



Microsoft Security Intelligence Report

Volume 18 | July through December, 2014

United Kingdom

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United Kingdom

The statistics presented here are generated by Microsoft security programs and services running on computers in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 and previous quarters. This data is provided from administrators or users who choose to opt in to provide data to Microsoft, using IP address geolocation to determine country or region.

On computers running real-time security software, most attempts by malware to infect computers are blocked before they succeed. Therefore, for a comprehensive understanding of the malware landscape, it's important to consider infection attempts that are blocked as well as infections that are removed. For this reason, Microsoft uses two different metrics to measure malware prevalence:

- *Encounter rate* is simply the percentage of computers running Microsoft real-time security products that report a malware encounter, whether the infection attempt succeeds or not.
- *Computers cleaned per mille*, or *CCM*, is an infection rate metric that is defined as the number of computers cleaned for every 1,000 unique computers executing the Malicious Software Removal Tool (MSRT), a free tool distributed through Microsoft update services that removes more than 200 highly prevalent or serious threats from computers.

Infection rate statistics for the United Kingdom

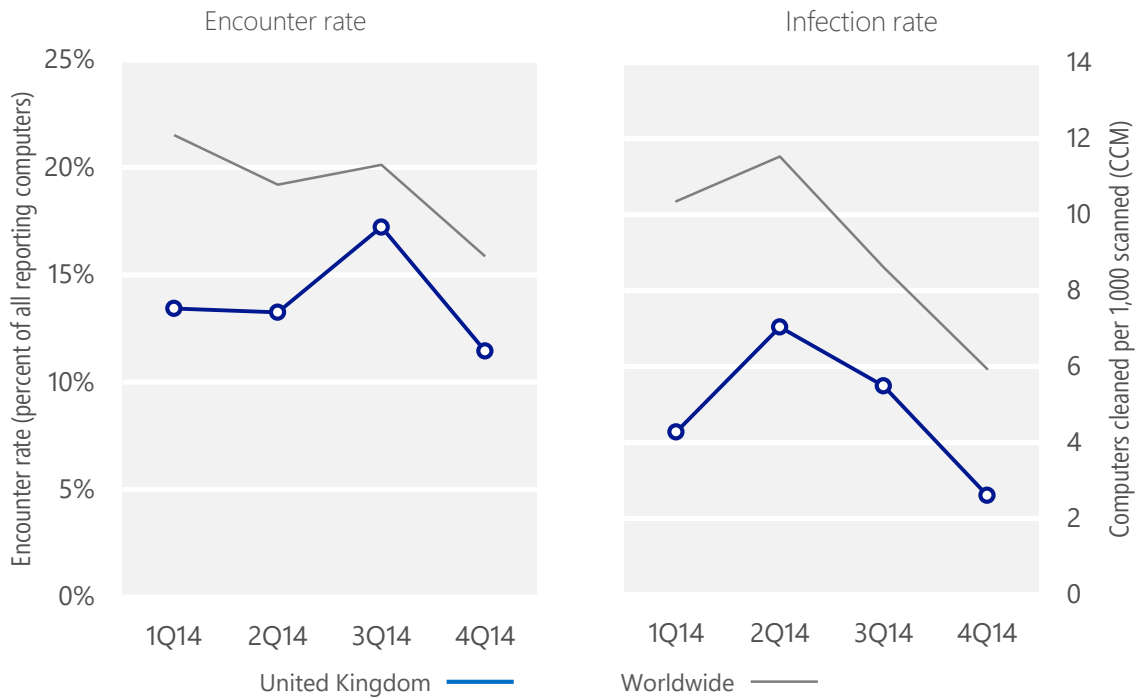
Metric	1Q14	2Q14	3Q14	4Q14
Encounter rate, United Kingdom	13.4%	13.3%	17.2%	11.5%
<i>Worldwide encounter rate</i>	<i>21.5%</i>	<i>19.2%</i>	<i>20.1%</i>	<i>15.9%</i>
CCM, United Kingdom	4.3	7.0	5.5	2.6
<i>Worldwide CCM</i>	<i>10.3</i>	<i>11.5</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>5.9</i>

Encounter and infection rates reported here do not include totals for the Brantall, Filcoute, and Rotbrow malware families. See pages 57–64 of [Microsoft Security Intelligence Report, Volume 17](#) for an explanation of this decision.

Encounter and infection rate trends

In 4Q14, 11.5% percent of computers in the United Kingdom encountered malware, compared to the 4Q14 worldwide encounter rate of 15.9 percent. In addition, the MSRT detected and removed malware from 2.6 of every 1,000 unique computers scanned in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 (a CCM score of 2.6, compared to the 4Q14 worldwide CCM of 5.9). The following figure shows the encounter and infection rate trends for the United Kingdom over the last four quarters, compared to the world as a whole.

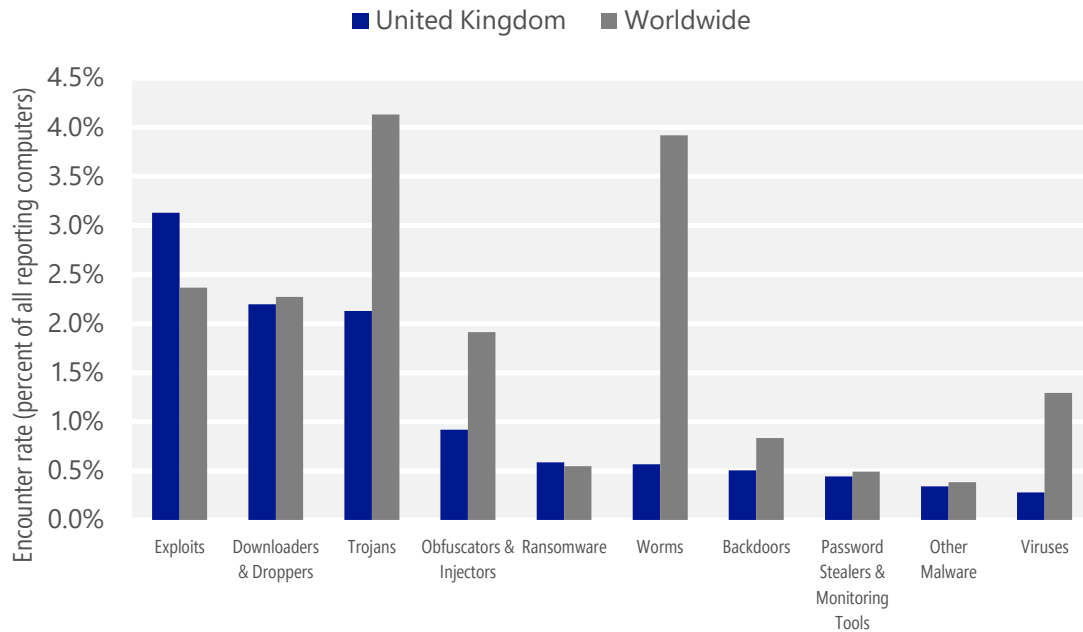
Malware encounter and infection rate trends in the United Kingdom and worldwide



See the Worldwide Threat Assessment section of [Microsoft Security Intelligence Report, Volume 18](#) at www.microsoft.com/sir for more information about threats in the United Kingdom and around the world, and for explanations of the methods and terms used here.

Malware categories

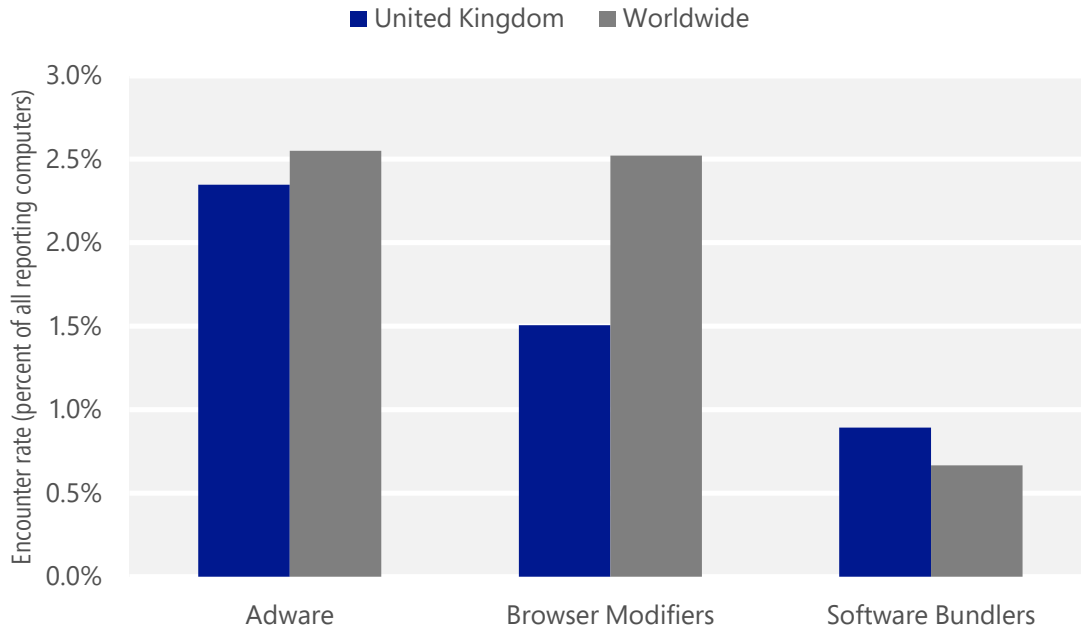
Malware encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14, by category



- The most common malware category in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was Exploits. It was encountered by 3.1 percent of all computers there, down from 6.7 percent in 3Q14.
- The second most common malware category in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was Downloaders & Droppers. It was encountered by 2.2 percent of all computers there, down from 3.5 percent in 3Q14.
- The third most common malware category in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was Trojans, which was encountered by 2.1 percent of all computers there, down from 3.0 percent in 3Q14.

Unwanted software categories

Unwanted software encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14, by category



- The most common unwanted software category in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was Adware. It was encountered by 2.3 percent of all computers there, down from 5.1 percent in 3Q14.
- The second most common unwanted software category in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was Browser Modifiers. It was encountered by 1.5 percent of all computers there, down from 4.0 percent in 3Q14.
- The third most common unwanted software category in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was Software Bundlers, which was encountered by 0.9 percent of all computers there, up from 0.1 percent in 3Q14.

Top malware families by encounter rate

The most common malware families encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14

	Family	Most significant category	% of reporting computers
1	JS/Axpergle	Exploits	1.7%
2	Win32/Tugspay	Downloaders & Droppers	0.9%
3	JS/Fiexp	Exploits	0.8%
4	Win32/Obfuscator	Obfuscators & Injectors	0.8%
5	Win32/Clikug	Trojans	0.6%
6	Win32/Anogre	Exploits	0.6%
7	JS/Krypterade	Ransomware	0.3%
8	Win32/Upatre	Downloaders & Droppers	0.2%
9	Win32/Zbot	Password Stealers & Monitoring Tools	0.2%
10	W97M/Adnel	Downloaders & Droppers	0.2%

- The most common malware family encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [JS/Axpergle](#), which was encountered by 1.7 percent of reporting computers there. [JS/Axpergle](#) is a detection for the Angler exploit kit, which exploits vulnerabilities in recent versions of Internet Explorer, Silverlight, Adobe Flash Player, and Java to install malware.
- The second most common malware family encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Tugspay](#), which was encountered by 0.9 percent of reporting computers there. [Win32/Tugspay](#) is a downloader that spreads by posing as an installer for legitimate software, such as a Java update, or through other malware. When installed, it downloads unwanted software to the computer.
- The third most common malware family encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [JS/Fiexp](#), which was encountered by 0.8 percent of reporting computers there. [JS/Fiexp](#) is a detection for the Fiesta exploit kit, which attempts to exploit Java, Adobe Flash Player, Adobe Reader, Silverlight, and Internet Explorer to install malware.
- The fourth most common malware family encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Obfuscator](#), which was encountered by 0.8 percent of reporting computers there. [Win32/Obfuscator](#) is a generic detection for programs that have had their purpose disguised to hinder analysis or detection by antivirus scanners. Such programs commonly employ a combination of methods, including encryption, compression, anti-debugging and anti-emulation techniques.

Top unwanted software families by encounter rate

The most common unwanted software families encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14

	Family	Most significant category	% of reporting computers
1	Win32/Couponruc	Browser Modifiers	1.2%
2	Win32/Costmin	Adware	0.7%
3	Win32/Couponarific	Adware	0.4%
4	Win32/BetterSurf	Adware	0.4%
5	Win32/Gofileexpress	Software Bundlers	0.3%

- The most common unwanted software family encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Couponruc](#), which was encountered by 1.2 percent of reporting computers there. [Win32/Couponruc](#) is a browser modifier that changes browser settings and may also modify some computer and Internet settings.
- The second most common unwanted software family encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Costmin](#), which was encountered by 0.7 percent of reporting computers there. [Win32/Costmin](#) is an adware family that installs itself as a browser extension for Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and Google Chrome, and displays advertisements as the user browses the Internet.
- The third most common unwanted software family encountered in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Couponarific](#), which was encountered by 0.4 percent of reporting computers there. [Win32/Couponarific](#) is a program that shows ads that the user cannot control as they browse the web. It does not have a working uninstaller.

Top threat families by infection rate

The most common malware families by infection rate in the United Kingdom in 4Q14

	Family	Most significant category	Infection rate (CCM)
1	Win32/Sefnit	Trojans	0.3
2	Win32/Zbot	Password Stealers & Monitoring Tools	0.2
3	Win32/Wysotot	Trojans	0.2
4	JS/Medfos	Trojans	0.2
5	Win32/Ramnit	Trojans	0.2
6	Win32/Caphaw	Backdoors	0.2
7	JS/Miuref	Trojans	0.2
8	Win32/Alureon	Trojans	0.2
9	Win32/Sirefef	Trojans	0.1
10	VBS/Jenxcus	Worms	0.1

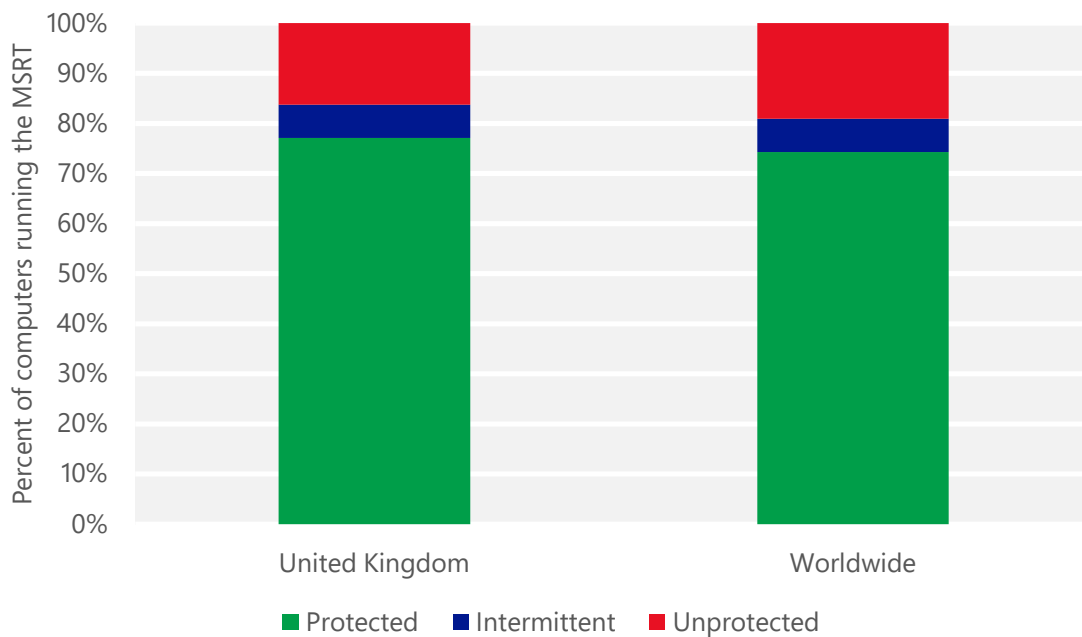
- The most common threat family infecting computers in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Sefnit](#), which was detected and removed from 0.3 of every 1,000 unique computers scanned by the MSRT. [Win32/Sefnit](#) is a family of trojans that can allow backdoor access, download files, and use the computer and Internet connection for click fraud. Some variants can monitor web browsers and hijack search results.
- The second most common threat family infecting computers in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Zbot](#), which was detected and removed from 0.2 of every 1,000 unique computers scanned by the MSRT. [Win32/Zbot](#) is a family of password stealing trojans that also contains backdoor functionality allowing unauthorized access and control of an affected computer.
- The third most common threat family infecting computers in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [Win32/Wysotot](#), which was detected and removed from 0.2 of every 1,000 unique computers scanned by the MSRT. [Win32/Wysotot](#) is a threat that can change the start page of the user's web browser, and may download and install other files to the computer. It is installed by software bundlers that advertise free software or games.
- The fourth most common threat family infecting computers in the United Kingdom in 4Q14 was [JS/Medfos](#), which was detected and removed from 0.2 of every 1,000 unique computers scanned by the MSRT. [JS/Medfos](#) is a trojan that installs malicious Internet browser extensions and redirects search results from popular search engines.

Security software use

Recent releases of the MSRT collect and report details about the state of real-time antimalware software on a computer, if the computer's administrator has chosen to opt in to provide data to Microsoft. This telemetry data makes it possible to analyze security software usage patterns around the world and correlate them with infection rates.

A typical computer runs the MSRT three times each quarter, once for each monthly version of the tool that Microsoft releases. In the figure below, "Protected" represents computers that had real-time security software active and up-to-date every time the MSRT ran during a quarter; "Intermittently protected" represents computers that had security software active during one or more MSRT executions, but not all of them; and "Unprotected" represents computers that did not have security software active during any MSRT executions that quarter.

Percent of computers in the United Kingdom and worldwide protected by real-time security software in 4Q14



Drive-by download sites

A *drive-by download* site is a website that hosts one or more exploits that target vulnerabilities in web browsers and browser add-ons. Users with vulnerable computers can be infected with malware simply by visiting such a website, even without attempting to download anything. Drive-by download pages are usually hosted on legitimate Web sites to which an attacker has posted exploit code. Attackers gain access to legitimate sites through intrusion or by posting malicious code to a poorly secured web form, like a comment field on a blog. Compromised sites can be hosted anywhere in the world and concern nearly any subject imaginable, making it difficult for even an experienced user to identify a compromised site from a list of search results.

Search engines such as Bing have taken a number of measures to help protect users from drive-by downloads. As Bing indexes the web, pages are assessed for malicious elements or malicious behavior. Clicking the link in the list of search results displays a prominent warning, saying that the page may contain malicious software.

At the end of 3Q14, Bing detected 0.21 drive-by download URLs for every 1,000 URLs hosted in the United Kingdom, compared to 0.41 worldwide. At the end of 4Q14, Bing detected 0.79 drive-by download URLs for every 1,000 URLs hosted in the United Kingdom, compared to 0.45 worldwide.

Drive-by download pages per 1,000 URLs hosted in the United Kingdom and worldwide

Metric	October 1, 2014	January 1, 2015
Drive-by download pages per 1,000 URLs, United Kingdom	0.21	0.79
<i>Drive-by download pages per 1,000 URLs worldwide</i>	<i>0.41</i>	<i>0.45</i>



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