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IDENTITY THEFT REPORTED BY HOUSEHOLDS ROSE 33 PERCENT FROM 2005 TO 2010

U.S. households experienced \$13.3 billion in direct financial losses

WASHINGTON – An estimated 8.6 million households had at least one person age 12 or older who experienced identity theft victimization in 2010, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. This was an increase from the 6.4 million households victimized in 2005.

Identity theft is the unauthorized use or attempted use of an existing credit card or another type of existing account, the unauthorized use of personal information to open a new account or for another fraudulent purpose, or a combination of these.

The unauthorized use of an existing credit card accounted for much of the increase in household identity theft from 2005 to 2010. The number of households experiencing the misuse of an existing credit card rose from about 3.6 million in 2005 to 5.5 million in 2010.

The percentage of victimized households (about 35%) experiencing the misuse of an existing account other than a credit card—such as a banking, savings or utility account—was unchanged from 2005 to 2010. However, the percentage of victimized households experiencing the misuse of personal information to open a new account or commit another crime declined from 23 percent to 14 percent during this period.

From 2005 to 2010, the percentage of households that experienced identity theft rose among households headed by non-Hispanic whites, Asians and Hispanics, but was unchanged among households headed by non-Hispanic blacks/African Americans, American Indians and persons of two or more races.

U.S. households experienced about \$13.3 billion in direct financial losses due to identity theft in 2010. Among households with losses of at least one dollar, the average loss was about \$2,200.

The misuse of personal information to open a new account represented nearly 30 percent of the total direct financial loss, although fewer than 10 percent of victimized households experienced this type of identity theft. These households lost on average nearly \$13,200.

(MORE)

The misuse of existing credit cards accounted for 32 percent of the total financial loss while this type of identity theft represented 54 percent of such victimizations overall.

A lower percentage of victimized households suffered direct financial loss from identity theft in 2010 compared to 2005. Nearly 24 percent of households victimized by identity theft had no financial losses in 2010, up from nearly 19 percent in 2005.

These findings are based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), an annual survey of about 46,000 households nationwide that collects information on crimes reported and not reported to the police. Findings on identity theft are based on the reports by the head of each household on the experiences of all household members age 12 or older.

The report, *Identity Theft Reported by Households, 2005-2010* (NCJ 236245), was written by BJS statistician Lynn Langton. Following publication, the report can be found at <http://www.bjs.gov>.

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical reports and programs, please visit the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov>.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Laurie O. Robinson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at <http://www.ojp.gov>.