

MessageLabs Intelligence Special Report Spam rates in the United Kingdom

September 2009



Local Analysis

- **Alton** in Hampshire – last year’s runner up - is the spam capital of the UK in 2009 with business users sent an average of 397 spam emails per day
- The top 5 most spammed towns received more than 189 spam messages per user per day, the level received by last year’s top target, **Egham** in Surrey
- The average numbers of spam messages received per user per day in the UK is 68
- **Fareham** in Hampshire is the least spammed place in the UK for the second year in a row
- The most targeted sectors include: Business Admin Services, Marketing & Media and Education, followed by Recreation and Accommodation & Catering. Least spammed is Chemical & Pharmaceutical followed by Healthcare, Minerals & Fuel, Manufacturing and Building & Construction

Global Analysis

- The areas that are subjected to the highest levels of spam are generally those locations that are populated with a higher density of small-to-medium sized businesses. Similarly, the least spammed places are often home to some of the largest companies
- Between four million and six million computers scattered across the globe have been compromised by cybercriminals without the user’s knowledge. These computers now form robotic networks – Botnets, which are controlled by cybercriminals and used to send out more than 87% of all unsolicited mail, equating to approximately 151 billion emails a day
- The global spam rate in September 2009 is 86.4%, but UK businesses are receiving more than their fair share, with levels reaching 91.7%
- Spammers have preferred professions, with the Engineering and Education sector being top targets globally with spam levels reaching more than 93%



Quote

“Even in an economic downturn, one thing which continues to rise is spam. Eight of the UK’s most spammed towns and cities are new to this years’ top ten listing and all have a high percentage of SMBs, suggesting spammers are targeting those businesses who potentially are less likely to have spam filters in place,” said Paul Wood, MessageLabs Intelligence Senior Analyst, Symantec.

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Top Tips to Stamp out Spam

- **Protect your email address** - using your primary email address anywhere on the web puts it at risk of being picked up by spammers so be careful where you use it.
- **Watch out for the checkboxes** – when you buy or sign up for something online, opt out of being contacted by third parties, you don’t know where your address will end up.

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Top 10

Alton, Hampshire
Teddington, Middlesex
Havant, Hampshire
Cirencester, Gloucestershire
Brighton, East Sussex
Barking, Essex
Dundee, Angus
Swansea, West Glamorgan
Bromley, Kent
Marlow, Buckinghamshire

Bottom 3

Fareham, Hampshire
Lincoln, Lincolnshire
Wilmslow, Cheshire

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Top 10

Egham, Surrey
Alton, Hampshire
Petersfield, Hampshire
Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands
Sutton, Greater London
Macclesfield, Cheshire
Dundee, Angus
Bradford, West Yorkshire
Colchester, Essex
St Peter Port, Guernsey

Bottom 3

Fareham, Hampshire
Guildford, Surrey
Farnborough, Hampshire

- **Don't use the reply, remove or forward options** – acknowledging the spam email using any of these options only validates your email address and can lead to more spam.
- **Use an unusual name** – if you use an email address with numbers in it for instance, you are less likely to receive spam. Spammers often use directories of common names to guess email addresses, e.g. ajones@company.com, bjones@company.com, etc.
- **Avoid clicking on any links in spam messages** – the addresses of links are frequently disguised and often serve only to confirm your existence to spammers. Same with unsubscribe links.
- **Avoid downloading pictures in spam email** – these can identify you as a recipient even if you just view the message in the preview pane. You can view your email as text to prevent this, or you can set your email security to block external images.
- **Use a spam filtering service** – Don't let spam get close to your inbox by having it filtered out beforehand by your ISP or by using an anti-spam service.

About MessageLabs Intelligence

MessageLabs Intelligence is a respected source of data and analysis for messaging security issues, trends and statistics. MessageLabs Intelligence publishes a range of information on global security threats based on live data feeds from more than 14 data centers around the world scanning billions of messages and web pages each week. More information is available at www.messagelabs.com/intelligence

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