



Fraud and Scams: How to look out for and avoid them

MARC BENNETT,
SEDGWICK COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The Cost of Scams

In 2022, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reported that fraud cost consumers \$9 billion.

2.5 million reports of fraud.

In 2023, the FTC estimated fraud cost consumers \$10 billion.

2.6 million reports of fraud.

In 2024, the FTC estimated fraud cost consumers 12.5 billion.

2.6 million reports of fraud.





FEDERAL TRADE
COMMISSION

A Scammy Snapshot of 2024

(based on reports to
Consumer Sentinel)

ftc.gov/data #FTCTopFrauds
ReportFraud.ftc.gov



2.6 million
fraud reports



\$12.5 billion
reported lost

More than 1 in 3 people
who reported a scam also
reported losing money.



Top Frauds



1
Imposters



2
Online
shopping
and negative
reviews



3
Business
and job
opportunities



4
Investments



5
Internet
services

Job scams and employment
agency losses soared.

Total losses:



2020
\$90 million



2024
\$501 million



38,000
reports
2020

105,000
reports



Losses to investment
scams **kept climbing**.

\$3.8
billion

2022

\$4.6
billion

2023

\$5.7
billion

2024

★ ★ ★ Reports by Military Consumers ★ ★ ★



99,000
fraud reports



\$584 million
reported lost



Imposters: Highest # of reports: 45,000
Total losses: \$200 million

Younger people
reported **losing money**
to fraud more often
than older people.

44%

20–29
year-olds

24%

70–79
year-olds

Big losses follow
scams that start
with a call or on
social media.

Phone calls:

Highest **per person**
reported losses



\$1,500
median loss

Social media:

Highest **overall**
reported losses



\$1.9 billion
total lost

Email:

Highest overall
number of reports



372,000
reports

Top Types of Fraud

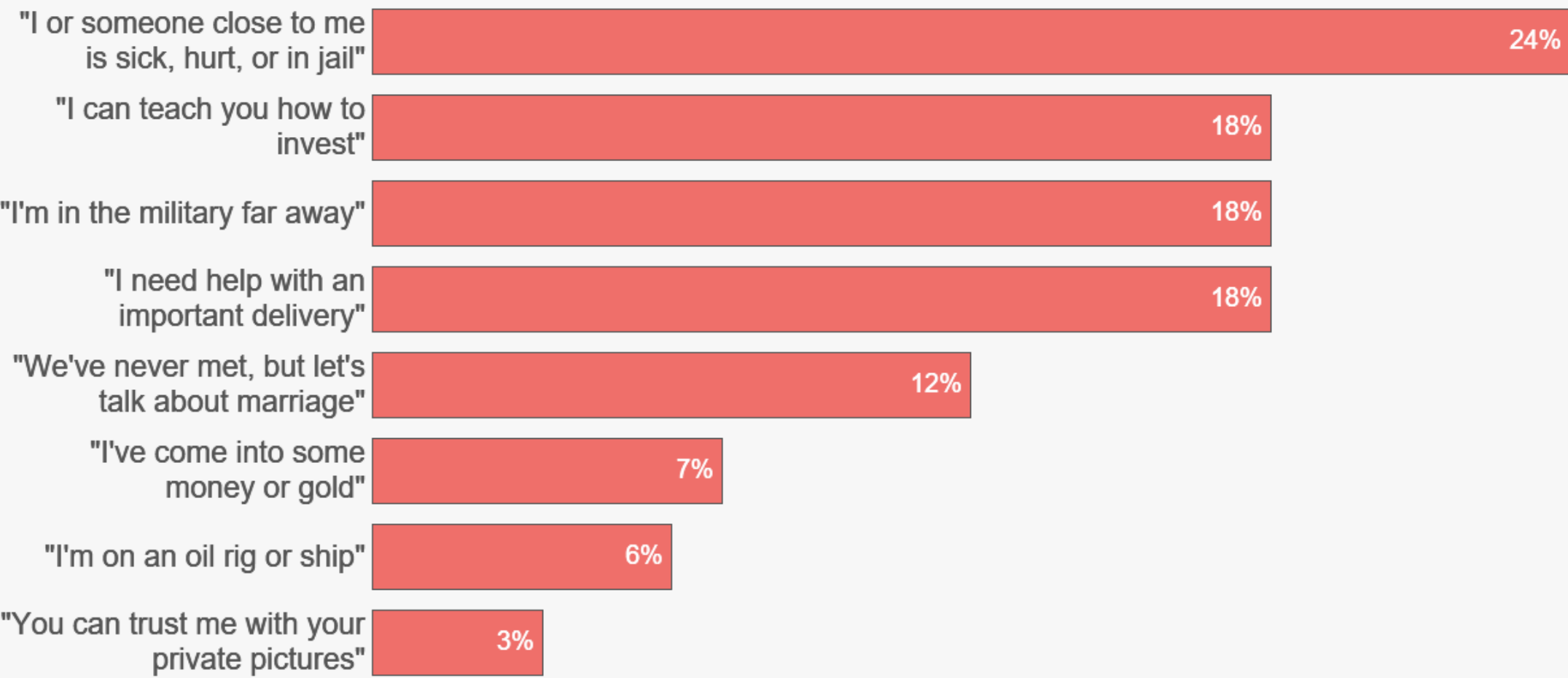
1. Imposters (Eg. Romance Scam)
2. Online Shopping
3. Prizes, Sweepstakes, Lottery
4. Investments
5. Business and Job Opportunities

--Source: FTC “A Scammy Snapshot of 2023”



- Criminals pose as interested romantic partners on social media or dating websites to capitalize on their elderly victims' desire to find companions.

Romance Scammers: Their Favorite Lies by the Numbers



Figures are based on 8,070 2022 romance scam reports that indicated a dollar loss and included a narrative of at least 2,000 characters in length. Lies were identified using keyword analysis of the narratives.



Government Scams

- Criminals pose as government employees.
- Phone call claiming there is a warrant for your arrest
 - Claim you did not pay your taxes
 - Claim a loved one is in jail and needs bond money

• **Hint: The government does not accept gift cards.**

Government Scam--Fake Investigation by IRS/FTC (Source: NYT 8-14-24)

The New York Times

SWINDLED SAVINGS

How One Man Lost \$740,000 to Scammers Targeting His Retirement Savings

Criminals on the internet are increasingly going after Americans over the age of 60 because they are viewed as having the largest piles of savings.

Government Scam--Fake Investigation by IRS/FTC (Source: NYT 8-14-24)



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

EFT Transfer Acknowledgment

Order no: [REDACTED]
Date: October 17, 2023
Name of Customer: Barry P. Heltin
Phone: 1-703-[REDACTED]
Address: [REDACTED] Arlington, VA 22206, USA.
Name of the Bank : [REDACTED]

We have received several notifications from [REDACTED] that your bank account has been hacked, and also that the hacking attempts will keep on repeating themselves as unfortunately your IP address has got compromised. So, at this point in time, in order for us to be able to safeguard your funds, we need to replace your existing bank account with a new bank account.

In this entire process you will be helped by Hayden Smith, who works as a Fraud Investigation Officer at the Head office of [REDACTED] United States. He will ensure that your money is made safe, and well encrypted. Once your money is adequately secured, we will get you a fresh and new account with [REDACTED]

Since the matter is Sub-Judice, no party is allowed to make the information public.

As of **October 18, 2023** you are going to safeguard **USD \$80,000/-** which will be kept in the custody of [REDACTED] and will transfer to new account and remains in that account for next up-to 7-10 working Days and then transferred back to your new [REDACTED] Account, because currently your Information is not secure anywhere online.

We are going to keep the custody of your money until your account, and your computer is completely out of danger.

Now, **FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION** is going to take the full and complete responsibility of your funds provided you agree to follow the instructions given by the aforementioned concerned person. Also, once your new bank account is opened we will mail you your new debit/credit card, and other banking details at your registered Address with us.

Regards,
Jeff Dawson
Federal Officer
Internal Revenue Service

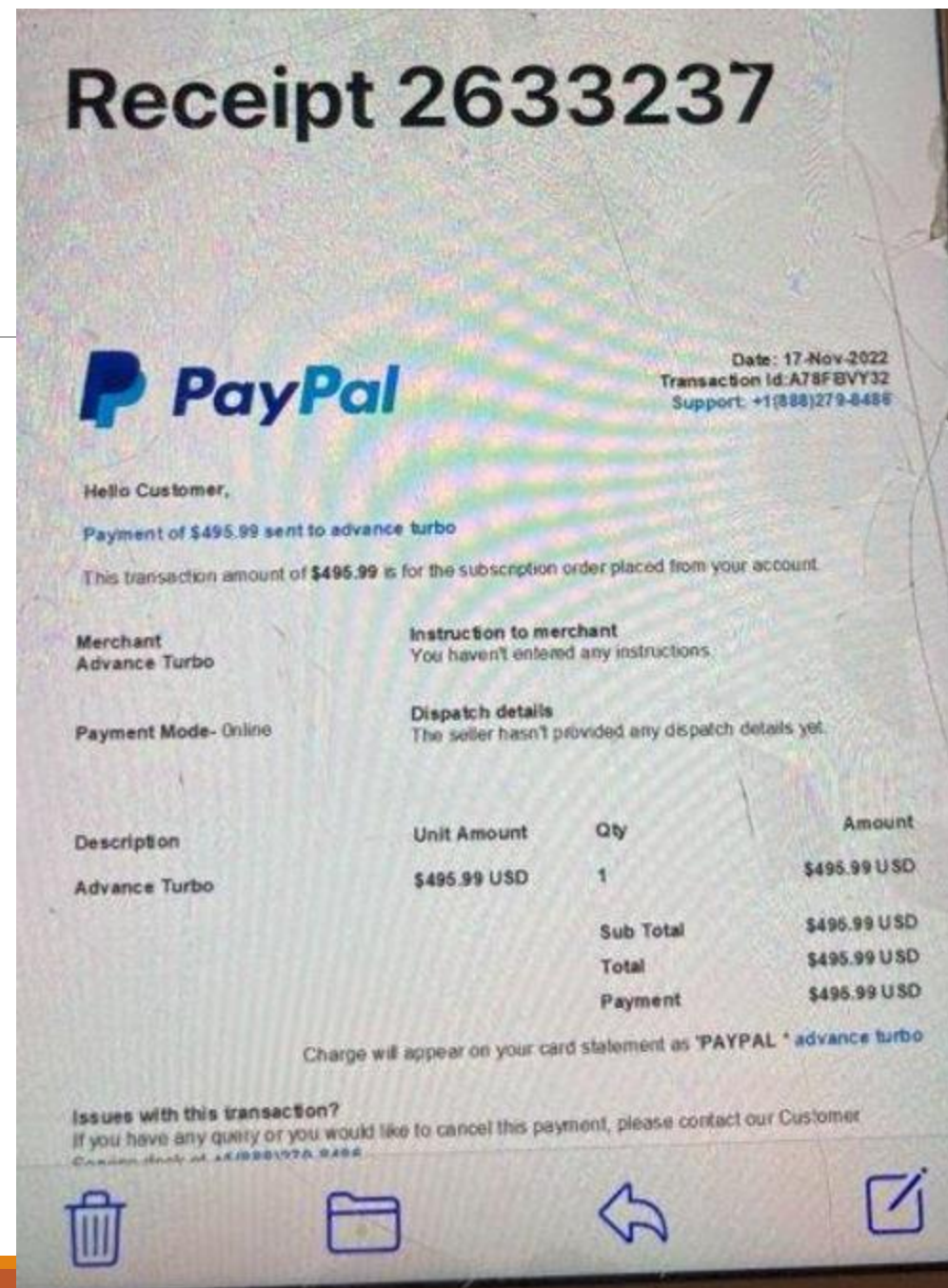
Grandparent Scam

- Criminals pose call pretending to be a family member in trouble or law enforcement.
- Goal is to get you to pay a bond or bill. Pressure to make decision quickly without thinking.
- **Hang up and call your family member directly.**



Email SCAMS

- **Order Confirmation Scams:** These are unexpected texts/emails that often refer to an unauthorized purchase and ask you to act urgently to confirm or cancel the purchase. These scammers tell you they can provide a refund but you have to sit at your computer, install TeamView or AnyDesk so they have access to your computer and can “help” you with the refund process. **Ex. Pay pal or Amazon scam**



Investment Scams

\$4.6 Billion in losses in 2023

The New York Times

A Mexican Drug Cartel's New Target? Seniors and Their Timeshares

One of Mexico's most violent criminal groups, Jalisco New Generation, runs call centers that offer to buy retirees' vacation properties. Then, it empties its victims' bank accounts.

Deed Fraud



Deed Fraud—How It Works

Deed fraud is a form of identity theft. Thieves forge true owner's name on a deed “selling” the property to themselves or a third party. They then register the deed at the Register of Deeds.

Vacation or vacant homes are commonly targeted.

Quitclaim deeds are often used.

Thieves can then do what they want with the property, including selling it, renting it out, borrowing against it or refinancing to cash out equity.

Deed Fraud—How to Protect Property

Pay attention to bills to make sure they are still arriving: Thieves can change the address on bills like mortgage, tax and water bills to conceal their crime.

Monitor credit reports for signs of identity theft.

Monitor status of property deeds, or better yet, sign up for notifications from register of deeds.

Source: Sedgwick County Register of Deeds

<http://sedgwickcounty.org/register-of-deeds/propertyfraudalert.com/kssedgwick>



Sedgwick County News

www.sedgwickcounty.org

For Immediate Release:

Jan. 28, 2025

Contact

Stephanie Bergmann Birmingham | (316) 660-9370 | communications@sedgwick.gov

Register of Deeds launches *Property Fraud Alert* Feb. 3, 2025

(Sedgwick County, Kan.) – As of Monday, Feb. 3, the Sedgwick County Register of Deeds will begin using an upgraded online system to warn property owners of possible fraud. The free service, *Property Fraud Alert*, will notify subscribers each time a document, like a real estate deed, mortgage, lien or easement, is recorded with their name on it. While this does not prevent fraud from happening, it provides an early warning system for property owners to take action as quickly as possible. All too often, victims of mortgage fraud or identity theft are unaware their home or identity has been stolen.

Since *Property Fraud Alert* is replacing the current notification service, citizens will need to subscribe and customize how they want to receive their alerts - by email, text or a phone call. Visit [Property Fraud Alert](#) to sign up. For more information on other services offered by the Register of Deeds, visit [Register of Deeds | Sedgwick County, Kansas](#).

-end-

Source: Sedgwick County Register of Deeds

<http://sedgwickcounty.org/register-of-deeds/propertyfraudalert.com/kssedgwick>

Sedgwick County, Kansas PROPERTY FRAUD ALERT

Tonya Buckingham
Sedgwick County Register of Deeds
Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. CST.
100 N Broadway Suite 105
Wichita, KS 67202
(316) 660-9400

If you require assistance to sign up please call us at 800-728-3858.

Property Fraud Alert is an online subscription service offered to the public that allows them to have their name monitored within the Recorder's office in order to track possible fraudulent recordings that affects their property. The threat of mortgage fraud and identity theft crimes continue to rise, and all too often victims of these types of fraudulent activities are unaware their homes or identity have been stolen. While Property Fraud Alert does not prevent fraud from happening, it provides an early warning system for property owners to take appropriate actions should they determine possible fraudulent activity has taken place.

It's simple! Just enter your personal and/or business name and you will be notified when a document is recorded with your name match.

[Continue](#)

[Learn more about the Property Fraud Alert service](#)

English

Sedgwick County, Kansas PROPERTY FRAUD ALERT

Tonya Buckingham
Sedgwick County Register of Deeds
Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. CST.
100 N Broadway Suite 105
Wichita, KS 67202
(316) 660-9400

If you require assistance to sign up please call us at 800-728-3858.

What is your preferred language for notifications?
☒ English ☐ Spanish

What type of name would you like to monitor?
☒ Personal ☐ Business / Trust

First Name

Confirm First Name

Last Name

Confirm Last Name

English

RED FLAGS



Unsolicited text messages/emails/social media

- **Never** click on links in emails, text messages, or social media
- **Never** call a phone number sent to you via text or email

Unknown numbers

- **Never** answer unknown phone numbers
- Scammers can “Spoof” a number on Caller ID to pretend to be somewhere they are not.

RED FLAGS



Personal Information Requests:

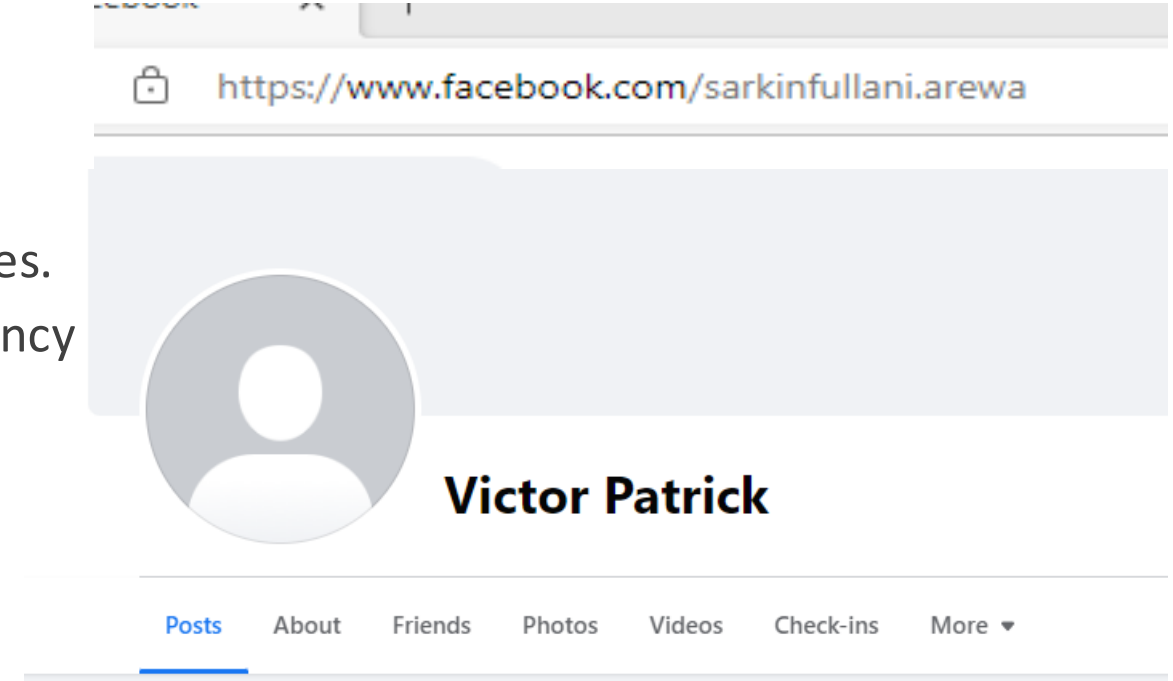
- **Never** give out personal information such as a bank account number
- **Never** give out your credit card number over the phone

Strange Payment Requests:

- **Never** pay for anything with **gift cards, cash, or cryptocurrency**
- **The government does not take Walmart Gift Cards or Bitcoin.**
- **If they tell you to keep it secret, its likely a scam.**
- **Never** send money to someone you have never met

RED FLAGS

- Indications that someone may not be who they say they are:
 - Their name and the name embedded in their email address/social media does not match
 - Spelling and grammar errors
 - Online profile suddenly disappears.
 - They pledge their love too quickly
 - They ask you to send or receive money/packages.
 - They need money right away due to an emergency
 - Reverse Image Search



PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SCAMS

- **1. SLOW DOWN -- Resist Pressure to Act Quickly**
 - Scammers want you to act without thinking so that you make a mistake
 - If it sounds too good to be true, IT IS.
- Never click on links or call numbers in a text messages, emails, or social media

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SCAMS

- **2. TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST – Don't feel ashamed or embarrassed.**
 - Even the most sophisticated consumer or investor can be the victim of a scam. Eg: Heartland Tri-State Bank, Elkhart, KS

Eg. Heartland Tri-State Bank, Elkhart, KS

AMERICAN BANKER.

COMMUNITY BANKING

Small Kansas bank failed because its CEO fell for a crypto scam: Report

By [Allissa Kline](#) September 28, 2023, 3:54 p.m. EDT 2 Min Read

kake^{abc} **com**

NEWS

WEATHER

SPORTS

Former CEO of failed Kansas bank charged with embezzling millions

Thursday, February 8th 2024, 3:00 PM CST

written by KAKE News

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SCAMS

- **3. ALWAYS REPORT SCAMS**
- Local law enforcement
 - Email Consumer@Sedgwick.gov
 - Wichita Police Department 316-268-4221
- IC3.gov
- Reportfraud.ftc.gov

