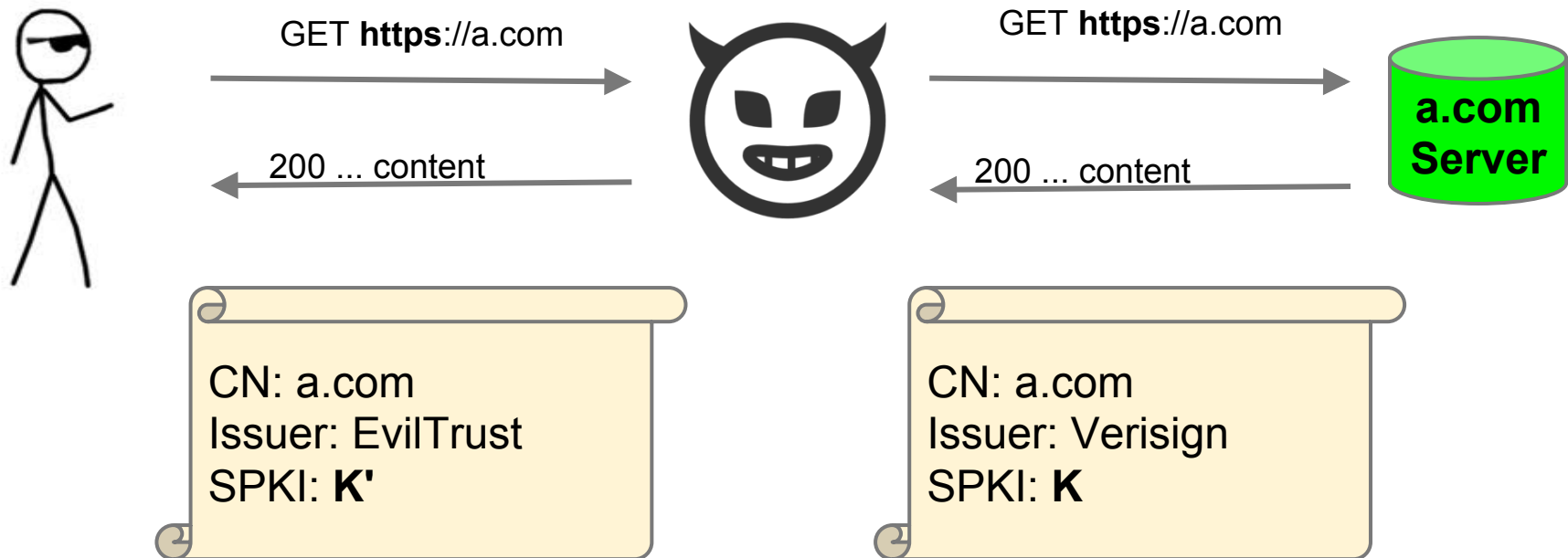
Strict-Transport-Security:  
max-age=15768000;



# HSTS in Action



# Problem 2: Rogue certificates



# Rogue certificates in the wild

- March 2011: Comodo registrar hacked
  - 9 certs: mail.google.com, login.live.com, www.google.com, login.yahoo.com, login.skype.com, addons.mozilla.org
- July 2011: DigiNotar hacked
  - 531+ certs issued: \*.google.com detected first
- ~2011: TürkTrust issues 2 intermediate CAs
  - One returned, one used in 2012 to proxy traffic...

Survey: [Niemann, Brendel](#) 2014

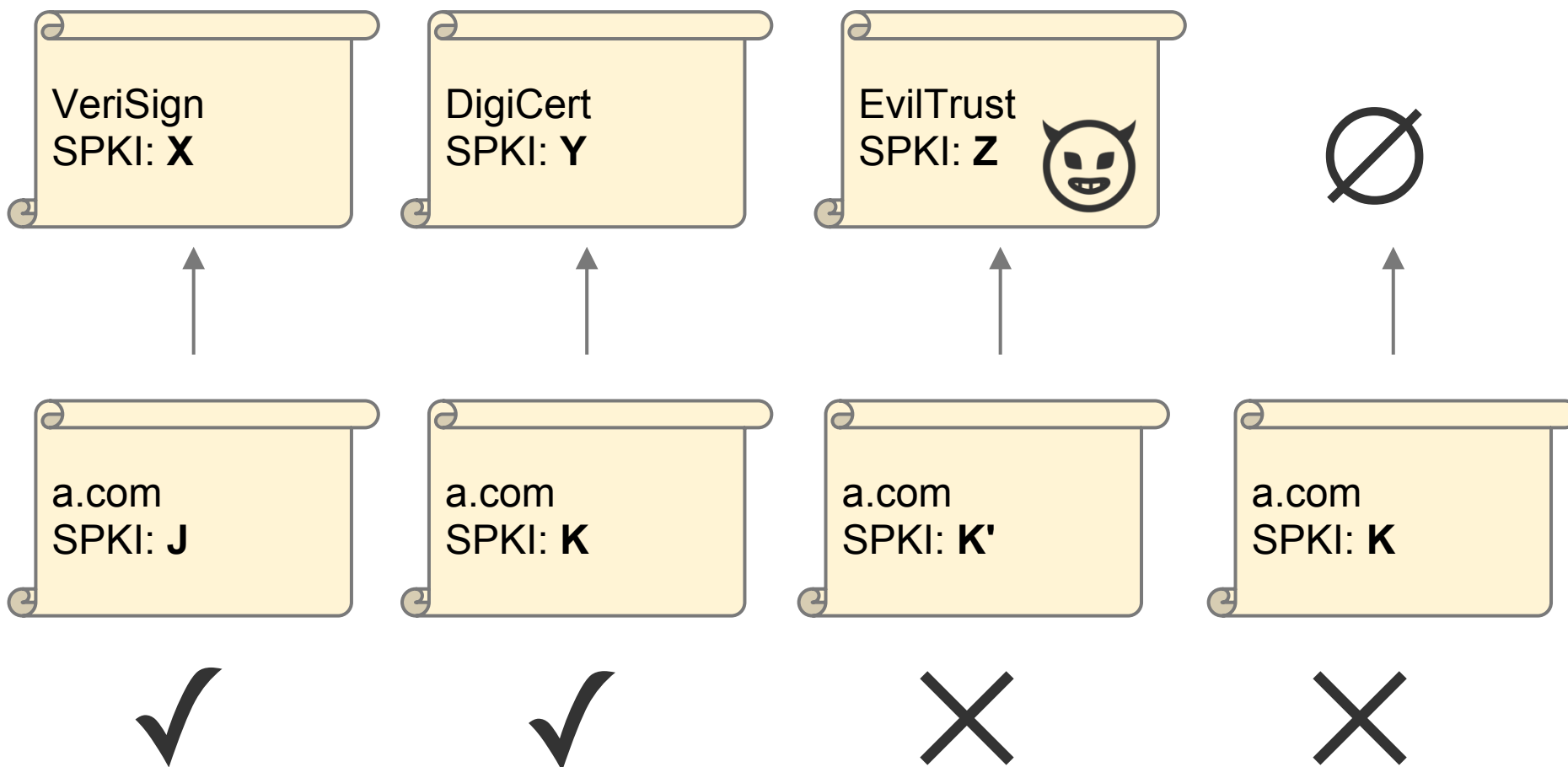
# Solution #2: HPKP (HTTP Public Key Pinning)

- Specified key hash must be present
  - Hard fail if hash not found
  - Hash can be in end-entity or CA cert
- Two methods of enabling
  - *Preloaded* via embedded browser list
  - *Dynamically* via HTTP Header\*
    - Must be set over HTTPS (TOFU)
    - Policy expires based on included age
    - SHA1 or SHA256 Hash

*\*dynamic pinning not currently supported by browsers (proposed RFC)*

# Solution #2: Key pinning

Pinset: {K, X}



# Study Methodology

## Infrastructure:

- OpenWPM\*
  - Module for Static Resources (A tags, objects, etc.)
  - Firefox Extension for Dynamic Resources (Ajax)
- ZMAP

## Span:

- Headers from Alexa Top Million
- Depth crawl of all HSTS domains
- Logged-in depth crawl of HPKP domains

\*Visit our github page for more information

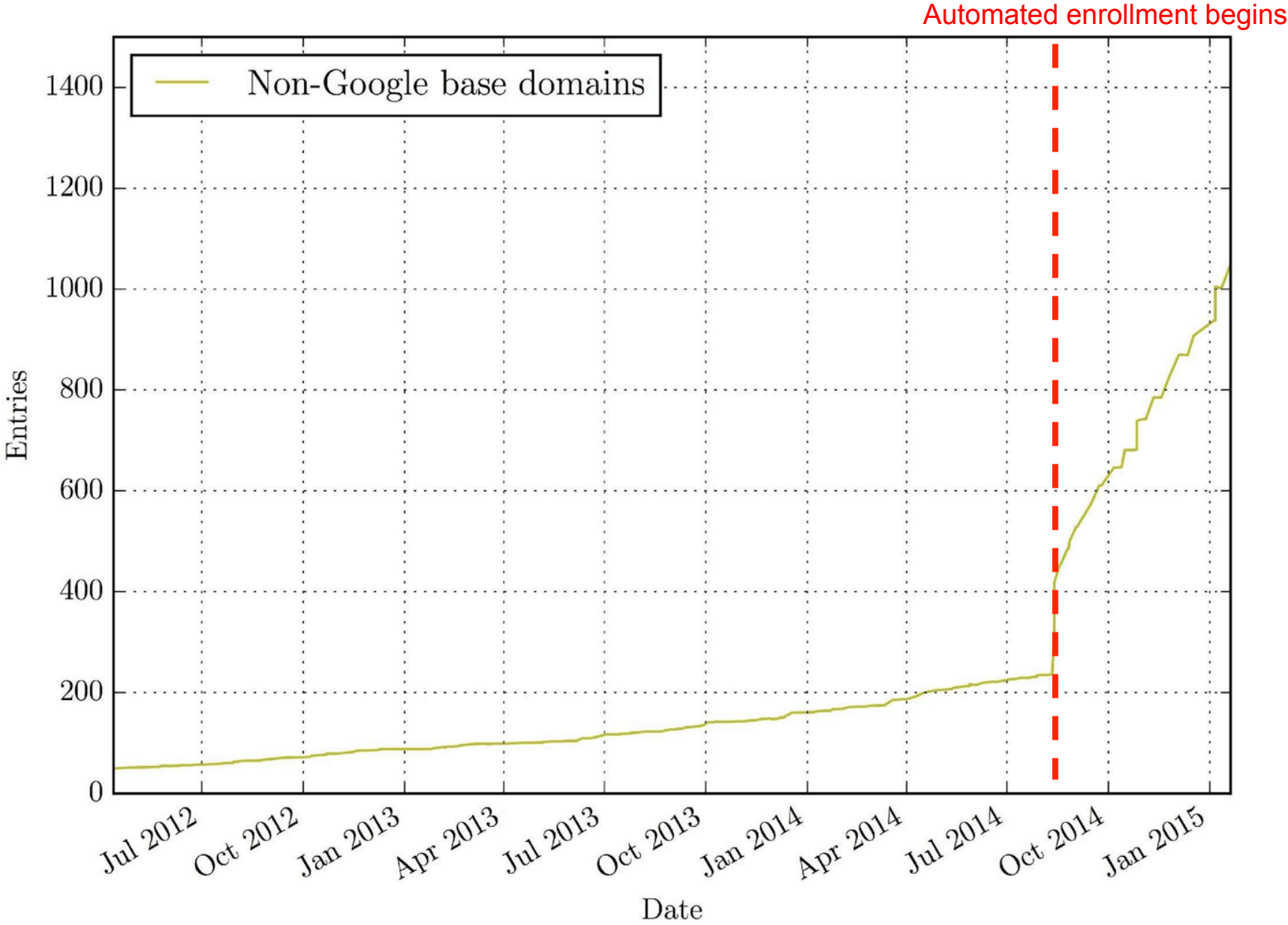
<https://github.com/citp/OpenWPM/>

# Deployment Summary

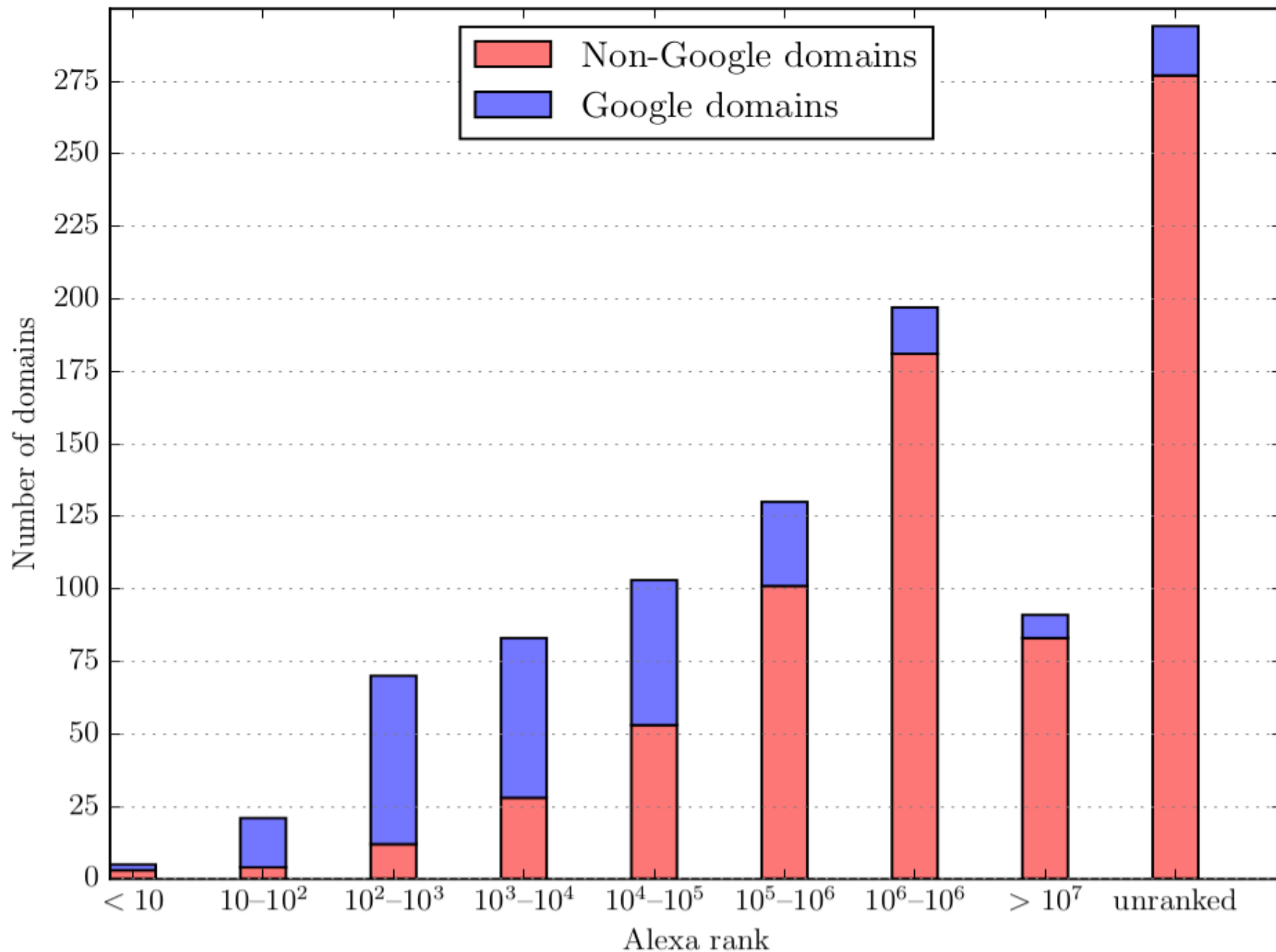
- Many sites are using HSTS
  - 12,593 of the Top 1M set HSTS headers
  - 1,021 Preloaded HSTS domains
- Many sites **SHOULD** be setting HSTS
  - 60% of Top 1M have active HTTPS sites
  - Of those, 10% redirect from HTTP to HTTPS
- Preloaded List has scalability issues
  - Started automated entry with manual review Aug 14
  - Surprisingly stale (10% return 404 or redirect to HTTP)



# Chrome Preloaded List Growth



# Many low-traffic sites preloaded

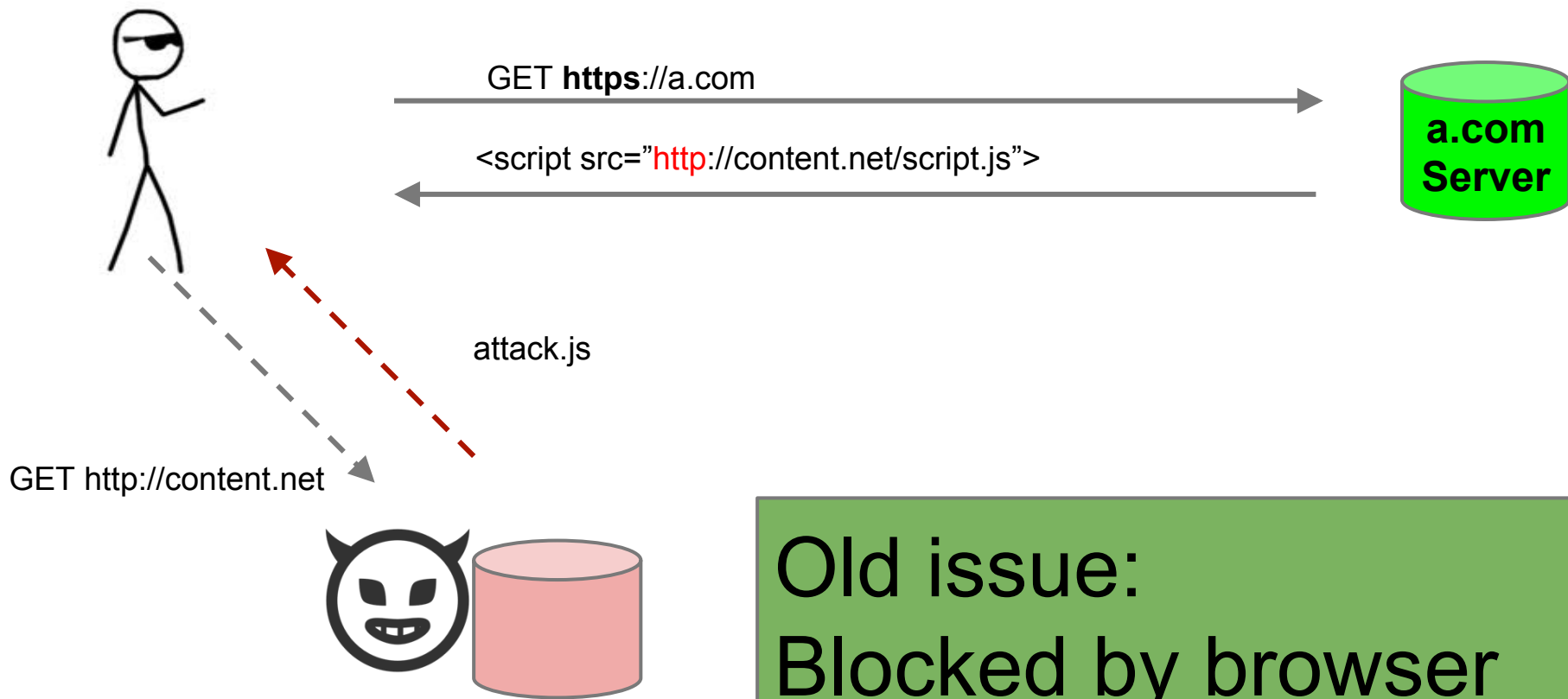


# Error 1: Configuration Issues

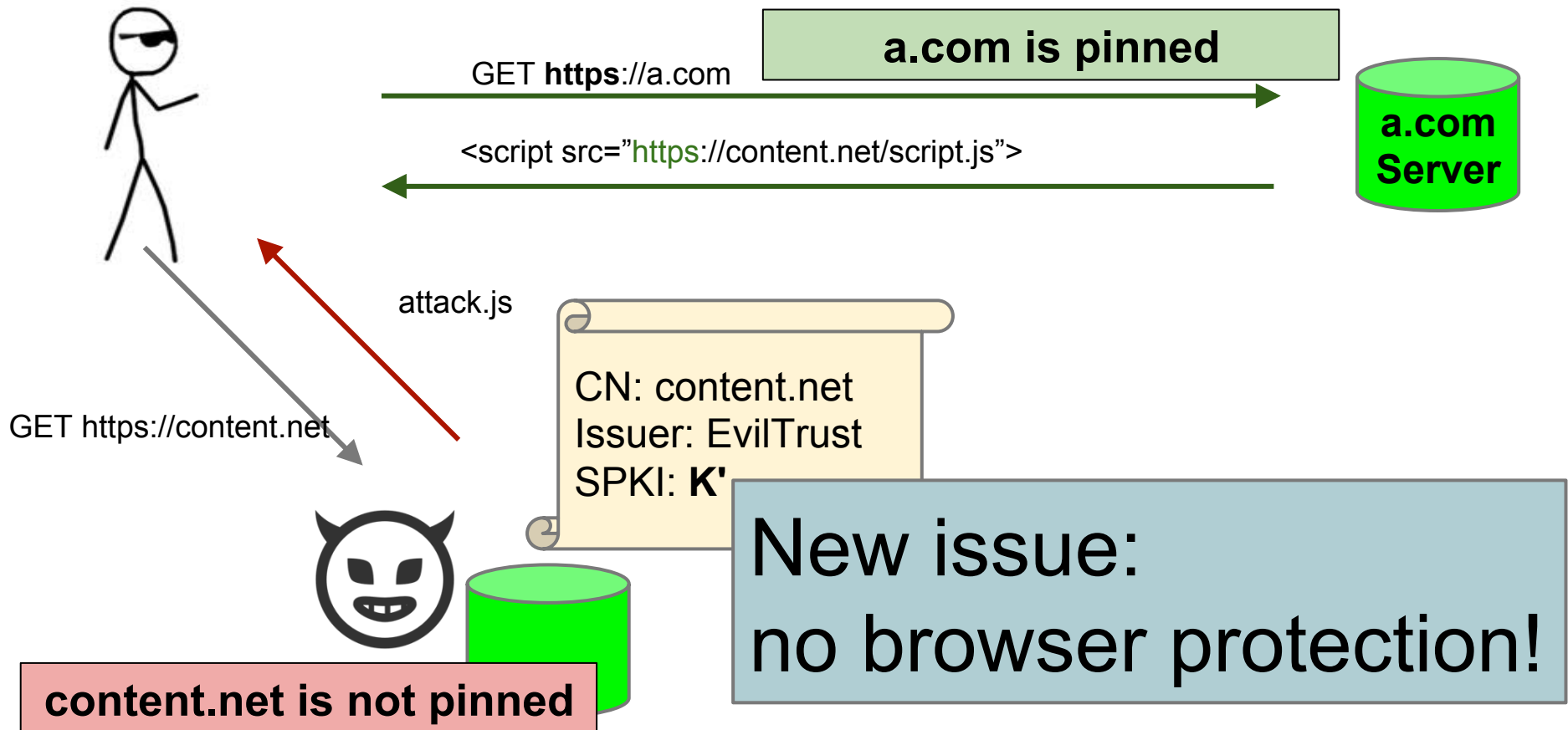
- 5,099 of 12,593 (40%) set HSTS correctly according to the specification
  - 44% do not redirect from HTTP to HTTPS
  - 4% set ONLY via HTTP (does nothing)
  - 5% malformed headers
  - 18% set max-age less than 86400 (a day)
- Specification difficult to use
  - No clear list of steps
  - Max-age unit (seconds) is difficult to reason about
- Webmasters clearly not reading the RFCs

# **Error 2: New Mixed Content**

# Traditional Mixed Content



# Pinned Mixed content



# Pinned mixed content is common

- All pinsets include passive content
- 50% of pinsets include active content
  - 63% of active content from scripts
  - Examples: Twitter, Tor, and Dropbox
- Causes of mixed content
  - External services (Akamai and Doubleclick)
  - Self-referencing not pinned subdomains
  - ***Pinning is limited so its difficult to avoid***

# **Error 3: Leakable Cookies**

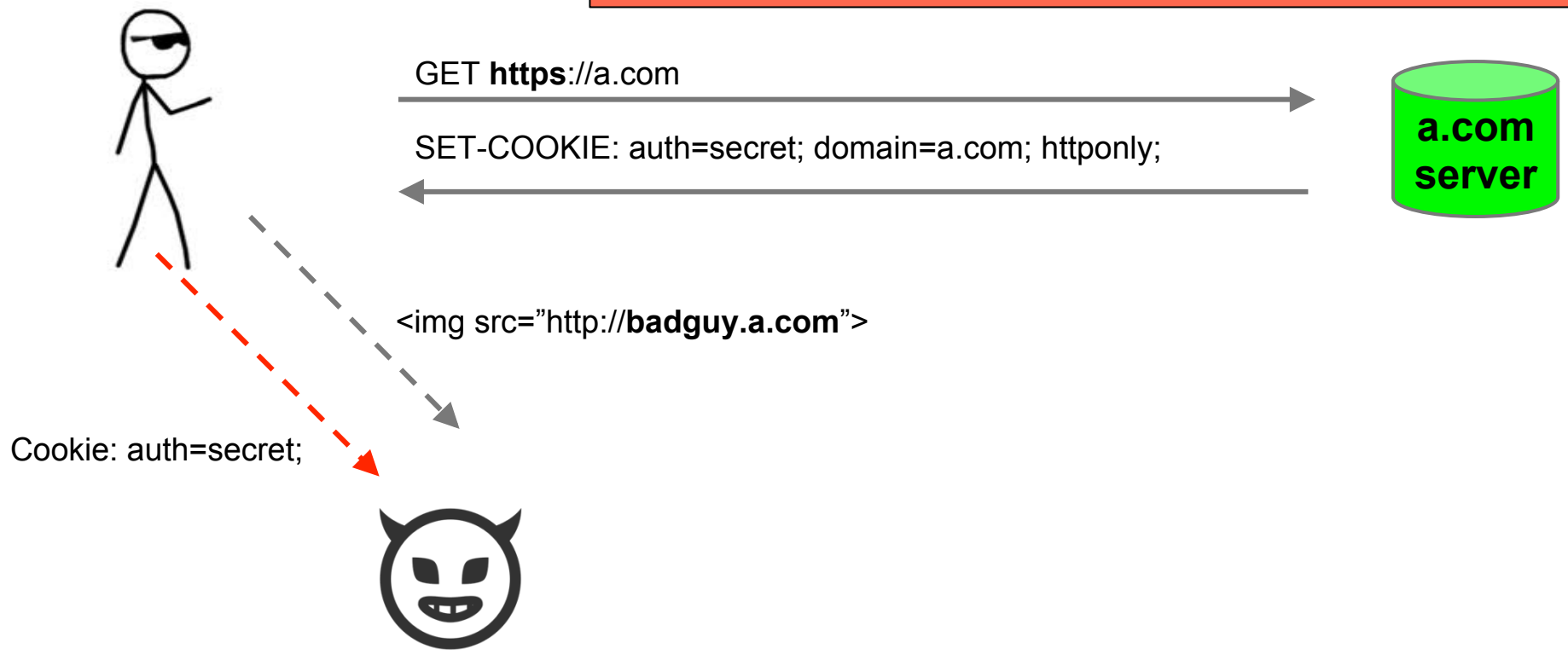


# Default Subdomain Policies for HSTS/HPKP and Cookies are Different

- HSTS and HPKP
  - By default **exclusive** on subdomains
  - Must specifically add `include_subdomains` directive to include subdomains
- Cookies
  - Most common case **inclusive** on subdomains
  - Must specific omit `domain` parameter from common case to do an exact domain (except on Internet Explorer)

# Cookie-stealing attack (HSTS)

a.com sets HSTS w/o includesubdomains



# Cookie-stealing attack (pinning)

a.com sets pins w/o includesubdomains



# Many vulnerable cookies in the wild

- Any site w/o `includesSubdomains` is vulnerable
- **10,174** cookies at **2,460** vulnerable domains
  - 98% **NOT** marked secure
  - Mostly tracking cookies (sites were not crawled logged in)
- 44% of Non-Google pinned domains vulnerable
  - Facebook, Twitter auth cookies vulnerable (known issue)

# Takeaways:

- Even simple upgrades are complicated in practice
  - Web platform is very large/complex
  - Standards do not necessarily reflect reality
- Better standards would help
  - Summaries, guidelines, and defaults would help
  - Consider testing with developers during process
- HSTS and HPKP are better than just HTTPS
  - Significant growth in the past 6 months
  - Some sites already setting HPKP

# Thank you

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# Error 1: Configuration Errors

	Alexa top 1M		Preloaded domains	
	Domains	%	Domains	%
Attempts to set dynamic HSTS	12,593	—	751	—
Doesn't redirect HTTP→HTTPS	5,554	44.1%	23	3.1%
Sets HSTS header only via HTTP	517	4.1%	3	0.4%
Redirects to HTTP domain	774	6.1%	9	3.1%
HSTS Redirects to non-HSTS	74	0.6%	3	0.4%
Malformed HSTS header	322	2.6%	12	1.6%
max-age = 0	665	5.3%	0	0%
0 < max-age <= 1 day	2,213	17.6%	5	0.7%
Sets HSTS securely w/o errors	5,099	40.5%	659	87.7%

# Takeaways: standards not holistic

- Standards not Holistic
  - Different formats for headers, preloads (DANE different as well)
  - Preload format not standardized and is changing
- Better Defaults may help
  - Pinning, HSTS default should be `includeSubdomains`
  - Minimum `max-age` values
- HSTS and Key Pinning are used and growing
  - 500% Non-Google growth in the past 6 months
  - Sites already setting HPKP (*errors more costly*)



# Preloaded HSTS

```
{...
  "entries":
  [
    {"name": "www.paypal.com", "mode": "force-https" },
    {"name": "www.elanex.biz", "mode": "force-https" },
    {"name": "jottit.com", "include_subdomains": true,
      "mode": "force-https" },
    {"name": "sunshinepress.org", "include_subdomains":
      true, "mode": "force-https" },
    {"name": "www.noisebridge.net", "mode":
      "force-https" },
    ...
  ]
}
```

[transport security static.json](#) (Chromium project)

# Preloads: HPKP

```
{
  "pinsets": [
    { "name": "tor",
      "static_spki_hashes":
        ["RapidSSL",
         "DigiCertEVRoot",
         "Tor1",
         "Tor2",
         "Tor3"
        ]
    }, ...
  ]
  "entries": [
    { "name": "torproject.org",
      "mode": "force-https",
      "pins": "tor" }, ...
  ]
}
```

[transport\\_security\\_static\\_state.json](#)

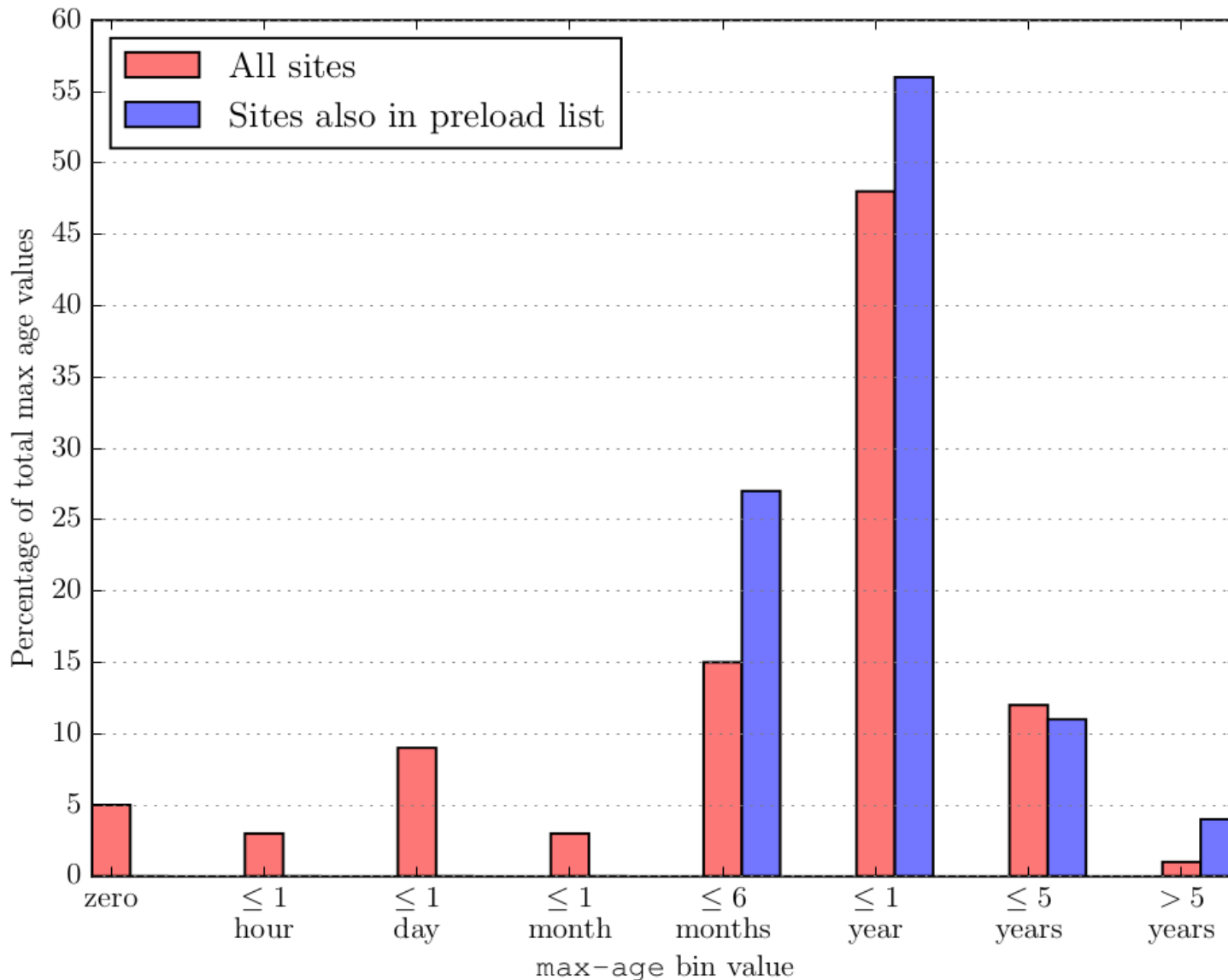
```
RapidSSL
-----BEGIN CERTIFICATE-----
MIID1TCCAr2gAwIBAgIDAjbRMA0GC
SqGS Ib3DQE BBUAMEIxCzAJBgNVBA
YTA lVTMRYwFAYDVQQKEw1HZW9UcnV
zdCBJbmMuMRswGQYDVQQDExJHZW9U
cnVzdCBHbG9iYWwgQ0EwHhcNMTAwM
...
-----END CERTIFICATE-----

Tor1
sha1/
juNxSTv9UANmpC9kF5GKpmWNx3Y=

Tor2
sha1/
lia43lPolzSPVIq34Dw57uYcLD8=
...
```

[transport\\_security\\_static\\_state.cert](#)

# Max-age values vary significantly



# Preventing cookie-stealing (Pinning)

- Set pins with `include_subdomains`
- Set cookies to more specific domain with `include_subdomains`

*dropbox.com*

*www.dropbox.com*

**does not** include but  
No equivalent for preloaded pinning!  
**does**

Proposed Addition Preload Token:  
`include_subdomains_for_pinning_only`

# **HTTPS: where web-sec meets TLS**

**HTTP** ( $\approx$  web browsing)

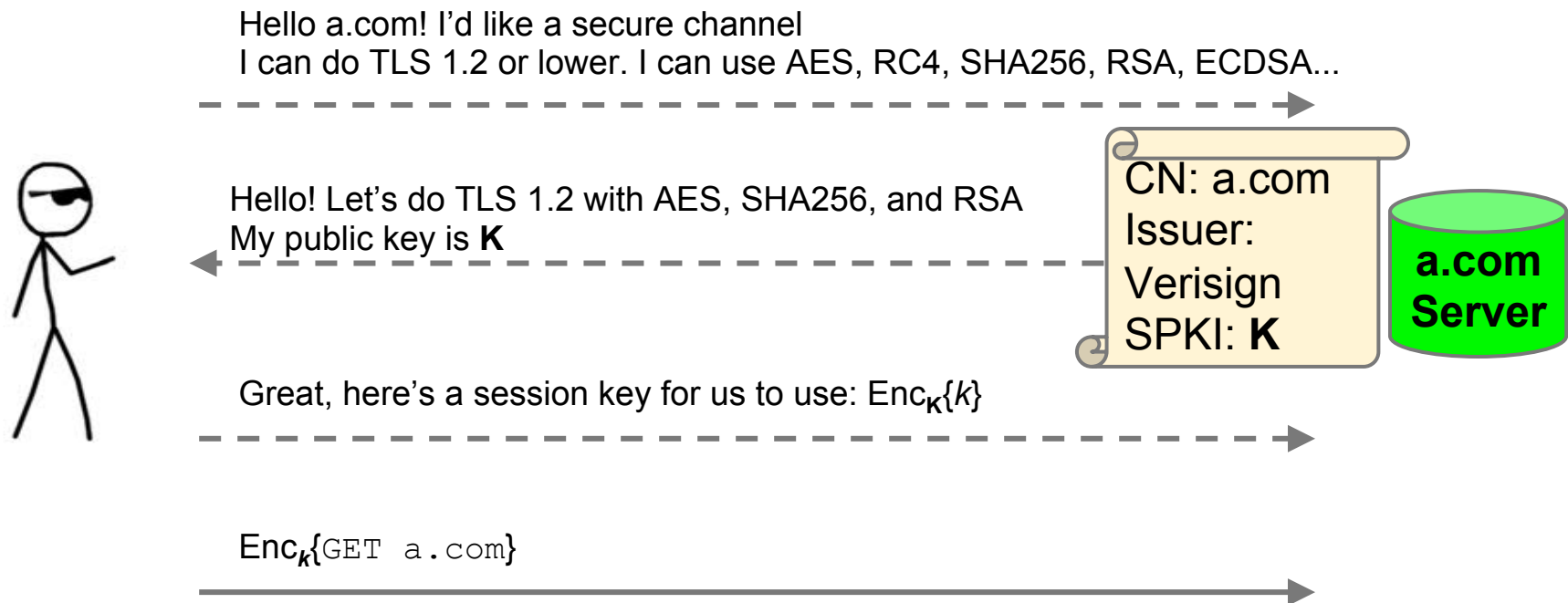
over

**S**ecure **S**ockets **L**ayer (SSL)

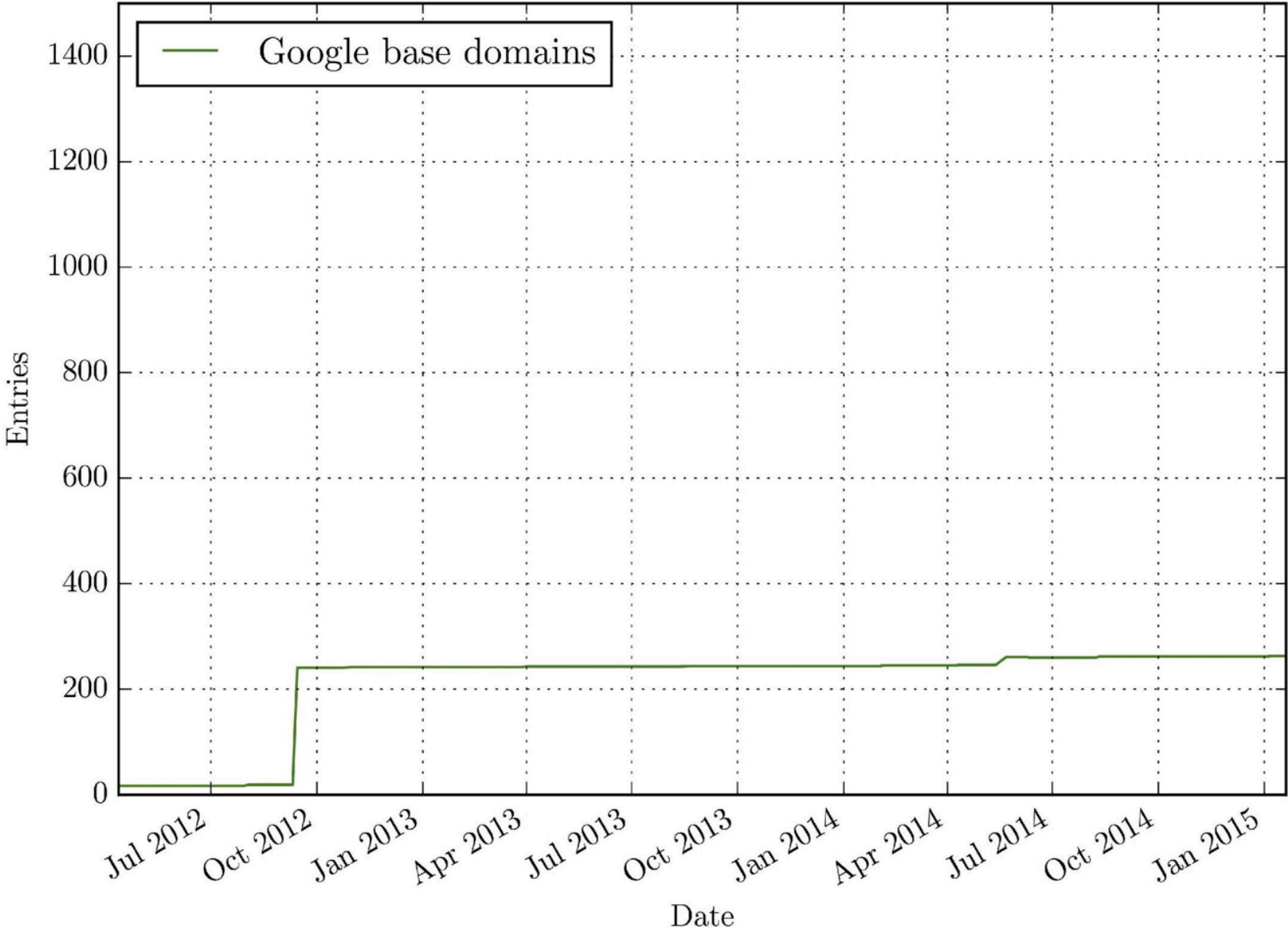
or

**T**ransport **L**ayer **S**ecurity (TLS)

# TLS in one slide



# Chrome Preloaded List Growth



# Chrome Preloaded List Growth

