

COVID-19, Scams, and the Effects of the Pandemic

Jennifer Leach

Director, Consumer & Business Education

Federal Trade Commission

jleach@ftc.gov

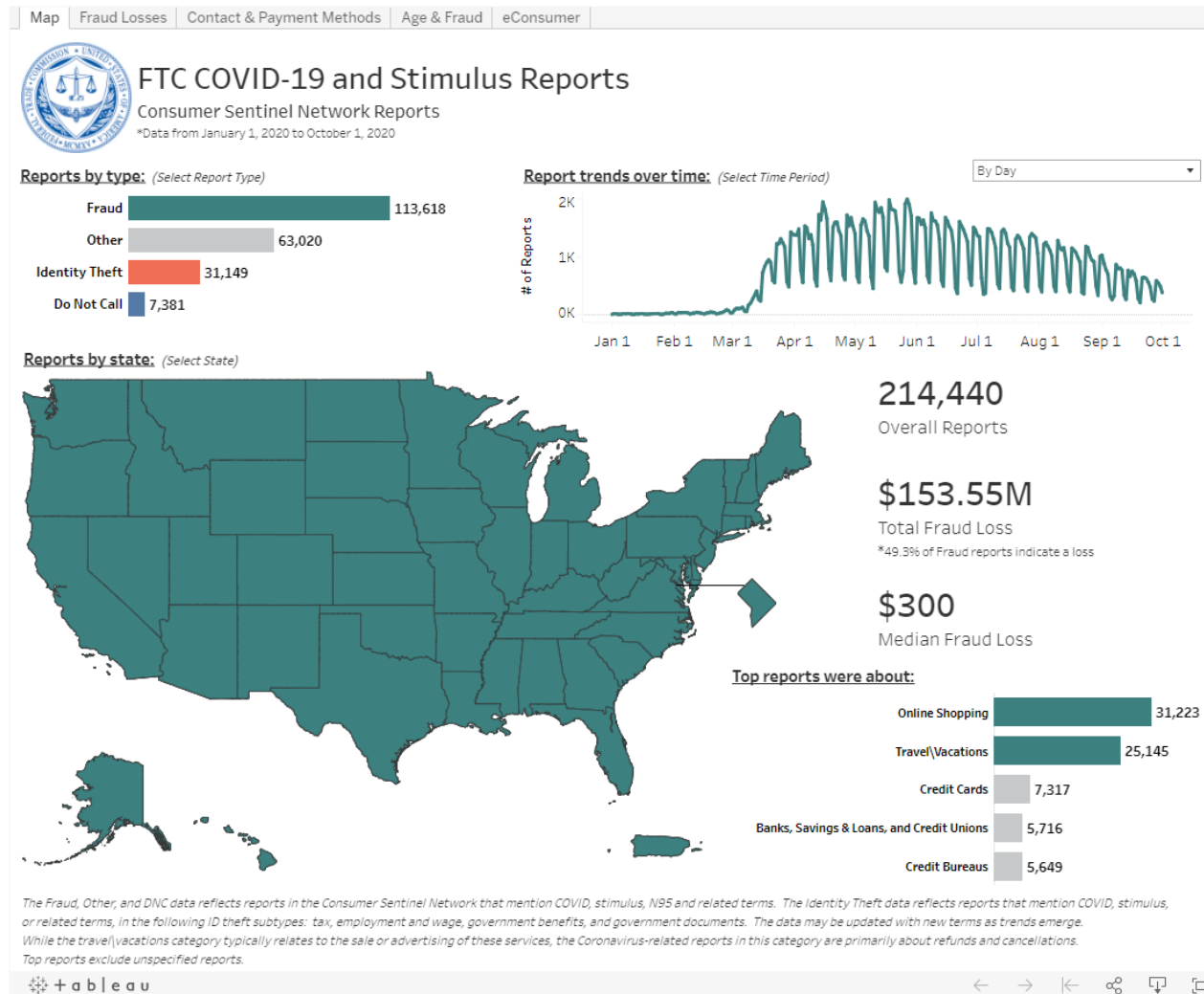
Scammers follow the headlines

- ▶ As headlines change, so will the scams
 - ▶ Fake cures, treatments, test kits
 - ▶ Online buying scams: masks, toilet paper, other essentials
 - ▶ Charity scams
 - ▶ Pet scams
 - ▶ Government benefit scams
 - ▶ Job scams
 - ▶ Economic help scams: mortgage/rental/student loans...
 - ▶ Debt collection
 - ▶ Scams targeting small businesses
 - ▶ ...

ftc.gov/exploredata

< Federal Trade Commission - Profile

☆ Favorite ↗ Explore (Beta) ⌵ Download





FTC COVID-19 Reports from eConsumer.gov

*Data from January 1, 2020 to October 5, 2020



4,391
Overall Reports

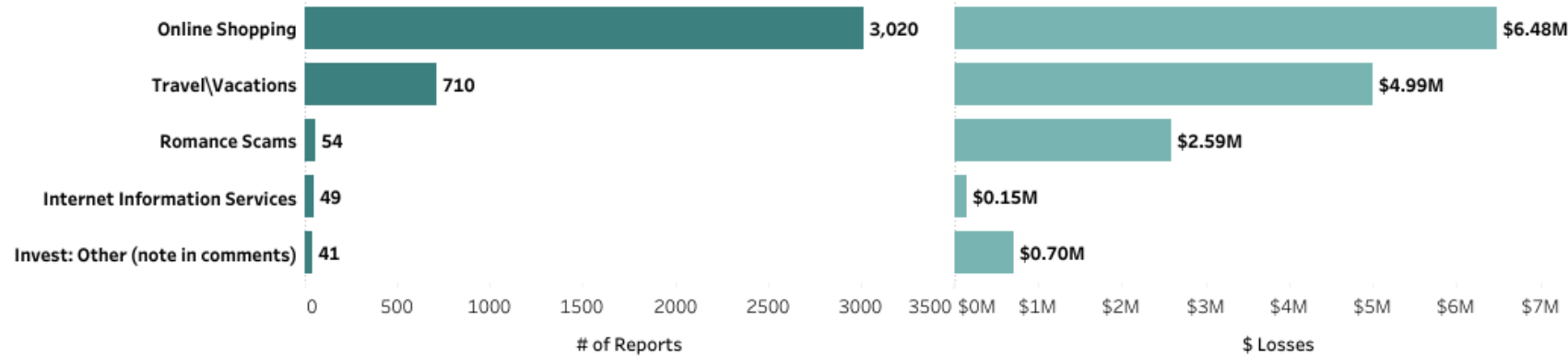
\$16.27M

Total Fraud Loss
*92.2% of Fraud reports indicate a loss

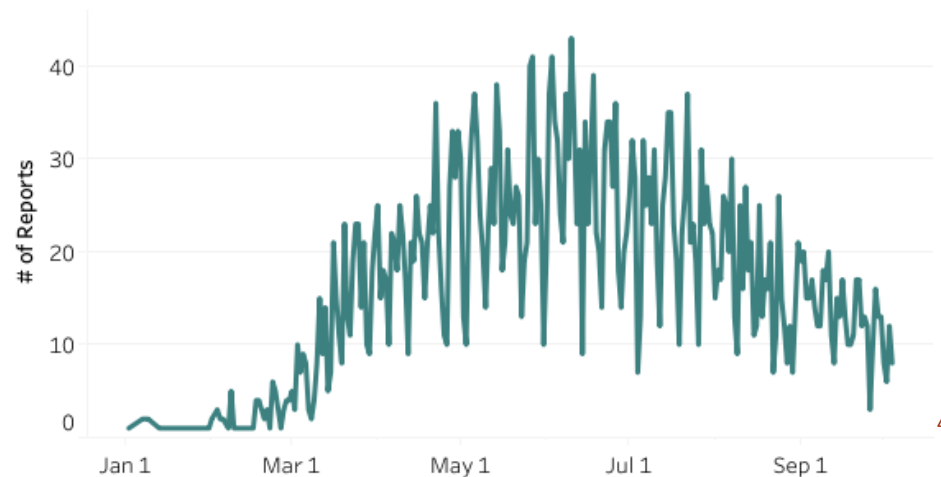
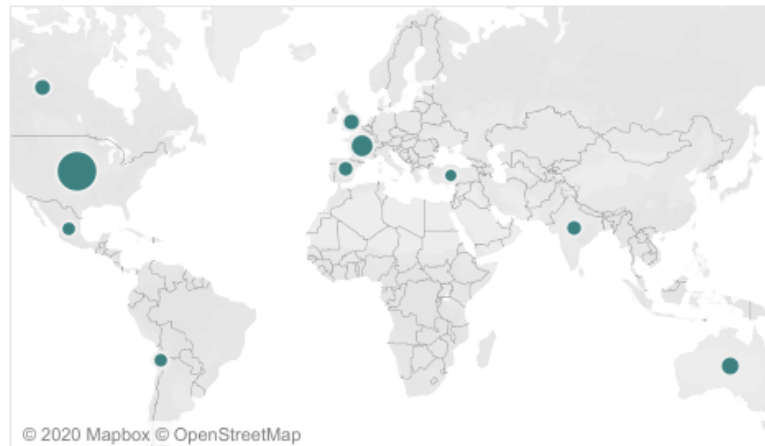
\$121

Median Fraud Loss

Top Fraud Products or Services



Top Consumer Countries



While the travel/vacations category typically relates to the sale or advertising of these services, the Coronavirus-related reports in this category are primarily about refunds and cancellations.



Home > Blog > Coronavirus: Scammers follow the headlines

[Vea esta página en español](#)

Coronavirus: Scammers follow the headlines

Share this page   

GET EMAIL UPDATES

February 10, 2020
by Colleen Tressler
Consumer Education Specialist, FTC

Scammers are taking advantage of fears surrounding the Coronavirus. They're setting up websites to sell bogus products, and using fake emails, texts, and social media posts as a ruse to take your money and get your personal information.

The emails and posts may be promoting awareness and prevention tips, and fake information about cases in your neighborhood. They also may be asking you to donate to victims, offering advice on unproven treatments, or contain malicious email attachments.

Here are some tips to help you keep the scammers at bay:

- Don't click on links from sources you don't know. It could download a virus onto your computer or device. Make sure the anti-malware and anti-virus software on your computer is up to date.
- Watch for emails claiming to be from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or experts saying that have information about the virus. For the most up-to-date information about the Coronavirus, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#).
- Ignore online offers for vaccinations. If you see ads touting prevention, treatment, or cure claims for the Coronavirus, ask

Recent Blog Posts

[The FTC Chairman is not writing to you](#)
October 1, 2020

[Online Trading Academy email correction](#)
September 30, 2020

[Have you gotten a collection call about a debt you don't recognize?](#)
September 29, 2020

Browse by Topic

- [Health & Fitness \(223\)](#)
- [Homes & Mortgages \(143\)](#)
- [Jobs & Making Money \(239\)](#)
- [Money & Credit \(870\)](#)
- [Privacy, Identity & Online Security \(592\)](#)

Blog Archive

- [October 2020 \(1\)](#)
- [September 2020 \(20\)](#)
- [August 2020 \(21\)](#)

Blogging

Find it:
[Consumer.ftc.gov/blog](https://consumer.ftc.gov/blog)

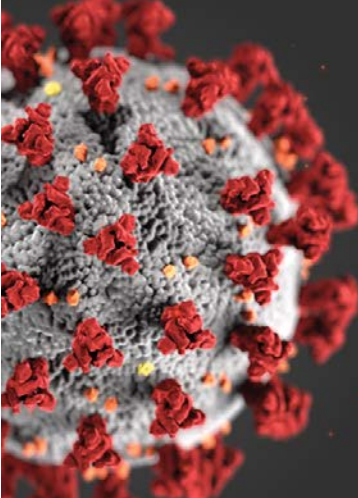
Sign up at:
[Ftc.gov/consumeralerts](https://ftc.gov/consumeralerts)

Who do you want to reach?

What do they need to know?

*This is different than what you need to say

Where/how can you find them?

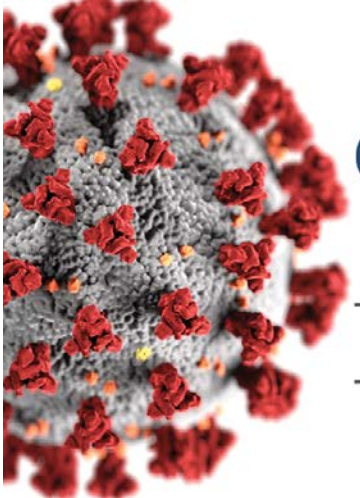


AVOIDING
Coronavirus Scams

Tips from the FTC

ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams

Source: Federal Trade Commission | FTC.gov



Coronavirus Scams

What the FTC is Doing

ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams

Source: Federal Trade Commission | FTC.gov

Social
Media

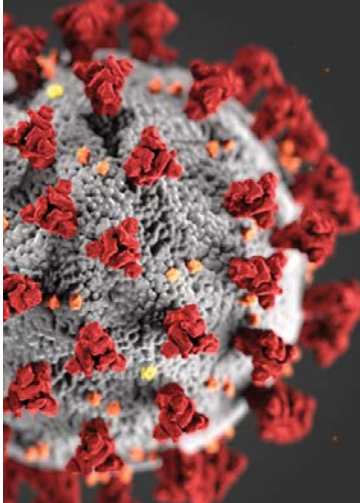


Coronavirus cure?

Not so fast.

Learn the facts at
ftc.gov/coronavirus

Source: Federal Trade Commission | FTC.gov



Learn about
Coronavirus Scams at

ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams

Source: Federal Trade Commission | FTC.gov

ftc.gov/coronavirus/resources

Social Media: econsumer.gov

CCPC Zambia
@CompComZambia

Do your homework before you donate to help #Coronavirus charities at home or abroad. Scammers use names that sound like the names of real charities. Report international scams to econsumer.gov #econsumergov #CCPC



3:38 AM - Apr 27, 2020 - Twitter Web App

가정경제

한국소비자원 대응 메시지
3월 24일 09:00:00에 전송

전 세계 소비자보호기관은 코로나바이러스 관련 사기에 대응하고 있습니다. 아래와 같이 사기가 의심되는 경우, #다국적온라인사기보고 사이트인 econsumer.gov로 신고하세요.

<https://econsumer.gov/ko/FeedbackComplaintsForm>

- ▶포기가 없더라도 3월 19일 예방 요는 치료한다고 광고하는 등
- ▶유명 자선단체와 비슷한 명칭을 사용하며 코로나19 관련 기부금을 요청하는 경우
- ▶재택근무 할 수 있는 직장을 소개해주는 대가로 돈을 요구하는 경우
- ▶공공기관 또는 사업자라고 칭하고 홍세를 할 수 있는 허가를 제공하거나 순환정보 또는 비밀정보와 같은 정보를 요청하는 경우



공유하기

FCCPC Nigeria
@fccpcnigeria

Consumer protection agencies around the world are looking to combat #Coronavirus scams. Many of these scams cross borders. Help them by reporting international scams to econsumer.gov <econsumer.gov> #econsumergov



Member Countries

E-Tüketici Portalı
@etuketici

Ayrıntılı bilgi için; T.C. #sağlıkbakanlığı ve #DünyaSağlıkÖrg. kaynaklarını inceleyebilir, bu tür sınır ötesi dolandırıcılıkları econsumer.gov adresine bildirebilirsiniz. #econsumergov



2:31 PM - Apr 4, 2020 - Twitter Web App

4 Retweets 5 Likes

La FTC
@LaFTC

Las agencias de protección al consumidor de todo el mundo se dedican a combatir las estafas de #Coronavirus. Muchas de estas estafas cruzan las fronteras. Ayúdanos reportando las estafas internacionales a econsumer.gov #econsumergov



4:39 PM - Mar 30, 2020 - Twitter Web App

1 Retweet

FTC
@FTC

Consumers worldwide have reported to econsumer.gov more than \$3.2M lost to COVID-19 scams. Learn more about what you can do to protect yourself from these scams: econsumer.gov/en/FeaturedSto... and report them to econsumer.gov. #econsumergov #COVID19



10:24 AM - May 6, 2020 - Twitter Web App

E-Tüketici Portalı
@etuketici

Bu tür uygulamala econsumer.gov ad

#econsumer
#CoronavirusPand
#Coronaturkey
#Covid19turkey
#Covid_19

9:29 AM - Apr 2, 2020 - Twitt

2 Retweets 5 Likes

#coronavirus tehdidine karşı korunmak için internetten temizlik malzemesi yada sağlık ürünümü sipariş ettiniz? Yurt içindeki ya da yurt dışındaki bazı internet satıcıları, tüketicilerce sıklıkla tercih edilen bazı ürünleri stoklarında olmamalarına rağmen tanıtıp pazarlayabilirler.



9:29 AM - Apr 2, 2020 - Twitter Web App

E-Tüketici Portalı
@etuketici

ts 33 Likes

Consumidor:

ia con lupa las condiciones actuales al momento de dar la cancelación de tu **hotel, cualquier otro ocio turístico o espectáculo** y contacta directamente al proveedor que te vendió el producto correspondiente para recibir la información sobre los pasos a seguir.



#Prevención y Acción

CCPC Zambia @CompComZambia

CCPC Zambia
@CompComZambia

Does an online seller at home or abroad claim a vaccine or medicine prevents or cures #COVID19? Scammers are trying to get you to buy products unproven to treat or prevent #COVID19. Learn more from @WHO. Report internet scams to econsumer.gov #CCPC #econsumergov



Videos

[Ftc.gov/coronavirus/resources](https://ftc.gov/coronavirus/resources)

OR

YouTube.com/ftcvideos

The screenshot shows the FTC website's navigation bar with links for 'ABOUT THE FTC', 'NEWS & EVENTS', 'ENFORCEMENT', 'POLICY', 'TIPS & ADVICE', and 'I WOULD LIKE TO...'. Below the navigation bar, there are two main sections of video thumbnails.

Avoid Coronavirus Scams

- FTC Tip # 1: Hang up on robocalls
- FTC Tip # 2: Ignore offers for vaccinations and home test kits
- FTC Tip # 3: Fact-check information
- FTC Tip # 4: Know who you are buying from
- FTC Tip # 5: Don't respond to calls, texts, or emails about money from the government
- FTC Tip # 6: Don't click on links from sources you don't know
- FTC Tip # 7: Watch for emails claiming to be from the CDC
- FTC Tip # 8: Do your homework when it comes to donations
- FTC Tip # 9: Watch out for phishing emails and text messages
- FTC Tip # 10: Stay in the know
- FTC Tip # 11: When you spot a scam, report it to the FTC

You can also view these videos on the [Avoid Coronavirus Scams YouTube playlist](#).

Avoid Economic Impact Payment Scams

- FTC Tip # 1: Don't respond to calls, texts, or emails about money from the government
- FTC Tip # 2: Don't pay anyone to get your money
- FTC Tip # 3: Don't respond to anyone who says your payment was too high

Infographics

KEEP CALM and Avoid Coronavirus Scams

Here are **5 things** you can do to avoid a Coronavirus scam:



Ignore offers for vaccinations and home test kits.

Scammers are selling products to treat or prevent COVID-19 without proof that they work.



Hang up on robocalls.

Scammers use illegal sales call to get your money and your personal information.



Watch out for phishing emails and text messages.

Don't click on links in emails or texts you didn't expect.



Research before you donate.

Don't let anyone rush you into making a donation. Get tips on donating wisely at ftc.gov/charity.



Stay in the know.

Go to ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams for the latest information on scams. Sign up to get FTC's alerts at ftc.gov/subscribe.



Federal Trade Commission

If you see a scam, report it to ftc.gov/complaint

Avoid CORONAVIRUS Relief Payment Scams

4 things you can do to avoid a Coronavirus relief payment scam



Don't respond to calls, texts, or emails about money from the government—or anyone asking for your personal or bank account information.

Government agencies like the IRS will not call, text, or email you about your relief payment.



Don't pay anyone to get your relief payment.

There are no fees to get your money.



Don't respond to anyone who says your payment was too high, and tells you to repay the money by sending cash, a gift card, or a money transfer.

That's always a scam.



Never click on links in emails, texts, or on social media about your relief payment.

Always start at irs.gov/coronavirus to check your eligibility, payment status, enter direct deposit information, or find out what to do to get your payment.



Federal Trade Commission

Learn more about scams at

ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams

To get official updates and more information about your relief payment, always go to

irs.gov/coronavirus

Contact tracing call?

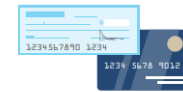
5 things to know

A contact tracer from your state health department might call if you've been exposed to COVID-19. But scammers are pretending to be contact tracers, too. Here's how you can spot the scam.



Real contact tracers won't ask you for money.

Only scammers insist on payment by gift card, money transfer, or cryptocurrency.



Contact tracing doesn't require your bank account or credit card number.

Never share account information with anybody who contacts you asking for it.



Legitimate contact tracers will never ask for your Social Security number.

Never give any part of your Social Security number to anyone who contacts you.



Your immigration status doesn't matter for contact tracing, so real tracers won't ask.

If they do, you can bet it's a scam.



Do not click on a link in a text or email.

Doing so can download malware onto your device.

Talking to a real contact tracer helps stop the spread of COVID-19. Reporting scammers helps stop them, too. Report fake contact tracers to your state and at ftc.gov/complaint.



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

For more information about contact tracing visit your state health department's website and

ftc.gov/coronavirus/scams

Financial Impact: Listening sessions

- ▶ Financial impact of the pandemic will be long-lasting
- ▶ Listening to partners in the field
- ▶ What issues are here? Coming?

ftc.gov/financialimpact

Home > Financial Impact of the Coronavirus [Ve esta página en español](#)

Financial Impact of the Coronavirus

Share this page [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)



What can you do if your finances have been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic? Here are some tips on dealing with job loss, trouble paying bills – including mortgages and car payments – and, if it comes to it, your rights in debt collection. We also have some resources if your small business is affected.

- > [Job Loss](#)
- > [Homes](#)
- > [Auto Payments](#)
- > [Credit](#)
- > [Debt](#)
- > [Student Loans](#)
- > [Small Business](#)



Click to Download PDF



- [Looking for work after Coronavirus layoffs?](#)

Trusted source takeaways

- ▶ Be clear
 - ▶ Your messages
 - ▶ Where to find them
- ▶ Be action-oriented
 - ▶ What can someone DO? What should they NOT do?
- ▶ Be a good sharer
 - ▶ Make it easy for others to use your stuff
 - ▶ Use other people's good stuff
- ▶ Keep listening to what people need

Jennifer Leach
Federal Trade Commission
jleach@ftc.gov