OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

From January through December of 2019, Hiya analyzed users in the UK to better understand the country's phone spam problem. As such, Hiya pulled the following statistics:

- Total number of spam calls placed in the UK
- Growth in spam calls from 2018 to 2019 in the UK
- Average monthly spam rate reported by users
- Number of unwanted calls per user/month

In addition to the above, this report also offers an in-depth look at the top unwanted call categories in the UK, the phone scams unique to the UK, the area codes most utilized by scammers, and the emerging coronavirus scam that began in February of 2020.
SPAM BY THE NUMBERS: 2019

7.3 billion spam calls
Total in the UK

86% Growth in spam calls from 2018 to 2019
16% Average monthly spam rate
11 Average # of monthly spam calls received per person
Featured Scam: Wangiri “One-Ring” Scam

The Wangiri or “one-ring” scam originally appeared in the U.S. in 2013. In years to follow, the scam hit a lull in the U.S. and expanded internationally to countries like Ireland, Scotland, and Germany and continues to inundate UK residents today.

Why and How?

Originating from the West African Atlantic Coast, seconds before a victim can pick up the call, the culprit hangs up. In some instances, scammers will leave a message urging the victim to call a number to either receive a so-called raffle prize, or find out about a sick relative. If the victim calls back, they will be connected to an international hotline charging a connection fee, along with high per-minute prices.

Tips on Mitigating the Wangiri “One-Ring Scam”

- Do not answer or return calls if you do not recognize the number.
- Before calling back an unknown number, check if the area code is international.
- Request that your carrier block outgoing international calls.

Numbers reflect calls reported by users from January-September 2019.
EMERGING SCAM: CORONAVIRUS

The recent COVID-19 epidemic has opened a prime opportunity for scammers to find new victims. Hiya first started seeing instances of coronavirus-themed scams in user complaints in late January. These fraudulent calls range from health insurance related inquiries, to home sanitation services for virus prevention, to scammers offering COVID-19 cures, for a price. Since that time, instances of these types of calls have continued to grow exponentially, much like the virus itself.

Scams surrounding coronavirus grew 1544% globally in just the past few weeks, with governments, health officials and retailers all warning consumers about false products and health claims.

In the UK, the top areas being targeted include London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol and Newcastle.
TOP SCAMS IN THE UK

Bank Scam
Disguising themselves as official representatives of banks across the UK, scammers are requesting sensitive information or items from victims that will allow them to access the victim’s bank account. Banks will never call a customer directly requesting personal or financial information. If they do, hang-up and call your bank directly to confirm that they are in need of the information.

Tech Support Scam
Scammers target older people by notifying them that there is a problem with their computer which can be fixed for a fee. They then trick them into downloading malware by sending them a link that then infects their computer with a virus. Scammers also trick victims into handing over financial information and personal details over the phone to “fix” the so-called problem.

Wangiri “One-Ring” Scam
Originating from the West African Atlantic Coast, seconds before a victim can pick up the call, the culprit hangs up. In some instances, scammers will leave a message urging the victim to call a number to either receive a so-called raffle prize or find out about a sick relative. Victims who call back are connected to an international hotline charging high per-minute prices.

HMRC Scam
Residents in the UK are receiving calls from representatives claiming they are from HMRC and that there has been an issue with their tax refund or unpaid tax bill. Scammers will leave a message and ask victims to call them back. This is not HMRC’s protocol. Victims that have been contacted by a representative from HMRC, be aware that they will never contact you over the phone and will never ask for personal or financial information such as bank account details.
TOP AREAS IN THE UK TARGETED BY SPAMMERS

Newest Area Code of the Quarter: 24 (Portsmouth, UK)

Citizens of Portsmouth are being contacted by cold-callers who are falsely claiming to be from Citizens Advice to scam people out of their money. The caller asks if a person needs advice on debt or money issues. They then ask for the person’s bank details so they could supposedly help clear their debts and offer other financial advice.
A better phone experience.

Available on the App Store
GET IT ON Google Play

Incoming call
Suspected Spam
+44 114 303 4236
United Kingdom

Search Hiya
RECENT SEARCHES
- Scam or Fraud
  +44 793 146 8876
- Brenda Day
  +44 734 010 1497
- Nuisance call
  +44 795 836 9751
- British Airways
  +44 344 493 0787
- East Coast Union Bank
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