

Canada's anti-spam legislation

From: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada



[Got spam? Click here to report it.](#)

Canada's anti-spam legislation (CASL) protects consumers and businesses from the misuse of digital technology, including spam and other electronic threats. It also aims to help businesses stay competitive in a global, digital marketplace. Learn about the legislation as well as how to protect yourself from spam and how to report it when necessary.

Report spam

Got spam? Tell us about it.

Spam news

Stay up to date on the latest threats, enforcement actions and legislative developments.

Protect yourself from spam

Find out how to recognize, report and protect yourself and your devices from spam and related threats.

Protect your business and comply

Read about how to ensure your marketing strategies comply with CASL as well as how to protect your business or organization from spam.

Understand Canada's anti-spam legislation

Go beyond the basics and get further information about CASL.

Take our spam quiz

Test your knowledge with 5 quick questions.

Canada's anti-spam legislation resources

Find links to additional information sources.

What is spam?

Spam has become a significant social and economic burden in Canada and around the world. The simplest definition of spam is unsolicited email, though it can also include unsolicited text messages and software.

The legal definition of spam also encompasses:

- unauthorized alteration of transmission data
- the installation of computer programs without consent
- false or misleading electronic representations (including websites)
- the harvesting of addresses (collecting and/or using email or other electronic addresses without permission)
- the collection of personal information by accessing a computer system or electronic device illegally

CASL focuses on commercial electronic messages, which are those that encourage participation in a commercial activity whether or not there is an expectation of profit.

About CASL

CASL was created in 2014 to reinforce best practices in email marketing and combat spam and related issues. These issues include identity theft, phishing and the spread of malicious software, such as viruses, worms and

trojans (malware). The legislation has made a positive difference. When CASL took effect in 2014, Canada was home to 7 of the world's top 100 spamming organizations. By 2017, there were only 2.

Canadians made more than 137,000 complaints to the Spam Reporting Centre between April 1 and September 30, 2018—more than 5,000 per week. Email sent without consent was the top reason for these complaints, but spam in the form of text messages is also on the rise. These figures show that CASL is an increasingly important tool for Canadians.


Since its inception, CASL has resulted in improvements for both consumers and businesses. In terms of consumers:

- Canadians now receive less spam. One study showed that within a year of the legislation being introduced, there was a 37% decrease in Canadian-based spam and 29% less email (spam or legitimate) in Canadians' in-boxes

Meanwhile, for businesses:

- CASL has caused companies to be more disciplined in managing their electronic marketing programs. As a result, open and click-through rates of marketing emails have risen, and bounce rates have dropped
- Between 2014 and 2017, the proportion of commercial electronic messages reaching their designated recipients rose to 90% from 79% in Canada (compared with 80% worldwide). The proportion of commercial emails opened and read also increased to 32% from 26% (compared with 21% in the United States)

The legislation has also enabled Canada to actively share information and cooperate in global enforcement actions. Canada now has international agreements with 4 countries and memorandums of understanding with 12 agencies in 8 countries.



⚠ Note: The information on this website is intended to provide a plain language explanation of some aspects of the legislation. It is not to be considered as legal advice, an interpretation of any legislation or regulations, or as a settlement or commitment on behalf of the Enforcement Agencies for CASL.

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