

Big Jump: BBB reports online scams up 87% since 2015

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Chances are that you, a family member, or a friend, have been the victim of an online scam.

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) reports online scams have risen 87% since 2015.

Tactics used by scammers have shifted drastically during the past several years, according to a new report published by the Better Business Bureau. During the same period, scams perpetrated via phone dropped 42%.

The Start With Trust® Online: BBB Online Scams Report, is based on two sets of data. The BBB analyzed data of more than 300,000 reports submitted to BBB Scam TrackerSM between 2015 and 2022 and conducted survey research in July 2022.

“The methods scammers use to target consumers have shifted significantly since BBB began collecting scam reports from the public in 2015,” BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust Executive Director Melissa Lanning

Trumpower.

Leading into the holiday season, this report is designed to bring awareness to consumers about the prevalence of scams in today's digital world, according to the BBB.

All scam types perpetrated online

So far in 2022, scams perpetrated online are more prevalent (55%) than other delivery methods, with a higher percentage of people losing money when targeted (75%).

When breaking out scams perpetrated via phone with a monetary loss, scams perpetrated via text message rose from 11% in 2015 to 30% in 2022. Scams perpetrated via text had a median dollar loss of \$800 in 2022, higher than other reported means of contact. Text message was the most reported offline method used to push people online.

The scam type, with a monetary loss, most often reported was online purchase scams (89%), while the number one place people reported being targeted by a scam was while browsing social media (25%).

Impersonation scams

54% of survey respondents said the scammer claimed to be from a legitimate organization. Of those who reported being targeted by an impersonation scam, 50% said the scammer pretended to be a business. When targeted by an impersonation scam, 68% of survey respondents said they did not ask the person to provide verification.

Online purchase (shopping) scams

Online purchase scams continued to be the most reported scam type to BBB Scam Tracker in 2022, making up 30% of all scams reported, with 71.6% reporting a monetary loss. The reported median dollar loss for this type of scam rose from \$101 in 2021 to \$114 in 2022. When looking at the ages of 18-24 the reported median dollar loss for this scam type increased 25.8% from \$124 in 2021 to \$156 in 2022. When compared to other demographics, this age group reported the highest median dollar loss.

Prevention tips

How and where you search, research, and conduct transactions may impact your susceptibility to online scams, according to the BBB.

Tips for avoiding losing money to online scams

If the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is. Price was the top motivating factor for people who made a purchase and then lost money. Scammers offer hard-to-find items and highly sought-after products at great prices.

Before you buy, do your research with a trustworthy source. One of the best ways to avoid scams is to verify the offer and avoid making snap buying decisions.

Avoid making quick purchases on social media. 25% of survey respondents reported being targeted while browsing social media.

Use secure and traceable transactions. Avoid paying by wire transfer, prepaid money card, gift card, or other non-traditional payment methods.

Don't believe everything you see. Scammers are great at mimicking official seals, fonts, and other details. Just because a website or email looks official does not mean it is. For example, if a business displays a BBB Accredited Business seal, you can verify its legitimacy by going to [BBB.org](https://www.bbb.org) and looking up the company.

Be skeptical about anyone who reaches out to you unsolicited. Survey respondents told us scammers produced fake business cards, websites, credentials, ratings and more to convince consumers they were legitimate.

Go to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker) to report a scam and learn more about other risky scams at [BBB.org/ScamTips](https://www.bbb.org/ScamTips).