

Top Ten Scams of 2024

Cryptocurrency Investment Scam Losses Exploding

No one wants to be the victim of fraud, but in 2024, the most expensive scam by far was cryptocurrency investment schemes. The reported median loss of \$30,000 was \$10,000 higher than in 2023, the highest median loss of any fraud type. Cryptocurrency investment scams typically involve a criminal contacting a victim with an offer of low or no-risk returns on cryptocurrency investing. Such schemes often involve convincing-looking fake websites to make them seem more trustworthy. After the victim invests sufficient funds, the criminal disappears with the victim's money.

Fraudulent Sweepstakes and Fake Prizes Are Again Top Scams

When criminals find a scam that works, they tend to stick with it. That was the case in 2024, when complaints involving fake sweepstakes and bogus gift offers were again the top scam category, making up over a third of all fraud reports (38.27%). Criminals running sweepstakes scams overwhelmingly relied on the telephone to reach potential victims, with 87% of reports indicating that a phone call was how the scam began. Phishing/spoofing scams (18.83% of reports) and Internet merchandise scams (17.04% of reports) rounded out the top three fraud categories for the second consecutive year.

Payment Methods Lacking Protections are Scammers' Favorites

Scammers are increasingly looking to get victims to send them money via methods that lack strong consumer protections. Bank Account Debit (includes personal payment apps) and wire transfers made up 33.1% and 12.92%, respectively, of complaints that involved a loss. The two payment methods saw 23.12% (bank account debit) and 33.47% (wire transfer) increases year-over-year. When consumers are convinced to send scammers money via these methods, it is nearly impossible for the victim to recover funds since such payments are typically not protected under federal law.

TOP TEN OVERALL

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2024	% Change (2023-2024)	Median Loss
1	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	38.27%	33.50%	\$1,000
2	Phishing/Spoofing	18.83%	8.82%	\$1,000
3	Internet: General Merchandise	17.04%	-16.44%	\$458
4	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	6.46%	-28.45%	\$30,000
5	Fake Check Scams	3.83%	-29.14%	\$1,840
6	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	2.91%	-7.72%	\$776
7	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	2.04%	-32.42%	\$11,750
8	Family/Friend Imposter	1.64%	15.62%	\$600
9	Internet: Information/Adult Services	0.72%	9.98%	\$2,000
10	Misc. Other	0.60%	9.98%	\$2,500

*Other complaint categories (e.g., scholarship/grant scams, counterfeit drugs, work-at-home scams) outside the top ten categories account for 7.66% of the remaining complaints.

TOP TEN – CONTACTED VIA INTERNET

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2024	% Change (2023-2024)	Median Loss
1	Internet: General Merchandise	31.74%	-4.06%	\$300
2	Phishing/Spoofing	26.75%	44.08%	\$1,000
3	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	9.68%	-37.88%	\$35,000
4	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	5.19%	-27.73%	\$575
5	Fake Check Scams	4.59%	-29.30%	\$1,450
6	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	3.69%	55.92%	\$555
7	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	3.29%	-25.67%	\$8,588
8	Family/Friend Imposter	2.79%	161.28%	\$550
9	Internet: Information/Adult Services	1.60%	74.18%	\$4,000
10	Internet: Auctions	1.30%	-15.08%	\$655

*Other complaint categories (e.g., work-at-home scams, counterfeit drugs, credit repair, etc.) outside the top ten categories account for 9.38% of the remaining complaints.

TOP TEN - CONTACTED OFFLINE

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2024	% Change (2023-2024)	Median Loss
1	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	60.23%	25.21%	\$1,000
2	Phishing/Spoofing	13.55%	-16.24%	\$1,050
3	Internet: General Merchandise	7.24%	-18.81%	\$1,562
4	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	4.32%	38.79%	\$29,000
5	Fake Check Scams	3.32%	-24.94%	\$3,886
6	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	2.39%	-38.23%	\$2,000
7	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	1.20%	-30.82%	\$18,000
8	Family/Friend Imposter	0.86%	-50.04%	\$865
9	Home Repair	0.60%	-58.82%	\$4,100
10	Misc. Other	0.60%	8.09%	\$1,200

*Other complaint categories (e.g., charitable solicitations, business opportunities, etc.) outside the top ten categories account for 5.69% of the remaining complaints.

MEET THE SCAMS

A look at the most reported frauds:

Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts

Requests for payment to claim fictitious prizes, lottery winnings, or gifts.

Phishing/Spoofing

Emails pretending to be from a well-known source ask consumers to enter or confirm personal information.

Internet: General Merchandise

Goods purchased are either never delivered or misrepresented.

Investment (incl. cryptocurrency)

Consumers are tricked into paying money for bogus cryptocurrency investments.

Fake Check Scams

Consumers are asked to cash fraudulent checks and then send the proceeds to a scammer before the check clears.

Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers

False promises of business or personal loans, even if credit is bad, for a fee upfront.

Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles

Con artist nurtures an online relationship, builds trust, and convinces victims to send money.

Family/Friend Imposters

A scammer calls or emails, claiming that a friend or family member is in distress (in jail, in the hospital, etc.) and urgently needs funds to help.

Internet: Information/Adult Services

Victims are extorted with threats to circulate explicit images or charge for access to fraudulent "psychic" services.

Misc. Other

Fraud reports that do not fit into other categories.

METHOD OF CONTACT

Method	Complaints	Percentage Total - 2024	% Change (2023-2024)
Phone	1119	44.64%	21.18%
World Wide Web	887	35.38%	-13.71%
Email	178	7.10%	-14.86%
In Person	138	5.50%	-19.09%
Postal Mail	128	5.11%	17.30%
Text Message	37	1.48%	-14.15%
Other (Text,TV/Radio, Print, Fax, Etc.)	20	0.80%	-16.11%

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Method	Complaints	Percentage Total - 2024	Percentage Total - 2023	% Change (2023-2024)
Bank Account Debit	328	33.10%	26.88%	23.12%
Credit Card	324	32.69%	38.21%	-14.44%
Wire Transfer	128	12.92%	9.68%	33.47%
Other (Cash, Cashier's Check, Money Order, Cash Advance, Trade, Telephone Bill)	94	9.49%	12.57%	-24.55%
Bank Debit Card	81	8.17%	8.93%	-8.50%
Check	36	3.63%	3.72%	-2.40%

CONSUMER AGE

Age Range	Percentage Total - 2024	Percentage Total - 2023	% Change (2023-2024)
Under 18	0.51%	0.16%	218.30%
18-25	4.22%	5.94%	-29.03%
26-35	12.27%	12.53%	-2.06%
36-45	15.14%	16.92%	-10.48%
46-55	16.61%	15.63%	6.28%
56-65	21.02%	17.29%	21.58%
Above 65	30.22%	31.53%	-4.15%

Methodology

The National Consumers League Top Ten Scams report analyzes 2,526 complaints submitted by consumers to NCL's Fraud.org campaign in 2024. This data is self-reported and should not be considered a nationally representative sample of fraud victims. NCL shares complaint data with a network of law enforcement and consumer protection agency partners who combine it with other data sets to identify trends in fraud and build cases.



Fraud.org is a program of the National Consumers League.
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The *Top Ten Scams* report is produced by Fraud.org, a project of the National Consumers League (NCL). Founded in 1899, NCL is America's oldest non-profit consumer advocacy organization. If you would like to support our work, please consider making a donation at www.fraud.org/donate.