



QUARTERLY SCAM UPDATE

Issue 4

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

January 1, 2022 – March 31, 2022

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 our efforts to combat Social Security-related scams with the House Committee on Ways and Means, Social Security Subcommittee; Senate Committee on Finance; and Senate Special Committee on Aging. We began publicly releasing the Quarterly Scam Update in the third quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 to provide information about these scams and our efforts to combat them.

This report addresses trends in Social Security-related scam allegations, as well as our ongoing efforts to raise public awareness of, and disrupt the scams in the second quarter (Q2) of FY 2022 (January 1 through March 31).



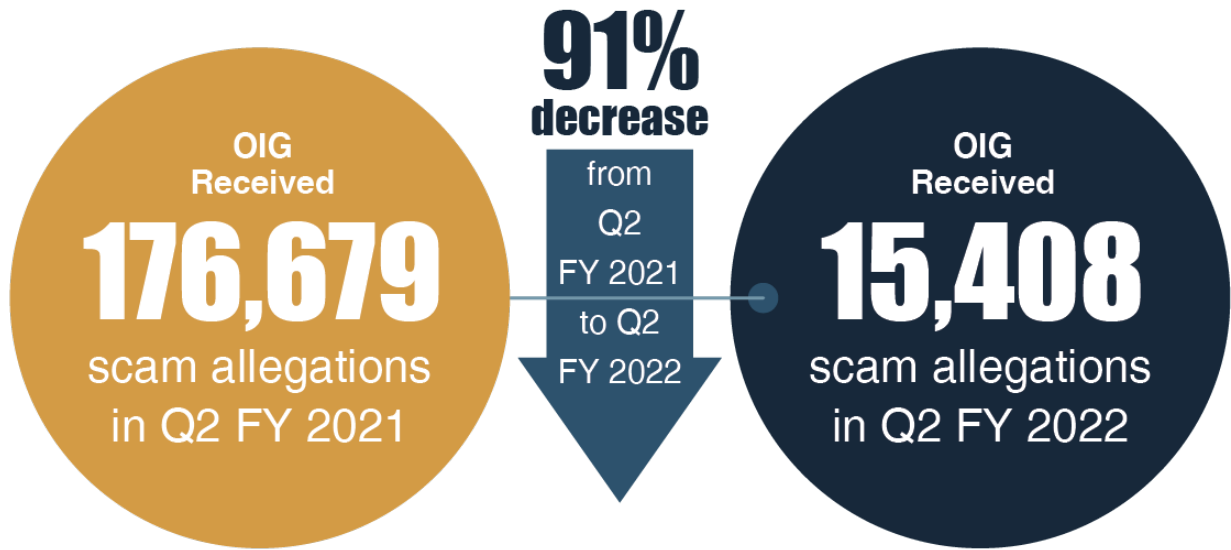
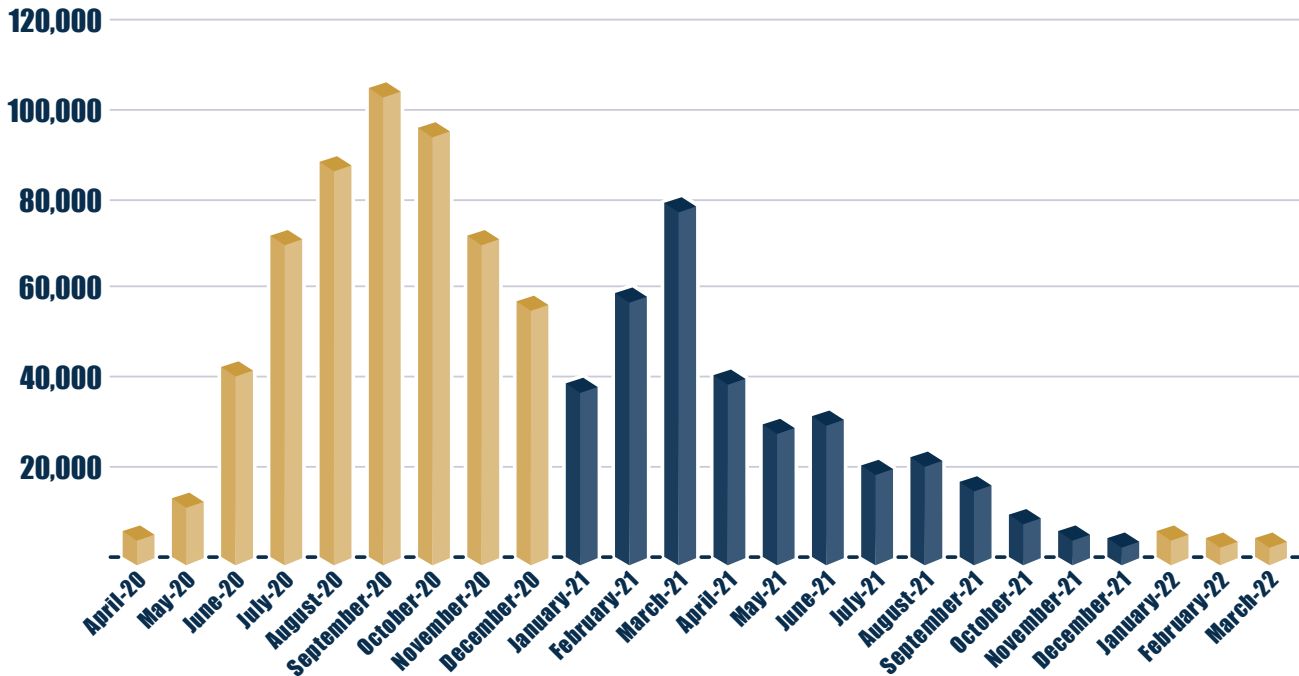


Figure 1







Imposter Scam Complaints Received by SSA OIG April 2020 to March 2022



1. The number of Social Security-related scam allegations OIG receives may not reflect all Social Security-related scams. This is because the allegations are self-reported. For the same reason, allegations of financial losses to scammers may not reflect actual losses.

2. These scams primarily use the telephone, but a small number of scams are reported to have been perpetuated through email, social media, text message, or U.S. mail.

Q1 and Q2 FY 2022 Complaint Trends – Percentage of Total Imposter Allegations from the Scam Reporting Form³

Complaint Characteristics		Q1 10/1/21–12/31/21	Q2 1/1/22–3/31/22
	The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security number	56.1%	43.8%
	The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security benefits	14.7%	16.3%
	The imposter used documents or images (such as a federal logo) when communicating with you	8.6%	10.3%
	The scam involved the impersonation of officials from federal, state, or local government agencies other than the Social Security Administration	41.5%	39.4%
	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	2.7%	3.6%
	None of the Above	20%	27.5%

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.

3. We have been tracking Social Security-related scam allegations since April 2018. We launched the dedicated online reporting form in November 2019, which increased our ability to track scam reports. We also receive allegations from other sources, including OIG's Hotline and directly from SSA employees.

In previous quarters, we reported that more individuals under 50 years of age reported financial losses to government imposter scams than those 50 and older. We also reported that individuals 50 and older reported losses that were higher than losses reported by those under 50. This quarter, these trends changed; more individuals 50 years of age or older reported financial losses than those under 50, and individuals under 50 reported slightly higher losses as compared with individuals over 50.

Figures 3 and 4, below, break down these trends for Q2 FY 2022. The analysis is based upon data from complainants who voluntarily self-reported both a date of birth and a dollar value loss. Figure 3 shows there were 523 reports of financial loss among individuals 50 and older and 497 reported losses by individuals 49 and younger. Figure 4 shows that individuals between 30 and 49 and individuals between 50 and 69 reported slightly higher than losses reported by individuals between 70 and 84 years of age. However, the 13 individuals ages 85 and older who reported loss reported the highest average financial loss.



Figure 2

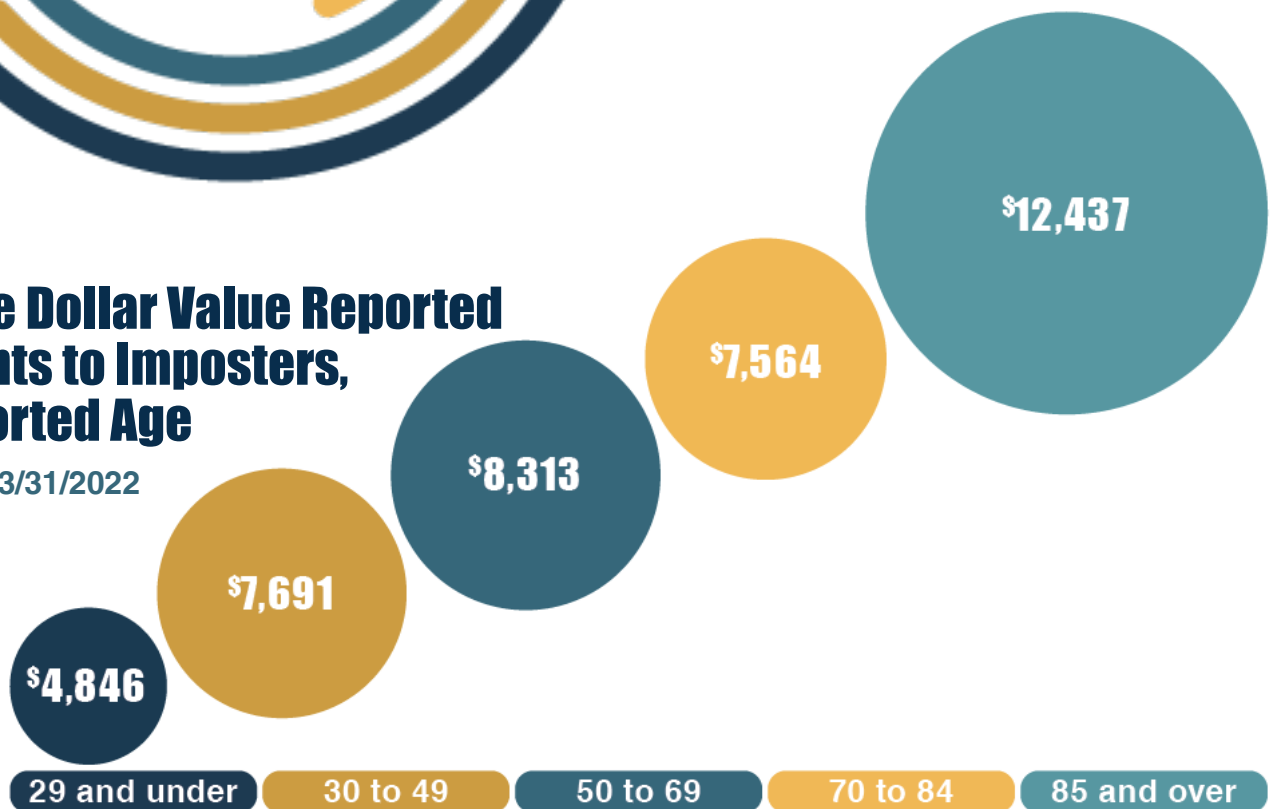
Number of Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

1/1/2022 – 3/31/2022

Figure 3

Average Dollar Value Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

1/1/2022 – 3/31/2022



We combat Social Security-related scams by investigating scam allegations and by partnering with SSA to engage in public outreach to inform citizens how to recognize, respond to, and report scams. Below are some outreach and investigative highlights from this reporting period.



Slam the Scam Day:

March 10, 2022, marked our third annual National Slam the Scam Day. Slam the Scam Day is an initiative to raise public awareness of the pervasive Social Security-related and other government imposter scams that continue to plague the nation and is an initiative supporting the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Protection Week. Our goal was to raise awareness of the tactics scammers use and encourage the public to hang up on scammers. We continue to increase the reach and impact of our effects with each successive Slam the Scam Day. This year, we held a press call, participated in English and Spanish Twitter chats, had a Facebook Live event, and spread our message on social media. Twenty Members of Congress shared Slam the Scam messages on social media or through press releases. The Senate passed a resolution designating March 10, 2022, as "National 'Slam the Scam Day.'" Other government agencies, companies, and nonprofit organizations also helped share our Slam the Scam message, including through press releases, social media, and print.

Highlights from the 3rd National Slam the Scam Day

March 10, 2022

News Media Coverage Estimated Audience



14.4 m
Online & Print



48,000
Television



80,000
Radio

Phone Scam Public Service Announcement (PSA) during National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW)



441,000+
Estimated Audience

Store Participation



3,691
Stores Display "Slam the Scam" Slides



8,000
Stores Broadcast SSA's PSA

Social Media

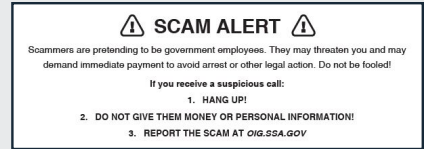


29.8m SSA OIG Tweets
84,000 impressions during NCPW

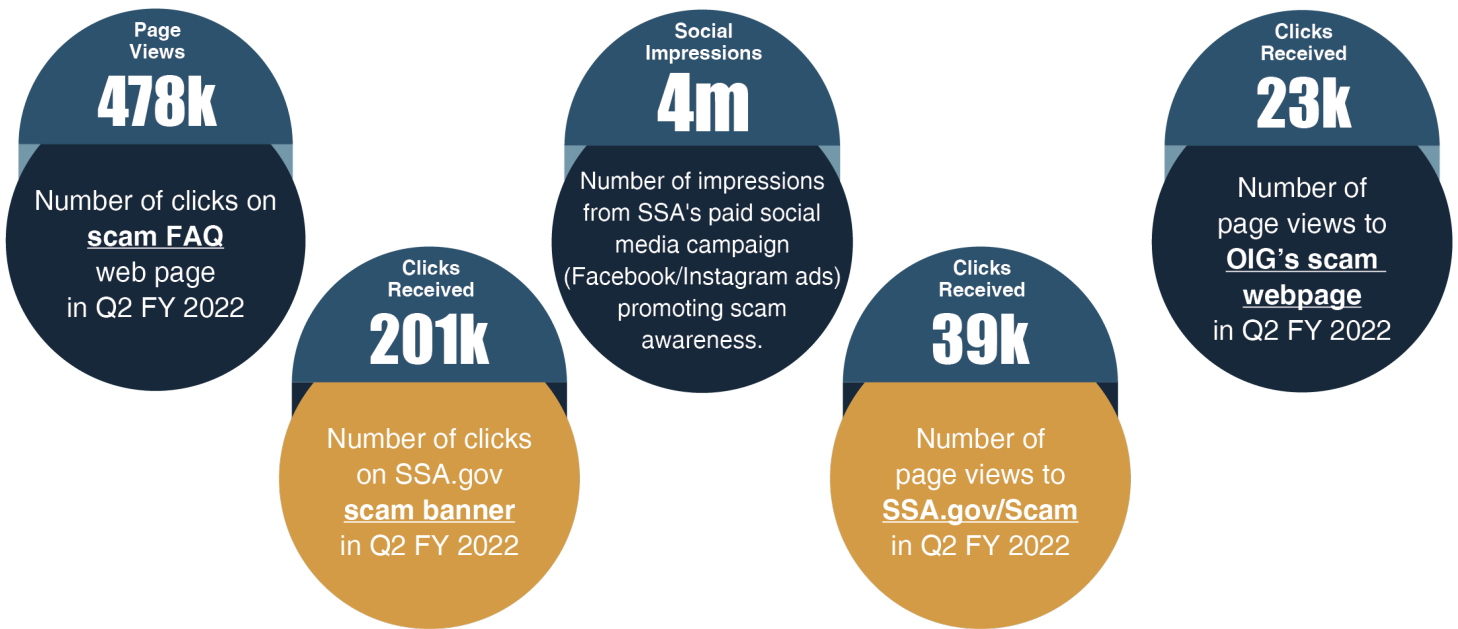


3.1m SSA OIG Posts
55,000 impressions during NCPW

In Q2 FY 2022, SSA mailed **47 million** letters to the public with a fraud message printed on the back of envelopes. Through May 6, 2022, the Agency had mailed approximately **545 million** of these letters in total.



SSA's latest Scam Awareness Public Service Announcement, which started airing in late October 2021, has generated **29.7 million** impressions in FY 2022 Q2.



Co-Conspirator in a Major Imposter Scam Investigation Sentenced to 9 Years in Prison:

Also highlighted in our [Spring 2022 Semiannual Report to Congress](#), from April 2019 to March 2020, a California man participated in a scheme in which victims were told that their SSNs had been linked to crimes and outstanding warrants were issued for their arrests. The man and his co-conspirators further told victims that to clear the arrest warrants, they should withdraw their savings and send cash by mail to other members of the scheme. In March 2021, the man pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud and wire fraud. In March 2022, a U.S. District Court judge sentenced him to 9 years in federal prison, and 3 years of supervised release and ordered him to pay \$490,500 in restitution to the victims. The case resulted from a joint investigation with Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Department of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, and several additional state and local law enforcement agencies. You can read more about the case [here](#).



4. This data reflects the number of scam-related arrests as of the issuance date of this report. This data is subject to change.



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