

Executive Summary

Consumer Fraud and Identity Theft Complaint Data

January – December 2006

- Consumer Sentinel now contains over 3.5 million fraud and identity theft complaints and is accessible to over 1,600 law enforcement agencies – including every state attorney general in the U.S. and consumer protection agencies in 19 nations.
- The FTC received over 670,000 Consumer Sentinel complaints during calendar year 2006 - 36% were identity theft complaints and 64% were related to other types of fraud.

Fraud

- A total of 428,319 of the Consumer Sentinel complaints were fraud-related. Shop-at-Home/Catalog Sales was the leading complaint category with 7% of the overall complaints, followed by Prizes/Sweepstakes and Lotteries (7%), Internet Services and Computer Complaints (6%), Internet Auctions (5%), Foreign Money Offers (3%), and Advance-Fee Loans and Credit Protection/Repair (2%).
- Consumers reported fraud losses of over \$1.1 billion; the median monetary loss was \$500. Eighty-five percent of the consumers reporting fraud also reported an amount paid.
- The percentage of fraud complaints with wire transfer as the reported payment method continues to increase. Twenty-three percent of the consumers reported wire transfer as the payment method, an increase of 8 percentage points from calendar year 2005.
- Some 60% of fraud complaints where the company's method of initial contact was reported indicate Internet solicitations - electronic mail at 45% and web at 15%. Seventy-two percent of all fraud complaints reported the method of initial contact.
- The metropolitan areas with the highest per capita rates of reported consumer fraud complaints are Greeley, Colorado; Albany-Lebanon, Oregon; and Napa, California.

Identity Theft

- Credit card fraud (25%) was the most common form of reported identity theft followed by phone or utilities fraud (16%), bank fraud (16%), and employment fraud (14%). Other significant categories of identity theft reported by victims were government documents/benefits fraud (10%) and loan fraud (5%).
- Electronic fund transfer-related identity theft continues to be the most frequently reported type of identity theft bank fraud during calendar year 2006.
- The metropolitan areas with the highest per capita rates of reported identity theft are Napa, California; Madera, California; and McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, Texas.