

Arrests for offensive Facebook and Twitter posts soar in London

625 arrests were made for alleged section 127 offences in 2010

The number of people being arrested for “online crimes of speech” have increased dramatically in London.

5 While arrests for aggressive, threatening or hateful speech on social media declined between 2010 and 2013, the numbers rose last year.

According to the Register, a total of 2,500 Londoners have been arrested over the past five years for allegedly sending “offensive” messages via social media. In 2015, 857 people were detained, up 37 per cent increase since 2010.

10 The Communications Act 2003 defines illegal communication as “using public electronic communications network in order to cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety”. Breaking the law carries a six-month prison term or fine of up to £5,000.

The figures, obtained from the Metropolitan police via a Freedom of Information request, only apply to the London area.

15 The legislation has been used to arrest Twitter users responsible for racist hate speech. According to Vocativ, among many recently arrested was a Scottish citizen who had posted hate speech about Syrian refugees on his Facebook page.

A recent study found the words ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ were used by UK Twitter users 10,000 times in three weeks.

20 In 2010, Paul Chambers was convicted under the Communications Act after tweeting a joke about blowing up Robin Hood Airport in Nottingham. His conviction was overturned after a two-year legal battle.