



Victims of Identity Theft, 2021

SUMMARY NCJ 306474

OCTOBER 2023

In 2021, about 23.9 million U.S. residents age 16 or older (9% of the population) had experienced identity theft in the past 12 months. As of 2021, about 1 in 5 persons had experienced identity theft in their lifetime.

Types of identity theft

In 2021, almost 4% of people had their credit card misused in the past 12 months, while 3% had their bank account misused. Two percent experienced misuse of their email or social media account. Nearly 1% had their personal information misused for fraudulent purposes, such as getting medical care or applying for a job or government benefits. Less than 1% had their personal information misused to open a new account.

Consequences of identity theft

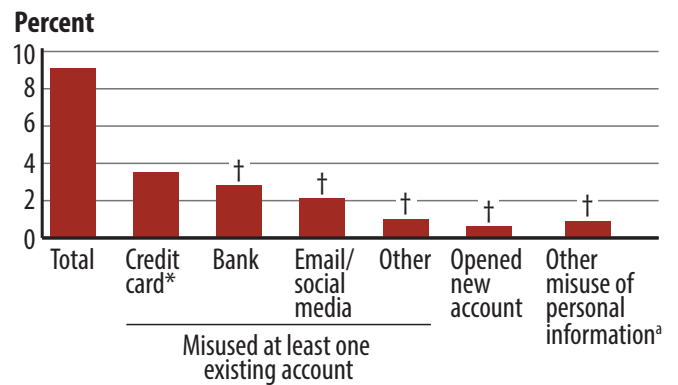
Consequences of identity-theft victimization varied by the type of crime victims experienced. A majority of victims (56%) spent 1 day or less resolving financial or credit problems associated with their most recent identity theft. About 7% of identity-theft victims reported the incident to law enforcement, and 67% of victims contacted a credit card company or bank. On average, each victim sustained a direct financial loss of \$880. Victims whose personal information was misused to open a new account (\$3,430) had higher direct losses on average than victims of bank account (\$670) or credit card misuse (\$620).

About 6 in 10 (59%) victims of identity theft had financial losses of \$1 or more in 2021, and those losses totaled \$16.4 billion. Ten percent of identity-theft victims in 2021 were severely distressed as a result of the most recent incident of identity theft they experienced.

Data source

Findings are from the 2021 Identity Theft Supplement (ITS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey. From July through December 2021, the ITS collected data from persons about their experience with identity theft during the 12 months before the interview. The 2021 ITS featured a redesigned questionnaire, aimed at improving the quality of data collected and modernizing the survey content. These changes include collecting the month and

Persons age 16 or older who experienced at least one identity-theft incident in the past 12 months, by type of theft, 2021



Note: Details do not sum to totals because persons could experience more than one type of identity theft. In 2021, there were 263 million persons age 16 or older living in noninstitutionalized, residential settings in the United States.

*Comparison group.

†Difference with comparison group is significant at the 95% confidence level.

^aIncludes misuse of personal information for fraudulent purposes other than opening a new account or the misuse of an existing account, such as filing a fraudulent income tax return, getting medical treatment, applying for a job, concealing the offender's identity from police or another government authority (e.g., a Department of Motor Vehicles), applying for government benefits, or carrying out some other fraud.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, Identity Theft Supplement, 2021.

year of the most recent occurrence of each type of identity theft, adding the misuse of an existing email or social media account as a separate type of identity theft, and excluding attempted incidents of identity theft.

These changes resulted in several improvements to the ITS questionnaire. One change is that the new questionnaire allows for reducing the number of incidents reported that occurred outside the survey window. It also decreases respondent burden by streamlining the information requested.

The full report (*Victims of Identity Theft, 2021*, NCJ 306474), related documents, and additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics are available on the BJS website at bjs.ojp.gov.