

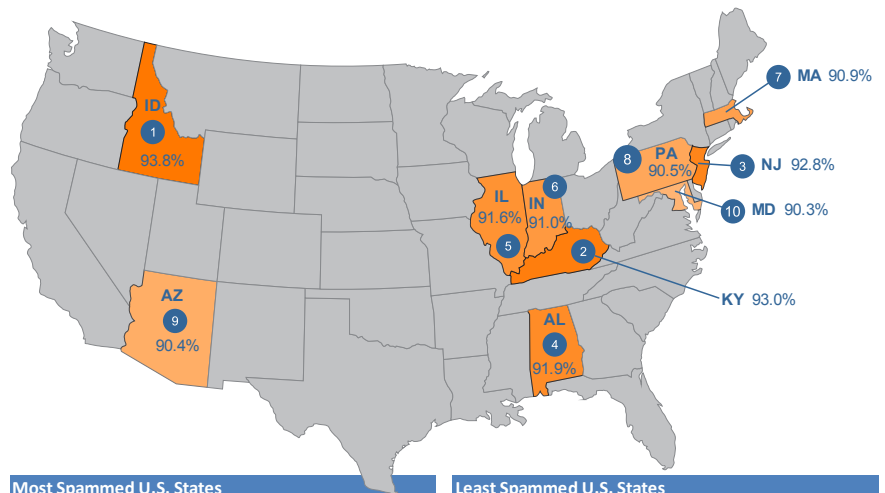
MessageLabs Intelligence Special Report Spam rates in the United States



September 2009

Local Analysis

- The spam capital of the US is Idaho with 93.8 percent of spam, far exceeding the global spam rate for September 2009 of 86.4 percent. Idaho has jumped 43 spots since 2008 when it was ranked the 44th most spammed state. The top ten spammed states all have spam levels of 90.3 percent or higher.
- Interestingly, the top three most spammed states were among the ten least spammed states in 2008. The difference can be attributed to the resilient and aggressive botnet market as well as a higher volume of global spam that has ensued since the beginning of the credit crisis toward the end of 2008.
- The least spammed US territory is Puerto Rico with 83.1 percent of spam, just slightly lower than the global average spam level. Puerto Rico retained its status among the least spammed states since 2008.
- In the US, the difference between the most and least spammed states was a margin 15.1 percent in 2008. In 2009, it has narrowed to 10.7 percent proving that spam levels across the US have increased and nowhere can be considered a safe-haven from spam.
- In the US, the most spammed industries are: Marketing, Wholesale, Recreation, Engineering and Real Estate while the least spammed are: Chemical and Pharmaceutical, followed by Agriculture, Public Sector, Transportation and Healthcare.



Most Spammed U.S. States

1	Idaho
2	Kentucky
3	New Jersey
4	Alabama
5	Illinois
6	Indiana
7	Massachusetts
8	Pennsylvania
9	Arizona
10	(tie) Maryland, North Carolina and New Mexico

Least Spammed U.S. States

1	Puerto Rico
2	Montana
3	Alaska
4	Kansas
5	South Dakota
6	Tennessee
7	Vermont
8	(tie) West Virginia and Rhode Island
9	Wisconsin
10	(tie) Iowa and Florida

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 for September 2009 is 86.4 percent, but US businesses are receiving more than their fair share, with levels reaching 93.8 percent.
- Spammers have preferred target industries with the Engineering and Education sector being the top global targets with spam levels reaching more than 93 percent.

Quote

“Some of the high spam levels seen across the US can be attributed to the economic challenges experienced globally since the end of 2008 as well as Internet advancement including the high adoption of social networking,” said Paul Wood, MessageLabs Intelligence Senior Analyst, Symantec. “Spammers have taken full advantage of both the economic uncertainty of some and the trustworthiness of others for their own rewards. Automated tools, resilient botnets and targeted spam campaigns are all part of the spammers’ toolkit and they are constantly evolving these techniques to outsmart any effort to stop them. No state is immune to the affects of spam.”

MessageLabs Intelligence 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.
- **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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