

SSA imposters top IRS in consumer loss reports

April 12, 2019

by Seena Gressin

Attorney, Division of Consumer & Business Education, FTC

Have you gotten calls about supposed problems with your Social Security number from callers pretending they're with the Social Security Administration (SSA)? If so, you're not alone. Our latest Data Spotlight finds that reports about SSA imposters are surging, while reports about IRS imposters have taken a dive.

As the Spotlight puts it, "In the shady world of government imposters, the SSA scam may be the new IRS scam." While reports of SSA imposters have swelled – nearly half of the reports we've gotten in the last year have come in the past two months alone – reports of IRS scammers have plunged. What's more, people told us they lost \$19 million to SSA imposters in the past year. That overtakes the \$17 million reported lost to IRS imposters in 2016, the peak year of the IRS scam.

How can you spot SSA imposters? They often use robocalls to reach you, then launch into a story aimed at tricking you into giving them your money, your Social Security number (SSN), or both. They may say your SSN has been suspended and you need to confirm your SSN to reactivate it. Or, they may say your SSN has been involved in a crime and your bank account is about to be seized or frozen, but you can protect your money if you put it on a gift card and give them the code. Never do that – your money will disappear.

If you get one of these calls, remember – the real SSA will **never** contact you out of the blue or tell you to put money on a gift card or, for that matter, visit a Bitcoin ATM, or wire money. If your caller ID shows a number that looks like it belongs to the SSA, don't trust the number – scammers fake their caller ID all the time. If you're worried, hang up and call the SSA yourself at 1-800-772-1213.

Check out the Data Spotlight for more information. If you think a scammer has your Social Security number, visit IdentityTheft.gov/ssa to learn what you can do.