

ELDER FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

What is Elder Financial Exploitation?

Elder financial exploitation (EFE) is the illegal or improper use of an older person's funds, property, or assets. It is the fastest-growing form of elder abuse, as perpetrators may be family members, friends, neighbors, caregivers, health care providers, business associates, or strangers.

EFE crimes generally fall into two categories:



ELDER THEFT

Trusted individuals steal money or belongings from seniors. Elder theft comprises two-thirds of EFE cases. Examples:

- Forging checks
- Stealing retirement or Social Security benefits
- Using credit cards or bank accounts without permission
- Changing names on wills, bank accounts, life insurance policies, or real estate titles without permission



ELDER SCAMS

Strangers deceive older adults into transferring money to them for promised goods, services or financial benefits which do not exist or were misrepresented. Examples:

- **Tech support scams** — Scammers pose as tech repair agents to access victims' computers and finances
- **Investment scams** — Perpetrators induce investors to make purchases based on false information and promises of large returns with minimal risk
- **Romance scams** — Criminals seek money from victims on dating apps and social media
- **Government or family imposter scams** — Fraudsters impersonate government officials or family members to demand money
- **Lottery scams** — Criminals claim victims must pay taxes or fees to access winnings from a lottery or raffle



The Impact on Seniors and the Economy



The average loss per older adult was **\$35,101** in 2022, according to the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center. The FBI reported total losses increased **84%** between 2021 and 2022.



Victims may lose their life's savings or their homes. Victims may also experience fear, shame, anxiety, and depression. Some may lose their independence or even their lives.



EFE costs seniors billions of dollars annually. It also hurts businesses, families, and government programs. EFE may force older adults to become reliant on government-sponsored assistance programs.



Why Older Adults Are Targeted

Seniors generally have more accumulated wealth, thanks to a lifetime of working, investing, and saving. Older adults who are most vulnerable to exploitation may:

- Have previously been a victim of fraud or scams
- Suffer from mild cognitive impairment or dementia
- Be dependent on others to meet daily needs
- Experience social isolation
- Lack information about scams and fraud
- Be unfamiliar with technology, online services, and safe online behavior

It is important to note that any age demographic can be victimized, not just older adults.

For More Information, Visit:

- ABA Foundation's Older Americans Resource Page — aba.com/olderamericans
- Federal Bureau of Investigation — fbi.gov
- Department of Justice — justice.gov/elderjustice/financial-exploitation
- Internet Crime Complaint Center — ic3.gov
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau — consumerfinance.gov
- Federal Trade Commission — ftc.gov
- National Center on Elder Abuse — ncea.acl.gov
- National Adult Protective Services Association — napsa-now.org

