



QUARTERLY SCAM UPDATE

Issue 11

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

Social Security-Related Scams

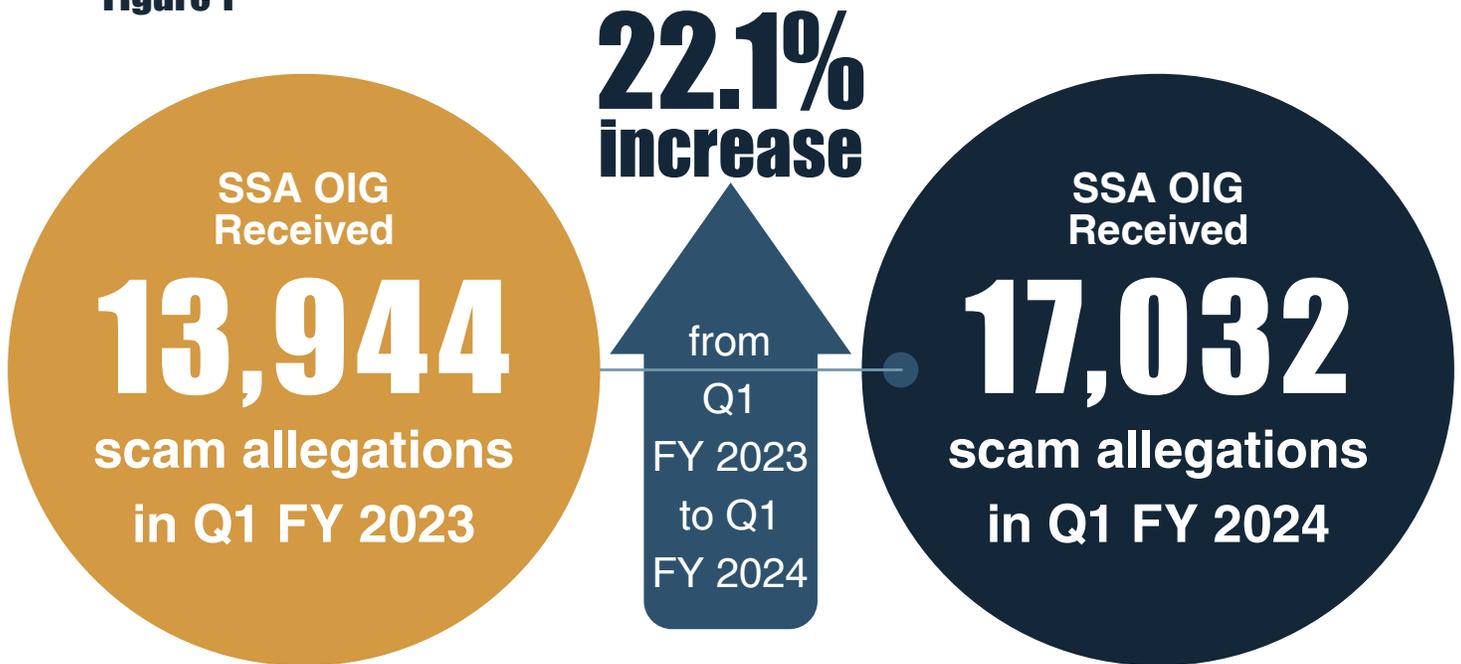
The Social Security Administration (SSA) and SSA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) continue to receive reports of scammers impersonating government employees or alleging a Social Security-related problem to steal money or personal information from victims.

Since October 2019, SSA OIG has shared information on its efforts to combat Social Security-related scams with the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Social Security; U.S. Senate Committee on Finance; and U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. SSA OIG began publicly releasing the Quarterly Scam Update in the third quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 to provide information about these scams and its efforts to combat them.

This report shares information about Social Security-related and government imposter scam allegation trends in the first quarter (Q1) of FY 2024 (October 1 through December 31, 2023). Examples of SSA and SSA OIG's recent efforts to disrupt and raise awareness of scams are also included.



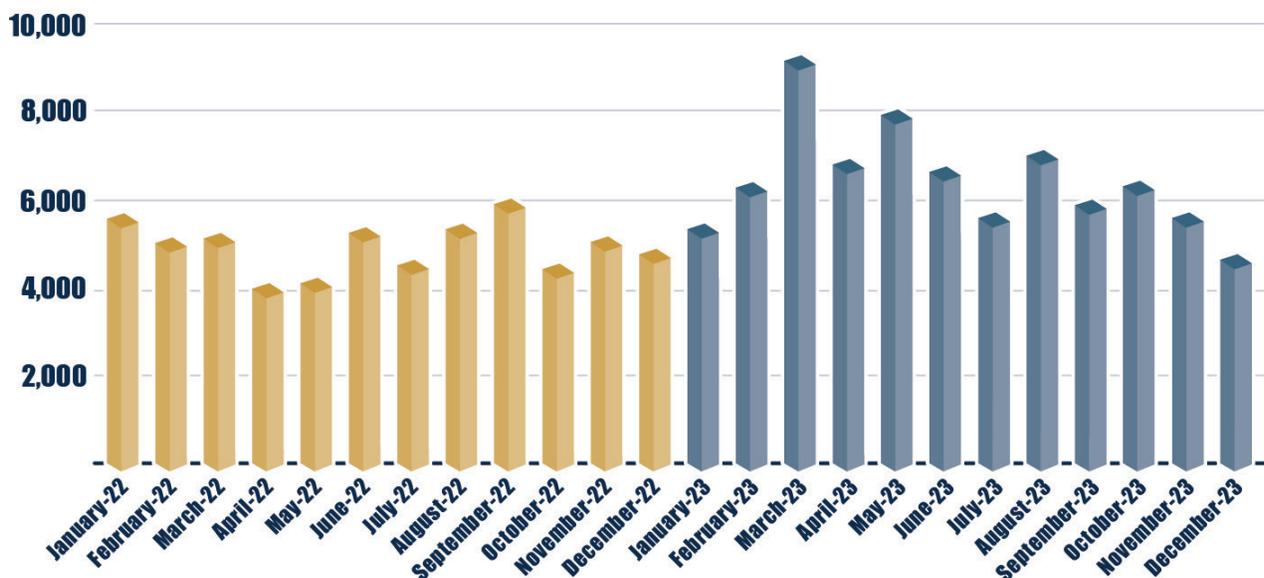
Figure 1



While scam allegations increased 22.1 percent from Q1 FY 2023 to Q1 FY 2024, scams reported to SSA OIG are still down significantly from Q1 in prior years. SSA OIG received 20,756 scam allegations in Q1 FY 2022, 225,364 in Q1 FY 2021 (during the scam's peak), 156,129 in Q1 FY 2020, and 61,762 in Q1 FY 2019. SSA OIG has received fewer than 10,000 Social Security-related scam allegations per month from January 2022 to the present.

Figure 2

**Imposter Scam Complaints Received by SSA OIG
January 2022 to December 2023**



SSA OIG receives the majority of Social Security-related scam allegations from its dedicated online scam reporting form and its hotline. While the form states it is for those who “believe [they] have been a victim of a Social Security Administration Scam,” the form also allows individuals to report whether the scam involved the impersonation of officials from federal, state, or local government agencies other than SSA.

Figure 3

Q4 FY 2023 and Q1 FY 2024 Complaint Trends – Percentage of Total Imposter Allegations from the Scam Reporting Form

Complaint Characteristics	Q4 7/1/23–9/30/23	Q1 10/1/23–12/31/23
 The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security number	40.8%	38.2%
 The imposter mentioned a problem with your Social Security benefits	16.4%	16.5%
 The imposter used documents or images (such as a federal logo) when communicating with you	25.8%	26.8%
 The scam involved the impersonation of officials from federal, state, or local government agencies other than the Social Security Administration	37.3%	35.3%
 The imposter mentioned a coronavirus or COVID-19 related issue, or referred to a coronavirus or COVID-19 stimulus check, stimulus payment, or economic impact payment	2.4%	2.5%
 None of the Above	28.5%	30.8%

Note: The percentages were calculated based on the total number of allegations each quarter. The percentages do not add to 100 percent because individual allegations may include more than one complaint characteristic.

In [Q4 FY 2023](#), slightly more individuals under 50 years of age reported financial losses than those 50 years of age or older. Figure 4 (below) shows that in Q1 FY 2024, slightly more individuals 50 years of age or older reported financial losses than those under 50 years of age. In Q1 FY 2024, 598 individuals under 50 years of age reported losses, compared with 650 individuals 50 years of age and older.

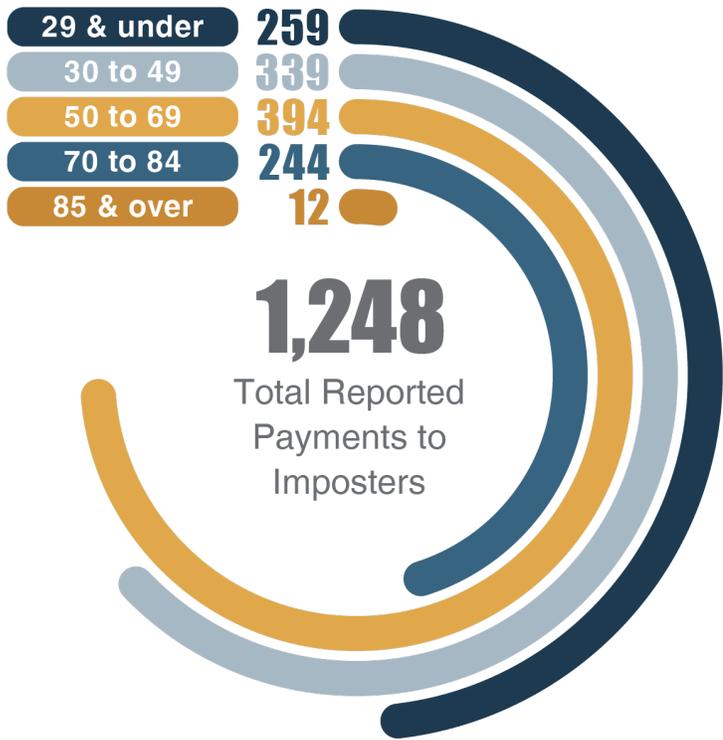


Figure 4

Number of Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

10/1/2023 – 12/31/2023

In [Q4 FY 2023](#), individuals 50 years of age and over reported higher average losses than those under 50 years of age. Additionally, during Q4 FY 2023, the highest average losses were reported by individuals 70 to 84 years of age. Figure 5 (below) shows that in Q1 FY 2024, these trends continued.

Figure 5

Average Dollar Value Reported Payments to Imposters, by Reported Age

10/1/2023 – 12/31/2023

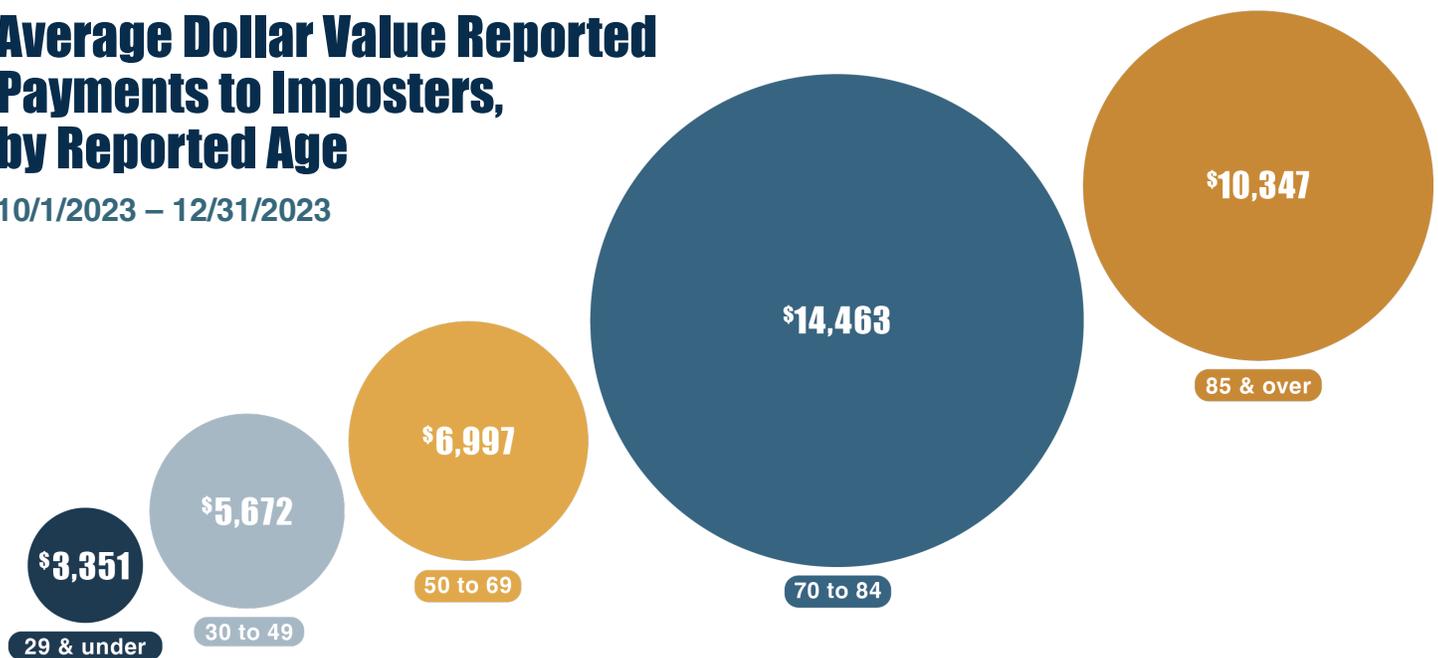
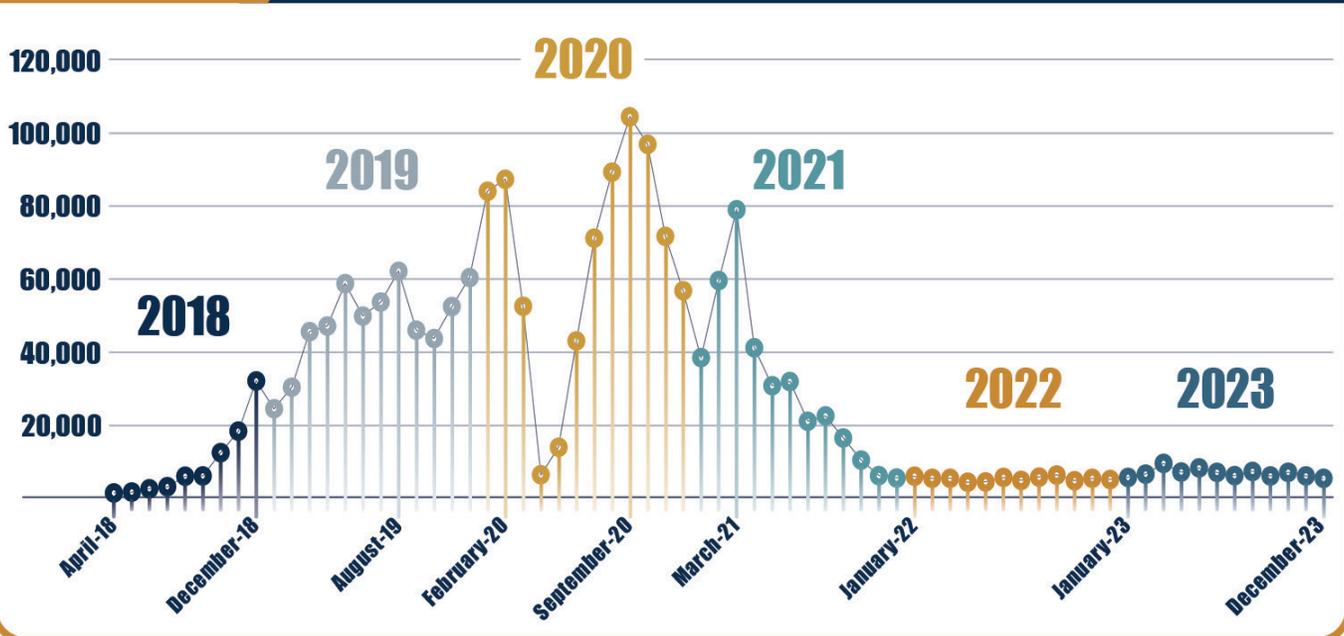


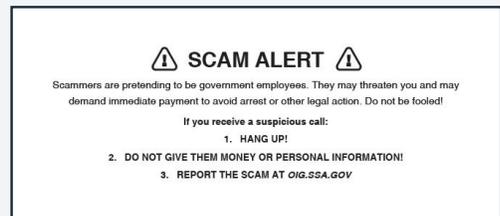
Figure 6

Long-term SSA-related Imposter Scam Allegations
April 2018 to December 2023



Annually, Social Security-related scam reports have decreased significantly since FY 2021, and according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), government imposter scam complaints have declined since 2021. However, Social Security-related scams remain the top government imposter type reported to the FTC.¹ Therefore, while the decline is promising, SSA OIG and SSA continue to fight these scams.

In Q1 FY 2024, SSA mailed 127.6 million letters to the public with a scam message printed on the back of envelopes (right). The Agency has mailed more than **1 billion** of these letters to date.



SSA's latest Scam Awareness Public Service Announcement (left), which started airing in late October 2021, generated **2.5 million** impressions in Q1 FY 2024.



SSA's November 16, 2023 video, *How to Spot a Scam*, garnered **3,707** views through the end of Q1 FY 2024.

1. This information is based on data reported to the FTC as of February 8, 2024.

Q1 FY 2024 Additional Internal and External Education Efforts

SSA and SSA OIG engaged in additional outreach and education efforts with members of the public, government and non-government organizations, and SSA employees to raise awareness of scams targeting American residents. Some examples of these efforts during Q1 FY 2024 included the activities below.

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SSA OIG and SSA led the discussion on Artificial Intelligence at the Office of Management and Budget's Payment Integrity and Fraud Symposium.
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SSA posted a blog titled, [Stay Alert: Fraudsters Target Veterans, Active-Duty Service Members and Their Families](#), that discusses how fraudsters commonly target veterans, active-duty service members and their families, and provides instructions for reporting.
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SSA published a video titled, [How to Spot a Scam](#) on [YouTube](#) and the [SSA.gov/Scam](#) webpage. SSA also participated in a monthly Department of Veterans Affairs meeting on fraud and scams to share about the recently released blog and video.
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SSA posted a blog titled, [New Year's Resolution to Combat Scams](#), that discusses smart resolutions to protect personal information and combat fraud and scams.
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SSA OIG presented on fraud and scams to employees in over a dozen SSA field offices in the Los Angeles, Fresno, and San Francisco, California areas.
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SSA OIG launched an initiative to develop informational materials on avoiding being victimized by scams using SSA as bait to be made available at public libraries.
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SSA OIG met with a telecommunications trade organization about presenting at a forthcoming conference regarding collaboration opportunities to deter SSA-related scam calls.
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SSA OIG presented to Criminal Justice students on OIG's mission, fraud investigations, and scam fighting work at Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico.

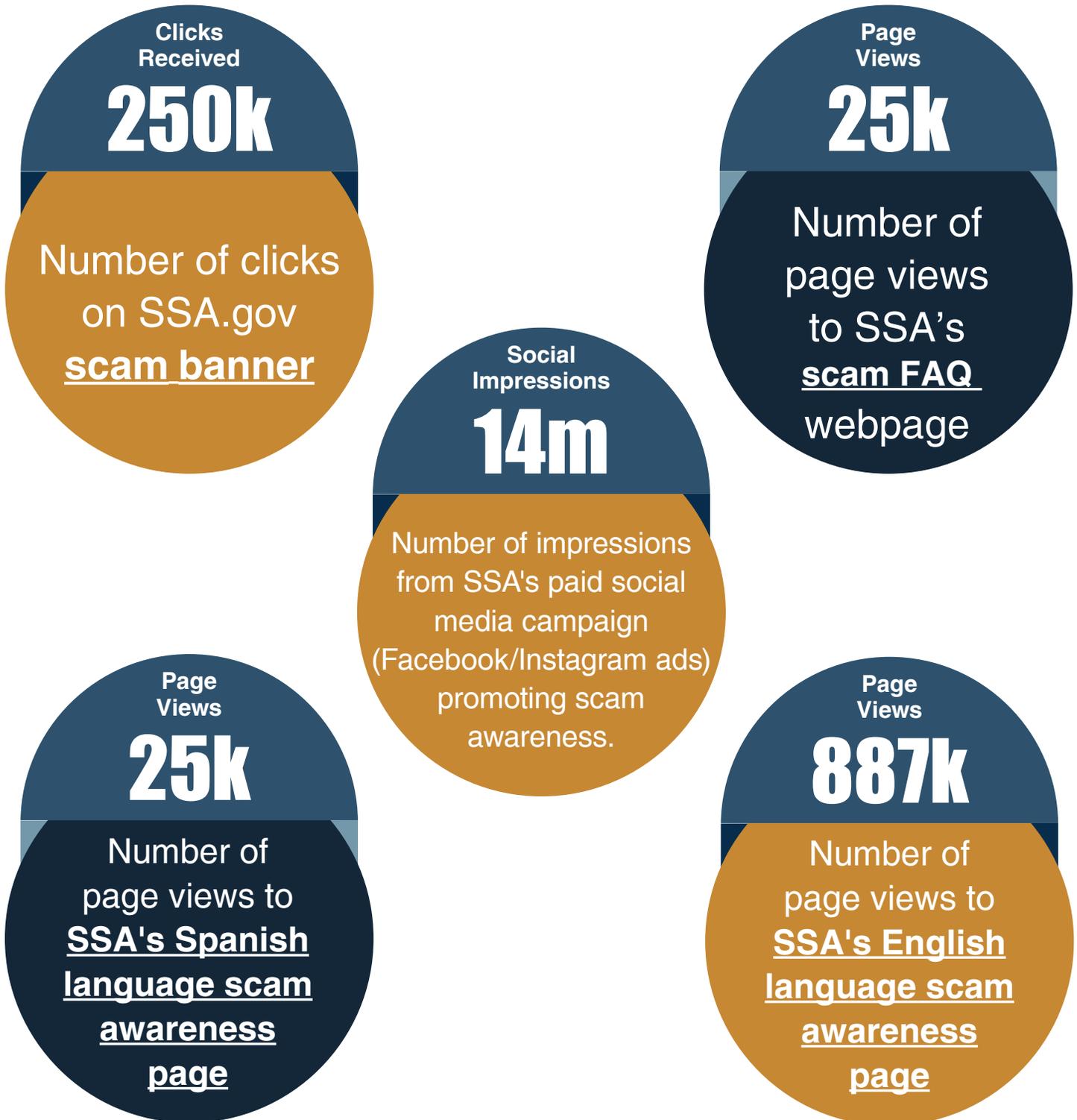
Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group

SSA and SSA OIG continue to serve on committees with the FTC and other law enforcement partners as a result of the [Stop Senior Scams Act](#), which established the Scams Against Older Adults Advisory Group. SSA and SSA OIG participate on committees that meet quarterly focused on:

- ◆ Expanding consumer education efforts;
- ◆ Identifying innovative or high-tech methods to detect and stop scams; and
- ◆ Improving industry training on scam prevention;
- ◆ Developing research on consumer or employee engagement to reduce fraud.

Q1 FY 2024 Website Page Views and Social Media Impressions

An SSA and SSA OIG joint scam page redesign resulted in an increase in page views to the scam page. Since the launch of the redesign on May 19, 2022, there have been **3.35 million page views** of the scam page including **179,342 clicks** on the Report a Social Security-related Scam button and **115,004 clicks** on the Report a Scam button. Website page views, clicks, and social media impressions for Q1 FY 2024 are below.



Consumer Protection: Telephone and Social Media Scams

Section 1140 of the *Social Security Act*, as amended, protects the public from advertisements, solicitations, and other communications that convey the false impression that SSA approved, endorsed, or authorized the communication. SSA OIG continued efforts to protect consumers from Social Security-related scam calls originating outside of the U.S. by seeking corrective action against U.S. based telecommunications companies, acting as gateway carriers, who profit by accepting Social Security-related scam calls into the U.S. telecommunications system, and passing them to unsuspecting consumers. During Q1 FY 2024, SSA OIG resolved a matter with a gateway carrier, resulting in the imposition of a \$37,500 penalty. To date, SSA OIG has imposed penalties against 24 gateway carriers for their involvement with Social Security-related scam calls.

As a result of SSA OIG's Section 1140 and other efforts, the telecommunications industry is on notice of the potential legal ramifications for their involvement with Social Security-related scam calls. Telecommunications companies are continuing to take more proactive steps to prohibit scam calls from entering the U.S. or are discontinuing the gateway carrier segment of their operations or operations entirely.

During Q1 FY 2024, SSA OIG launched a new initiative focused specifically on domestic originating misleading Social Security disability telephone solicitations. The purpose of these solicitations is to develop Social Security disability representation leads for attorneys and non-attorney claimant representatives. SSA OIG has initiated Section 1140 inquiries against several entities over concerns that their Social Security disability solicitations convey the inference that the calls are from SSA or are otherwise authorized by SSA.

In addition to SSA OIG's scam call efforts, SSA OIG continues to stay vigilant regarding Social Security-related imposter social media accounts. SSA OIG recognizes the public's vulnerability to harm from social media scams, as well as the negative impact these scams have on SSA's reputation and ability to effectively communicate via its robust social media program. During Q1 FY 2024, SSA OIG continued its efforts monitoring social media platforms for SSA-related imposter accounts. SSA OIG reported four SSA-related imposter accounts, prompting the expedient take down of the identified fraudulent accounts by the social media platform. SSA OIG continues to review each matter for potential civil monetary penalty action.



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