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PRESS RELEASE

In 2021, 1 in 10 persons had been victims of identity theft in the past 12 months

WASHINGTON – In 2021, about 23.9 million U.S. residents age 16 or older (9% of the population) had experienced identity theft in the past 12 months, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics' new report *Victims of Identity Theft, 2021*. As of 2021, about 1 in 5 persons (22%) had experienced identity theft in their lifetime.

In 2021, almost 4% of people had their credit card misused, while 3% had their bank account misused. Two percent experienced misuse of their email or social media account. Nearly 1% had their personal information misused for fraudulent purposes, such as getting medical care or applying for a job or government benefits. Less than 1% had their personal information misused to open a new account.

Consequences of identity-theft victimization varied by the type of crime victims experienced. A majority of victims (56%) spent 1 day or less resolving financial or credit problems associated with their most recent identity theft. About 7% of identity-theft victims reported the incident to law enforcement, and 67% of victims contacted a credit card company or bank. On average, victims sustained direct financial losses of \$880. Victims of new account misuse (\$3,430) had higher direct losses on average compared to victims of bank account (\$670) and credit card misuse (\$620).

"While about 6 in 10 (59%) victims of identity-theft incidents in 2021 had financial losses of \$1 or more, those losses totaled \$16.4 billion" noted Kevin M. Scott, PhD, Acting Director of BJS. "In addition, 10% of identity-theft victims in 2021 were severely distressed as a result of the crime."

Findings are from the 2021 Identity Theft Supplement (ITS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey. From July through December 2021, the ITS collected data from persons about their experience with identity theft during the 12 months before the interview. The 2021 ITS featured a redesigned questionnaire, aimed at improving the quality of data collected and modernizing the survey content. These changes include excluding attempted incidents of identity theft, collecting the month and year of the most recent occurrence of each type of identity theft and adding the misuse of an existing email or social media account as a separate type of identity theft.

"These changes resulted in several improvements to the ITS questionnaire," Dr. Scott explained. "For example, the new questionnaire allows for reducing the number of incidents reported that occurred outside the survey window. It also decreases respondent burden by streamlining the information requested."

BJS is also releasing the complementary third-party report, *Assessing the Measurement of Identity Theft through the Identity Theft Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey*, produced for BJS by RTI International, which describes efforts to assess potential sources of measurement error in the ITS.

[Victims of Identity Theft, 2021](#), written by BJS Statisticians Erika Harrell, PhD, and Alexandra Thompson; the third-party report [Assessing the Measurement of Identity Theft through the Identity Theft Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey](#), written by Lynn Langton, PhD, Christopher Krebs, PhD, Patrick Hsieh, PhD, Sarah Cook, Philip Lee, Jeanne Snodgrass, and Herschel Sanders, of RTI International; related documents; and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs are available on the BJS website at bjs.ojp.gov.

About the Bureau of Justice Statistics

The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs is the principal federal agency responsible for collecting, analyzing and disseminating reliable statistics on crime and criminal justice in the United States. Kevin M. Scott, PhD, is the acting director. More information about BJS and criminal justice statistics can be found at bjs.ojp.gov.

About the Office of Justice Programs

The Office of Justice Programs provides federal leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime; advance equity and fairness in the administration of justice; assist victims; and uphold the rule of law. More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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