

America Under Attack:

The Shifting Landscape of Spam
and Scam Calls in America



truecaller insights · IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE HARRIS POLL

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Our 2024 Spam and Scam survey results reflect both the evolution of criminal communications fraud and the mixed success of regulators, enforcement agencies, and carriers in mitigating 'robocall' volumes and consumer financial losses.

Top-to-bottom, ecosystem-wide Implementation of STIR/SHAKEN over the last few years, coupled with a more aggressive enforcement posture in pursuing spam, scam, and fraud offenders, has had a positive but modest impact in reducing overall robocall volumes.

These mitigation efforts have also commensurately reduced the overall magnitude of fraud perpetrated against U.S. consumers. While encouraging, Americans still suffer a **~\$25B annual loss** at the **average amount of ~\$450**, impacting **21%** of the adult public. Moreover, those defrauded tend to be in the segments who can least afford the loss.

Between increasingly sinister social engineering capabilities and leveraging AI tools to shape, script, and deliver fraudulent calls and messages, we believe that in 2024 we will see less large scale robocall campaigns but a market spike in series after series of precision-targeted, deeply contextually relevant and persuasive spearfishing campaigns. These surgical strikes have the potential to be much more effective – even at lower volumes, than the brute force mass out-dialing techniques of the past.

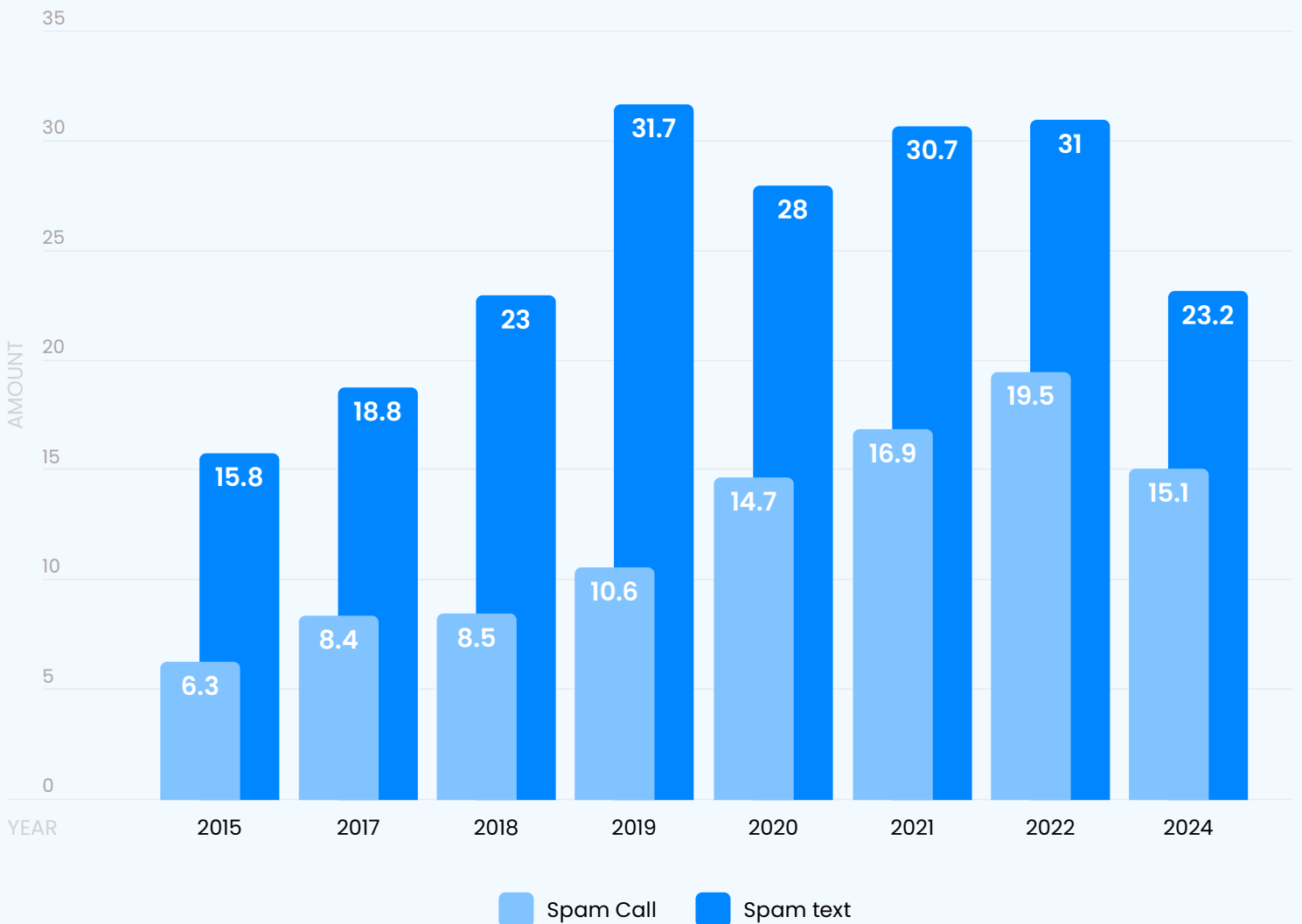
Compared to previous years of our report, volumes may have declined, at least temporarily, but the threat may in fact have accelerated. It is worth mentioning here that we are also in an election cycle which will drive unprecedented levels of mobile targeting for calls and messages to fund raise, drive behaviors and in many cases fraud at the hands of bad actors exploiting the noise.



The State of Spam and Scam

Over the past 12 months, Americans have lost a collective \$25.4 billion to phone scams. The data speaks for itself. More than 56 million Americans were impacted by scam calls preying on trust, exploiting vulnerabilities, and leaving victims reeling from financial losses. But more importantly, spam and scam calls are creating a trust deficit in the most basic form of communication; phone calls. The Truecaller U.S. Spam and Scam Report 2024 tracks changing trends in phone-based scams and presents the latest findings.

Monthly Spam Recieved



Magnitude of Impact

over the past 12 months

Regulatory and mitigation efforts have helped decrease massive robocall campaigns by

18%

YoY

Black Americans and Hispanic adults were

2x more

likely to say that they lost money compared to White Americans (39%, 30%, respectively vs 15%)

41%

of 65 yr olds stopped answering calls, potentially missing important communication

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly being used to make these scam calls, making them sound more realistic and adding to user fears.

1 in 4

Americans reported losing an average of \$452

Younger adults ranging from 18-44 yrs are

3x as likely

to be targeted than older adults

The amount lost totals over

\$25.4 billion

Over

56.2 million

U.S. Adults have been impacted

Preying on Vulnerable Youth

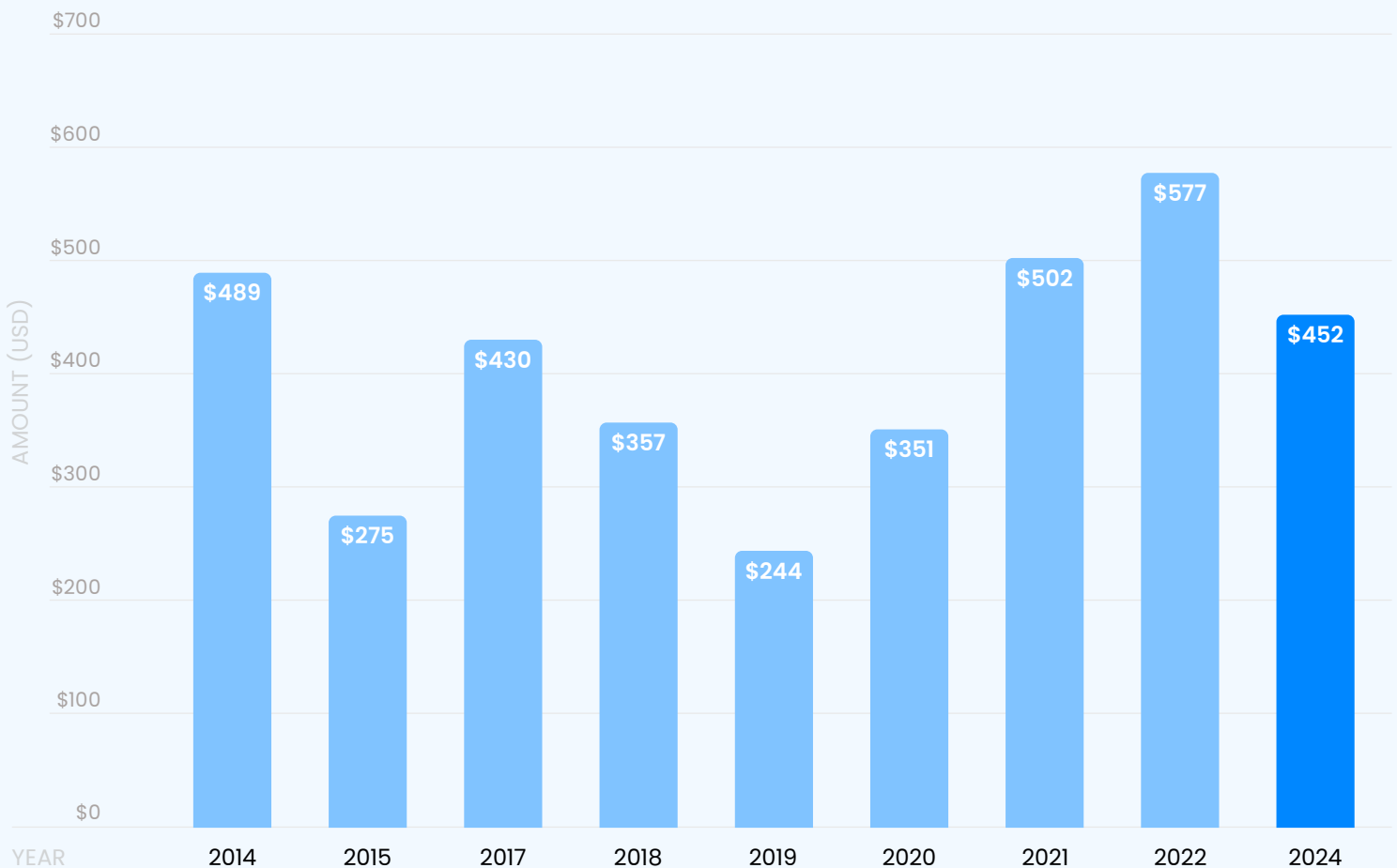
There is an emerging trend of targeting a younger demographic. While the average amount of financial loss has come down to \$452 compared to \$577 in 2022, young adults (18-44 yrs age group) continue to be thrice as likely to be successfully targeted compared to older adults (55+ yrs). Further, 25% of the same age group have reported falling victim to scams more than once.

There are also some clear reasons why older adults (65+ yrs age group) were less likely to be victims of phone scams. Data shows an overwhelmingly large percentage of this age group (75%) never answer calls or text messages if they do not recognize the sender. 57% have signed up for services like 'Do No Call' registry versus 30% in younger age groups (18-64 yrs). 21% of older adults have also downloaded a caller ID app or have caller ID on their landline compared to 14% in younger age groups.

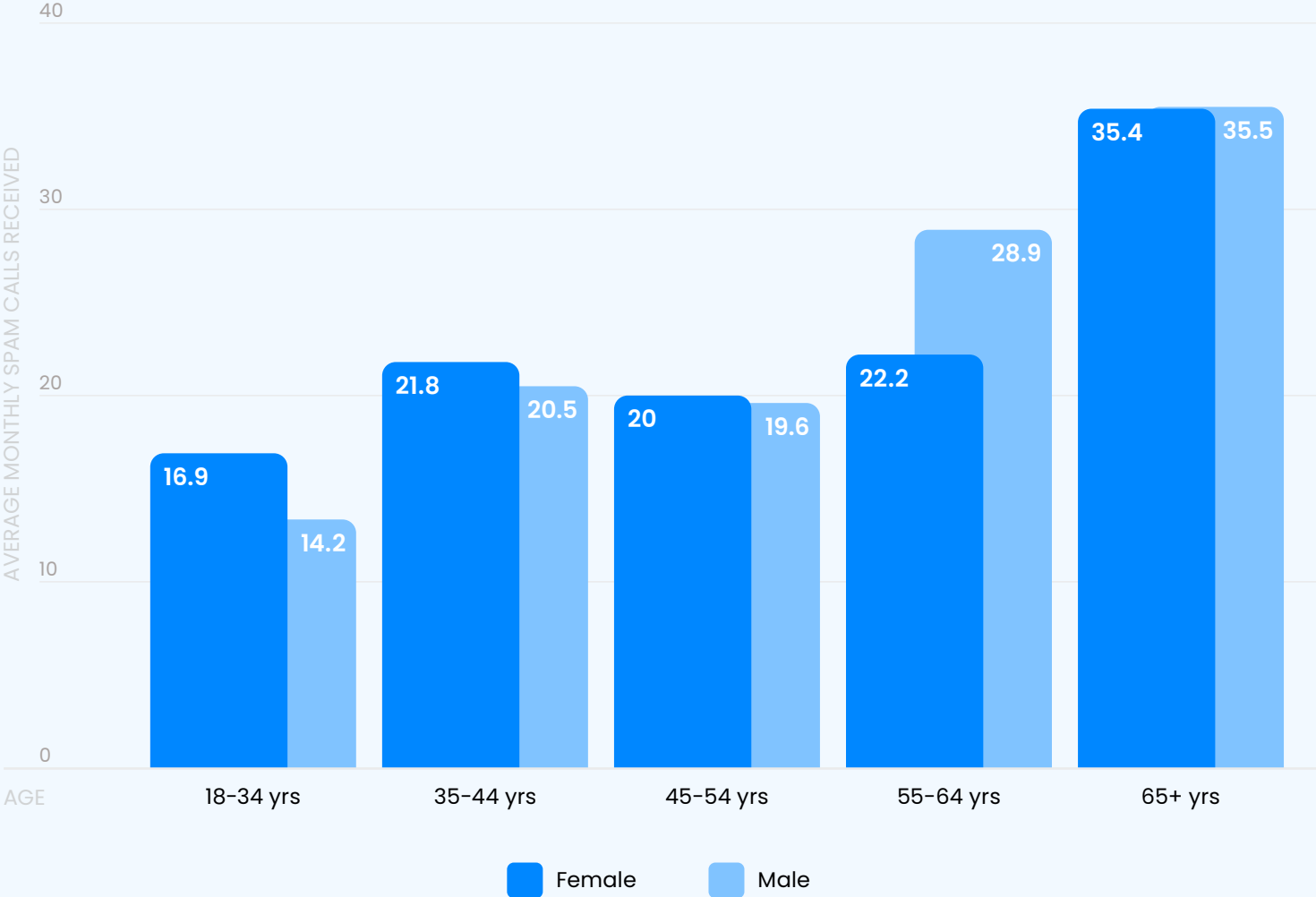


Young adults are still losing a lot of money to scams

Average Money Lost to Scam Calls



Average Monthly Spam Calls Received by Gender & Age

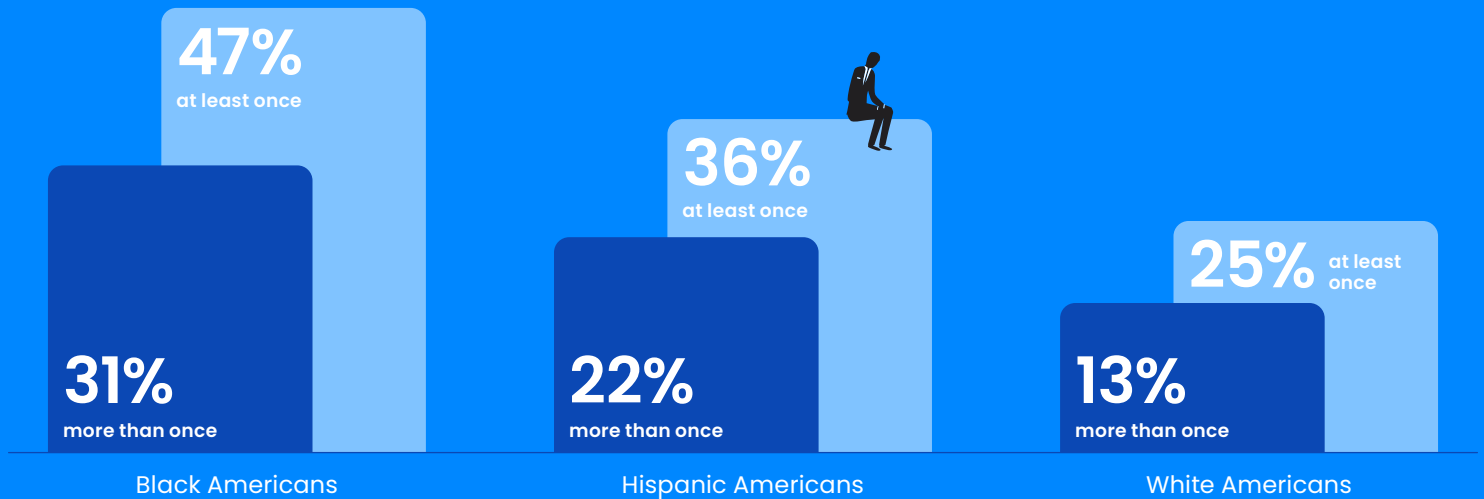


Seniors are being disproportionately targeted by fraudsters

The Ethnic Divide

Communities of color continue to be disproportionately targeted by spam calls. In 2023, Hispanic and Black Americans were twice as likely to lose money to phone scams. Black Americans are more likely than Hispanic or White Americans to have ever been victims of a phone scam (47% vs. 36% and 25%), and to have been victims of phone scams more than once (31% vs. 22% and 13%).

Percentage of Americans who have ever fallen prey to scams, by ethnicity

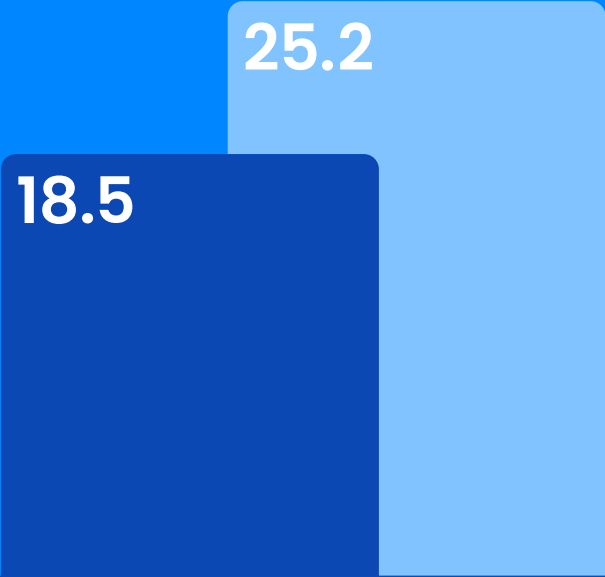


There's also a difference in the kind of suspicious communications received by different ethnicities. White Americans typically received suspicious communications about fraudulent delivery updates, vehicles (e.g., extended warranty) and political communications. Hispanic Americans received more suspicious communications about student loans vis-a-vis White Americans. In comparison, more Black Americans (24%) said that they received suspicious communications around electronic deals compared to White Americans (17%).

White Americans seem to have taken more proactive measures compared to Hispanic and Black adults when it comes to avoiding suspicious calls. 65% of White Americans said they never answer calls or text messages if they do not recognize the sender compared to 49% of Hispanics and 42% of Black Americans. More White Americans have signed up for the Do No Call Registry (44%) as opposed to 19% Hispanics and 21% Black Americans.

White Americans report receiving more spam calls per month on average than Black Americans (25.2 vs. 18.5). And on average, White Americans who were victims of scam calls lost \$590 on average compared to \$208 on average lost by Black Americans.

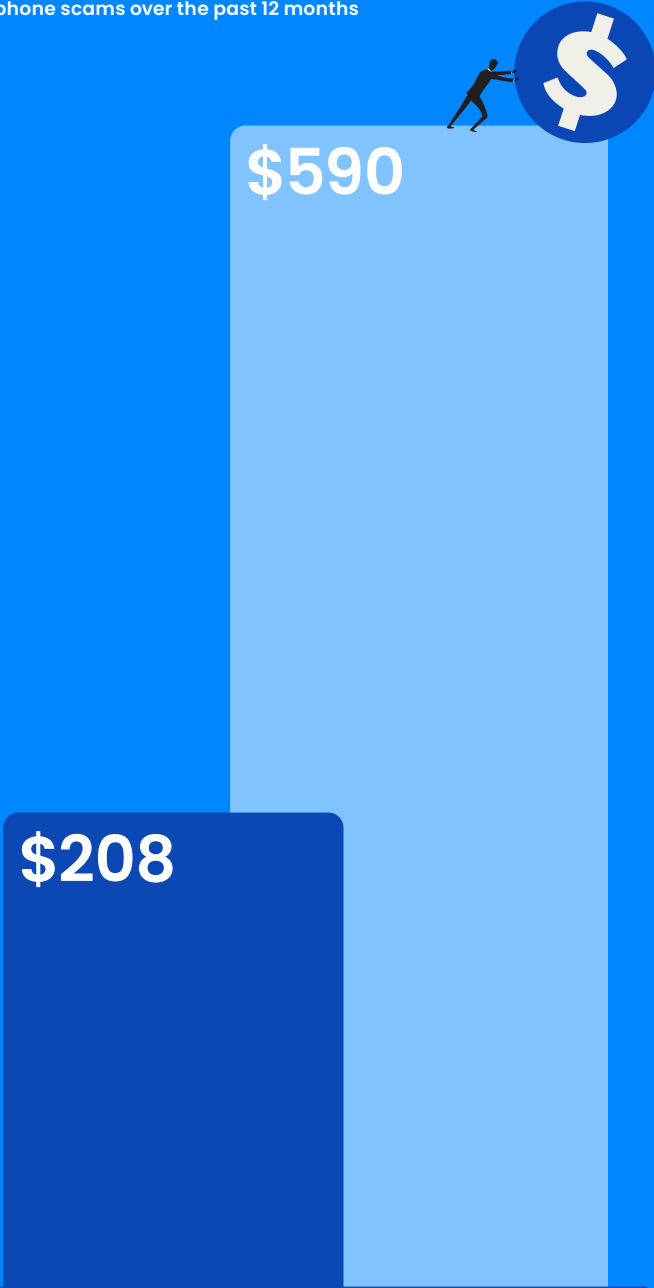
Average amount of spam calls received per month, by ethnicity



Black Americans White Americans

Average amount lost, by ethnicity

Among those who lost money to phone scams over the past 12 months



Black Americans White Americans

The Gender Divide

There's also a noticeable difference in how men and women are impacted by phone scams. For instance, among those who lost money to a phone scam in the past 12 months, 79% of men were scammed on a mobile phone compared to women (68%). Men (19%) were also more likely to be a victim more than once compared to women (15%).

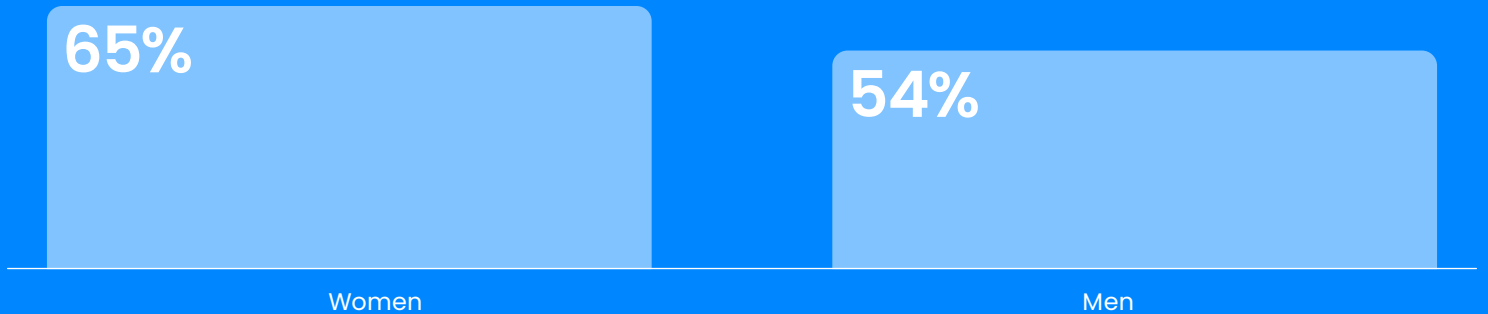
Women also appear to have a more cautious approach when it comes to protecting themselves against spam calls/texts with 65% saying they never answer calls or text messages from unknown senders compared to 54% of men. A higher percentage of women reported receiving spam calls (94%) compared to men (89%). They are also more likely to receive 10 or more spam calls per month (61% against 55%).

Both men and women have different approaches to damage control as well. Among those who lost money to a phone scam in the past 12 months, women were more likely than men to say they canceled their credit card/changed account numbers compared to men. In contrast, a higher percentage of men who were victims of a phone scam in the past 12 months (33%) responded by downloading a spam blocker app vs women (20%).



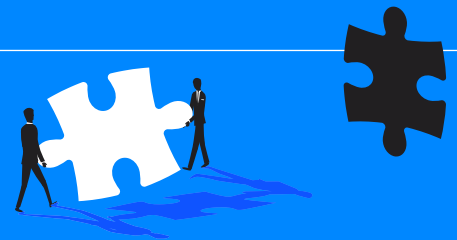
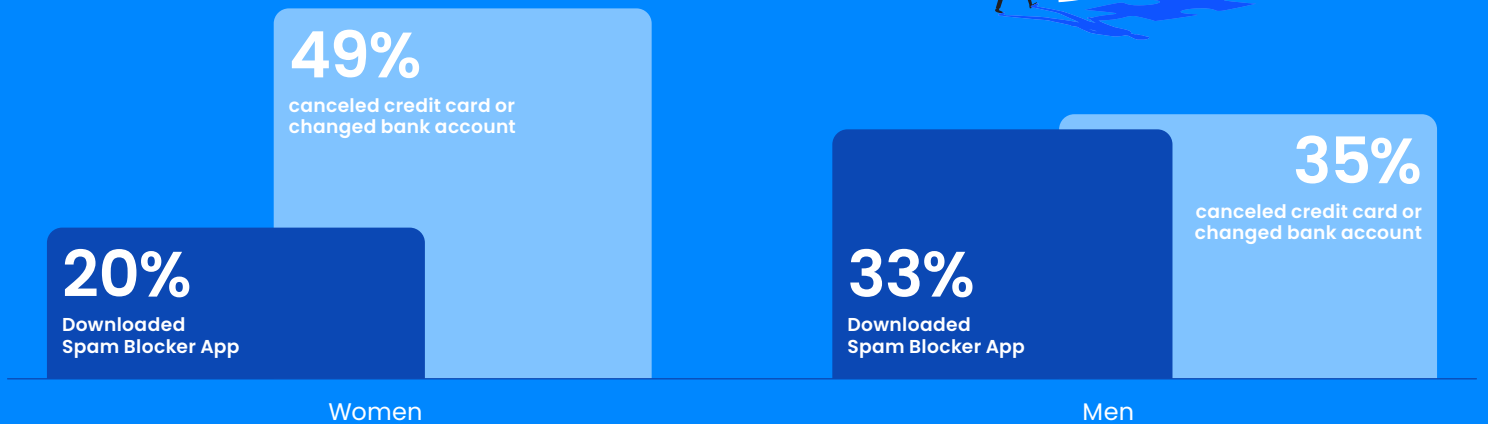
Men seem to be more vulnerable to scams than women

Prefer to never answer calls or text messages from unknown senders



Approaches to damage control

Among those who lost money to phone scams over the past 12 months

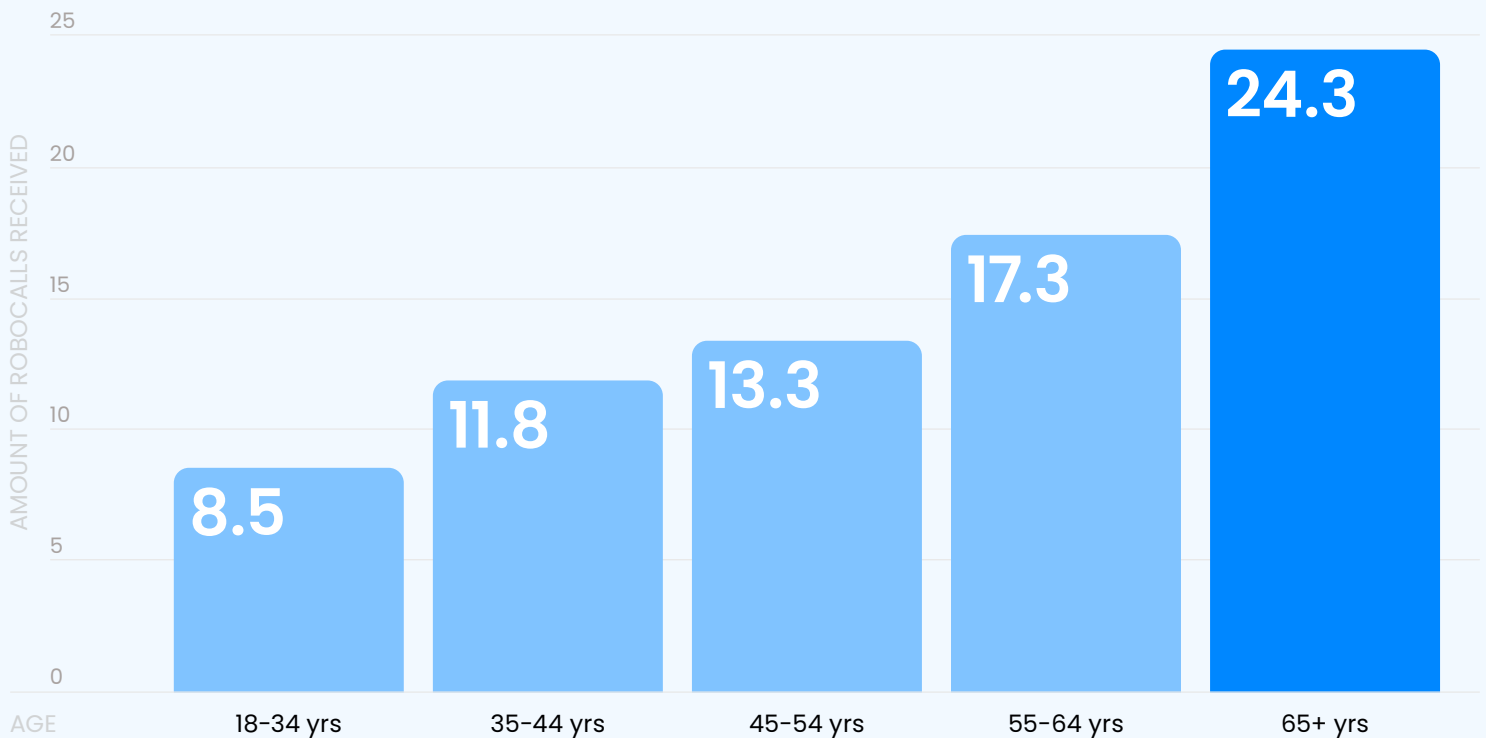


Playing Catch-up With Spammers

92% of Americans reported receiving spam calls. The numbers for spam texts are no less; 86% of Americans confirmed they received them. Moreover, two in five Americans (40%) confirm that they are now receiving more spam calls and text messages than a year ago.

“ Scam targeting increases with age

Average Robocalls Per Month



The effects of spam calls and texts go much further than financial loss. 95% of those who lost money in a phone scam in the past 12 months confirmed that they spent significant time, effort and resources on preventative measures after suffering from fraud. Among actions taken, 41% resorted to canceling their credit card, while 38% installed spam blockers or caller ID apps.

However, the figures for pre-emptive measures remain low. Only 18% of Americans have downloaded a spam blocker app, and a mere 15% have a caller ID app. Instead, Americans are saying no to phone calls if they do not recognize the phone number (59%).

Societal Impact

The problem of spam calls runs deep and is causing an increasing gap in communication between adult Americans. Overwhelmingly, people are finding it difficult to communicate over the phone as many adults are ignoring calls from unknown numbers to avoid spam. One in three Americans (34%) confirm that they've missed important calls because the Caller ID incorrectly reported the call as spam and blocked it.

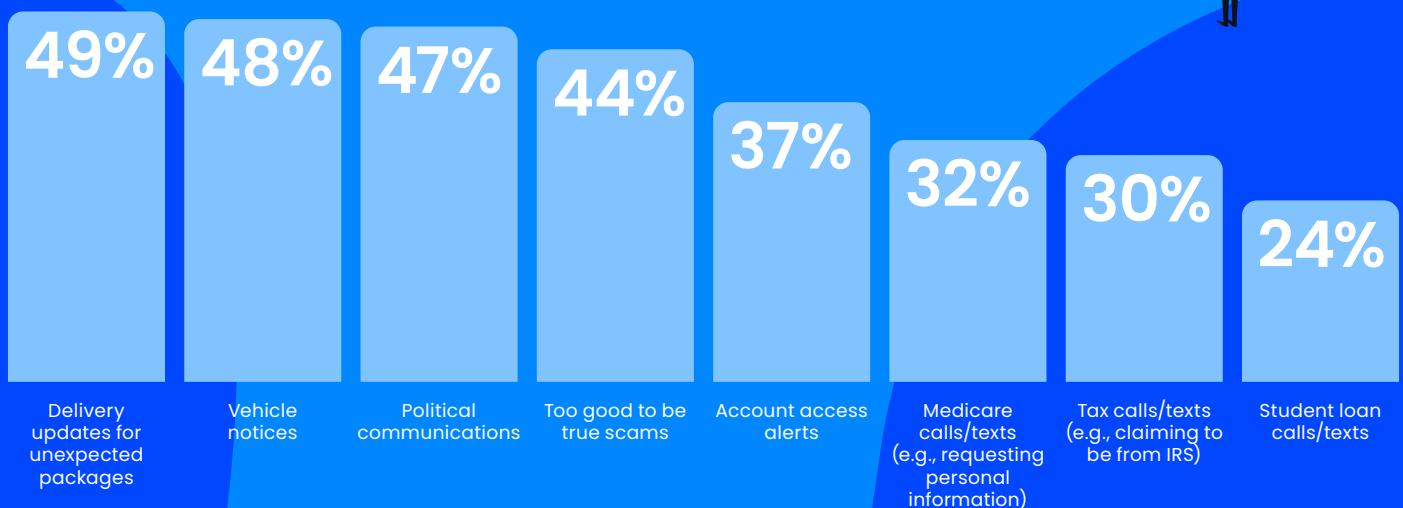
Nearly 3 in 5 Americans (59%) say they never answer calls or text messages if they do not recognize the sender. Delivery updates for unexpected packages (49%), vehicle notices (48%) and political communications (47%) proved to be some of the most common forms of message spam. However, solicitations for Medicare (32%), and fake messages claiming to report problems with tax filings (30%) and student loans (24) also contributed to the erosion of trust amongst Americans.

With 56% of Americans feeling threatened by scammers using AI-generated voices, the threat of scam calls is causing Americans to lose productive time by missing important calls. The Hispanic and Black Americans (68% and 65%), in particular, are more likely than White Americans (56%) to fear missing legitimate calls because they suspect them to be spam. Overall, women are also more likely than men to feel threatened by scammers using AI voice cloning (61% vs. 51%).



Text scams are on the rise and becoming increasingly effective. Hispanics are the most susceptible ethnic group

Types of suspicious calls or texts



Earning Back Trust

The trust deficit in phone calls and text messages can be easily overcome by more widespread awareness and adoption of business verification services, spam blockers, and caller ID apps. Three out of four Americans (78%) reported that they would be more likely to answer a call if it displayed a verified business logo on the screen.

Younger Americans between the ages of 18 yrs and 34 yrs were more likely than those ages 45+ yrs to say they would be much more likely to answer an inbound call on their mobile phone if a verified business logo were displayed on the screen (33% vs. 18%). More than 2 in 3 Americans (68%) showed interest in a service that would be able to record calls and transcribe it for them. Seven in ten Americans say having their calls automatically screened for them would be useful and two in five (40%) would be willing to pay a premium for such a feature.

Similarly, 51% of Americans showed interest in a service that would automatically organize their SMS inbox for them. The interest from Hispanic and Black Americans skewed higher than from White Americans perhaps influenced by the higher volume of SMS spam received by the communities.

In Closing

In 2024, the landscape of communications will likely continue to shift in a classic cat-and-mouse game of regulatory and enforcement countermeasures versus threats. In the past, massively scaled, 'wide net' scam campaigns were numbers games through which criminals launched millions of calls to ensnare thousands of victims. Now, through increasingly effective social engineering, hyper-relevant, personalized targeting, scripting, and the weaponization of AI/ML technologies – fraudsters may place fewer calls in favor of more effective spearfishing. Such selectivity will reduce detectability and increase the yield of pinpointed scams. The most unfortunate truth is that those who are least able to withstand financial loss are often the populations most vulnerable to scams. Protecting consumers will require unprecedented levels of public-private cooperation and dedicated, purpose-built applications and services for mobile communications management.



Why Truecaller is Different

At Truecaller, we believe our community-led solution for blocking spam and scam is superior to all other solutions - especially when compared to carrier deployed brute-force blocking techniques which will often cause you to miss important phone calls . Our proprietary mix of a strong, community-based system combined with advanced machine learning and AI provides the best protection for people across the world. We've learned over the years that scammers and spammers are crafty. When regulation or laws pop-up, they immediately find ways around them. That is why there is no quick or easy fix to scams, unless you harness the power of a community like Truecaller.

The Truecaller Way: How to Best Prevent Spam and Being Scammed

- Download a trusted Caller ID application like Truecaller and do not respond to calls and SMS that are marked as Spam and Fraud by the community. Make sure to only download the app from trusted sources: Google Play Store, Apple App Store or from [links placed on Truecaller's website](#).



- Phone and SMS scams will typically try to add some urgency to get you to respond without thinking. Take your time and verify the sender and information before responding.
- Stay aware of the most common types of scams in the US, as updated regularly by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) [here](#).
- Do not click on unknown links that you receive via SMS. Especially if it is related to financial matters. If in doubt, it is better to call the financial institution that the SMS is from or visit their website directly instead of clicking on the SMS link.
- Delete suspicious SMS and emails immediately to avoid any spyware and fraud.
- Never share sensitive information like your Social Security, user IDs or usernames, passwords, credit card numbers or any other financial information over a phone call or SMS. Bank officials, financial institutions or regulators will never ask you for this information.
- Never download mobile applications from unverified and unknown sources - especially not from a link you get or if someone calls you and asks you to download something.
- Do not fall for offers made by people who claim to represent a company - especially if they are calling from personal phone numbers.

If you or someone You Know Is Affected by Scam, Here's What to do:

- Report it to your local police or Sheriff's office.
- File a complaint with the [Federal Trade Commission](#).
- Contact your [state attorney general](#) and file a report.
- Learn more and take next steps as listed on [The Consumer Protection site](#) on USA.gov. You can find out about current types of scam, find state or local fraud protection resources and follow pathways for action in the event a qualifying consumer problem occurs. To reach the USAGov hotline call 1-844-USA-GOV1 or 1-844-872-4681.
- Visit the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) [Scams and Safety page](#) on reporting suspicious activities online.
- The OVD or Office for Victims of Crime by the Department of Justice has an elder fraud hotline. They will assist you with filing a complaint. To reach the hotline, call 1-833-FRAUD-11 or 1-833-37283-11.
- If your bank or financial institution is not providing you with suitable assistance in case of heavy financial fraud, contact the [The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(CFPB\)](#), which is dedicated to making sure consumers are treated fairly by banks, lenders, and other financial institutions.
- Contact the [Internet Crime Complaint Center \(IC3\)](#) for help with filing internet-based complaints. IC3 is a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the National White Collar Crime Center.
- Sources of information are [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Make sure you follow these instructions and links only from official websites of The United States Government, ending with the **.Gov** domain name.

General Disclaimer

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Methodology

The Scam Survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Truecaller between January 9-11, 2024, among 2,074 adults ages 18, among whom 420 lost money due to a phone scam in the past 12 months. The Spam Survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Truecaller between January 10-12, 2024, among 2,080 adults ages 18.

Data were weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income, and political party affiliation, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

**2024 International Data Base US Census Population Estimates showed a U.S. adult population (ages 18 yrs and older) of 267,400,939. Based on 21 percent of U.S. adults reporting losing money in a phone scam, the total number of phone scam victims in the U.S. was estimated to be 56,154,197. The average phone scam victim in the survey reported losing \$452. This equates to a total of \$25.4 billion.*

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +/- 2.5 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. If you have more questions about the methodology or need additional press assets, please contact press@truecaller.com.

About Truecaller

We enable safe and relevant conversations between people and make it efficient for businesses to connect with consumers. Fraud and unwanted communication are endemic to digital economies, especially in emerging markets. We are on a mission to build trust in communication. Truecaller is an essential part of everyday communication for over 374 million active users, with more than a billion downloads since launch. Headquartered in Stockholm, since 2009, we are a co-founder-led, entrepreneurial company, with a highly experienced management team. Truecaller has been listed on Nasdaq Stockholm since Oct 8th 2021. For more information, please visit www.truecaller.com

About The Harris Poll

The Harris Poll is a global consulting and market research firm that strives to reveal the authentic values of modern society to inspire leaders to create a better tomorrow. It works with clients in three primary areas: building twenty-first-century corporate reputation, crafting brand strategy and performance tracking, and earning organic media through public relations research. One of the longest-running surveys in the U.S., The Harris Poll has tracked public opinion, motivations and social sentiment since 1963, and is now part of Stagwell, the challenger holding company built to transform marketing. To learn more, please visit www.theharrispoll.com



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