



Fraud ,Scams and Dementia

April 24, 2025

Helen Savage- AARP Fraud Expert

Suzanne LaFollette-Black, Gerontologist



Agenda

- Fraud Trends
- How We React to Fraud
- Prevention Strategies
- Resources



Trends in Scams and Fraud



APRIL 23, 2025

Good Morning America-ABC

BREAKING NEWS!

FBI warns of growing scam/fraud epidemic in US

Agenda

- Seniors (60+ years) lost over \$4.8 billion due to scams/fraud
- Fraud by phone and internet most prevalent
- CHECK, CALL, WAIT

Fraud & Its Impact on Older Adults



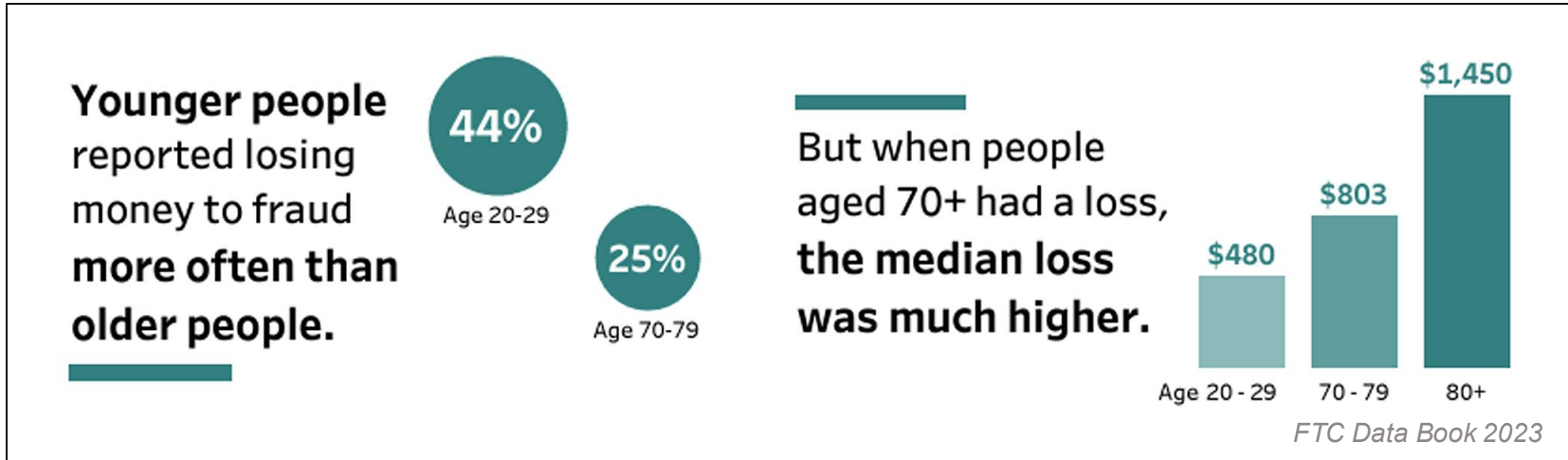
Fraud vs. Elder Financial Exploitation



Fraud vs. Elder Financial Exploitation



Fraud & Older Adults



Younger people lose money to fraud more often.

Older people lose so much more.

Grandparents Scams (Ave Loss: \$3K)

- Grandparent scams exploit the love and concern grandparents have for their grandchildren.
- **Warning Signs:** Scammers pretend to be grandchildren in distress, asking for urgent financial assistance.
- **Advise:** Verify the caller's identity, confirm with other family members, and never send money without confirming the situation.





Top Scams

FTC Report on top Scams

<u>Top Scams Reported</u>	<u>Total Losses (in \$)</u>
1. Imposter Scams	\$450 million
2. Online Shopping	\$250 million
3. Business Email	\$200 million
4. Romance Scams	\$150 million
5. Identity Theft	\$100 million
6. Advance Fee Loans	\$50 million

Even the FTC gets Scammed

Scammers are using the Federal Trade Commission's good name to try to trick people into paying them — or sharing personal information. Someone might call, email, text, or message you on social media, claiming to be from the Federal Trade Commission.



Scope of Fraud

- **FTC:** \$10 billion (all, 2023)
- **FBI:** \$12.5 billion (cybercrime, 2023)
- **Javelin:** \$43 billion (ID fraud, 2022)



Impostor Scams: the Impostors

Government

- Social Security Administration
- IRS
- Medicare
- FTC
- U.S. Postal Service

Business

- Amazon
- Utility companies
- FedEx/UPS
- Norton
- Microsoft

What to Know

- The government and businesses do not contact you out of the blue about a “problem”
- Concerned? Contact the entity at a trusted phone number
- Make no payments, share no sensitive info

Business Impostor Scams




Sweepstakes and Lottery Scams

Local authorities warn of scam in South Louisiana

 KLFY News 10 | 7 days ago

Local authorities are warning the public to the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Office that the scam starts with a call or letter s


New Britain man stole millions in national sweepstakes scam, officials say

 Houston Chronicle | 24 days ago

NEW BRITAIN — Federal authorities say a local man and his associates ran a nationwide sweepstakes scam, luring mostly older people with the ...



RED FLAGS:

- You don't recall entering
 - Upfront fee to collect the prize
- 

What can indicate a sweepstakes scam?

A request to pay a fee, taxes or customs duties before collecting a prize

Winning a sweepstakes you've never heard of

Being asked to buy gift cards and share the numbers before being given a prize

All of the above

Online Romance Scams

Scrabble Online

Match.com

Words With Friends

Plenty of Fish

Facebook

RED FLAGS:

- Wants to move to another way of communicating
- Professes love early on
- Never able to meet in person
- Urgent need for money...or invest with them in crypto

Online Romance Scams



Sarah Jennings
AARP

MEETING A ROMANTIC
PARTNER ONLINE
CAN BE GREAT



Identity Theft and Identity Fraud

THEFT: Identity has been compromised

FRAUD: Stolen identity has been used

PROTECTION:

- Freeze your credit
- Use unique passwords
- Set up online account access
- Keep systems updated

MITIGATION:

- annualcreditreport.com
- identitytheft.gov



Gift Cards as Payment in Scams



This is Jim-Our Fraud Story

- Husband with dementia
- Victim of internet fraud
- Vanilla Gift cards-\$4000

- What makes people vulnerable?
- How can you prevent this from happening?
- How to protect your loved one and yourself from scam/fraud?

What makes people vulnerable?

- **Memory loss:** Scammers exploit because victims forget or unaware they are being scammed
- **Impaired decision-making**
- **Isolation:** Scammers exploit because victims are less likely to talk about money with others
- **Trusting nature:** Scammers know that folks with dementia are more likely to accept their stories

TOP SCAMS prevalent with dementia

- Impersonation (government agency, bank, family)
- Tech support /internet fraud
- Fake sweepstakes
- Cell phone
- Charity scams
- Romance scams



Why Gift Cards?

- Virtually untraceable
- Readily converted to cash or bitcoin
- Ability to move large amounts of money in small parcels

AARP's Campaign on Gift Card Payment Scams

- Three-year commitment
- Goal: Take gift cards away as a scam tactic
- Consumer education, media outreach, research into in-store interventions, retailer collaborations

aarp.org/giftcards

How to Protect Yourself



Gifts Cards Are for Gifts — Not Criminals

AARP survey finds some deceived into buying cards for strangers

Spotting Signs of Financial Scams

- **Unusual bank activity**-late or missed payments
- **Changes in spending habits**-buying the same things repeatedly, more spending, out of character purchases
- **Unexplained changes**-missing valuables, new “friends” names on legal documents
- **Behavior shifts**-secretive about \$, paranoid, confused
- **Disorganization**-piles of unopened mail; overdue notices, trouble with everyday expenses



How We React to Fraud

Why Scams are Successful

THE ETHER

Heightened emotions block logical thinking

Fear, Excitement, New Love...



Prevention Strategies

How to Safeguard someone with Dementia from Financial Fraud

- **Set up financial safeguards**(joint accounts, spending limits)
- **Monitor accounts** (credit cards, banking, 401K)
- **Legal protections** (advance care directives financial-durable power of attorney)
- **Use technology** (monitoring apps, call blockers)
- **Build a caregiver support network** (Prepare to care, community resources, friends, family, church)
- **Report suspected fraud immediately**

What You Can Do

- ✓ Keep operating & antivirus software current
- ✓ Keep your passwords private — don't share
- ✓ Use unique passwords for each online account
 - Consider a password manager



Fraud Prevention Tips

- **Stay informed:** Educate yourself about common fraud schemes targeting older adults.
- **Verify identities:** Confirm the identity of individuals or companies before sharing personal or financial information.
- **Be cautious online:** Avoid clicking on suspicious links or sharing sensitive information with unknown parties.
- **Trust your instincts:** If something feels off or too good to be true, it probably is.
- **Seek help:** Don't hesitate to reach out to family, friends, or authorities if you suspect you're being targeted by a scam.

RESOURCES to help...



Fraud Watch Network

aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork

**If you or someone you know has been
a victim of fraud, contact:**

877-908-3360

Empowering Victims to Get Support



ReST:

Resilience, Strength & Time

- 1-hour, free, virtual sessions open to anyone across the country
- Lowers stress
- Safe space to talk

aarp.org/fraudsupport

The Your Questions Answered Tool

Your Questions Answered

Enter your question...



Fraud prevention



Go to answers.aarp.org to use this free tool!

Where to report in NC, and get help



1-855-408-1212 Opt 1



1-855-408-1212 Opt 2



Consumer Protection
(919) 716-6400

If your Identity is Stolen

- Contact your financial firm/credit card fraud hotline
- Submit an FTC Identity Theft Report
 - www.identitytheft.gov
- File a police report with local department
- Notify other agencies as needed, such as IRS, Medicaid Fraud Office, State AG
- Closely monitor your online account(s)
- Contact credit reporting bureau(s) and request a Fraud Alert or Credit Freeze
 - experian.com (888) 397-3742
 - transunion.com (800) 680-7289
 - equifax.com (877) 478-7625



CAREGIVER Resources

- **AARP's Caregiver Resource Center**
 - aarp.org/caregiving
 - 1-877-333-5885
- **Community Resource Finder**
 - aarp.org/crf
- **learn.aarp.org**
- **[BRAIN HEALTH- www.aarp.org/stayingsharp](http://www.aarp.org/stayingsharp)**
- **aarp.org/brainhealth**
- **AARPCAREConnect.org**

CAREGIVER BOOK REFERENCES

- CHECKLIST for FAMILY CAREGIVERS- *A guide to Making It Manageable* by Sally Balch Hurme
- CHECKLIST for MY FAMILY- *A Guide to My History, Financial Plans, and Final Wishes* by Sally Balch Hurme



Conclusion

Share what you learned with your friends and family to help protect them, too.

If you can **SPOT** a scam, you can **STOP** a scam.



QUESTIONS?



Keep in Touch with Us

Email: shahn@aarp.org

Phone: 919-508-0271

Web: www.aarp.org/nc
www.aarp.org/fraud



[Facebook.com/aarpnc](https://www.facebook.com/aarpnc)



[Twitter.com/aarpnc](https://twitter.com/aarpnc)



Keep in Touch with Us

savagehelenn@gmail.com

Email: suzannelafolletteblack@gmail.com

Phone: 1-866-389-5650

Web: www.aarp.org/nc
www.aarp.org/fraud



[facebook.com/aarpnc](https://www.facebook.com/aarpnc)



[Twitter.com/aarp.org](https://twitter.com/aarp.org)



Thank You
for Joining Us!