

Configuration Manual

MSc Research Project
Cybersecurity

Marcello D'Angelone
Student ID: x21113777

School of Computing
National College of Ireland

Supervisor: Mark Monaghan

National College of Ireland
MSc Project Submission Sheet



School of Computing

Student Name: Marcello D'Angelone
Student ID: X21113777

Programme: MSc Cybersecurity
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Module:
 Mark Monaghan

Supervisor:
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Project Title: Email spoofing defence techniques: a comprehensive review and development of new measurement tool

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Configuration Manual

Marcello D'Angelone

X21113777

1 Introduction

This configuration manual outlines the requirements and steps to reproduce the environment and execute the Domain Crawler tool.

2 Hardware Configuration

The research project has been developed on a System with the hardware configuration represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Hardware Configuration

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| System Manufacturer | LENOVO |
| System Model | 20L8S2Y100 |
| Processor | Intel(R) Core(TM) i7-8650U CPU @ 1.90GHz, 2112 Mhz, 4 Core(s), 8 Logical Processor(s) |
| Installed Physical Memory (RAM) | 24.0 GB |
| Hard Disk (SSD) | 512 GB |

The Domain Crawler tool was executed on the same hardware configuration for testing and datasets analysis purposes. A separate Amazon EC2 instance was created¹ to execute longer-running large-scale scans. Its hardware specifications are reported in Table 2.

Table 2: EC2 Instance details

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| System Manufacturer | AWS |
| Instance type | t2.micro |
| Processor | Intel(R) Xeon(R) CPU E5-2686 v4 @ 2.30GHz |
| Installed Physical Memory (RAM) | 1 GB |
| Hard Disk (SSD) | 16 GB |

3 Software Configuration

The minimum software required to reproduce the research findings is listed below:

¹ Tutorial: Get started with Amazon EC2 Linux instances:

https://docs.aws.amazon.com/AWSEC2/latest/UserGuide/EC2_GetStarted.html

Table 3: Software Configuration

| Software | Version | Type |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Microsoft Windows 10 Enterprise (64bit) | 10.0.19045 Build 19045 | Operating System on Lenovo Hardware |
| Debian | debian-11-amd64-20230515-1381 | Operating System on EC2 instance |
| Python | 3.9.2 | Programming Language |
| Pycharm | Community Edition 2023.1 | IDE |
| R for Windows | 4.3.0 | Programming Language for statistical analysis |
| Rstudio | 2023.06 | R Integrated Developer Environment |
| Excel | 2304 | Spreadsheet |
| Putty | 0.74 | SSH access to the AWS EC2 instance |
| WinSCP | 6.1.1 | Windows Secure copy to copy the tool and datasets to the AWS EC2 instance |

Python can be installed on Windows 10 directly from the Microsoft store by typing Python 3.9 in the search bar, as depicted in Figure 1.

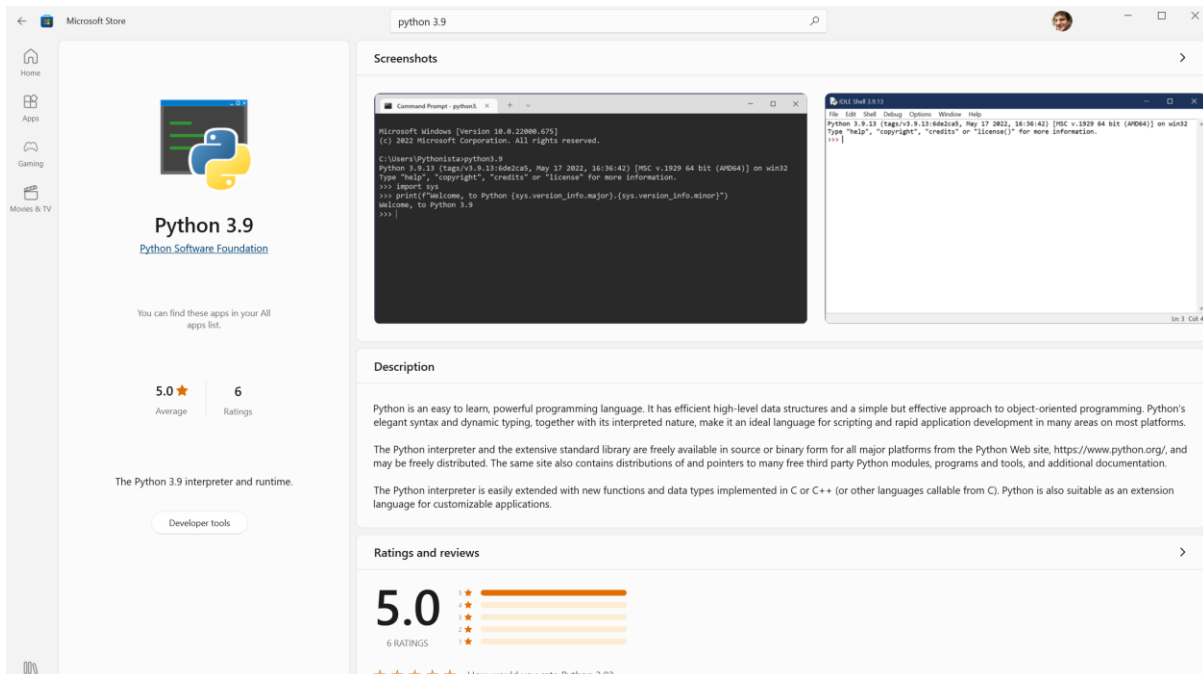


Figure 1: Python installation on Windows 10

The next step requires installing an Integrated Developer Environment (IDE) for Python. For this research, PyCharm Community Edition 2023.1 has been used. This free IDE can be downloaded from the JetBrains website².

Once the installation is completed, the Python interpreter should be selected from File > Settings and Python Interpreter, as represented in Figure 2.

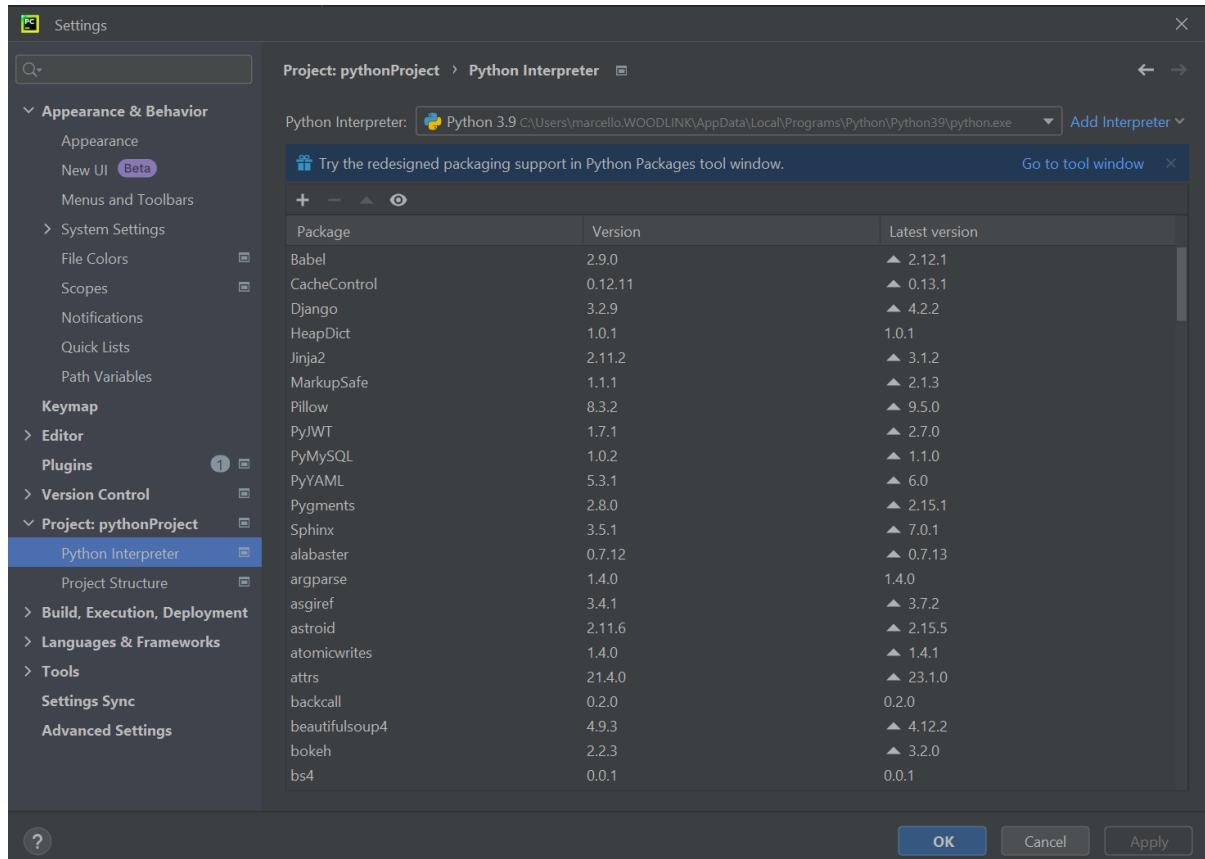


Figure 2: IDE interpreter configuration

Once the PyCharm IDE is installed, creating a virtual environment where the code is executed with all the required libraries is recommended. The `python3 -m venv project` command must be executed from the IDE terminal or an SSH shell to do so. Then the `cd` command allows to change the directory to the project folder. Finally, the Python files `domain_crawler_MainMenu.py`, `get_domain_list.py` and `get_spf_dmar.py` user-defined functions and the `requirements.txt` file must be copied to the same project folder. To install the required libraries, it is necessary to type `pip install -r requirements.txt`. These steps are illustrated in Figure 3.

² <https://www.jetbrains.com/pycharm/download/?section=windows>

```

PS C:\Users\marcello.WOODLINK\OneDrive\NCI\Thesis\pythonProject> python3 -m venv project
PS C:\Users\marcello.WOODLINK\OneDrive\NCI\Thesis\pythonProject> cd project
PS C:\Users\marcello.WOODLINK\OneDrive\NCI\Thesis\pythonProject\project> ls

Directory: C:\Users\marcello.WOODLINK\OneDrive\NCI\Thesis\pythonProject\project

Mode                LastWriteTime         Length Name
----                -
da---l             7/1/2023   2:31 PM             Include
da---l             7/1/2023   2:31 PM             Lib
da---l             7/1/2023   2:31 PM             Scripts
-a---l             6/25/2023  12:57 PM          3384 domain_crawler_MainMenu.py
-a---l             6/30/2023   3:07 PM          1565 get_domain_list.py
-a---l             6/25/2023  12:50 PM          8094 get_spf_dmarc.py
-a---l             7/1/2023   5:23 PM           530 pyvenv.cfg
-a---l             6/25/2023   1:00 PM           114 requirements.txt

PS C:\Users\marcello.WOODLINK\OneDrive\NCI\Thesis\pythonProject\project> pip install -r .\requirements.txt

```

Figure 3: Python virtual environment and libraries installation

Like Python, R requires the programming language and the IDE to be installed locally on the machine. R can be downloaded from the Comprehensive R Archive Network³ (CRAN), whereas the Rstudio desktop can be downloaded from the Posit website⁴.

Excel is part of the Office 365 suite and is pre-installed on most Windows Laptops. If this is missing, or the CSV file containing the domain list is imported on a Linux machine, an open-source version called LibreOffice can be downloaded and installed⁵.

Putty is a ssh client for Windows Operating systems which has been used to connect to the EC2 instance and execute the tool. This is freeware that can be downloaded and installed from the Putty website⁶. Putty has no Linux or Mac version since they both have a built-in ssh client. The connection is authenticated through SSH key pair created as described in the EC2 tutorial and configured in Figure 4.

³ R: <https://cran.rstudio.com/>

⁴ RStudio: <https://posit.co/downloads/>

⁵ Libreoffice: <https://www.libreoffice.org/download/download-libreoffice/>

⁶ Putty: <https://www.chiark.greenend.org.uk/~sgtatham/putty/latest.html>

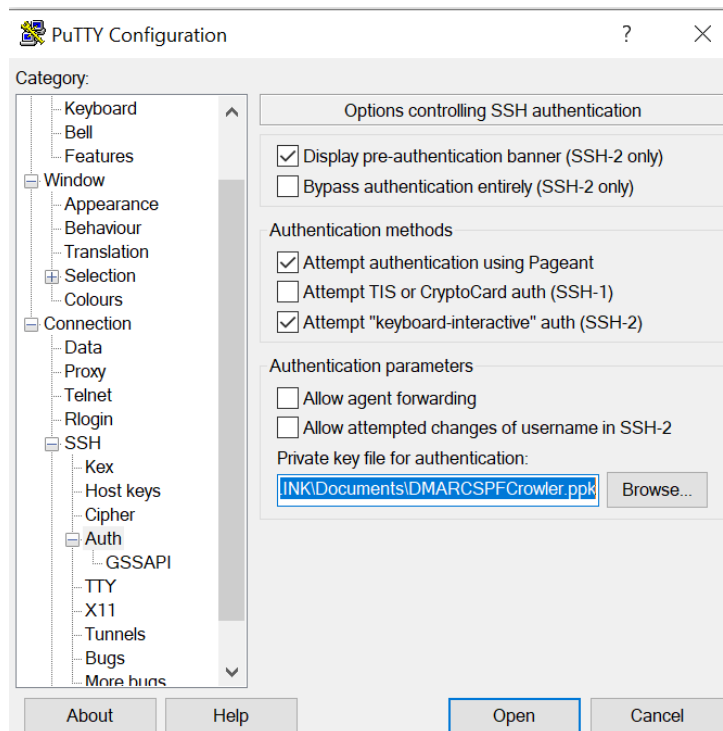


Figure 4: Putty SSH private key configuration

WinSCP is a secure file transfer utility for Windows used to transfer the code and CSV files to the EC2 instance, and it can be downloaded from the official WinSCP website⁷. The file transfer is performed via FTP over and SSH encrypted connection, which leverages Putty keys and credentials.

4 Datasets preparation

4.1 CSV datasets procedure

The datasets obtained in CSV format, along with their referenced download link, are listed below:

1. The Alexa Top 1 Million domain list⁸.
2. Moz's list of the 500⁹.
3. DomCop¹⁰.
4. U.S. General Services Administration¹¹.

All the datasets in question have a column with a list of domains. The only requirement to parse these CSV files is that its column header must be called "Domain". As depicted in

⁷ WinSCP: <https://winscp.net/download/WinSCP-6.1.1-Setup.exe>

⁸ Alexa Top 1 Million: <http://s3.amazonaws.com/alexa-static/top-1m.csv.zip>

⁹ Moz: <https://moz.com/top-500/download/?table=top500Domains>

¹⁰ DomCop: <https://www.domcop.com/files/top/top10milliondomains.csv.zip>

¹¹ U.S. General Services Administration: https://github.com/GSA/govt-urls/blob/main/1_govt_urls_full.csv

Figure 5, the function `open_CSV_domains` in `get_domain_list.py` that imports the CSV file as pandas dataframe expects a column header called “Domain”. This means that the column header must be edited if it is called with a different name.

```
def open_CSV_domains(domains_csv):  
  
    df = pd.read_csv(domains_csv, usecols=['Domain'])  
  
    domain_tuple = tuple(df['Domain'])  
  
    return domain_tuple
```

Figure 5: Open CSV function

For instance, the Alexa Top 1 Million domain list contains a disclaimer and no Domain header. The disclaimer needs to be removed and added the Domain header in the column with the list of domains as displayed in Figure 6.

| | A | B |
|---|---|--------------|
| 1 | | Domain |
| 2 | 1 | google.com |
| 3 | 2 | youtube.com |
| 4 | 3 | baidu.com |
| 5 | 4 | bilibili.com |
| 6 | 5 | facebook.com |

Figure 6: Alexa Top 1 Million

The Moz and the U.S. General Service Administration CSV files present a domain header called “Root Domain” and “Doman name”, respectively. These need to be renamed as “Domain” as per Figures 7 and 8.

| Rank | Domain | Linking Root Don | Domain Authority |
|------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | www.blogger.com | 30,617,950 | 100 |
| 2 | youtube.com | 23,184,662 | 100 |
| 3 | www.google.com | 14,725,970 | 100 |
| 4 | linkedin.com | 12,376,710 | 99 |
| 5 | support.google.com | 5,618,215 | 99 |
| 6 | play.google.com | 3,904,778 | 99 |
| 7 | apple.com | 6.626.575 | 99 |

Figure 7: Moz Top 500 domain list

| Domain | Agency | Maintainir | Use case | Type of go | Federal br | State | Comment | Link |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|----------|-------------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| 1-800-vermont.com | | | | State | | Vermont | Travel anc | http://1-8 |
| 174.132.145.94/~hope | | | | Local | | North Car | Town of H | http://tow |
| 1800arkansas.com | | | | State | | | See histor | #N/A |
| 1800runaway.org | | | | Quasigovernmental | | | The Nation | http://ww |
| 18f.us | General Services Administration | | | Federal | | | 18F, Gene | https://mi |
| 211.getcare.com | | | | State | | Virginia | 2-1-1 VIRG | https://21 |
| 211virginia.org | | | | State | | Virginia | 2-1-1 VIRG | http://211 |
| 360eldorado.com/Government | | | | Local | | Kansas | City of El | http://ww |
| 3riverscfc.org | Combined Federal Campaign | | | Federal | | Ohio, Pen | 3 Rivers/P | http://3riv |
| 4thjudicialda.com | | | | State | | Colorado | 4th Judicia | http://4th |
| 511ny.org | | | | State | | New York | 511 NY (N | http://511 |
| 911digitalarchive.org | | | | Quasigovernmental | | | The Septe | http://911 |
| a2gov.org | | | | Local | | Michigan | City of Ani | http://ww |
| aacounty.org | | | | County | | Maryland | Anne Arur | http://ww |
| aal.army | Department of the Army | | | Federal | | | The Army | https://aa |

Figure 8: U.S. General Service Administration domain list

On the other hand, the DomCop represented in Figure 9 does not require any editing as the column header is already called Domain.

| Rank | Domain | Open Page Rank |
|------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1 | facebook.com | 10 |
| 2 | fonts.googleapis.com | 10 |
| 3 | google.com | 10 |
| 4 | youtube.com | 10 |
| 5 | twitter.com | 10 |
| 6 | instagram.com | 10 |

Figure 9: DomCop 10 Million domain list

Of course, any CSV file can be customised and compiled with any number of rows as long as its header is called “Domain”.

4.2 API dataset preparation

The dataset obtained from the Similarweb API requires an account creation through the demo account portal¹². Once the account is created and the user logged in, the following steps are required to obtain an API key:

1. Under the Account Settings select “Digital Rank API”
2. From this page click “Generate a New API Key” as depicted in Figure 10

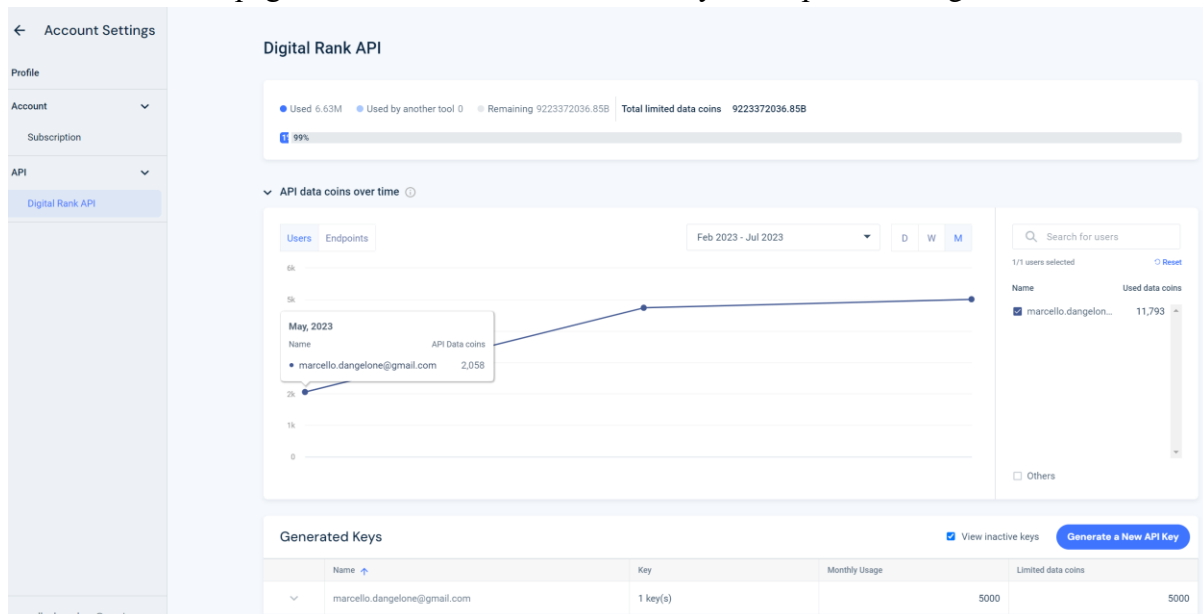


Figure 10: Digital Rank API key generation

3. Type a name and select Create as described in Figure 11.

The screenshot shows a modal dialog titled 'Generate a New API Key'. It contains a text input field labeled 'API key name' with the text 'mystudentkey' entered. Below the input field are two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'Create'.

Figure 11: Create API key

4. The API key will appear in the “Generated Keys” table.

¹² Similarweb Demo account:

<https://account.similarweb.com/journey/registration?workspace=marketing&flow=regular>

Because it is a poor security practice to hard-code secrets, tokens or other sensitive information directly in the code or configuration files, the following steps are required to store the Similarweb API key in an environmental variable.

```
def get_API_Domains(number_of_domains):  
    #create an environmental variable called APIKEY containing the API key generated as  
    # per configuration manual  
    api_key = os.getenv('APIKEY')  
    top_domains = "https://api.similarweb.com/v1/similar-rank/top-sites?api_key={API_KEY}&limit={TOTAL}".format(  
        API_KEY=api_key,  
        TOTAL=number_of_domains
```

Figure 12: Create API key

Setting the APIKEY environmental variable on Windows, can be done by typing environment in the search bar, this opens the System properties as represented in Figure 13.

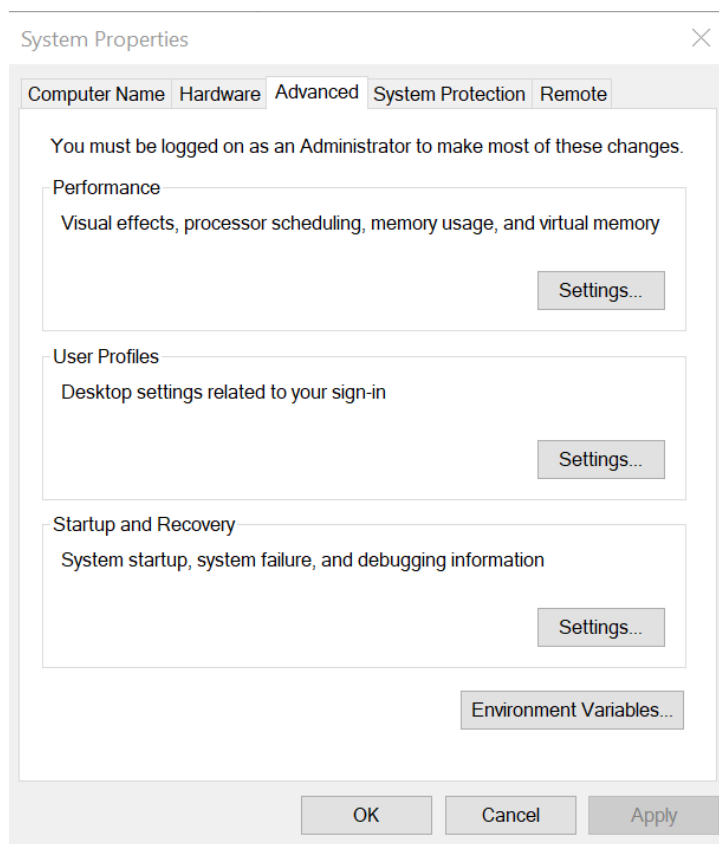


Figure 13: System properties

Then selecting “Environment Variables...” the Window represented in Figure 14 will open. From here, by selecting “new” under User variable, the user can type APIKEY under Variable Name and paste the key obtained in the steps described to obtain the Similarweb API key.

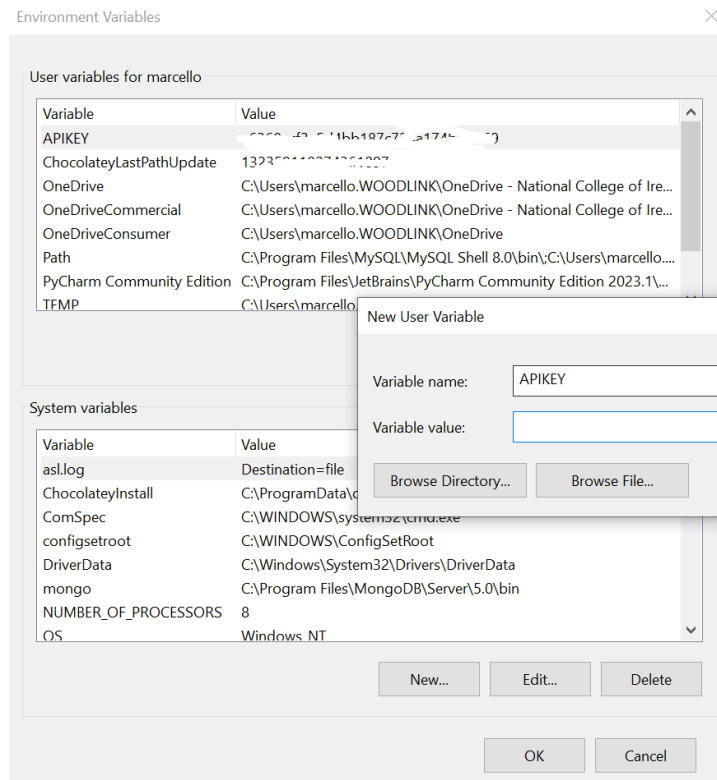


Figure 14: Environment Variables

Once this is saved by pressing OK twice the domain crawler tool will be able to access the key via the `os.getenv('APIKEY')` statement in the `get_domain_list.py` function.

5 Execution

The tool can be executed directly from the IDE or from the EC2 instance after copying the required files to the EC2 virtual environment via WinSCP, as depicted in Figure 15. With a simple drag and drop from the required files from the window on the left-hand side to the one on the right-hand side.

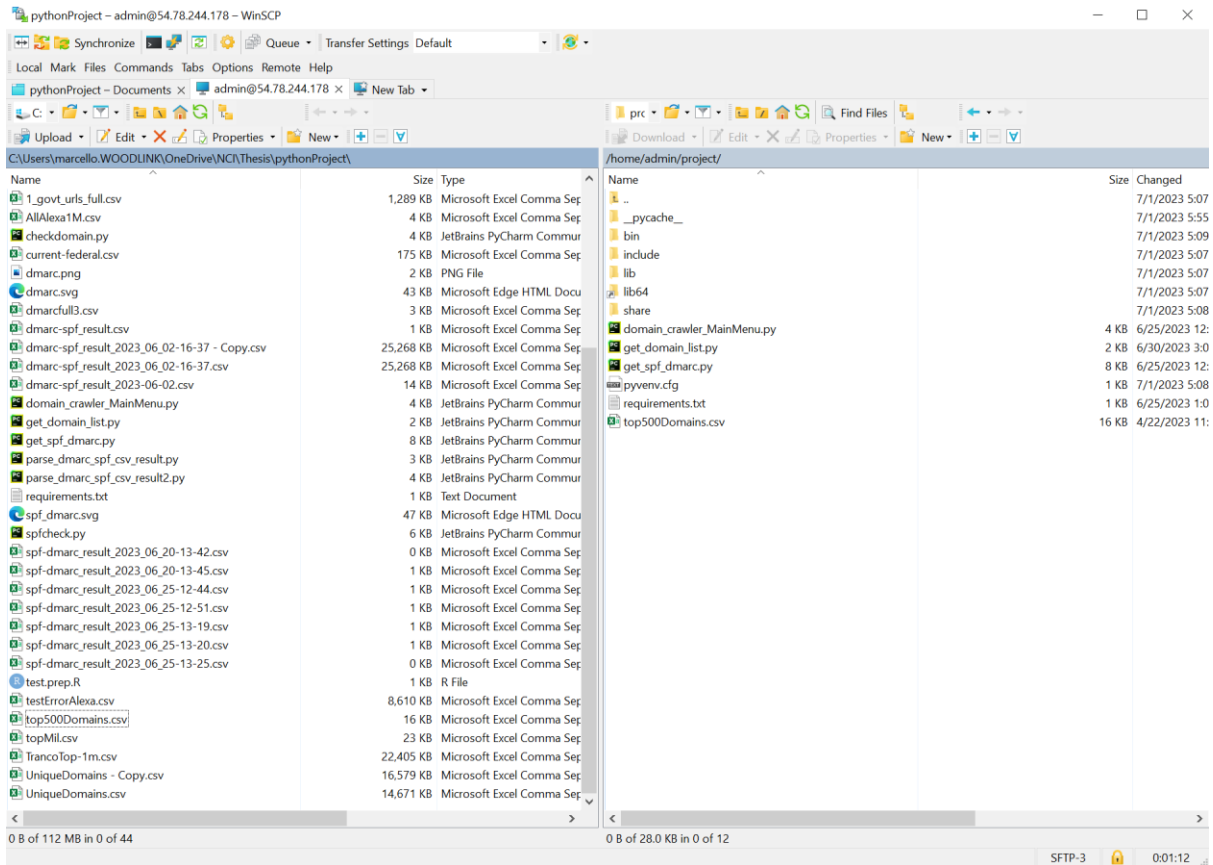


Figure 15: WinSCP file transfer

When executed from an SSH client connecting to the EC2 instance, the command `python3 domain_crawler_MainMenu.py` must be typed as depicted in Figure 16.

```
admin@ip-172-31-28-141: ~/project
Using username "admin".
Authenticating with public key "DMARCSPPFCrawler"
Linux ip-172-31-28-141 5.10.0-23-cloud-amd64 #1 SMP Debian 5.10.179-1 (2023-05-12) x86_64

The programs included with the Debian GNU/Linux system are free software;
the exact distribution terms for each program are described in the
individual files in /usr/share/doc/*/copyright.

Debian GNU/Linux comes with ABSOLUTELY NO WARRANTY, to the extent
permitted by applicable law.
Last login: Sun Jul 2 16:23:18 2023 from 80.111.81.46
admin@ip-172-31-28-141:~$ cd project/
admin@ip-172-31-28-141:~/project$ python3 domain_crawler_MainMenu.py

#####  ##### # # # #  #####  ##### # # # #  #####  #####
# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #
# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #
# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #
# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #
# # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # # #
#####  ##### # # # #  #####  ##### # # # #  #####  ##### # # # #

# Capture SPF and DMARC records

# Author: Marcello D'Angelone

Please select a domain scan type:
 1) API (SimilarWeb Ranking System)
 2) Tranco domains (Research-Oriented Top Sites Ranking)
 3) CSV file import
 4) Single domain (full DMARC/SPF report)
 5) Exit the program

:> █
```

Figure 16: WinSCP file transfer

The output generated by selecting options one, two, or three consists of a CSV file, which can be imported by Excel, or the stand-alone parsing tool created for this project. Since the parsing tool requires a graphical user interface to display the pie chart, it will prompt to select the output generated by the domain crawler from an Explorer Window, as depicted in Figure 17.

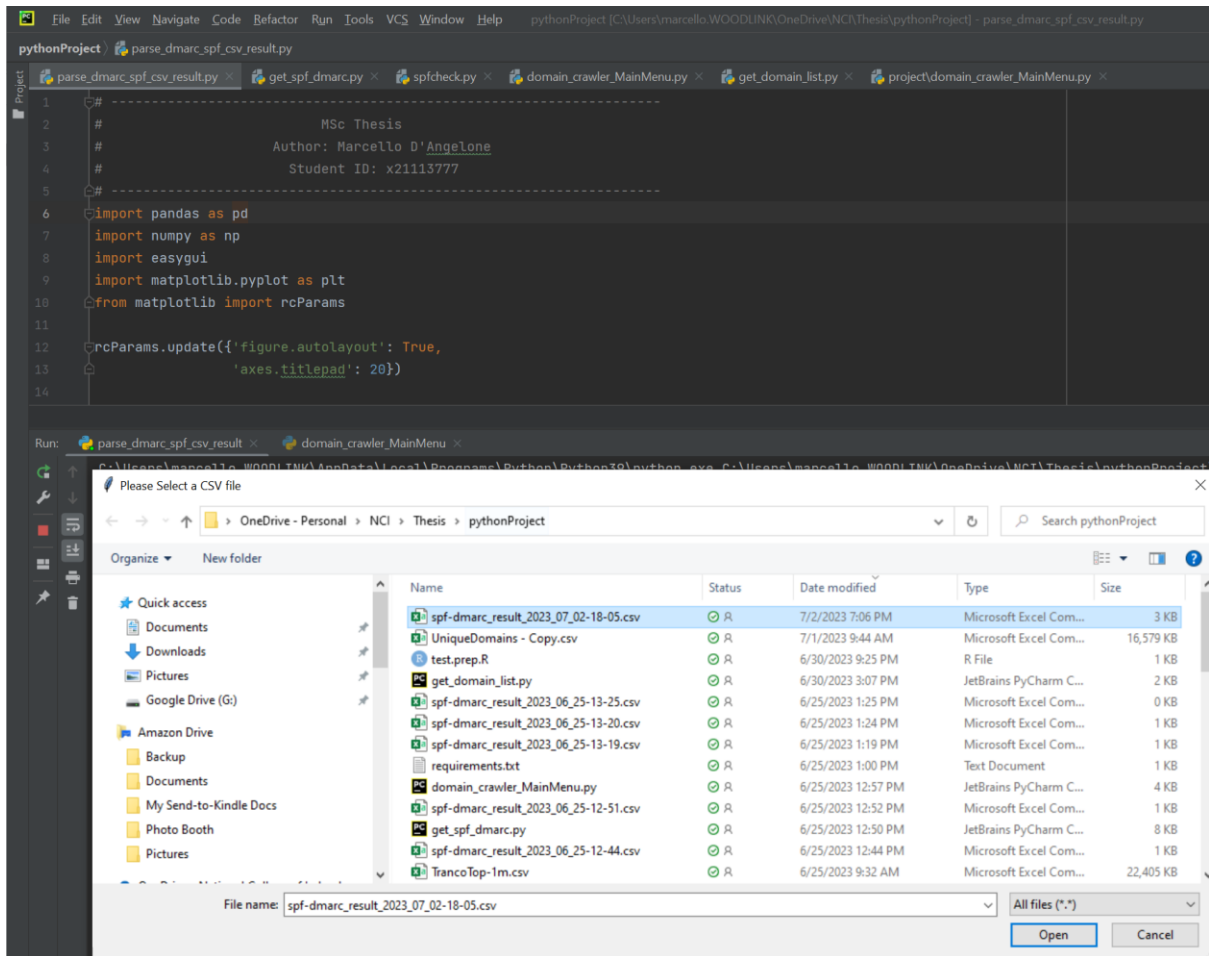


Figure 17: DMARC and SPF CSV output parser

Once the CSV output file has been selected, and Opened via the Explorer Window, a pie chart will be displayed with the result as depicted in Figure 18.

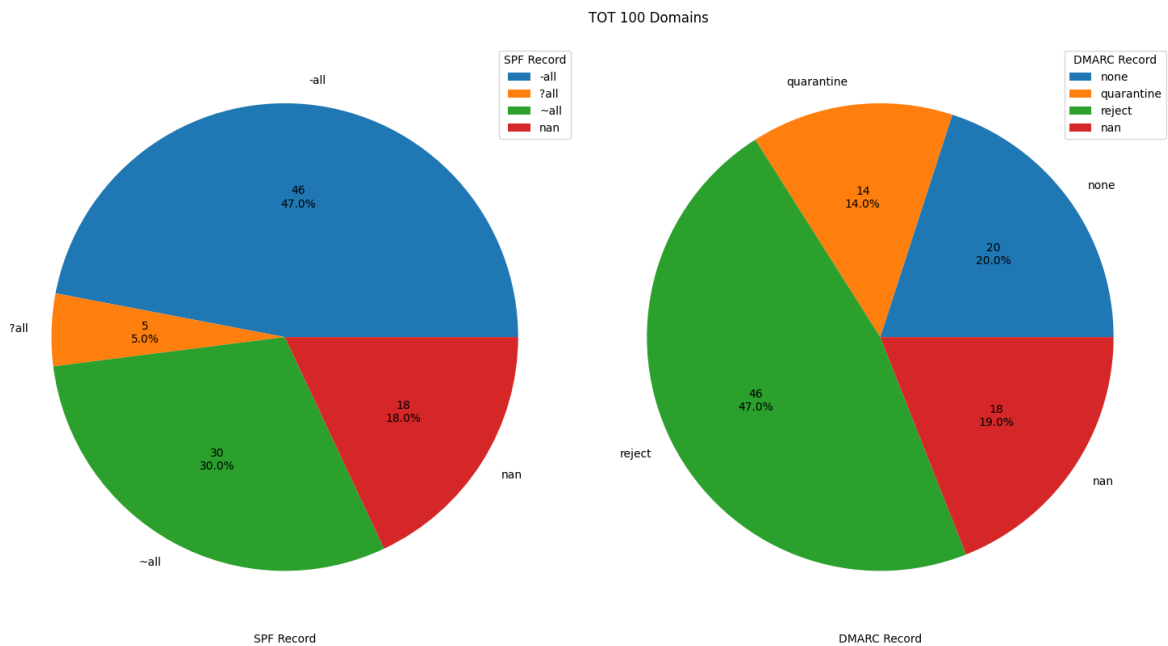


Figure 18: DMARC and SPF CSV output parser

The Title of the chart displays the total number of Domain parsed, while the pie chart on the left displays the total number of and the percentage of the domains with an SPF policy, while the pie chart on the right displays the total number and the percentage of the domains with a DMARC policy.

6 Statistical test

The statistical hypothesis compared one of the last published Alexa Top 1 Million measurements with the one gathered using the domain crawler tool to determine an increase in the anti-spoofing protocols adoption rate.

The Null hypothesis (H_0) stated there is no increase in adopting SPF and DMARC protocols. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) states that there is a significant increase. The confidence level interval was set 95% (alpha value of 0.05).

Because the two measurements have a different sample size, the 2-sample test for equality of proportions with continuity correction has been used with the data displayed in Table 11.

Table 4: Alexa Top 1 Million measurements comparison

| | Total valid DMARC | | Total valid SPF | | Total |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|-----------|
| Tatang et al. (2021) | 114,706 | 11.47% | 503,310 | 50.33% | 1,000,000 |
| Domain Crawler | 221,607 | 25.63% | 515,164 | 59.59% | 864,552 |

```
#DMARC measurement comparison between 2020 and 2023
> prop.test(c(221607, 114706), c(864552, 1000000))
```

```
2-sample test for equality of proportions with continuity
correction
```

```
data: c(221607, 114706) out of c(864552, 1e+06)
X-squared = 62903, df = 1, p-value < 2.2e-16
alternative hypothesis: two.sided
95 percent confidence interval:
 0.1405065 0.1427331
sample estimates:
 prop 1    prop 2
0.2563258 0.1147060
```

```
>
> #SPF measurement comparison between 2020 and 2023
> prop.test(c(515164, 503310), c(864552, 1000000))
```

```
2-sample test for equality of proportions with continuity
correction
```

```
data: c(515164, 503310) out of c(864552, 1e+06)
X-squared = 16028, df = 1, p-value < 2.2e-16
alternative hypothesis: two.sided
95 percent confidence interval:
 0.09113797 0.09398990
sample estimates:
 prop 1    prop 2
0.5958739 0.5033100
```