



QUARTERLY SCAM UPDATE

Issue 13

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

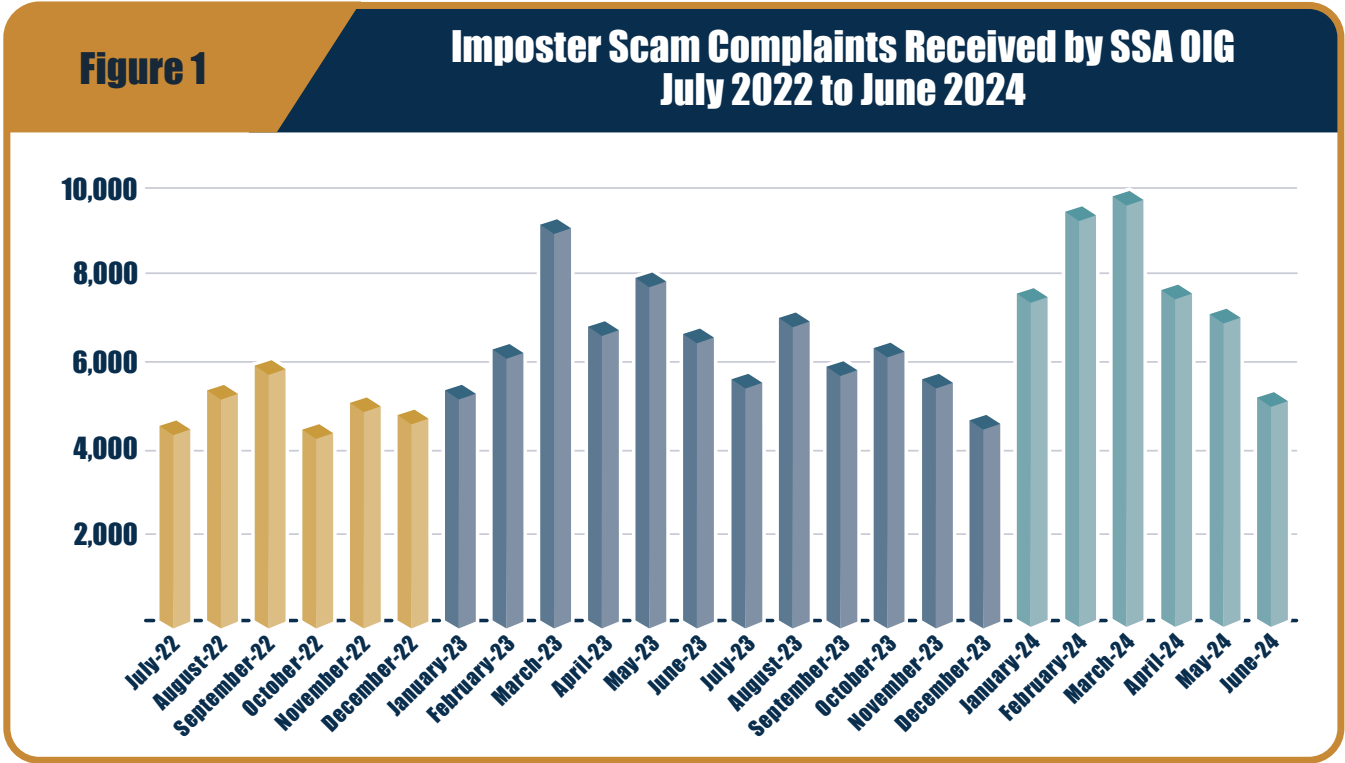
April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024

Social Security-Related Scams

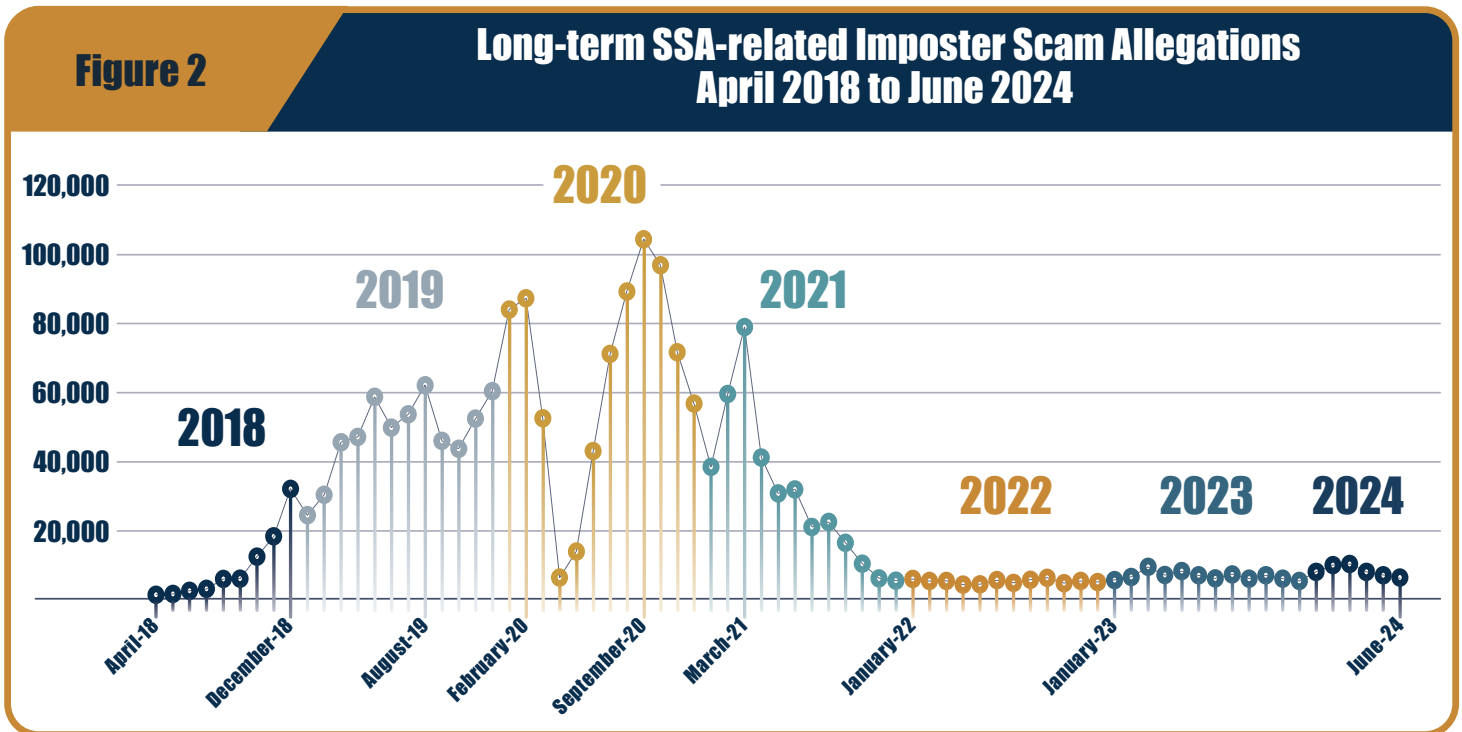
The Social Security Administration (SSA) and SSA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) continue to receive reports of scammers impersonating government employees or alleging a Social Security-related problem to steal money or personal information from victims.

Since October 2019, SSA OIG has shared information on its efforts to combat Social Security-related scams with the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Social Security; U.S. Senate Committee on Finance; and U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. SSA OIG began publicly releasing the Quarterly Scam Update in the third quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 to provide information about these scams and its efforts to combat them.

This report shares information about Social Security-related and government imposter scam allegation trends in the third quarter (Q3) of FY 2024 (April 1 through June 30, 2024). Examples of SSA and SSA OIG's recent efforts to disrupt and raise awareness of scams are also included.



While imposter scam complaints have fluctuated during FYs 2022, 2023, and 2024 (see Figure 1 above), scams reported to SSA OIG are still down significantly from the scam’s peak in FYs 2019 through 2021 (see Figure 2 below). Annually, Social Security-related scam reports have decreased significantly since FY 2021, and according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), imposter scam complaints across the government have declined since 2021. However, Social Security-related scams [remain](#) the top government imposter type reported to the FTC.¹ Therefore, while the decline is promising, SSA OIG and SSA continue to fight these scams.









1. This information is based on data reported to the FTC as of July 24, 2024.

SSA OIG receives the majority of Social Security-related scam allegations from its dedicated online scam reporting form and its hotline. While the form states it is for those who “believe [they] have been a victim of a Social Security Administration Scam,” the form also allows individuals to report whether the scam involved the impersonation of officials from federal, state, or local government agencies other than SSA.

Figure 3

Q2 and Q3 FY 2024 Complaint Trends – Percentage of Total Imposter Allegations from the Scam Reporting Form

Complaint Characteristics	Q2 1/1/24–3/31/24	Q3 4/1/24–6/30/24
 The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security number	44.2%	41.8%
 The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security benefits	16.9%	19.3%
 The imposter used documents or images (such as a federal logo) when communicating with you	32.7%	31.0%
 The scam involved the impersonation of officials from federal, state, or local government agencies other than the Social Security Administration	37.0%	33.5%
 The imposter mentioned a coronavirus or COVID-19 related issue, or referred to a coronavirus or COVID-19 stimulus check, stimulus payment, or economic impact payment	2.0%	1.5%
 None of the Above	26.8%	28.5%

Note: The percentages were calculated based on the total number of allegations each quarter. The percentages do not add to 100 percent because individual allegations may include more than one complaint characteristic.

In [Q2 FY 2024](#), slightly more individuals 50 years of age or older reported financial losses than those under 50 years of age. Figure 4 (below) shows that in Q3 FY 2024, this trend continued. In Q3 FY 2024, 553 individuals under 50 years of age reported losses, compared with 617 individuals 50 years of age and older.

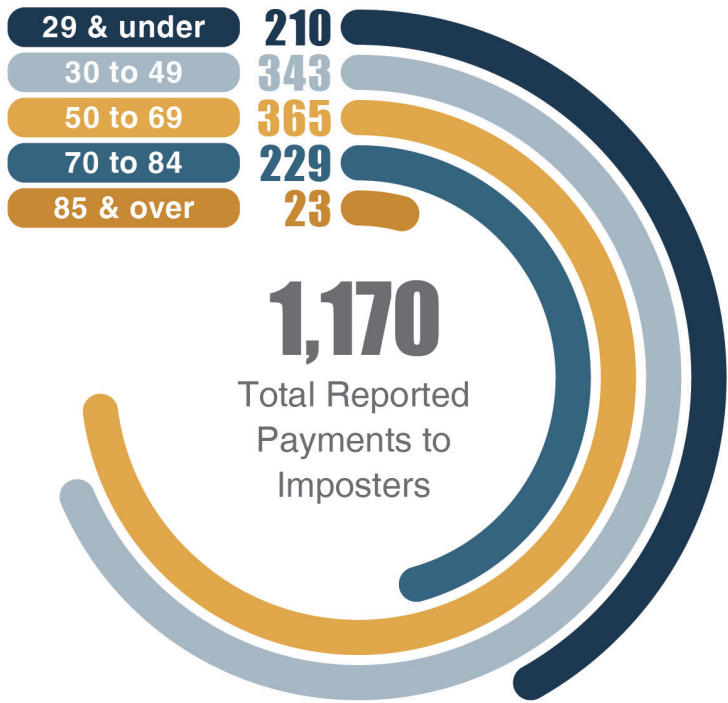


Figure 4

Number of Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

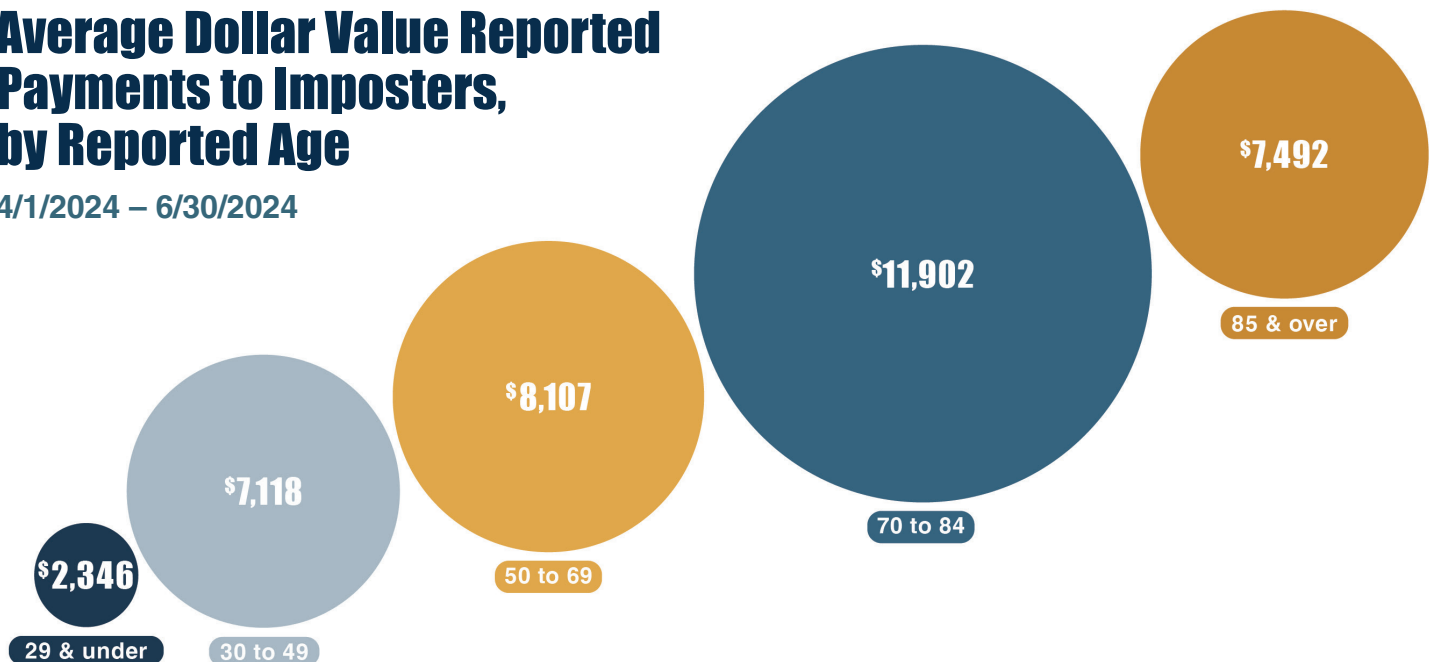
4/1/2024 – 6/30/2024

In [Q2 FY 2024](#), individuals 50 years of age and over reported higher average losses than those under 50 years of age. Additionally, during Q2 FY 2024, the highest average losses were reported by individuals 70 to 84 years of age. Figure 5 (below) shows that in Q3 FY 2024, these trends continued.

Figure 5

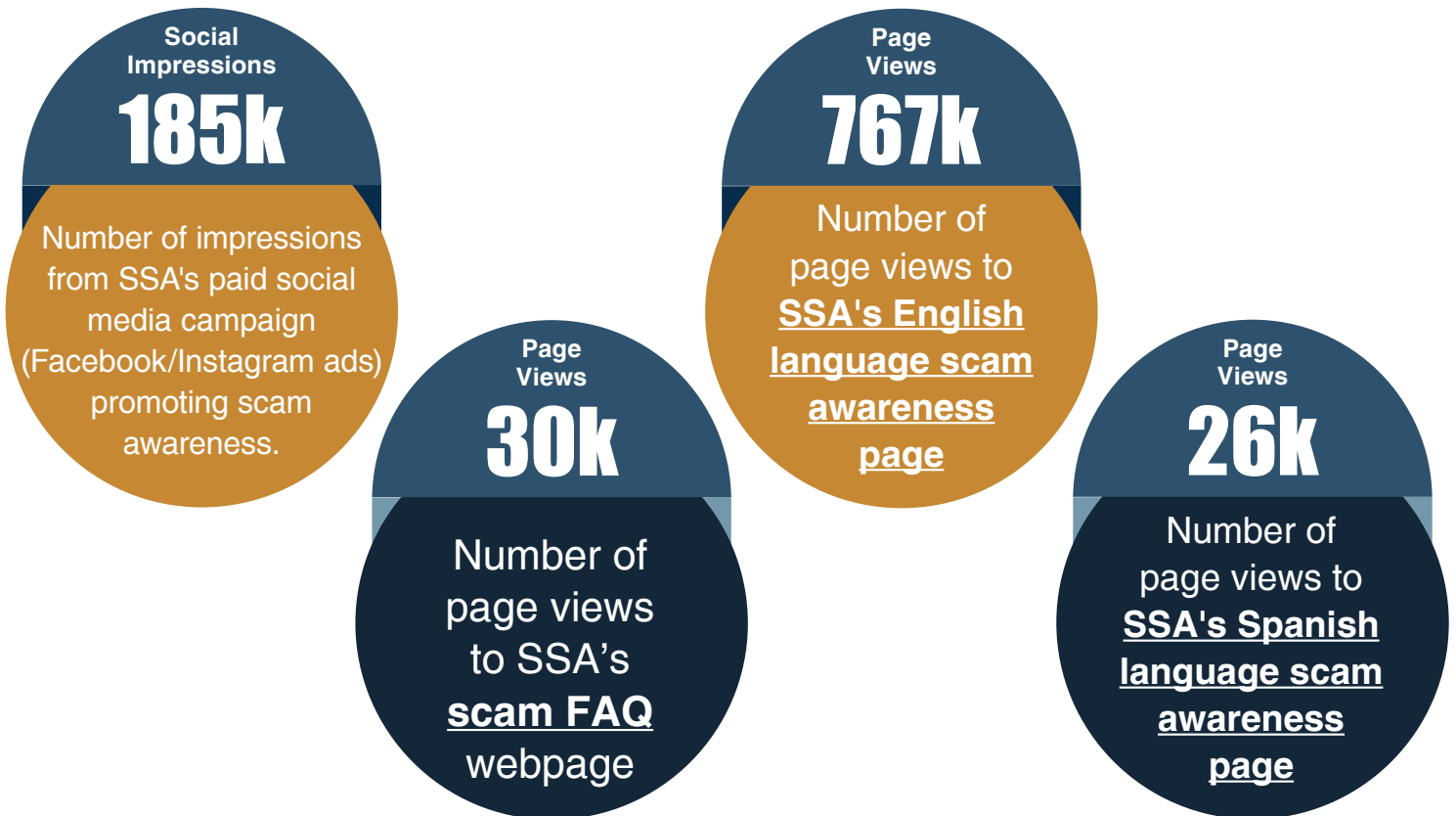
Average Dollar Value Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

4/1/2024 – 6/30/2024



Q3 FY 2024 Website Page Views and Social Media Impressions

Since the launch of the redesigned SSA and SSA OIG joint scam page on May 19, 2022, there have been **5.1 million page views**. Website page views, clicks, and social media impressions for Q3 FY 2024 are shown below.



In Q3 FY 2024, SSA mailed **33.9 million** letters to the public with a scam message printed on the back of envelopes (right). The Agency has mailed more than **1.1 billion** of these letters to date.

⚠ SCAM ALERT ⚠

Scammers are pretending to be government employees. They may threaten you and may demand immediate payment to avoid arrest or other legal action. Do not be fooled!

If you receive a suspicious call:

1. HANG UP!
2. DO NOT GIVE THEM MONEY OR PERSONAL INFORMATION!
3. REPORT THE SCAM AT oig.ssa.gov




SSA's October 2021 *Scam Awareness Public Service Announcement* [video](#) (left) generated 4.3 million impressions in Q3 FY 2024.



SSA's November 2023 [video](#) (left), *How to Spot a Scam*, garnered 1,399 views in Q3 FY 2024. The [Spanish language version of the video](#), *Cómo detectar una estafa*, had 1,358 views during Q3 FY 2024.



Q3 FY 2024 Additional Internal and External Education Efforts

SSA and SSA OIG engaged in additional outreach and education efforts with members of the public, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and SSA employees to raise awareness of scams targeting U.S. residents. Some examples of these efforts during Q3 FY 2024 included the activities below.





SSA OIG participated in a Lunch-and-Learn on safeguarding private information to prevent scams on April 17, 2024 with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

SSA OIG presented virtually on Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act* at the annual conference of the National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR) on May 8, 2024.

SSA participated in *World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2024* by publishing a [video](#) for frontline employees and to its YouTube channel to raise awareness of abuse and neglect of older persons.

SSA published a [video](#) on its YouTube channel titled *How We Protect Your Personal Information* on June 12, 2024, that discusses privacy as a serious top priority at SSA.


SSA OIG collaborated with SSA's Office of Native American Partnerships to publish a [blog](#) on SSA's website titled *Learn 5 Ways to Help Prevent Elder Abuse* on June 14, 2024, to share resources with underserved communities.

SSA OIG presented at the International Public Sector Fraud Forum on *Organized Transnational Crime Cases Targeting SSA* on June 14, 2024.




SSA OIG attended the American Library Association's Annual Conference & Exhibition from June 27 to July 2, 2024, where it distributed Section 1140 related outreach materials and made valuable connections.

Throughout the quarter, SSA OIG continued providing outreach and training on scams internally and to SSA's frontline employees, SSA OIG's law enforcement partners, and to private sector organizations.



Scam Alert

On June 14, 2024, SSA OIG issued a Scam Alert, *Inspector General Warns: \$600 June Increase is Bogus* to warn members of the public that scammers are circulating misinformation around a \$600 fake Social Security benefit increase that they were alleging would be issued in June 2024. Members of the public were advised "the annual cost-of-living increases issued by SSA are ALWAYS automatic. No additional information is required for members to receive the legitimate COLA increase." The Scam Alert received extensive media coverage. Read this Scam Alert and others [here](#).

Section of the Scam Alert



Consumer Protection: Educate to Eliminate Scams

Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act*, as amended, protects the public from advertisements, solicitations, and other communications that convey the false impression that SSA approved, endorsed, or authorized the communication. As part of its Section 1140 outreach efforts during Q3 FY 2024, SSA OIG:



Presented to Social Security claimants' representatives on Section 1140 prohibitions against misleading advertising and solicitations.

Created and distributed educational materials to state bar associations, law firms, and attorneys nationwide.



Provided public libraries with in-person, print, and digital SSA-related scam awareness resources to bolster scam awareness at the community level.

Developed relationships with over 100 new contacts with public library systems, universities and colleges, community organizations, and other federal agencies to raise awareness.



Continued to establish relationships with the private sector and other federal and local governmental entities to combat SSA-related telephone scams, including ongoing outreach meetings.

Monitored and responded to SSA-related imposter social media accounts throughout the quarter.



Initiated inquiries regarding 11 SSA-related imposter social media accounts, prompting the quick removal of the identified fraudulent accounts by the social media platform, while continuing to review each matter for potential civil monetary penalty action under Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act*.



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