



QUARTERLY SCAM UPDATE

Issue 14

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

July 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024

Social Security-Related Scams

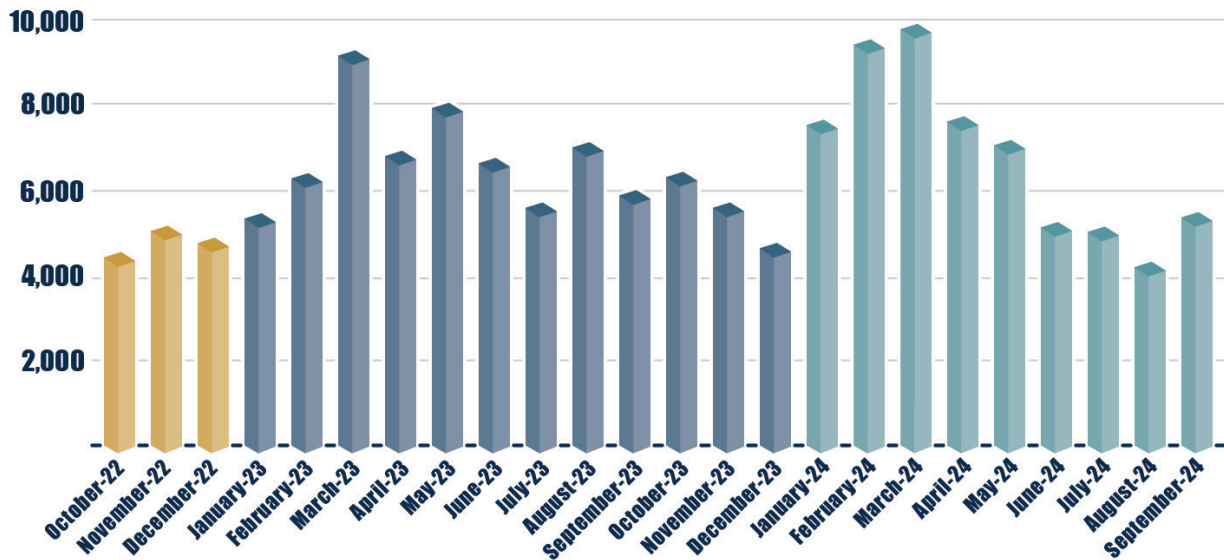
The Social Security Administration (SSA) and SSA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) continue to receive reports of scammers impersonating government employees or alleging a Social Security-related problem to steal money or personal information from victims.

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 imposter scam allegation trends in the fourth quarter (Q4) of FY 2024 (July 1 through September 30, 2024). Examples of SSA and SSA OIG's recent efforts to disrupt and raise awareness of scams are also included.

Figure 1

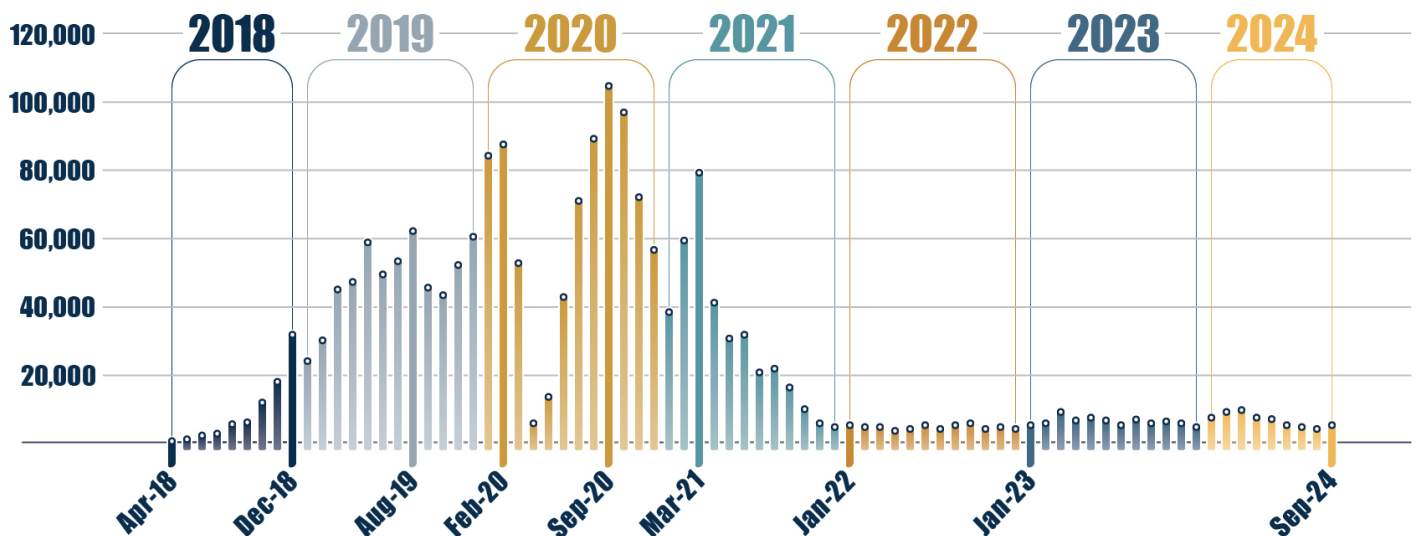
Imposter Scam Complaints Received by SSA OIG October 2022 to September 2024



While imposter scam complaints have fluctuated during FYs 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.

Figure 2

Long-term SSA-related Imposter Scam Allegations April 2018 to September 2024









1. This information is based on data reported to the FTC as of November 8, 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

Q3 and Q4 FY 2024 Complaint Trends – Percentage of Total Imposter Allegations from the Scam Reporting Form

Complaint Characteristics		Q3 4/1/24–6/30/24	Q4 7/1/24–9/30/24
	The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security number	41.8%	35.6%
	The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security benefits	19.3%	17.3%
	The imposter used documents or images (such as a federal logo) when communicating with you	31.0%	30.6%
	The scam involved the impersonation of officials from federal, state, or local government agencies other than the Social Security Administration	33.5%	32.9%
	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	1.5%	1.1%
	None of the Above	28.5%	32.9%

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 [Q3 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 Q4 FY 2024, this trend continued. In Q4 FY 2024, 413 individuals under 50 years of age reported losses, compared with 446 individuals 50 years of age and older.

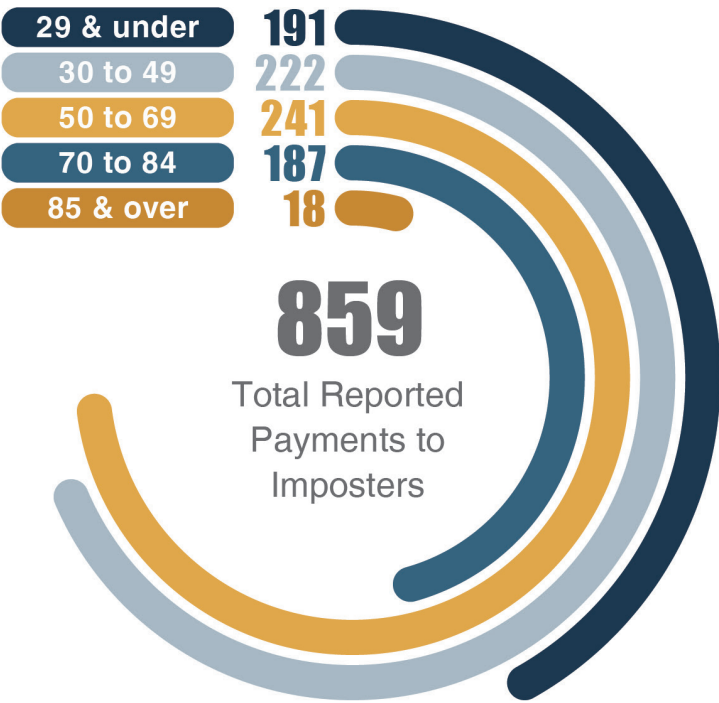
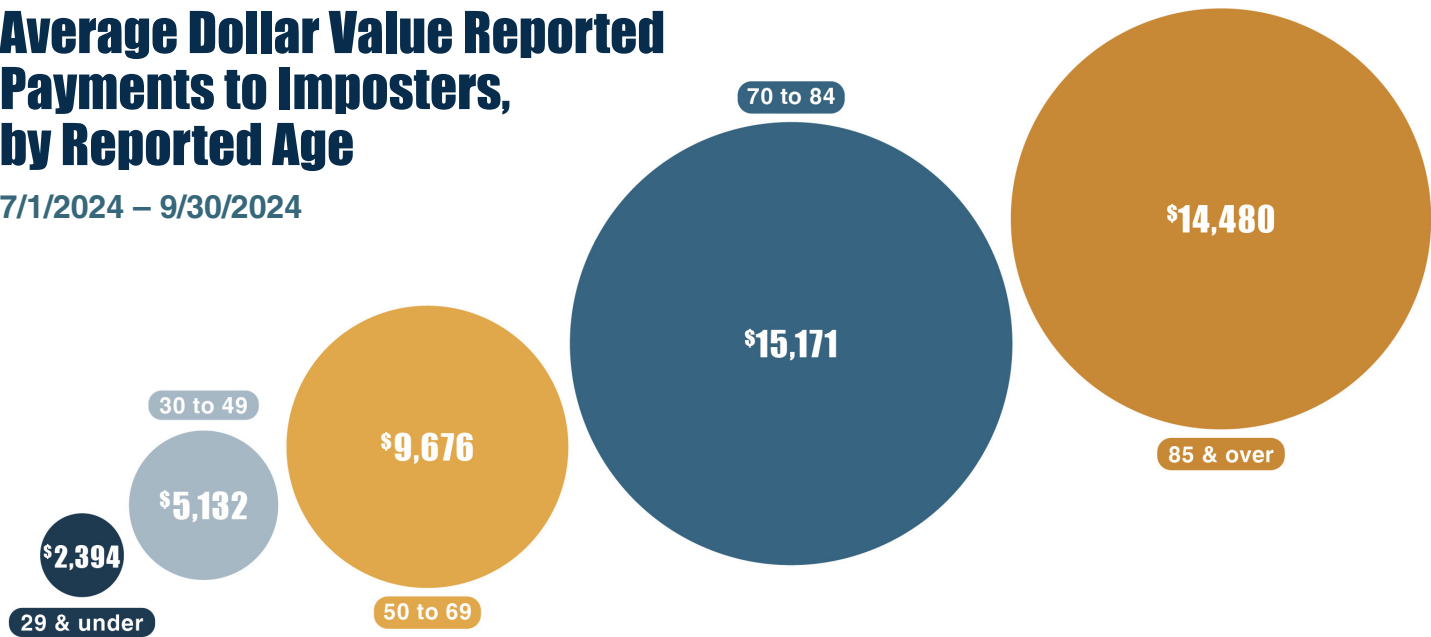


Figure 4
Number of Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age
7/1/2024 – 9/30/2024

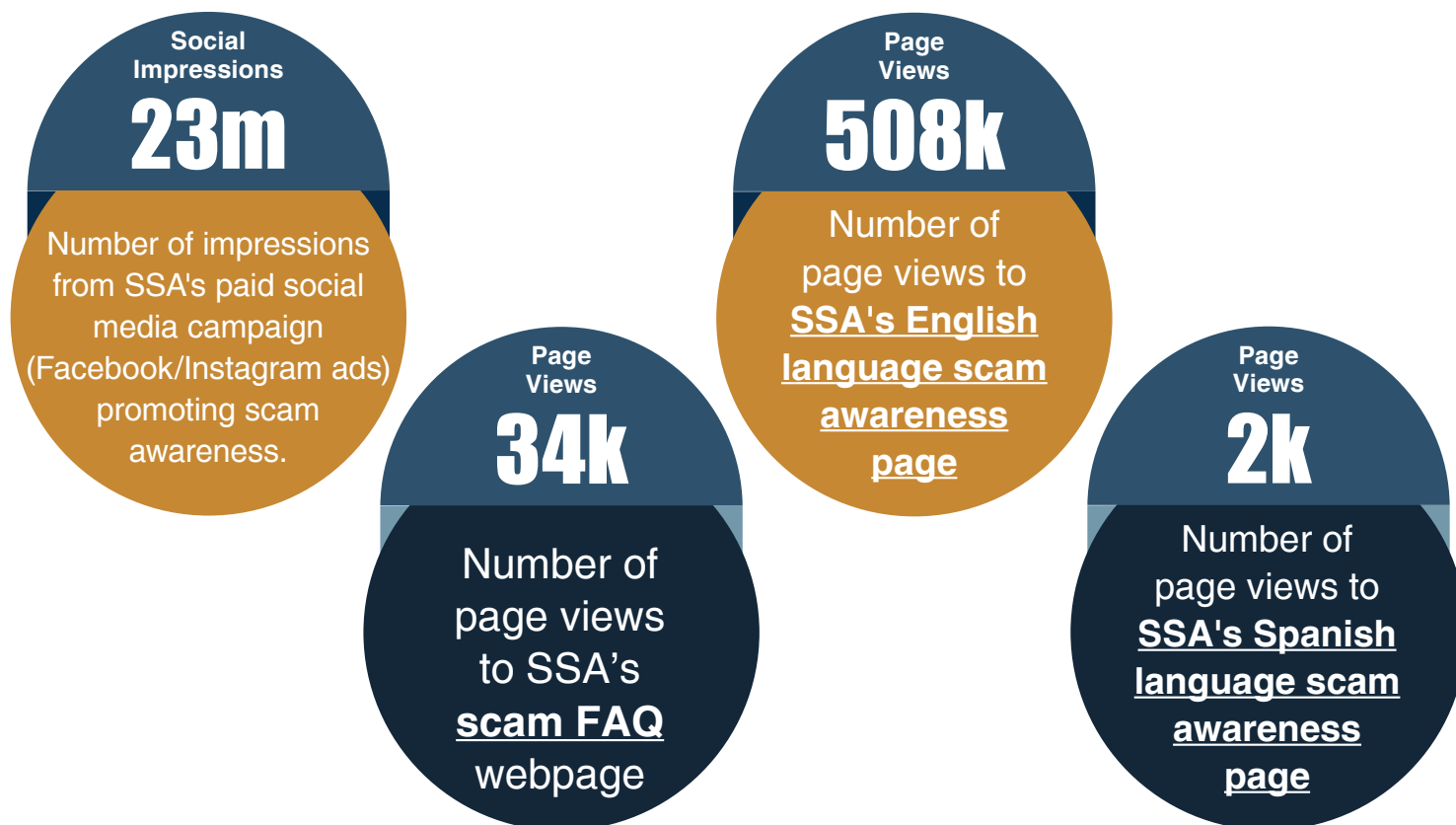
In [Q3 FY 2024](#), individuals 50 years of age and over reported higher average losses than those under 50 years of age. Additionally, during Q3 FY 2024, the highest average losses were reported by individuals 70 to 84 years of age. Figure 5 (below) shows that in Q4 FY 2024, these trends continued.

Figure 5
Average Dollar Value Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age
7/1/2024 – 9/30/2024



Q4 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 **5.6 million page views**. Website page views, clicks, and social media impressions for Q4 FY 2024 are shown below.



In Q4 FY 2024, SSA mailed 48 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](https://oig.ssa.gov)



SSA's October 2021 *Scam Awareness Public Service Announcement* [video](#) (left) generated 2 million impressions in Q4 FY 2024.



SSA's November 2023 [video](#) (left), *How to Spot a Scam*, garnered 1,200 views in Q4 FY 2024. The [Spanish language version of the video](#), *Cómo detectar una estafa*, had 2,100 views during Q4 FY 2024.

Q4 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 Q4 FY 2024 included the activities below.

Throughout the month of July 2024, SSA OIG participated in [Military Consumer Month](#) by sharing anti-scam information via social media.



On July 11, 2024, SSA OIG participated in the [Commodity Futures Trading Commission's Cryptocurrency Conference](#) to explore new avenues to combat or disrupt scams. The working group addressed strategies to prevent victimization, using technology to disrupt the fraud, and collaboration on enforcement efforts.

SSA OIG collaborated with the AARP on the July 26, 2024, podcast [The Perfect Scam: Ohio Woman Comes Face-to-Face With Her Scammers](#) to remind listeners SSA and SSA OIG staff will never show up at their home to demand money.



SSA met with the [National Cybersecurity Alliance](#) (NCA) on August 16, 2024, to discuss common issues, areas for further collaboration, and information about SSA's anti-scam messaging for older Americans. NCA was a guest speaker during SSA's Cybersecurity Awareness Month.

On September 4, 2024, SSA OIG participated in an [AARP Texas Facebook Live](#) presentation on romance scams. SSA OIG discussed warning signs of a scam and tips to stay safe.



During September 5 through 6, 2024, SSA OIG continued to engage in outreach with the telecommunications industry by attending the [Pacific Telecommunications Council conference](#) in Washington, D.C.

Scam Alert

On August 7, 2024, SSA OIG issued a Scam Alert, *Inspector General Warns: Hybrid Scams on the Rise* to warn members of the public that scammers are introducing SSA "long-con" scams through seemingly common problems. Members of the public were advised scammers are compounding tactics by using fake Amazon or PayPal tech support emails and text messages to get them to connect with an imposter SSA employee who will try to convince them their Social Security number (SSN) or record is compromised. Read this Scam Alert and others [here](#).

Section of the Scam Alert



Consumer Protection: Educate to Eliminate

Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act*, as amended, protects the public from advertisements, solicitations, and other communications (including websites and scam telephone calls) that may convey the false impression SSA approved, endorsed, or authorized the communication. It also prohibits the reproduction and sale of SSA publications and forms without authorization and places restrictions on charging for services SSA provides to the public for free.

SSA OIG continues to strive for efficiency and effectiveness in its Section 1140 responsibilities through a combination of outreach and enforcement efforts. As part of its outreach efforts, SSA OIG seeks to establish and develop positive relationships with federal and local governmental entities and the private sector, to develop collaborative anti-scam initiatives. SSA OIG also engages in direct public outreach to educate the American citizenry on scam avoidance. As part of its Section 1140 outreach efforts during Q4 FY 2024, SSA OIG:



Initiated discussions with the U.S. Patents and Trademark Office (USPTO) concerning potential anti-scam collaborative efforts.

Met with officials from library systems in California and New York to discuss potential anti-scam initiatives, in furtherance of the initiative of developing collaborative relationships with public libraries.



Continued its practice of sending out Section 1140 education letters to entities that are contemplating or are already engaging in SSA-related commerce. The letters discuss Section 1140's prohibitions and the potential penalties for violating the law.

Obtained voluntary compliance from a company offering online government related forms services. The company agreed to website modifications to ensure its operations comply with Section 1140.



Continued its vigilance in monitoring and responding to SSA-related imposter social media accounts because of the public's vulnerability for harm from social media scams. These imposter accounts can also negatively impact SSA's reputation and ability to effectively communicate via its robust social media program.

Initiated inquiries regarding 7 SSA-related imposter accounts, and reviewed each matter for potential enforcement action.





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