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## **COLD CALLING**

### **Half of landline calls to the elderly come from cold-callers**

*By Katie Morley*

NEARLY half of landline phone calls made to elderly and vulnerable people are from cold-callers, it has been disclosed.

As many as a million people estimated to be on so-called “suckers lists” are being bombarded with around 150 nuisance and scam calls a month in a cold-calling epidemic sweeping the UK.

In a bid to protect vulnerable consumers, 166 local councils have resorted to fitting £100 phone blockers in people’s homes, which only allow calls from pre-selected friends and family. Nearly half (46 per cent) of all calls received by call blockers are nuisance and scam calls, according to analysis by Truecall, which provides them to councils.

And around one in five cold-calls come from foreign numbers meaning they cannot be stopped by the Government’s cold-call ban or the Telephone Preference Service.

The analysis of the calls, which dates back four years, also revealed a recent rise in the number of foreign calls being “spoofed” so they appear to come from UK mobile numbers.

Cold-callers know potential victims are more likely to accept calls from mobiles so they use so-called Voice-over IP technology to send calls over the internet, which let them change the number. According to Ofcom, the number of spoofed calls received by UK landlines is around a billion, around a quarter of the total 3.9 billion nuisance calls are received by UK landlines per year. Ofcom said it was working closely with technical experts and standard-setting bodies to identify ways to prevent these calls.

It comes as cold-callers offering to settle personal injury claims or sell payment protection insurance will from today be banned from calling people who have not chosen to “opt-in” to receive them.

Consumers receiving unwanted calls are being asked to report firms to the Information Commissioners Office, the body responsible for taking action against firms that break the law. However, the move will not protect consumers against calls from foreign or spoofed numbers, experts said.

However, in a bid to protect older and vulnerable people, nearly 7,000 scam call blockers have now been installed by 166 separate local authorities, police forces and charities. The recipients were receiving on average 42 nuisance calls per month.