US largest exporter of spam

AUGUST 25, 2004
The Australian

THE United States is the largest global source of spam, producing more than two of every five messages, a report by security firm Sophos showed. The Sophos report found 42.53 per cent of all spam originated in the United States. The next largest source was South Korea, with 15.42 per cent, and China and Hong Kong, accounting for a combined 11.62 per cent.

The report suggested that a US law known as CAN-SPAM that took effect in January has done little to curb the flood on unwanted messages that some see as a threat to the internet.

Chris Kraft, senior security analyst at Sophos, said the results showed little overall change from a similar survey in February for the United States.

"Six months and millions of spam messages later, it is quite evident that the CAN-SPAM legislation has made very little headway in damming the flood of spam," he said. "If nine months isn't long enough to make a significant difference, how long is?"

The "dirty dozen" spam sources, according to Sophos, included Brazil, accounting for 6.17 per cent of global spam, followed by Canada (2.19 per cent); Japan (2.87 per cent); Germany (1.28 per cent); France (1.24 per cent); Spain (1.16 per cent), Britain (1.15 per cent); Mexico (0.98 per cent); and Taiwan (0.91 per cent).

Sophos notes that the most broadband-connected country in the world, South Korea, has consolidated its position as a leading producer of spam - almost tripling the percentage of spam originating from its shores since February.

However, Canada has managed to significantly decrease their contribution to the junk email by more than half - from 6.8 per cent six months ago to 2.9 per cent.

"It's of no surprise that spammers are motivated by one thing - quick, easy money," continued Mr Kraft.

"There are plenty of spammers who have taken their money making schemes to the extreme by hacking into innocent third-party computers in an effort to do their dirty work. Many of the computers sending out spam are most likely to have had their broadband internet connections exploited by remote hackers."

Sophos noted that "zombie" computers - which have been compromised by hackers or virus writers - are sending out approximately 40 per cent of the world's spam, mostly without the knowledge of the PC owners.

An EU study has estimated that the worldwide cost to internet subscribers of spam is around 10 billion euros ($17 billion) a year, not least because of hours lost deleting such messages from email in-boxes.

Agence France-Presse
This report appears on australianIT.com.au.