## Government imposter scams top the list of reported frauds

Pretending to be someone people trust is what scammers do. They may claim to be a well-known company or a beloved family member, but data from

pretending to be the government may be favorite ruse. Since 2014, the FTC has gotten nearly 1.3 million reports about government imposters.

far more than any other type of fraud reported in the same timeframe. This spring, monthly reports of government imposter scams reached the highest levels we have on record.<sup>1</sup>

recently about the dramatic surge in Social Security

The vast majority of peiorphesidens, republik 6 is intropester's are still hanging on in scam say it started with a phone call, 2 and these callers have their mind games down pat. Government impersonators can create a sense of urgent fear, telling you to send money right away or provide your social security number to avoid at the sense of urgent fear.

when people do lose money, a lot: the median individual reported loss is \$960.4 People ages 20 to 59 report losing money to these scams at higher rates than people 60 and over, but median individual reported losses increase with age. People 80 and over report a median loss of \$2,700.5

Gift cards are now the payment method of choice for these scammers. Most people who tell us they lost money to a government imposter say they gave the scamtr TC reported

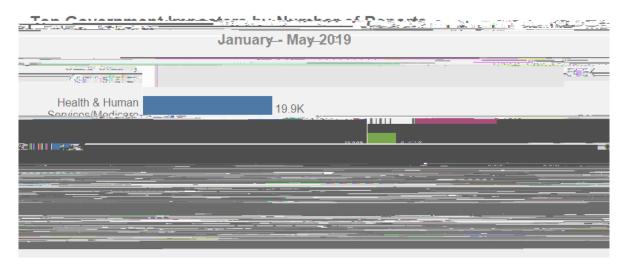
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in their name to make their government grant offers sound official, and use g s to suggest a hefty law enforcement presence.

Government imposters will adapt quickly to find new ways to get your money. Lots of government agencies have been impersonated, including the FTC. The

top five. Scammers use

 $\,$  6% of people who report government imposters say they lost money.  $^3$  But



know it helps convince people that the caller really is with the government.

So what can you do to protect yourself against imposters when their stories keep changing?

- x Be suspicious of any call from a government agency asking for money or information.
  you with threats, or promises of or demands for money. Scammers do.
- x 'R Q f¶uAst caller ID ±it can be faked Even if it might
- x Never pay with a gift card or wire transfer. If someone tells you to pay this way scam.
- x Check with the real agency.Look up their

to reach you and why.

even more convincing when they fake the number on your caller ID so it shows the name or phone number of a real government agency. illegal to fake the number on caller ID, but scammers

Report government imposter scams to the FTC at <a href="FTC.gov/complaint">FTC.gov/complaint</a>. To learn more, visit <a href="ftc.gov/imposters">ftc.gov/imposters</a>. Want to explore the data? Visit the