

CANADIANS WINNING THE WAR AGAINST SPAM

*Spam Volumes Dropping for the First Time in Four Years,
and Attitudes Towards Email as a Communications Tool
Are Improving*



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Spam Volumes Dropping for the First Time in Four Years, and Attitudes Towards Email as a Communications Tool Are Improving

Vancouver, BC – After being increasingly inundated by spam over the past few years, Canadians are fighting back. For the first time in four years, the amount of unsolicited or “spam” emails received by Canadians has declined. In our latest reading of Ipsos-Reid’s *Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report* in Q4-2004, online Canadians received an average of 177 emails per week, 87 of which (49%) were spam, an improvement over 2003 where 134 (68%) of the weekly average of 197 emails were spam. Prior to this, spam volumes had been doubling every year (average of 30 spam messages per week in 2001, and 64 in 2002).

There are several reasons for the drop in spam volumes. First of all, new laws such as Canada’s Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and the U.S.’s CAN-SPAM Act (Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act) have forced marketers to re-evaluate their practices and adhere to tougher guidelines, and have elevated awareness of the problems associated with spam. Second, Canadians are increasingly installing spam filters, as 77% of online Canadians report that they are using spam-filtering software, up from 41% just two years ago. Third, ISPs and organizations have made significant progress in fighting spam through filters¹. Finally, Canadians are becoming less willing to open spam, as only 36% open any spam on a given week compared to 40% in 2002, thus contributing to the decreasing effectiveness of this marketing tool among spammers.

“Canadians are starting to regain control of their email inboxes,” says Steve Mossop, Senior Vice-President of Ipsos-Reid. “At this point in time last year, Canadians were frustrated with email overload and clutter, and were starting to turn off their mailboxes and become increasingly skeptical towards email. This year, people are feeling more

¹ According to IDC, worldwide revenue for antispam solutions will exceed \$1.7B in 2008, surpassing the \$300M spent in 2003.

positive about email as a communications tool, and are receptive to legitimate permission-based email marketing.”

Canadians now have a more positive attitude towards email than they have had in past years, and they are finding ways to work email into their routines and take advantage of the many benefits that email provides. Two-thirds (67%) say that they prefer communicating by email than by any other method, a jump from the 58% last year. In addition, 56% of online Canadians say that email has made them more efficient in their work – a slight increase of two points over 2003 – and fewer people agree that they dread going on vacation or taking days off because of the amount of email they’ll need to respond to upon their return (28% compared to 34% last year).

With reductions in spam volumes, Canadians are becoming more receptive to legitimate forms of email marketing, such as permission-based email. More specifically, 79% (up from 77% last year) of online Canadians have actually registered to receive emails from websites. The average number of registrations is 9.0, up from 8.1 in 2003, and 7.1 two years ago. Their willingness to provide email addresses to marketers who ask has also increased from 60% last year to 65% in 2004. Canadians are registering at a much broader range of websites relative to the past that match their individual interests and activities. The two most common types of websites at which online Canadians register are entertainment websites (45%) followed by news and information sites (37%). Another five categories are also very popular – computer/technology sites (32%), e-commerce (30%), travel (30%), hobbies (30%), and health/fitness (29%).

“All of this is great news for Canadians and legitimate email marketers,” says Mossop. “The drop in spam makes email clutter more manageable, and at the same time, increasing interest in permission-based email means that legitimate marketers can better use this tool to provide Canadians with information about the products and services that they really want to hear about.”

*The **Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report** is the largest, most comprehensive and authoritative source of its kind about quarterly Internet trends in Canada. The results are based on two separate data collection instruments. In the first, 1,000 web users from Ipsos-Reid's Canadian Internet Panel are surveyed online. Panelists are chosen through random telephone surveys conducted on an ongoing basis across Canada. Results are complemented by a further 1,000 interviews via telephone with Canadian adults in order to verify results of the panel, and track issues among non-Internet users. Telephone interviews for this release were conducted between January 5 and 10, 2005 while the online data was collected between January 6 and 10, 2005. These data are statistically weighted to reflect the population proportions of regular online users by online expertise and regional distribution. Our panelists represent approximately 14.4 million Canadian adult Internet users who are online for one hour a week or more (there are a total of 17.9 million adults who have Internet access).*

With a national sample of 1,000 (for each component), one can say with 95% certainty that the overall results are within a maximum of ± 3.1 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire population of Canada's regular online users been surveyed. The margin of error will be larger for sub-groupings of the survey population.

- 30 -

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