

### Top trends of 2022

#### Investment fraud, including cryptocurrency scams, sees astonishing losses

In 2022, the median loss for frauds reported in the investment category was \$18,700. This is over 10 times greater than the 2021 median loss reported in this category (\$1,750). Notably, the investment category includes cryptocurrency scams. These types of fraud center around stealing money under the guise of investing the funds into cryptocurrency on behalf of the victim. Although cryptocurrency values largely crashed in the summer of 2022, the earlier run-up in value of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies may have been a selling point for fraudsters.

#### Bogus prizes and sweepstakes remain at #1 despite trending down

Fraudulent prizes and sweepstakes remained the most reported type of scam. Despite making up a smaller share of overall reports compared to complaints in 2021, this category is still seven points higher than its 23% prevalence in 2020. Making up 30% of all reports received by Fraud.org in 2022, this type of scam still has a broad reach, particularly when victims were contacted over the phone. Among phone-based scams, reports of bogus prizes and sweepstakes represented 50% of complaints.

#### Advance fee loans were the fastest growing category of reports

Reports involving false promises of business or personal loans represented the fastest growing category of complaints in 2022. With a year-over-year increase of 23%, this trend may reflect the economic difficulties many consumers are facing nationwide. Scammers are likely preying on record inflation combined with lingering effects from the pandemic, targeting individuals seeking cash quickly to make ends meet.

#### Share of complaints involving debit charges increased by 142% as Zelle fraud was rampant in 2022

In 2021, 11% of consumers who reported losing money to a scam listed bank account debit as the method of transfer. In 2022, that number jumped to 27.17%, making it fraudsters' second most popular form of receiving money (with credit card at number one and debit card at number three). Bank account debits include charges sent via peer-to-peer payment apps, such as Zelle, Venmo, and Cash App. This trend coincides with the recent increase of fraud on these apps, with scammers taking advantage of the nearly instant transfer of money that the payment apps provide.

#### Romance scams on the decline

With 31% fewer reports compared to last year, romance scams may be losing prevalence. The popularity of documentaries like "The Tinder Swindler" and "Inventing Anna," which focused on romance scams, likely raised consumers' awareness of and resistance to this fraud in 2022.

### TOP TEN OVERALL

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2021-2022)	Median Loss
1	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	30.27%	-14.07%	\$1,000.00
2	Internet: General Merchandise	21.40%	9.31%	\$400.00
3	Phishing/Spoofing	19.41%	11.01%	\$900.00
4	Fake Check Scams	5.83%	4.42%	\$2,000.00
5	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	3.58%	17.43%	\$18,700.00
6	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	2.83%	22.81%	\$2,425.00
7	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	2.31%	-31.08%	\$2,480.00
8	Family/ Friend Imposter	2.08%	10.28%	\$1,000.00
9	Computers: Equipment/Software	1.21%	15.79%	\$795.00
10	Scholarships/Grants	0.92%	-9.77%	\$800.00

## TOP TEN - CONTACTED VIA INTERNET

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2021-2022)	Median Loss
1	Internet: General Merchandise	36.43%	41.88%	\$289.00
2	Phishing/Spoofing	22.00%	11.20%	\$707.50
3	Fake Check Scams	6.61%	10.06%	\$2,495.50
4	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	6.04%	1.43%	\$17,375.00
5	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	5.66%	5.11%	\$1,095.00
6	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	3.62%	9.01%	\$2,525.00
7	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	3.05%	4.25%	\$2,247.50
8	Computers: Equipment/Software	1.65%	2.03%	\$499.00
9	Family/ Friend Imposter	1.65%	1.17%	\$250.00
10	Internet: Info/Adult Svcs	1.40%	1.36%	\$875.00

## TOP TEN - CONTACTED OFFLINE

Rank	Scam Type	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2021-2022)	Median Loss
1	Prizes/Sweepstakes/Free Gifts	50.71%	-12.37%	\$1,000.00
2	Phishing/Spoofing	17.24%	7.23%	\$1,417.00
3	Internet: General Merchandise	8.88%	59.92%	\$1,400.00
4	Fake Check Scams	5.18%	-7.42%	\$1,698.00
5	Advance Fee Loans, Credit Arrangers	2.64%	49.58%	\$2,425.00
6	Family/ Friend Imposter	2.43%	48.20%	\$1,400.00
7	Investments: Other (incl. cryptocurrency)	1.53%	25.65%	\$39,100.00
8	Home Repair	1.27%	20.62%	\$5,875.00
9	Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles	1.22%	-6.78%	\$2,080.00
10	Computers: Equipment/Software	0.85%	11.69%	\$3,750.00

## 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

### Internet: General Merchandise Sales (not auctions)

Goods purchased are either never delivered or misrepresented

### Phishing/Spoofing

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

### Fake Check Scams

Consumers paid with phony checks for work or for items they're trying to sell, instructed to wire money back to buyer

### Friendship & Sweetheart Swindles

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

### Investment

Investments opportunities in: day trading; gold and gems; art; rare coins; other investment products; reports about companies that offer advice or seminars on investments; etc.

### 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

### Computers: Equipment and Software

Scammers claim to offer "technical support" for computer problems and charge a fee to fix a nonexistent problem. This category includes tech support scams

### Scholarships/Grants

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

## METHOD OF CONTACT

Method	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2021-2022)
PHONE	39.07%	-13.86%
WORLD WIDE WEB	36.56%	1.68%
EMAIL	10.33%	13.92%
IN PERSON	6.00%	30.00%
POSTAL MAIL	4.96%	9.24%
TEXT MESSAGE	1.88%	#N/A
OTHER (TEXT, TV/RADIO, PRINT, FAX, ETC.)	1.21%	-63.70%

## CONSUMER AGE

Age Range	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2021-2022)
UNDER 18	0.08%	-58.65%
18-25	5.25%	-27.00%
26-35	13.35%	-13.19%
36-45	16.75%	6.69%
46-55	15.48%	10.52%
56-65	16.86%	0.13%
ABOVE 65	32.23%	5.01%

## METHOD OF PAYMENT

Method	Percentage Total - 2022	% Change (2021-2022)
CREDIT CARD	40.94%	-8.51%
BANK ACCOUNT DEBIT	27.17%	142.62%
BANK DEBIT CARD	13.55%	0.38%
OTHER (CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, MONEY ORDER, CASH ADVANCE, TRADE, TELEPHONE BILL)	7.03%	-52.02%
WIRE TRANSFER	5.72%	-51.07%
CHECK	5.58%	32.85%

### Methodology

The National Consumers League Top Ten Scams report analyzes 3,503 complaints submitted by consumers to NCL's Fraud.org campaign in 2022. 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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