

Greenwich Face and Voice Recognition Lab

Email failures to members of our volunteer research participant pool

We have been regularly receiving e-mails from volunteers stating that they suddenly stopped receiving e-mails from us a few months/weeks previously and wanted to check if there was anything wrong. Numbers have been increasing recently.

E-mail system providers are increasing security to reduce spam. The e-mails we send end up in junk folders or we receive a rejection e-mail. We only send e-mails to people who clicked on options requesting information packs, or those who provided informed consent to receive regular invites to our research projects.

How can this problem get resolved if you think you have been impacted, or better still, how can it be avoided altogether?

Everyone, particularly new volunteers.

1. **Everyone should add super-recognisers@greenwich.ac.uk to their e-mail system contacts list.** This should resolve most problems. Note - Lab staff may sometimes send FIRST.SURNAME@greenwich.ac.uk or @gre.ac.uk e-mails.
2. **Send an e-mail to super-recognisers@greenwich.ac.uk with "Test" in the subject line** - nothing else is needed. We will simply reply with "Thanks". We do not check these e-mails every day, and we can occasionally be overwhelmed with enquiries that create a backlog for a week or so, so please be prepared to wait for a few days for a reply.
3. **Specify language and type of research project or test you wish to receive.**
 - a. **Research/test type:** We have created a new link so that participants can request invites to specific project types. These are:
 - i. **Face recognition tests and research on face processing only.**
 - ii. **Face and voice recognition tests and research on faces and voices only.**
 - iii. **Research on other criminal justice system topics only.**
 - iv. **Research of all types supported or endorsed by the lab.**
 - b. **Preferred language:** Use the same link to specify preferred language. As about 50% of our research is in English only, we will also ask whether we can send some invites in English. Our face recognition tests are currently translated into 10 languages, our voice recognition tests into two languages (see below for full list of languages). More should be available soon (e.g. Hindi).

https://greenwichuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1EKB9OsEpY1TCHI

Why exactly does this problem happen?

Despite following best practice, providing alternative options, and requesting volunteers to avoid the following, some volunteers will have clicked on 'spam' when they received an e-mail from us. If a proportion of our e-mails exceeded a specific threshold for spam rejections, no more e-mails will be received by addresses supported by that e-mail system provider.

Thresholds have reduced in recent years. We understand that Google and others are updating their thresholds in January 2024, so we expect that even fewer e-mails will be received going forward.

The reason for creating the language and research type specification link is because it is possible some participants have been annoyed when receiving invites to research, they are not interested in – but we do not actually know for sure.

We follow best practice.

We do not want to send spam. We include a URL link at the top and bottom of all e-mails which recipients can click on to stop all future e-mails. Some people directly e-mail asking us to stop the e-mails. All such requests are dealt with in 14 days. (Some e-mails come from e-mail addresses that are not in our records, and we reply requesting correct details).

In 2023, we sent e-mails to about 12,000 volunteers who we did not think had contributed to any research for two years. As required under GDPR-based laws, they were informed we would stop sending any more e-mails unless they took at least one test and entered their Greenwich-Issued Volunteer Anonymous Code to demonstrate interest, or they clicked on a link that confirmed they would like to remain on our mailing list. About 9,000 did not respond and their e-mail addresses were removed from our records. Some have since contacted us requesting they rejoin. This is possible if they provide their Anonymous Code.