

IDENTITY THEFT

While Identity Theft Is Down, Friendly Fraud Is Up

(NAPSA)—While the number of cases involving identity fraud are down, certain consumer costs attributed to fraud actually increased in 2010. This demonstrates why consumers need to stay vigilant.

Those are just some of the key findings from the 2011 Identity Fraud Survey Report.

The survey also found that:

- The number of identity fraud incidents decreased by 28 percent over the past year. Approximately 3 million fewer adults were victimized by identity fraud in 2010, compared to 2009. This is the largest single-year decrease since the survey began monitoring identity fraud in 2003.

- At the same time, consumer fraud costs increased in 2010. Specifically, the “mean” consumer out-of-pocket fraud amounts due to identity fraud increased 63 percent, from \$387 in 2009 to \$631 per incident in 2010.

- “Friendly fraud” is on the rise. Fraud perpetrated by people known to the victim, such as a relative or roommate, grew 7 percent, with consumers between the ages of 25 and 34 most likely to be victims of this type of fraud. People in this age group are also the most likely to have their Social Security number (SSN) stolen—with 41 percent of fraud victims in this group reporting theft of their SSN.

- New account fraud was the most damaging and caused the greatest losses—\$17 billion. New account fraud, in which accounts have been opened without the victim’s knowledge, can be difficult to detect and is the most likely to severely impact the victims.

The survey was conducted by Javelin Strategy & Research and sponsored by Fiserv, Intersections Inc. and Wells Fargo.

James Van Dyke, Javelin’s president and founder, advises



While fraud incidents decreased in 2010, consumer out-of-pocket losses due to identity fraud actually increased.

that consumers need to stay vigilant. Here are some tips:

- **Keep Personal Info Private**—At home or work, secure your personal and financial records in a locked storage device or behind a password.

- **Don’t Overshare on Social Networks**—Javelin reports that 36 percent of people aged 65+ do not use the privacy settings on social networks. This potentially exposes crucial information to fraudsters.

- **Be Vigilant**—Nearly half of all reported identity fraud cases are first detected by consumers. Monitor your accounts regularly and set up alerts that can be sent via e-mail and to a mobile device.

- **Learn About Identity Protection Services**—These include credit monitoring, fraud alerts, credit freezes and database scanning, some of which can be obtained for a fee and others at no cost.

- **Report Problems Immediately**—Quickly letting your bank, credit card issuers and the local police know that identity fraud has occurred can enhance the likelihood that losses are reduced and law enforcement can pursue fraudsters.

To learn more, visit the website at www.idsafety.net.