

Top Ten Scams of 2023

Cryptocurrency Investment Scams Growing Alarmingly

An alarming growth in complaints involving cryptocurrency-linked schemes in 2023 should make consumers wary of any solicitations involving cryptocurrencies. The percentage of complaints to Fraud.org regarding crypto-linked scams more than doubled year-over-year and made up nearly 1-in-10 (9.03%) of complaints received. The median loss of \$20,000 from such scams was also much larger than other fraud types. Consumers typically first learned of these scams via the web (41% of complaints) or text message (37%).

Fake Prizes, Bogus Merchandise Remain Top Scams

The top three scam categories reported to Fraud.org in 2023 remained unchanged from 2022 with fake prize/sweepstake/gift scams topping the list, followed by internet merchandise scams, and phishing/spoofing scams. Together, the three scam categories made up more than 60% of all complaints in 2023.

Offline Fraud Shows Jumps in Advance Fee and Charity Scams

Complaints where consumers reported encountering scammers offline saw some notable increases in advance fee fraud, a scam where consumers are induced to send a payment to receive a promised payout (such as for a loan) which never materializes. The percentage of complaints involving such frauds jumped by 46.47% versus 2022. Also worryingly, complaints involving offline solicitations for fake charities more than tripled, as a percentage of complaints, with many relating to fake rescue operations.

Scammers Diversifying Payment Techniques

Credit cards and bank account debits remained the two most reported methods of payment, respectively. However, scammers are bringing back old ways to get consumers' money, with wire transfer complaints increasing 69% and "old-fashioned" cash-based and cashier's check-based scams showing a 78.8% jump compared to 2022.

When in Doubt, Report It!

This year's *Top Ten Scams* report was compiled from more than 2,700 complaints submitted by consumers. No matter what scam a consumer encounters, we always recommend reporting it. Here at Fraud.org, we share complaints with a network of more than 200 law enforcement and consumer protection agency partners. Those partners use complaint data to spot trends, identify gaps in policy, and build cases against scammers. If in doubt, report it!

TOP TEN OVERALL

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2023	% Change (2022-2023)	Median Loss
1	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	28.66%	-5.31%	\$1,008
2	Internet: Gen Merchandise	20.39%	-4.73%	\$497
3	Phishing/Spoofing	17.31%	-10.83%	\$1,615
4	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	9.03%	152.25%	\$20,000
5	Fake Check Scams	5.41%	-7.34%	\$1,718
6	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	3.16%	11.52%	\$1,225
7	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	3.01%	30.33%	\$8,000
8	Charitable Solicitations	1.45%	195.57%	\$350
9	Family/Friend Imposter	1.42%	-31.96%	\$1,040
10	Home Repair	1.05%	17.51%	\$2,199

TOP TEN – CONTACTED VIA INTERNET

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2023	% Change (2022-2023)	Median Loss
1	Internet: Gen Merchandise	36.43%	-9.19%	\$400.00
2	Phishing/Spoofing	22.00%	-15.60%	\$1,000.00
3	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	6.04%	158.05%	\$18,106.00
4	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	5.66%	26.92%	\$499.00
5	Fake Check Scams	6.61%	-1.79%	\$1,900.00
6	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	3.62%	22.28%	\$8,000.00
7	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	3.05%	-22.39%	\$940.00
8	Internet: Auctions	0.95%	60.22%	\$230.00
9	Family/Friend Imposter	1.65%	-35.29%	\$1,000.00
10	Scholarships/Grants	1.27%	-15.88%	\$1,000.00

TOP TEN – CONTACTED OFFLINE

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2023	% Change (2022-2023)	Median Loss
1	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	48.10%	-5.16%	\$1,900.00
2	Phishing/Spoofing	16.17%	-6.20%	\$1,952.00
3	Internet: Gen Merchandise	8.91%	0.35%	\$1,600.00
4	Fake Check Scams	4.42%	-14.66%	\$1,045.00
5	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	3.87%	46.37%	\$1,950.00
6	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	3.11%	102.79%	\$25,000.00
7	Charitable Solicitations	2.21%	364.65%	\$850.00
8	Family/Friend Imposter	1.73%	-28.98%	\$1,470.00
9	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	1.73%	42.05%	\$6,590.00
10	Home Repair	1.45%	14.35%	\$2,199.00

MEET THE SCAMS

A look at the most reported frauds:

Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers

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

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

Fake Check Scams

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

Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles

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

Home Repair

Fake or ineffective home warranties, home protection devices or services, and contractor fraud

Investment (incl. cryptocurrency)

Consumers are tricked into paying money for bogus crypto currency investments

Internet: General Merchandise Sales (not auctions)

Goods purchased are either never delivered or misrepresented

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

Scholarships/Grants

Offers of fictitious “guaranteed” scholarship or grant funds in exchange for up-front payment or personal information

METHOD OF CONTACT

Method	Complaints	Percentage Total - 2023	% Change (2022-2023)
World Wide Web	1121	41.00%	12.17%
Phone	1007	36.83%	-5.72%
Email	228	8.34%	-19.26%
In Person	186	6.80%	13.37%
Postal Mail	119	4.35%	-12.29%
Text Message	47	1.72%	-8.33%
Other (Text, TV/Radio, Print, Fax, Etc.)	26	0.95%	-21.52%

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Method	Complaints	Percentage Total - 2023	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2022-2023)
Credit Card	462	38.21%	40.94%	-6.66%
Bank Account Debit	325	26.88%	27.17%	-1.08%
Other (Cash, Cashier's Check, Money Order, Cash Advance, Trade, Telephone Bill)	152	12.57%	7.03%	78.86%
Wire Transfer	117	9.68%	5.72%	69.05%
Bank Debit Card	108	8.93%	13.55%	-34.08%
Check	45	3.72%	5.58%	-33.29%

CONSUMER AGE

Age Range	Percentage Total - 2023	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2022-2023)
Under 18	0.16%	0.08%	103.32%
18-25	5.94%	5.25%	13.12%
26-35	12.53%	13.35%	-6.16%
36-45	16.92%	16.75%	1.02%
46-55	15.63%	15.48%	0.97%
56-65	17.29%	16.86%	2.53%
Above 65	31.53%	32.23%	-2.16%

Methodology

The National Consumers League *Top Ten Scams* report analyzes 2,756 complaints submitted by consumers to NCL's Fraud.org campaign in 2023. 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.