



# QUARTERLY SCAM UPDATE

Issue 7

## OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

October 1, 2022 – December 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, 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. 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 first quarter (Q1) of FY 2023 (October 1 through December 31). Examples of SSA and OIG's recent efforts to disrupt and raise awareness of scams are also included.



Figure 1

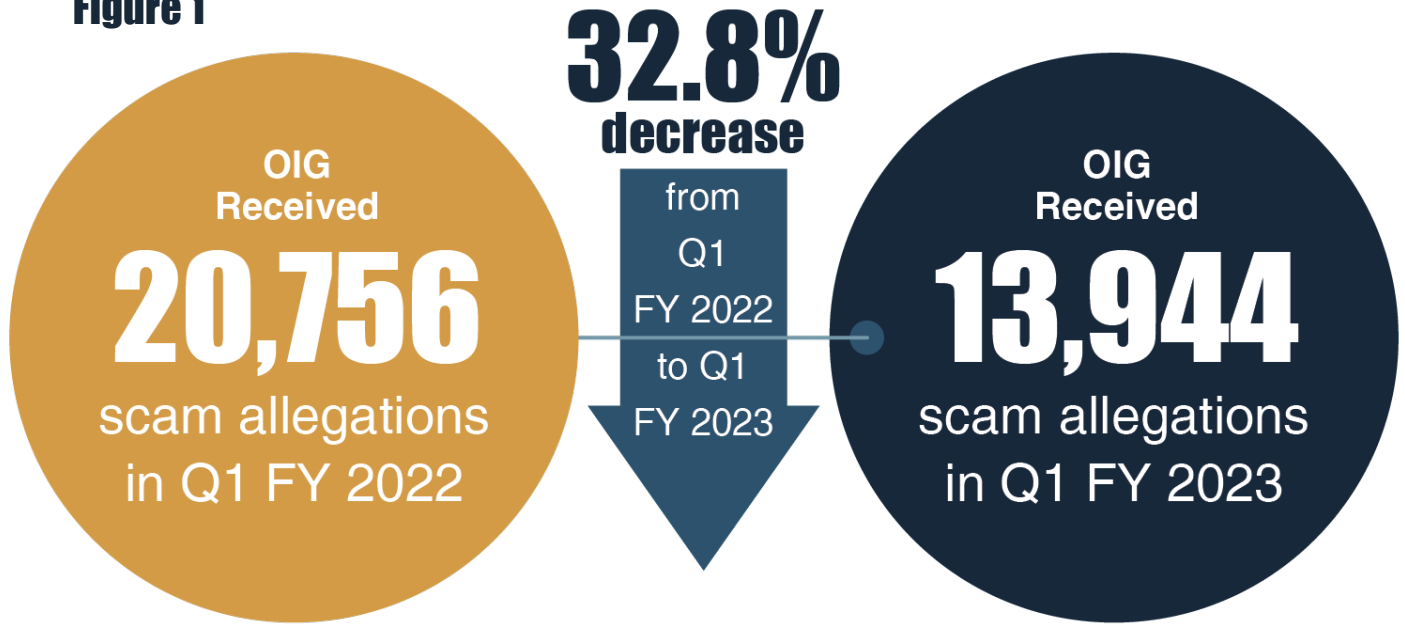
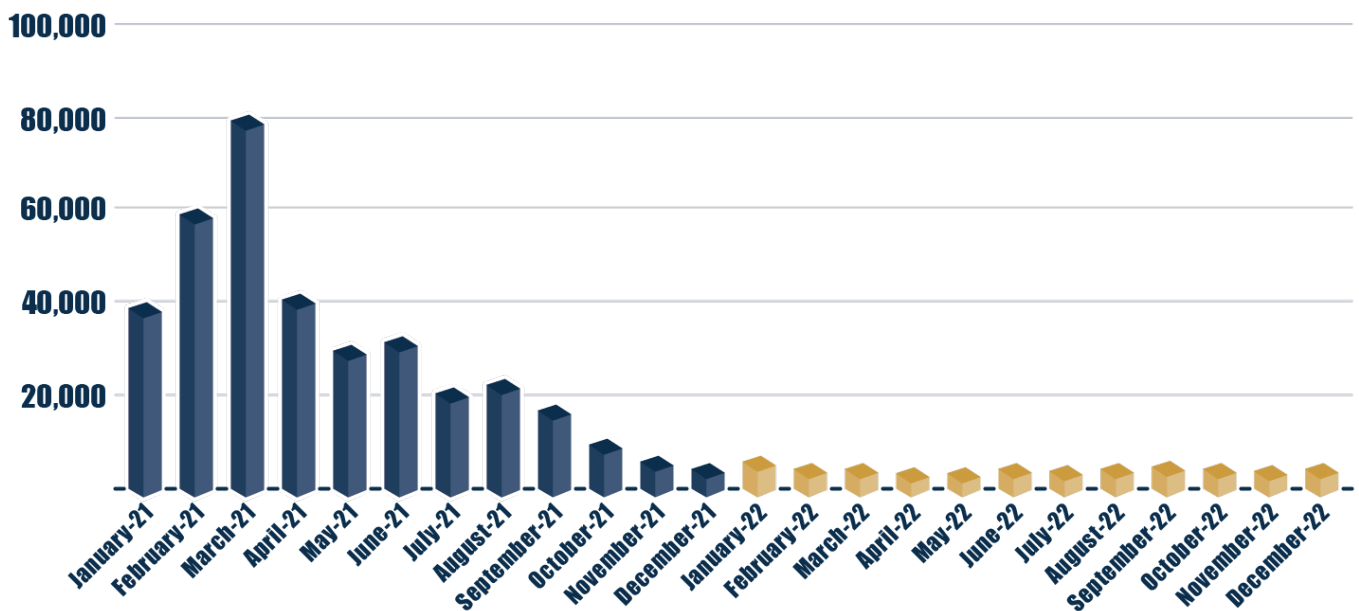


Figure 2







Imposter Scam Complaints Received by SSA OIG January 2021 to December 2022



OIG receives the majority of Social Security-related scam allegations from OIG's dedicated online scam reporting form.<sup>1</sup> 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**

### Q4 FY 2022 and Q1 FY 2023 Complaint Trends – Percentage of Total Imposter Allegations from the Scam Reporting Form<sup>1</sup>

Complaint Characteristics	Q4 7/1/22–9/30/22	Q1 10/1/22–12/31/22
 The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security number	<b>43.8%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>
 The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security benefits	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>
 The imposter used documents or images (such as a federal logo) when communicating with you	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>24.6%</b>
 The scam involved the impersonation of officials from federal, state, or local government agencies other than the Social Security Administration	<b>37.9%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>
 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	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
 None of the Above	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>

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.

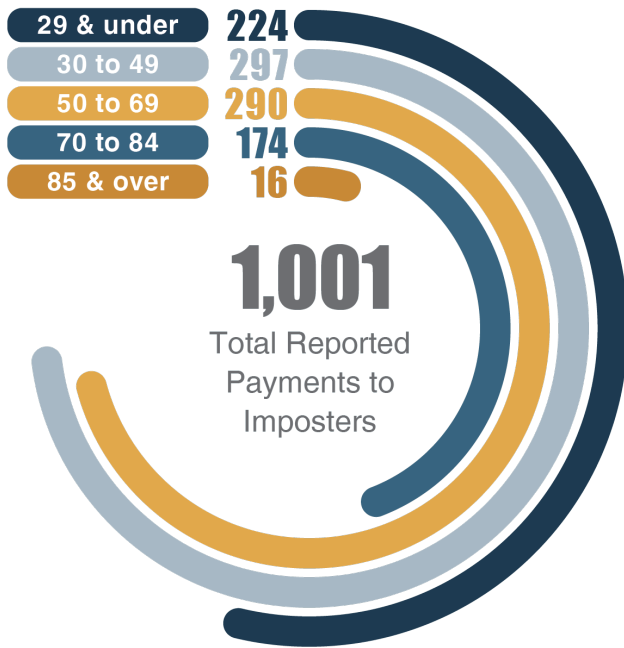
1. SSA OIG also receives allegations from other sources, including SSA OIG's Hotline and directly from SSA employees. SSA OIG has been tracking Social Security-related scam allegations since April 2018. SSA OIG launched the dedicated online reporting form in November 2019, which increased its ability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

In Q4 FY 2022, SSA OIG [reported](#) that financial losses were higher for individuals 50 years of age and older than those under 50 years of age. Figure 4 (below) shows that in Q1 FY 2023, reports of financial losses were slightly higher for individuals under 50 years of age than those 50 years of age or older: 521 individuals under 50 years of age reported losses, compared with 480 individuals 50 years of age and older.

Figure 4

## Number of Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

10/1/2022 – 12/31/2022

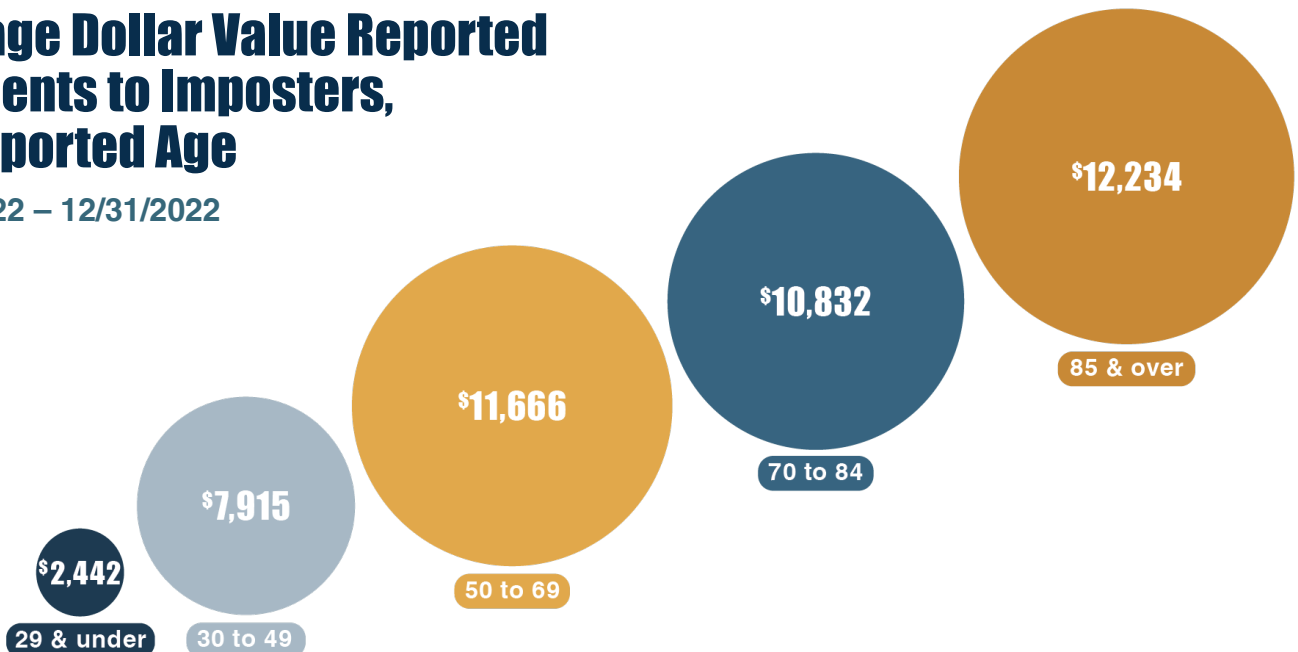


In Q4 FY 2022, individuals 50 to 84 years of age [reported](#) higher average losses than those under 50 or 85 years of age and over. Figure 5 (below) shows that in Q1 FY 2023, individuals 50 years of age and over reported significantly higher average losses than those under 50 years of age. The highest average losses were reported by individuals 85 years of age and over.

Figure 5

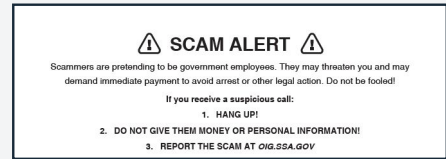
## Average Dollar Value Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

10/1/2022 – 12/31/2022



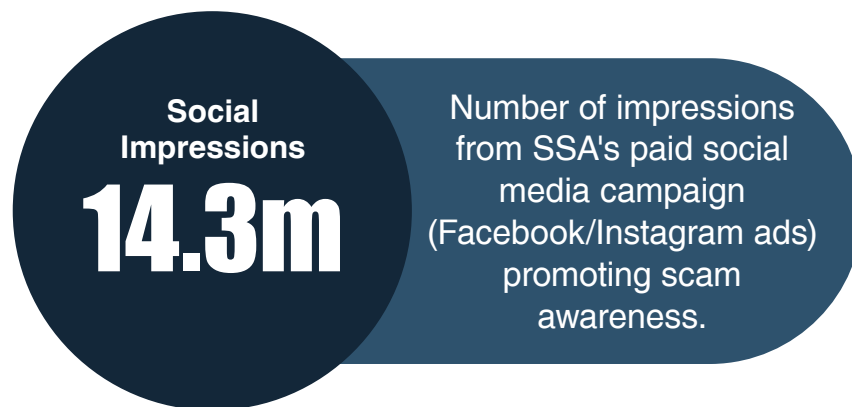
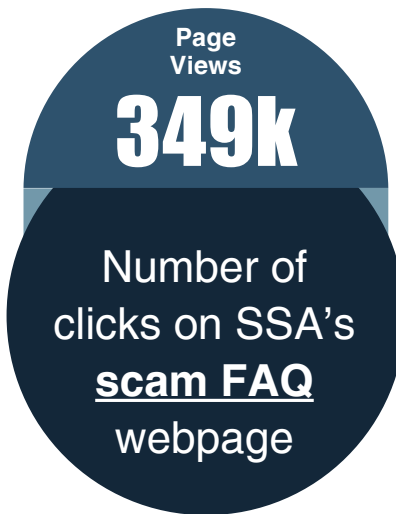
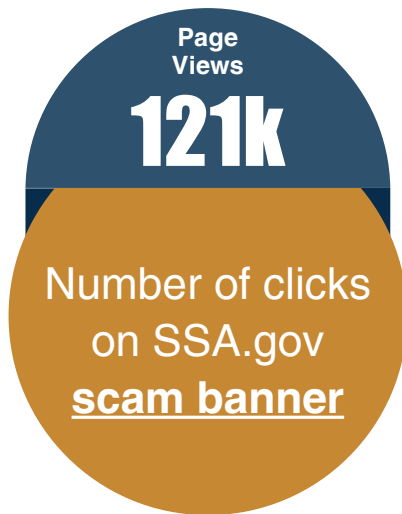
According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), government imposter scam complaints have declined since 2018, however, Social Security-related scams [remain](#) the top government imposter type reported to the FTC.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, while the decline is promising, OIG and SSA continue to fight these scams.

In Q1 FY 2023, SSA mailed **103.9 million** letters to the public with a scam message printed on the back of envelopes (right). Through December 31, 2022, the Agency had mailed approximately **700 million** of these letters.



SSA's latest Scam Awareness Public Service Announcement (left), which started airing in late October 2021, generated 75.6 million impressions in Q1 FY 2023.

## Q1 FY 2023 Website Page Views and Social Media Impressions



2. This information is based on data reported to the FTC during January 1 through December 31, 2022.

3. During FY 2022, SSA and SSA OIG began combining their separate scam web pages. SSA OIG previously reported clicks on its separate scam web page. However, since this reporting period ended, that page now redirects to the joint page at [SSA.gov/Scam](#).

## Q1 FY 2023 SSA OIG Social Media Related to Scam Alerts

In addition to ongoing web and social media efforts, OIG issued a scam alert on October 20, 2022 using its Facebook and Twitter accounts. OIG also posted the alert to its new LinkedIn account.



**35,000**

Impressions

**521**

Engagements

### Notable Shares

SSA, North Hopewell Township Police Department (PA), Department of Aging (MD), Senior Medicare Patrol (WI)



**5,382**

Impressions

**715**

Engagements

### Notable Retweets

SSA, Eldercare Locator, Department of Education OIG, AmeriCorps OIG, Doral Police Department (FL), Westchester Consumer Protection (NY), USA.gov



**482**

Impressions

**49**

Engagements

### Notable Reposts

National Adult Protective Services Association

## Individuals from Illinois and Arkansas Charged in an \$11 Million Call Center Fraud Ring

In October 2022, three individuals were charged for their roles in a multi-year fraud and money laundering conspiracy involving call centers. The 11-count indictment alleges that from January 2017 to August 2020, the individuals and other co-conspirators allegedly engaged in a criminal fraud conspiracy originating from call centers located in India. The callers impersonated SSA and other U.S. government officials and tricked victims into sending them money to safeguard their assets, avoid arrest, or prevent their government benefits from being cut off, according to the charges. Victims allegedly sent money in the form of gift cards by providing redemption codes over the phone and mailed cash in packages sent to FedEx and UPS pick-up locations. The indictment alleges co-conspirators, known as runners, liquidated victims' gift cards at retail locations in the U.S. or used fake identification documents to pick up their packages containing cash at Walgreens locations. They allegedly defrauded over \$11 million from victims as a result of the conspiracy. All three individuals were charged with mail fraud, conspiring to commit mail fraud, wire fraud and conspiring to commit money laundering. If convicted, all three individuals face up to 20 years in federal prison. SSA OIG, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Homeland Security Investigations, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) conducted the investigation with the assistance of the Heber Springs, Texas Police Department. You can read more about the case [here](#).

## Indian National Sentenced for Government Impersonation Call Center Scam

In November 2022, a 38-year-old Indian citizen residing in Houston, Texas was ordered to serve 60 months in federal prison for conspiracy to commit mail fraud. At the time of his plea, the individual also agreed to pay restitution to the scheme's identified victims. As a non-U.S. citizen, he is also expected to face removal proceedings following imprisonment. Between April and October 2019, the individual was involved in a telemarketing scheme via Indian call centers to extort money from victims in the U.S. The individual acted as a runner in these schemes, using aliases and fake identification documents to pick up more than 70 parcels containing cash the scheme's victims had mailed. One common script used in the scheme involved coercing victims into believing federal agents from SSA or another federal agency were investigating them. The "agent" on the phone would convince the victim the only way to clear their name from investigation was to send cash in a parcel shipped through FedEx to a name and address they provided. Runners in the U.S. would then pick up the parcels. The FBI, SSA OIG, and Department of Homeland Security OIG conducted the investigation with the assistance of the Houston Police Department and TIGTA. You can read more about the case [here](#).



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