

Federal Trade Commission Webinar

A white silhouette of a crowd of people is positioned above the main title box. The figures are of various heights and are arranged in a line, suggesting a diverse group of attendees.

Fighting Consumer Fraud & Identity Theft in Tennessee

June 28, 2022

Welcome!

Presenters:

- **Anna Burns**, FTC, Southeast Regional Office
- **Margaret Burgess**, FTC, Southeast Regional Office
- **Claire Marsalis**, Tennessee Attorney's General Division of Consumer Affairs
- **Michele Mason**, BBB Serving Southeast Tennessee & Northwest Georgia
- **David Tarpley**, Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlandds
- **Rachel Carden**, Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance, Securities Division
- **Cristina Miranda**, FTC, Division of Consumer and Business Education

Overview

- The Tennessee landscape
- The latest scams
- Identity theft
- Working together to fight fraud and identity theft

National Data

CONSUMER
SENTINEL
NETWORK
DATA BOOK 2021

SNAPSHOT

**5.8
MILLION
REPORTS**

TOP THREE CATEGORIES

- 1 Identity Theft
- 2 Imposter Scams
- 3 Credit Bureaus, Info Furnishers and Report Users

2.9 million fraud reports

25% reported a loss



\$6.1 billion
total fraud losses

\$500
median loss

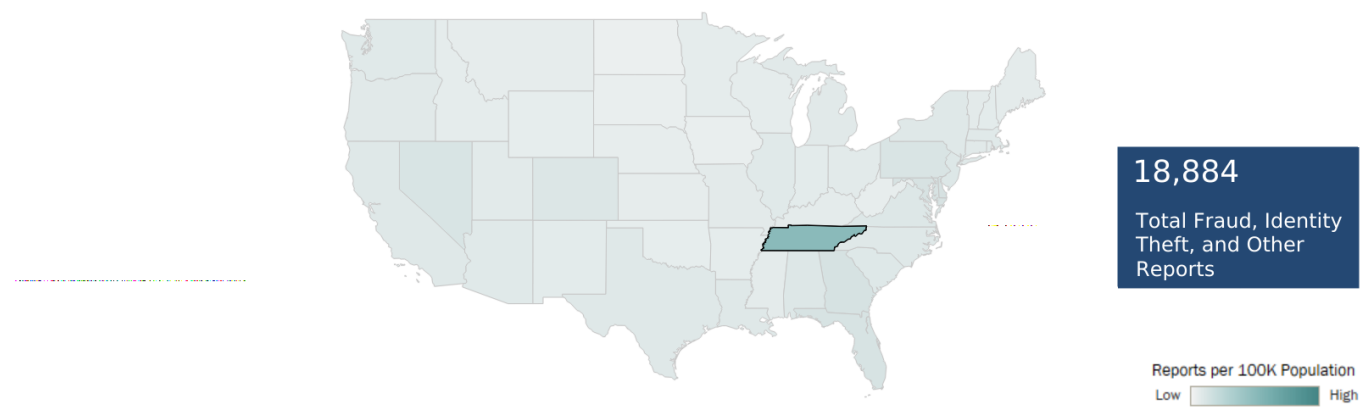
FTC CONSUMER SENTINEL NETWORK

Published May 5, 2022
(data as of March 31, 2022)

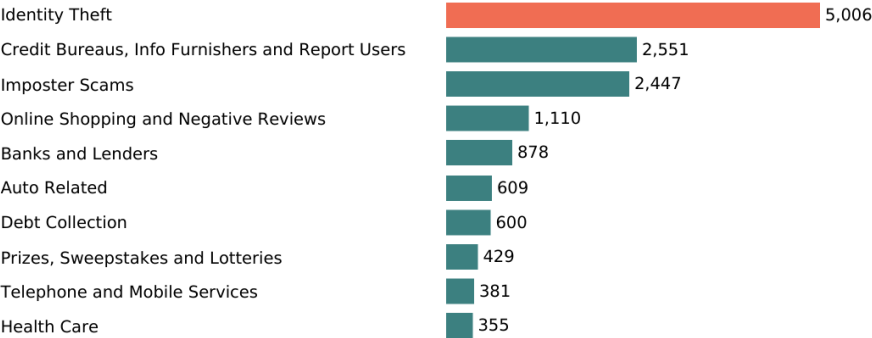
Tennessee
Year: 2022 YTD

Year
2022

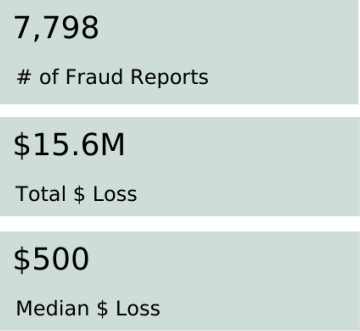
Quarter
All



Top 10 Report Categories



Fraud Facts



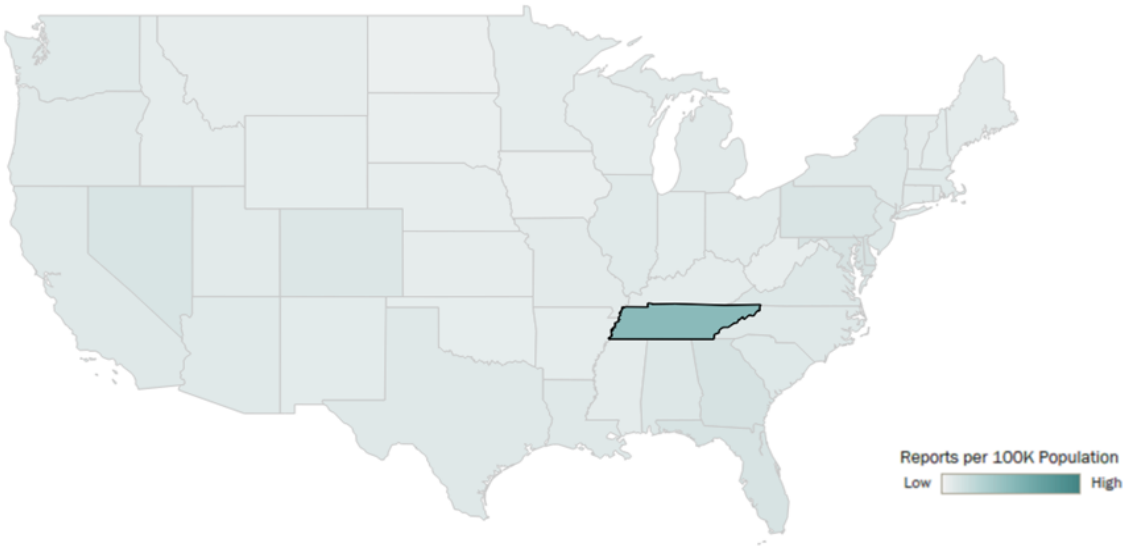
State population estimates are based on U.S. Census population estimates for 2019. State level data excludes state-specific data contributor reports. When no states are selected, the results i..

Tennessee
Year: 2022 YTD

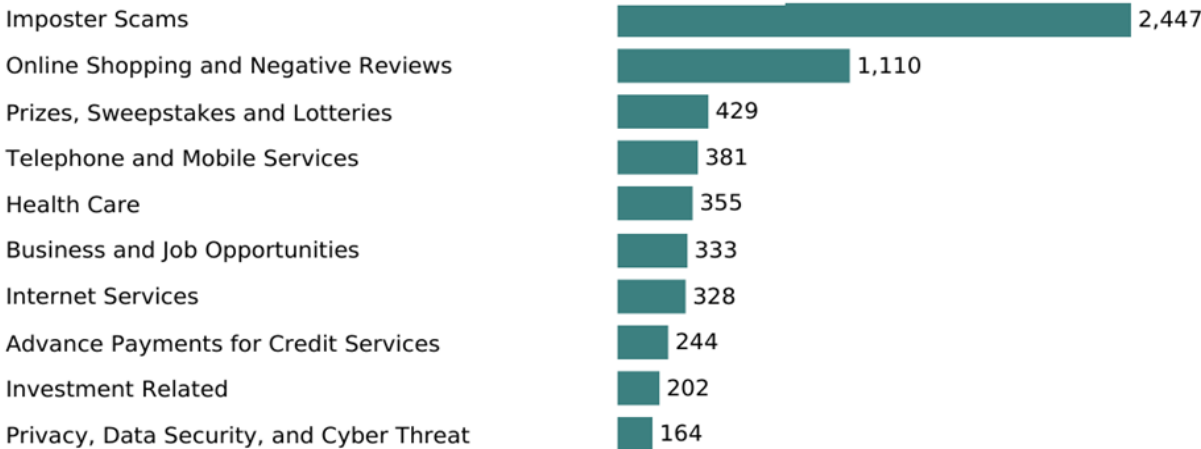
View
Map

Year
2022

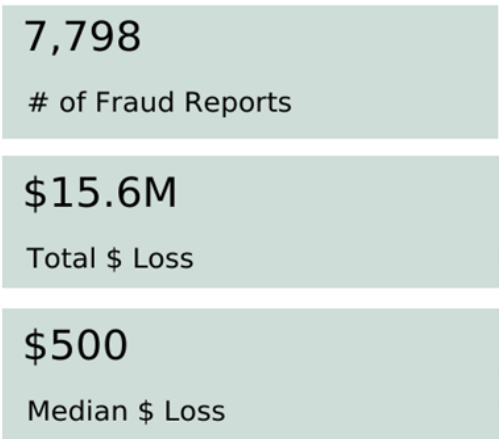
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Top 10 Fraud Report Categories



Fraud Facts



State population estimates are based on U.S. Census population estimates for 2019. State level data excludes state-specific data contributor reports. Certain Fraud categories are comprised of subcategories that fall in both Fraud and Other report types. The Fraud rankings exclude subcategories that are not fraud.

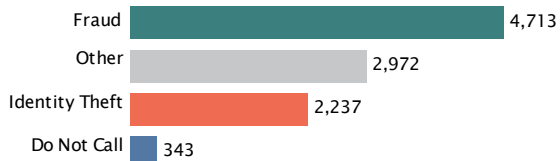


FTC COVID-19 and Stimulus Reports

Consumer Sentinel Network Reports for Tennessee

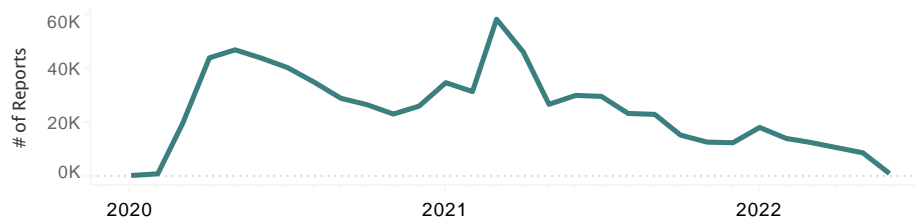
*Data from January 1, 2020 to June 8, 2022

Reports by type for Tennessee: (Select Report Type)

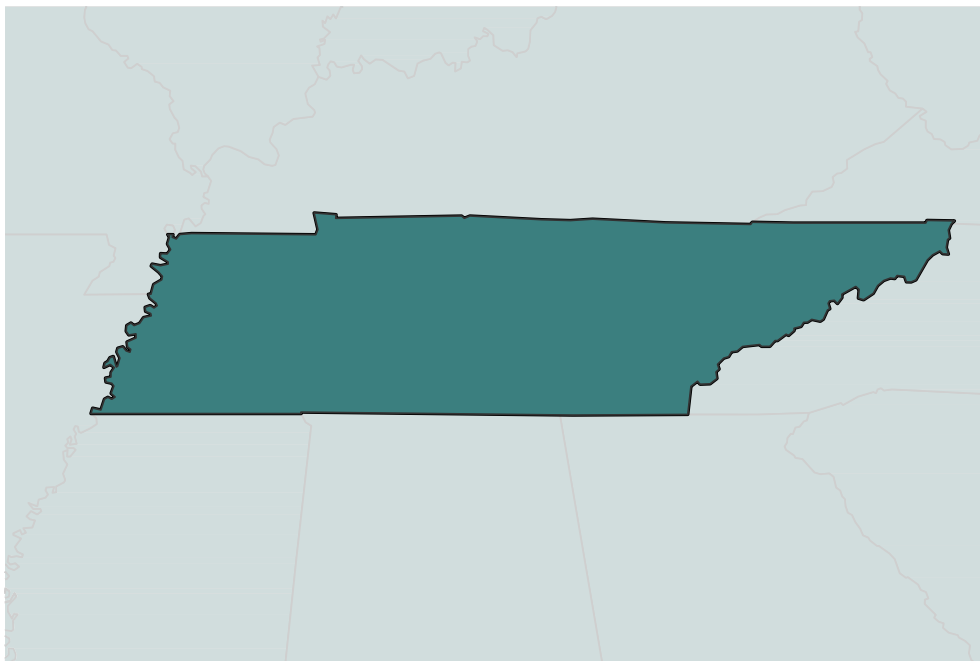


Report trends over time: (Select Time Period)

By Month



Reports by state: (Select State)



10,227

Overall Reports
for Tennessee

\$8.51M

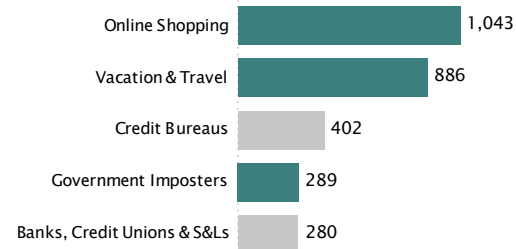
Total Fraud Loss

*39.4% of Fraud reports indicate a loss

\$400

Median Fraud Loss

Top reports for Tennessee were about:



The Fraud, Other, and DNC data reflects reports in the Consumer Sentinel Network that mention COVID, stimulus, N95 and related terms. The Identity Theft data reflects reports that mention COVID, stimulus, or related terms, in the following ID theft subtypes: tax, employment and wage, government benefits, and government documents. The data may be updated with new terms as trends emerge. While the Vacation & Travel subcategory typically relates to the sale or advertising of these services, the Coronavirus-related reports in this category are primarily about refunds and cancellations. Top reports exclude unspecified reports. Some of the Fraud and Other subcategories were renamed on Oct. 22, 2020.

THE LATEST SCAMS



Signs of a Scam



- Scammers pretend to be from an organization you know
- Scammers say there's a problem or a prize
- Scammers pressure you to act immediately
- Scammers tell you to pay in a specific way

Learn more: ftc.gov/scams

Government Impersonator Scams

TOP GOVERNMENT IMPOSTER SCAMS

1 Social Security Administration

2 Health & Human Services/Medicare

3 United States Postal Service

4 IRS Imposter

5 Police, Sheriff, or FBI



IRS Imposter Scams

You get a call from someone who says she's from the IRS. She says that you owe back taxes. But do you?



Government Impersonator Scams

- Government agencies don't call people out of the blue with threats or promises of money
- Do not trust caller ID
- Check with the real agency
- Only scammers demand payment by gift card, wire transfer, or cryptocurrency

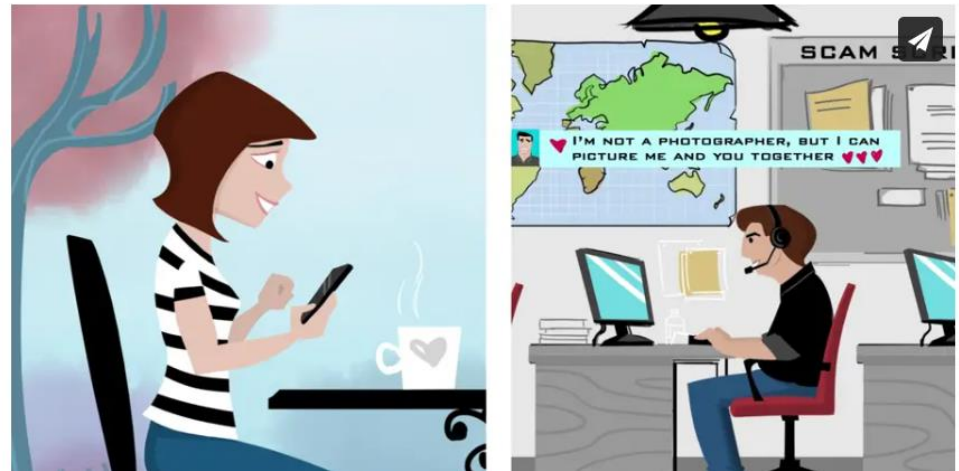
ftc.gov/imposters

Other Impersonator Scams

ftc.gov/imposters

Romance Scams

You meet someone special on a dating website, but then he needs money.



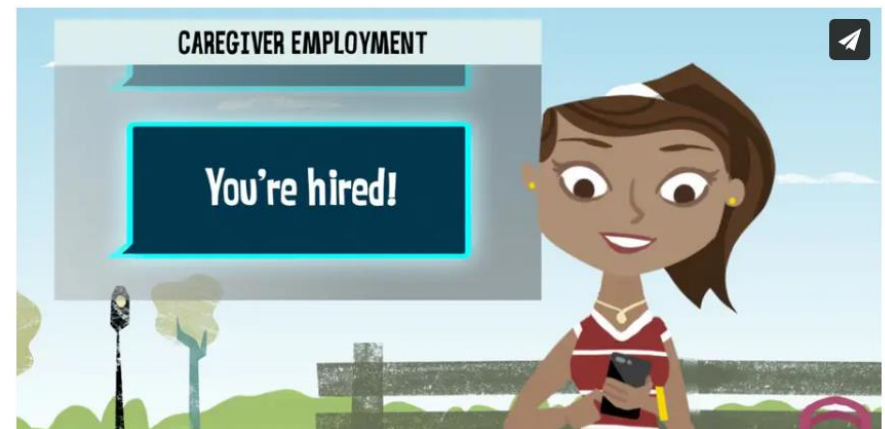
Grandkid Scams

You get a call: "Grandma, I need money for bail." Or some other kind of trouble. But is it your grandchild?



Nanny and Caregiver Imposter Scams

Caregiver websites can help you find jobs, but scammers also use them to find people to rip off.



Business Impersonator Scams

About **1 in 3** people who report a business impersonator say the scammer pretended to be Amazon.



Of 273,000 people who reported a business impersonator from July 2020 - June 2021, about **96,000** said the scammer claimed to be Amazon, and about **16,000** said the scammer claimed to be Apple.

Business Impersonator Scams

- Never call back an unknown number.
- Don't click on links from unexpected texts, emails, or social media messages.
- Only scammers demand payment by gift card, wire transfer, or cryptocurrency.
- Don't give remote computer access to someone who contacts you unexpectedly.

ftc.gov/imposters



Job Scams



How to avoid a job scam

- Don't pay for the promise of a job
- Do your own research
- Take your time

Learn more: ftc.gov/jobscams



Online Shopping



When you shop online

- Check out the company or product
- Look at the terms of the sale
- Pay by credit card

Learn more: [ftc.gov/onlineshopping](https://www.ftc.gov/onlineshopping)



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COVID-19 Vaccine Certificate and Negative Testing Scams

Learn more: ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams



Four Ways *to Stay Ahead*



of COVID-19 Vaccine Certificate Scammers

Right now, there are no plans to create a national COVID-19 vaccine verification app, certificate or passport. **To stay ahead of scammers:**



Be skeptical of anyone contacting you from the federal government.
No agency will call, email, or text demanding your personal information or money to get a vaccine certificate or passport.



Check with airlines, cruise lines, and event venues about their requirements.
Don't rely on information from someone who calls, texts, or emails you out of the blue.



Contact your state government about its vaccine verification plans and requirements.



Don't share your information with just anyone.
That real-looking site could be scammers looking for your money or information.

Report vaccine passport scammers to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov or your attorney general at ConsumerResources.org.



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ATTORNEYS GENERAL



Don't Buy Fake Vaccine Cards or Test Results

- Don't buy or make fake vaccine cards. **It's a crime.**
- Lost your card or test results? **Contact your state health department.**
- Been offered a fake vaccine card or negative test result? **Report it.**
 - HHS Inspector General at **1-800-HHS-TIPS**
 - FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud)





COVID-19 Treatment Claims



Spot unsupported treatment claims

- News about a medical breakthrough in a sales pitch
- Talk to your doctor
- Get the latest from [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and [FDA.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

IDENTITY THEFT

Someone uses your personal information to:

- Open accounts
- File taxes
- Buy things



Examples of Misuse

- Open Credit Cards
- Open Utility Accounts
- Apply for a Tax Refund
- Get a Loan
- Apply for Employment
- Get Medical Care



Impact

- Denial of credit/loans
- Denial of public benefits
- Denial of medical care
- Denial/loss of employment
- Harassment by debt collectors
- Legal issues/arrest
- Stress/anxiety
- Recovery time/expense



Reduce the Risk

- Review mail, especially financial statements
- Check credit report every year:
 - Free report from AnnualCreditReport.com
- Protect Social Security and Medicare numbers
- Store documents securely and shred before discarding
- File taxes early

Fraud Alerts & Credit Freezes:

What's the Difference?

Looking for ways to protect your identity?
Here are two options to consider.



Fraud Alert

- ✓ Makes lenders verify your identity before granting new credit in your name. (Usually, they'll call you to verify your identity.)
- ✓ Free
- ✓ Available to anyone who is or suspects they may be affected by identity theft
- ✓ Lasts one year
- ✓ To place: Contact **one** of the three credit bureaus. That bureau must tell the other two.

Credit Freeze

- ✓ Restricts access to your credit report to help prevent identity theft. (Usually, you'll need a PIN or password to place or lift the freeze.)
- ✓ Free
- ✓ Available to anyone
- ✓ Lasts until you lift it
- ✓ To place or lift: Contact **all three** credit bureaus. (If you know which bureau a lender will use, you can lift for only that one.)



Report identity theft and get a recovery plan

Get Started →

or browse recovery steps

IdentityTheft.gov can help you report and recover from identity theft.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:



Tell us what happened.

We'll ask some questions about your situation. Tell us as much as you can.



Get a recovery plan.

We'll use that info to create a personal recovery plan.



Put your plan into action.

If you create an account, we'll walk you through each recovery step, update your plan as needed, track your progress, and pre-fill forms and letters for you.

Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA)



What We Do:

Protect consumers and legitimate businesses from those who engage in unfair or deceptive acts or practices as outlined by the **Tennessee Consumer Protection Act of 1977**

How We Do It:

- Serve as Tennessee's clearinghouse for consumer complaints
- Provide an informal complaint mediation program
- Collaborate with Consumer Protection Division of the AG's Office
- Deliver statewide consumer education and outreach events



DIVISION OF
CONSUMER AFFAIRS

www.tn.gov/consumer | (615) 741-4737

Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

Complaint Mediation Program:

- Offers consumers and businesses a good faith means to remedy a dispute.
- Disputes vary from issues related to financial transactions to consumer purchases of products, goods, or services.
- The Division mediates disputes if
 - The complainant lives in Tennessee *OR*
 - The business is located in Tennessee *OR*
 - The transaction took place in Tennessee
- Consumers can file a complaint online at tn.gov/consumer or request a complaint form by contacting (615) 741-4737 or consumer.affairs@ag.tn.gov.
- DCA consumer specialists mediate complaints through a series of letters – sharing the written responses of each party with the other



Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

In 2021, the
Division
received
5,561
consumer
complaints.

2021 Top 10 Complaint Categories	Complaints Received
Home Improvements/Repair & Home Warranties	787
Landlord/Tenant	466
Health Services & Products	372
Personal/Professional Services	349
Motor Vehicle – Used Sales	341
Debtor/Creditor	331
Internet Sales	296
Motor Vehicle – Repairs & Warranties	269
Timeshares/Vacation Clubs	211
Imposter Scams	185



Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA)



**Office of Attorney General
Division of Consumer Affairs
P.O. Box 20207
Nashville, TN 37202-0207
(615) 741-4737**

Email: Consumer.Affairs@ag.tn.gov

Website: www.tn.gov/consumer



Better Business Bureau

www.bbb.org

Our Vision:

An ethical marketplace where buyers and sellers trust each other

Our Mission:

Be the leader in advancing marketplace trust.

Services for Consumers:

- Search for BBB Business Profiles
- Find Trustworthy Companies
- Get a Quote for Products or Services
- File a Complaint
- Share a Customer Review
- BBB's Scam Tracker
- Receive Scam Alerts



How to Spot a Scam

BBB has published a new [Scam Alert](#) every week for the past 10 years. In that time, we've learned a few things about spotting scams. From phony text messages to fake surveys to suspicious social media accounts, this guide covers how to identify a scammer's handiwork—no matter the form it takes. **Read our tips for spotting scams, so you'll never fall for one again.**

[Subscribe to scam alerts](#)



Each type of scam has red flags. Here's how to spot them.



How to identify a look-a-like website



How to spot a fake social media account



Don't fall for phony text messages

bbb.org/all/spot-a-scam

Learn about New Trends & Emerging Scams

Sign Up to Receive Scam Alerts

BBB Scam Tracker



Links from BBB's site or visit bbb.org/scamtracker

- Tracks the pulse of the marketplace by plotting reported scams on the map
- Allows you to drill into an area to see what reports have been submitted
- Allows you to report or research a scam using the map or a keyword search
- Scam reports are compiled and shared with law enforcement agencies
- BBB produces studies on the most reported scams to identify trends

BBB Offices in Tennessee:

BBB serving SE TN & NW GA
508 N. Market Street
Chattanooga, TN 37405
bbb.org/chattanooga
423-266-6144

BBB serving Greater East TN
251 N Peters Rd
Knoxville, TN 37923
bbb.org/knoxville
865-692-1616

BBB of the Midsouth
3693 Tyndale Drive
Memphis, TN 38125
bbb.org/memphis
901-759-1300

BBB of Middle TN
25 Century Boulevard, Suite 101
Nashville, TN 37214
bbb.org/nashville
615-242-4222





Legal Aid Society
of Middle Tennessee & the Cumberlandands

Working Together. Doing Justice. Restoring Hope.

DAVID TARPLEY, ATTORNEY

WWW.LAS.ORG

(800) 238 -1443

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tn.gov/securities



Department of
**Commerce &
Insurance**





Securities Division



What To Do If You've Been Scammed

If you shared personal information,
go to [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov).

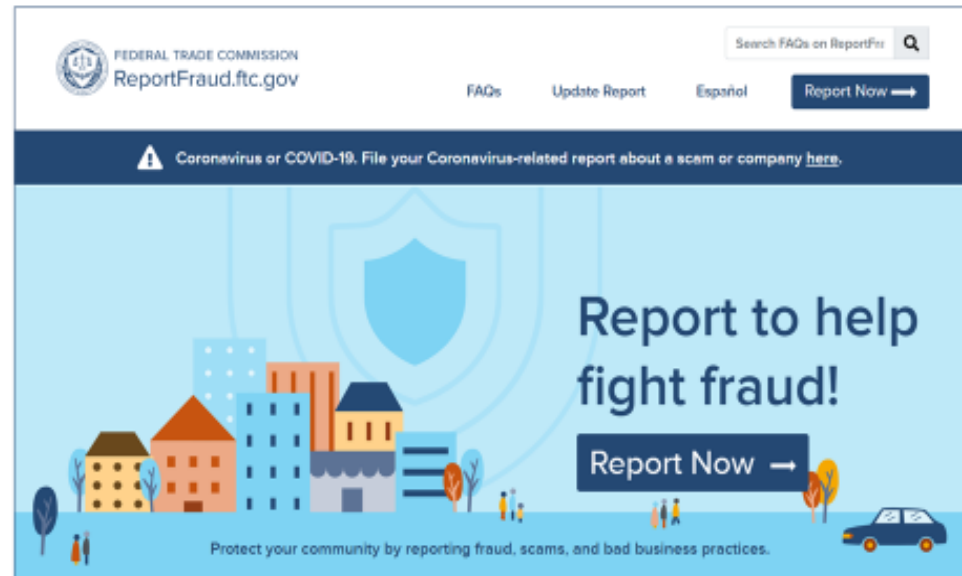
Learn more: [ftc.gov/scams](https://www.ftc.gov/scams)

You Paid By		Contact
	Credit Card	Your card issuer
	Wire Transfer	Wire transfer company
	Gift Card	Company that issued the gift card
	Money Transfer App	Company behind the money transfer app



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Report Fraud to the FTC



Keep up with the latest scams and share with your community

- Sign up for **Consumer Alerts** at:
 - ftc.gov/ConsumerAlerts
- Follow us on **social media** and share:
 - @FTC / @laFTC
 - Facebook.com/FederalTradeCommission
- Share Consumer Alerts on your website, in your newsletter or emails, or on social media

Use and Share Free FTC Resources

- consumer.ftc.gov: hundreds of fraud articles
- consumer.gov: consumer protection basics, plain and simple
- ftc.gov/PassItOn: helping older adults protect others from fraud
- YouTube.com/FTCVideos: view and share videos

Talk to Us

- **Help for Tennessee's Congressional delegation**
 - Derick Rill, FTC's Office of Congressional Relations
drill@ftc.gov or 202-326-3007
- **Consumer Sentinel Network**
ftc.gov/enforcement/consumer-sentinel-network
 - Law enforcement groups can obtain access by contacting Nick Mastrocinque at
nmastrocinque@ftc.gov

Q&A

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Thank you for joining us!

Slides available at: consumer.gov/StateWebinars

***Please spread the word to fight fraud and
identity theft throughout Tennessee!***

Feedback about the webinar:
everycommunity@ftc.gov

