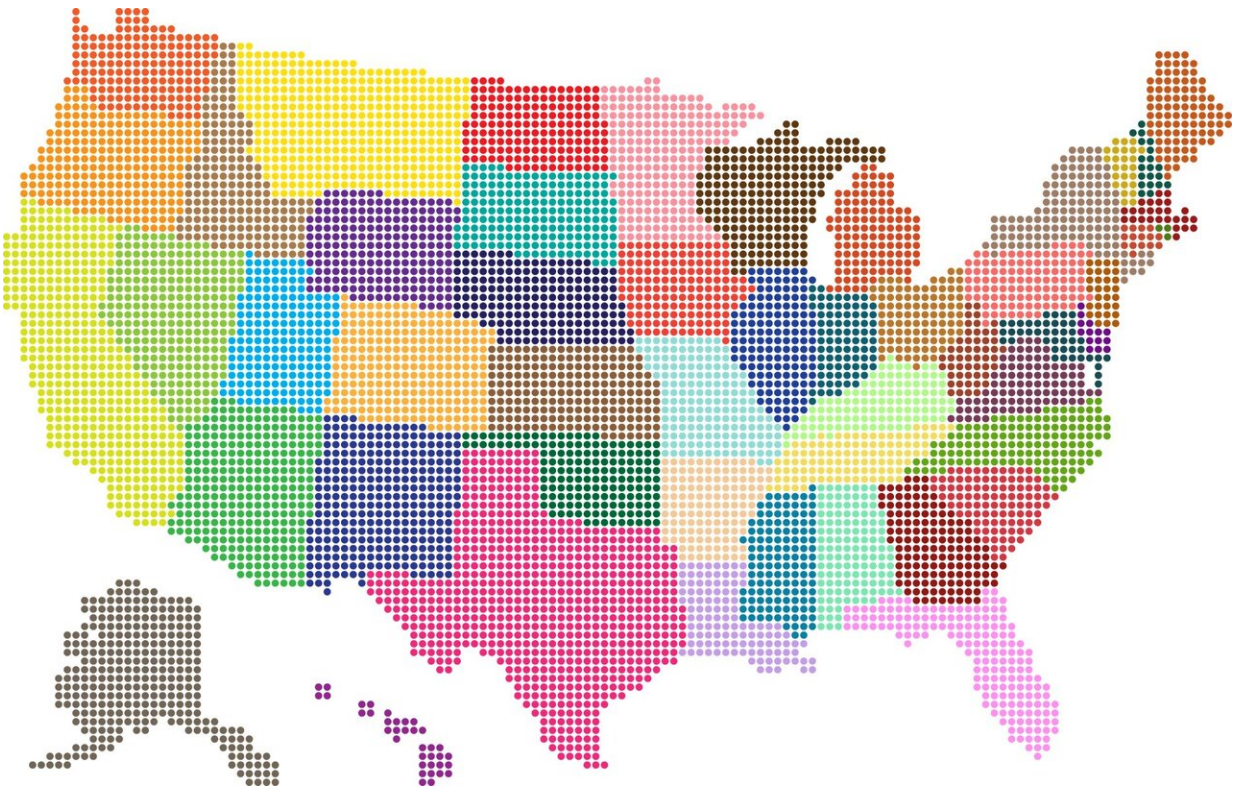


Robocalls continue to rise, and these states get the most: Where does yours rank?

January 14 2020, by Mike Snider



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Every state gets plenty of robocalls, but people in a few states, such as Maryland and Nevada, bear more than their share.

People in Maryland got, on average, 18 calls a month and filed among

the most complaints in the nation (nearly 22 complaints per 1,000 residents), according to a report from cellphone recommendation site Let's Talk.

Nevada residents got an average of 16.5 robocalls each month in 2019 and filed 22 complaints, the report says. Let's Talk scored the states on its analysis of home and mobile robocall complaints filed with the Federal Trade Commission through October 2019 and average monthly robocalls in 2019, according to an index from YouMail, a company that provides a service to block such messages.

The other states making up the top 10 hit hardest by robocalls include Colorado, Delaware, New Jersey, Arizona, Connecticut, Virginia, Georgia and Oregon. (Scroll down for the complete list.)

The best state to avoid robocalls: Alaska, where residents get 3.3 each month.

Coastal states typically had higher robocall hassle factors, while those in the Midwest were hit less—but there's no specific method to robocall activity, says Let's Talk's Maddie Peterson. "It could even be as simple as people answer their phones more often in those regions, and therefore feel like complaining more," she said.

Even though officials have taken steps to restrict and punish robocallers, the calls keep coming. Americans got more than 58 billion robocalls in 2019, a 20% increase over 2018 when they received nearly 48 billion, according to YouMail.

Robocalls are part of the daily grind for Bill Dowling. The Wilmington, Delaware, video producer received three robocalls in one hour Tuesday. Delaware ranked No. 4 on Let's Talk's list, and residents there got, on average, about 15.9 robocalls per month.

Dowling answers them because he fears missing a potential client. "There's no one else to answer my calls, so it takes me from my work to have to keep picking up these dumb calls," said Dowling, who operates Billy D. Productions. "I get them on a daily basis, but it seems like they're starting to get more aggressive."

Unwanted robocalls "are far and away the top consumer complaint we get each year" at the Federal Communications Commission and account for 60% of all complaints, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said in an op-ed in U.S. TODAY last summer.

Consumers should be able to expect some improvements. Major carriers were expected to have implemented by the end of 2018 a [robocall](#) fighting standard called SHAKEN/STIR, or Signature-based Handling of Asserted Information Using toKENs and the Secure Telephone Identity Revisited.

The tech standard lets providers label calls as potential spam—and can identify "spoofed" call numbers—or verify calls to make sure they are legit before even going to consumers.

Penalties for robocallers are increasing. Last week, President Donald Trump signed into law the Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence (TRACED) Act, which gives the FCC more time to take action against robocallers and fine them for up to \$10,000 per call.

The law creates a working group that includes officials from the FCC, FTC, Justice Department, Commerce Department, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and other agencies. The group is to report to Congress on ways to fight robocalls.

"Will the TRACED Act completely solve the problem of illegal robocalls? No," Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., who co-sponsored the bill with Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., said Thursday. "But it will go a long way toward making it safe to answer your phone again. And it will help ensure that those who exploit vulnerable individuals face punishment for their actions."

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