

# The State of Spam

## A Monthly Report – February 2007

*Generated by Symantec Messaging and Web Security*

## Monthly Spam Landscape

Spam activity in January of 2007 was fairly consistent with trends observed in previous months, though some new wrinkles appeared. Highlights:

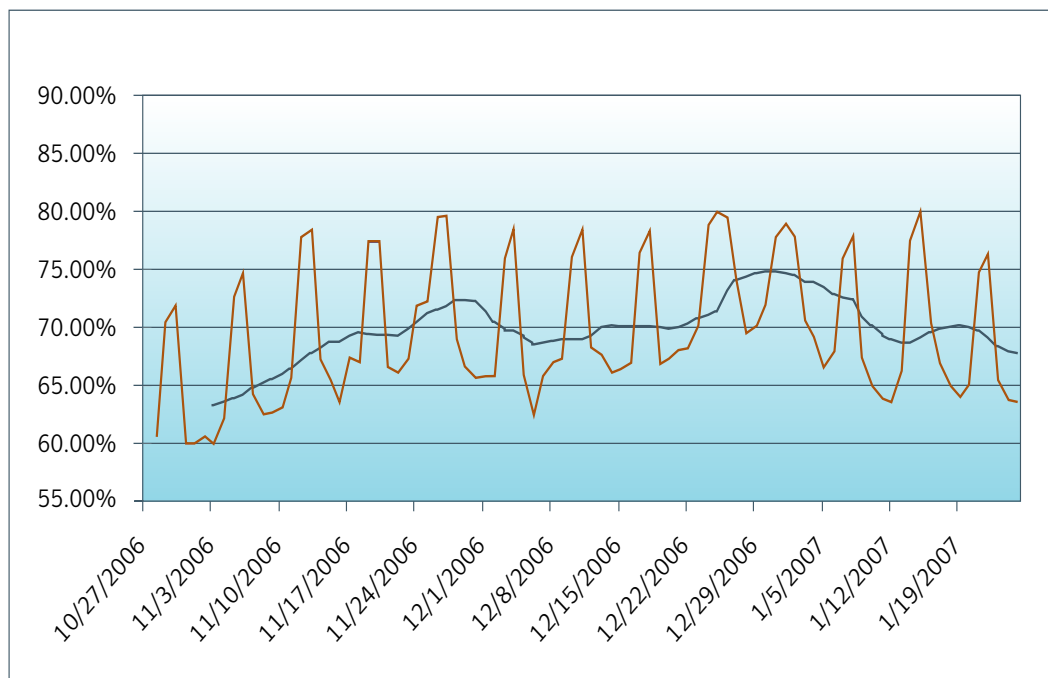
- Image spam reached an all time high of 45%, but ended the month of January back at a 30% level.
- Spam continues to account for a high percentage of all e-mail traffic, however the percent of spam for the month of January at the SMTP layer saw a reduction to around 69%.
- An interesting trend is the sharp decline in adult spam over the past few months.

## Percentages of E-mail Identified as Spam

### Defined:

Worldwide Internet Mail Gateway Spam Percentage represents the number of messages that were processed and classified as spam versus the total number of messages processed when scanned at the mail gateway. This metric represents SMTP layer filtering and does not include the volumes of e-mail detected at the network layer.

### Internet E-mail Spam Percentage



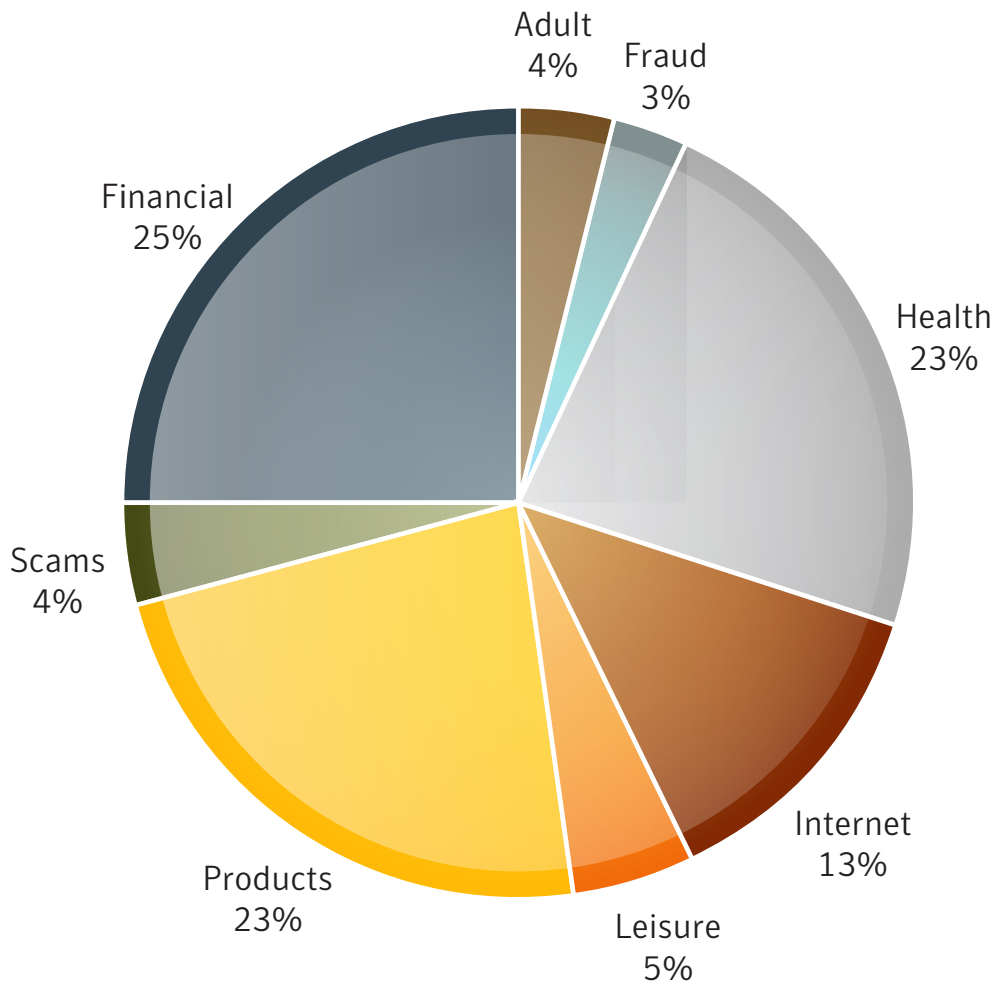
A trend line has been added to demonstrate a 7-day moving average.

## Global Spam Categories

**Defined:**

Spam category data is collected from classifications on messages passing through the Symantec Probe Network.

**Global Spam Categories (90 Days)**



## Category Definitions

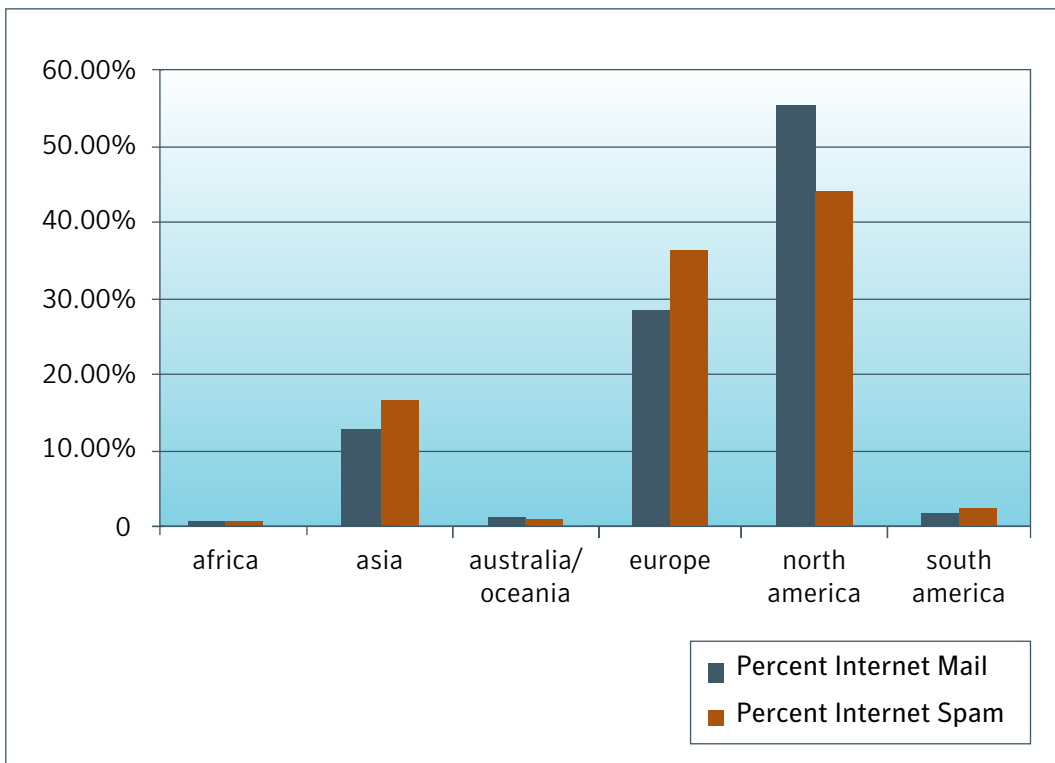
- **Products E-mail attacks** offering or advertising general goods and services. Examples: devices, investigation services, clothing, makeup
- **Adult E-mail attacks** containing or referring to products or services intended for persons above the age of 18, often offensive or inappropriate. Examples: porn, personal ads, relationship advice
- **Financial E-mail attacks** that contain references or offers related to money, the stock market or other financial “opportunities.” Examples: investments, credit reports, real estate, loans
- **Scams E-mail attacks** recognized as fraudulent, intentionally misleading, or known to result in fraudulent activity on the part of the sender. Examples: Nigerian investment, pyramid schemes, chain letters
- **Health E-mail attacks** offering or advertising health-related products and services. Examples: pharmaceuticals, medical treatments, herbal remedies
- **Fraud E-mail attacks** that appear to be from a well-known company, but are not. Also known as “brand spoofing” or “phishing,” these messages are often used to trick users into revealing personal information such as E-mail address, financial information and passwords. Examples: account notification, credit card verification, billing updates
- **Leisure E-mail attacks** offering or advertising prizes, awards, or discounted leisure activities. Examples: vacation offers, online casinos, games
- **Internet E-mail attacks** specifically offering or advertising Internet or computer-related goods and services. Examples: web hosting, web design, spamware
- **Political Messages** advertising a political candidate’s campaign, offers to donate money to a political party or political cause, offers for products related to a political figure/campaign, etc. Examples: political party, elections, donations
- **Spiritual E-mail attacks** with information pertaining to religious or spiritual evangelization and/or services. Examples: psychics, astrology, organized religion, outreach
- **Other** E-mails attacks not pertaining to any other category.

## Regions of Origin

**Defined:**

Region of origin represents the percentage of messages reported coming from each of the following regions: North America, South America, Europe, Australia/Oceania, Asia and Africa.

**Global Claimed Region of Origin (90 Days)**

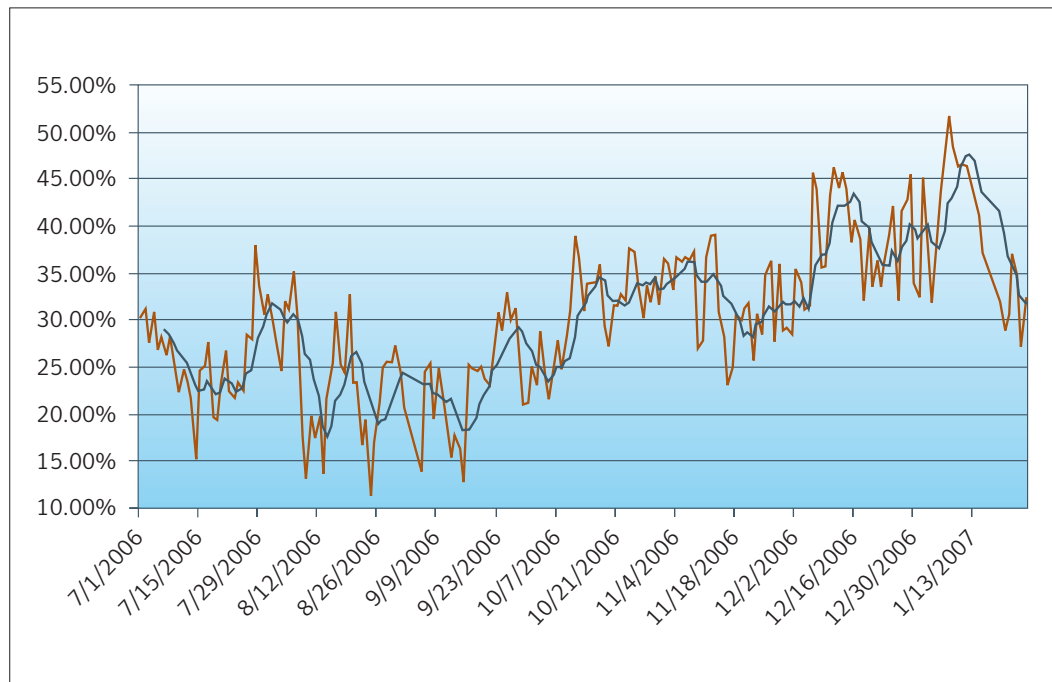


## Percentages of Image Spam

**Defined:**

The total number of image spam messages observed as a percentage of all spam observed.

### Internet E-mail - Percent Image Spam



A trend line has been added to demonstrate a 7-day moving average.

## New Spam Techniques

### HTML 'ASCII' Art

Although this is not actually a new technique, we have seen a new spin off of an old technique using "ASCII Art" in an HTML format. It is defined by Wikipedia as "an artistic medium that relies primarily on computers for presentation and consists of pictures pieced together from the 95 printable characters defined by ASCII." The term is also loosely used to refer to text-based art in general. ASCII art can be created with any text editor, and is often used with free-form languages. Most examples of ASCII art require a fixed-width font (non-proportional fonts, like on a traditional typewriter) such as Courier for presentation.

This technique will randomize the text used within the ASCII art and may be problematic for some anti-spam solutions that are solely dependant upon signatures for detection. URL-based anti-spam filtering technology will be able to detect this type of spam. The use of a randomized site through a free web hosting service may add some difficulty to some anti-spam URL technologies that require a precise URL path, however any anti-spam technology that allows for pattern matching in URLs can easily account for this level of randomization.

