

## Fact Sheet: Identity Theft

*“One of the most harmful abuses of personal information is identity theft.”*

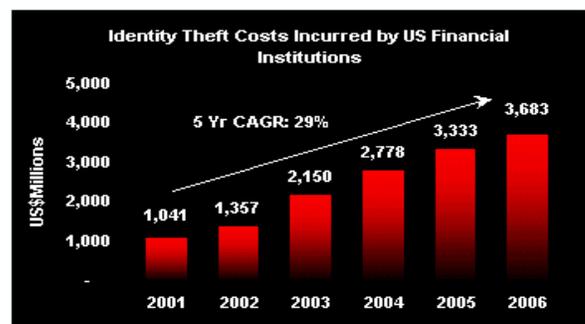
-- George W. Bush, February 2002

Due to under-reporting and other measurement problems, there are no precise measures of the number of Americans who are victimized by identity theft each year. However, a March 2002 U.S. General Accounting Office Report to Congressional Requesters found that “the prevalence and cost of identity theft seem to be increasing.” GAO-02-363, “Identity Theft Prevalence and Cost,” at 3 (emphasis added) (March 2002). The facts support this conclusion:

- **79% increase.** According to one study, 7 million U.S. adults were victims of identity theft in the past year, a 79% increase over the previous year.
  - Gartner Inc. survey, “Underreporting of Identity Theft Rewards the Thieves,” (July 2003).
- **11.8 million.** According to one study, 11.8 million Americans are estimated to have been victims of ID theft.
  - Star Systems, a Concord EFS, Inc. subsidiary, in conjunction with Powell Tate, “ID Theft in the United States: An Update,” at 6 (Dec. 2002).
- **220,000.** An estimated 220,000 people will be victims of pure identity theft in 2004, which involves taking over victims’ accounts or creating new accounts using identifying information that relates to the victim. This number is growing at an annual rate of 30%.
  - Financial Services Roundtable, BITS Analysis, (Feb. 2003).
- **12%.** 12% of homeowners have been a victim of identity theft, while 22% of homeowners know of a family member, friend, or acquaintance who has been a victim of identity theft.
  - Harris Interactive, “Fireman’s Fund Homeowners Insurance Awareness Survey,” (January 2003).
- **175 hours.** Some victims spend as many as 175 hours actively trying to resolve their identity theft related problems. Some spend more.
  - GAO-02-363, “Identity Theft Prevalence and Cost,” at 9 (March 2002).
- **161,819.** 161,819 identity theft complaints were received by the Federal Trade Commission and over 100 other organizations in 2002.
  - FTC, “National and State Trends in Fraud and Identity Theft,” at 3 (Jan. 22, 2003).

- **87%.** Identity theft complaints to the Federal Trade Commission increased 87% from 2001 to 2002.
  - FTC, "National and State Trends in Fraud and Identity Theft," at 3 (Jan. 22, 2003).
- **92%.** 92% of Americans think the government should take action on identity theft.
  - Star Systems, a Concord EFS, Inc. subsidiary, Identity Theft Research, (April 2003).
- **83%.** 83% of homeowners believe the government should take steps to prevent identity theft.
  - Harris Interactive, "Fireman's Fund Homeowners Insurance Awareness Survey," (January 2003).
- **70%.** 70% of U.S. workers and managers believe that government regulations play a role in raising awareness at their workplace about identity theft and database security.
  - Harris Interactive, Database Security Survey of U.S. Workers and Managers, (May 2003).
- **More than \$1 billion.** The U.S. General Accounting Office found that, using law enforcement's broad definition of identity theft, total credit card fraud losses were "about \$1 billion in 2000." Combined with additional losses to other financial services companies, loss avoidance costs, and the costs to consumers to repair their records after being victimized, the total costs are likely well-over \$1 billion per year.
  - GAO-02-363, "Identity Theft Prevalence and Cost," at 6-9 (March 2002).
- 48 % of credit card fraud is related to lost or stolen credit cards, while 47% of credit card fraud includes mail intercept fraud, skimming, counterfeit cards, and identity theft.
  - Celent Communications, Taking a Bite out of Credit Card Fraud, 2003.

- **More than \$3 billion.** One study estimates that the cost of identity theft to financial institutions will grow to \$3.6 billion by 2006.
  - Celent Communications, ID Theft: Protecting the Customer – Protecting the Institution, 2002.



- **\$9,800.** The average amount of a victim's loss attributed to the crime of identity theft is \$9,800, more than the amount attributed to bank robbery.
  - Aberdeen Group, "Identity Theft: A \$2 Trillion Criminal Industry in 2005," (May 2003).

- **66%.** 66% of U.S. workers and managers surveyed believe that their co-workers, not hackers, pose the greatest risk to consumer privacy.  
-- Harris Interactive, Database Security Survey of U.S. Workers and Managers, (May 2003).
- **90%.** 90% of homeowners are concerned that they will be a target of identity theft (defined as a crime in which an imposter obtains key pieces of personal information to impersonate someone else).  
-- Harris Interactive, "Fireman's Fund Homeowners Insurance Awareness Survey," (January 2003).
- **51%.** 51% of people surveyed are very concerned about identity theft, more concerned than they are about unemployment or corporate fraud.  
-- Star Systems, a Concord EFS, Inc. subsidiary, Identity Theft Research, (April 2003).
- **74%.** 74% of consumers are willing to provide an ID when applying for a loan or opening a bank account.  
-- Star Systems, a Concord EFS, Inc. subsidiary, Identity Theft Research, (April 2003).
- **More than 2/3.** More than two-thirds of consumers want the financial services industry to have programs in place to verify the identity of consumers who open bank and credit card accounts.  
-- Star Systems, a Concord EFS, Inc. subsidiary, Identity Theft Research, (April 2003).
- **72%.** 72% of consumers believe banks and credit card companies should verify the identity of customers who open credit card accounts.  
-- Star Systems, a Concord EFS, Inc. subsidiary, Identity Theft Research, (April 2003).
- **Consumers are willing to provide photo identification when conducting financial transactions.** 74% would provide ID when applying for a loan; 66% would provide ID when making a credit card purchase; 74% would provide ID when opening a bank account; and 68% would provide ID when applying for a credit card.  
-- Star Systems, a Concord EFS, Inc. subsidiary, Identity Theft Research, (April 2003).
- **Beneath the statistics are personal tragedies.** For example, in May of 2002 a New Jersey woman received a notice from a North Carolina police department. The notice said that her husband had just committed a traffic violation in North Carolina. The problem? The woman's husband died 8 months earlier in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Renewing her hope that her husband was alive, this woman contacted the police department that issued the notice, only to discover that a thief had stolen her husband's identity.  
-- Robin Gaby Fisher, "Identity thief robs name of 9/11 victim," Star-Ledger (Sept. 22, 2002).