



Identity Theft: The Aftermath 2014™

Conducted by the Identity Theft Resource Center® (ITRC)ⁱ

Original data analyzed by: The Identity Theft Resource Center

Sponsored by: IDT911

Commentaries:

Matt Cullinaⁱⁱ, Eva Velasquezⁱⁱⁱ, Paul Bond^{iv}, Susan Grant^v, Mike Cook^{vi},
Julie Ferguson^{vii}, and James Lee^{viii}

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
HIGHLIGHTS	6
INTRODUCTION	8
KEY FINDINGS	
A: Identity theft crimes erode trust in the basic mechanisms that victims believe were in place to protect them.....	9
B. Identity theft crimes continue to make a strong emotional impact on the lives of victims.	10
C: Victims believe that the protection of personal information falls on a number of entities, from the individual to the apps we use.....	11
D: Monetization of information by thieves is varied and elaborate.....	12
E: Risk minimization techniques and universal mechanisms in the financial identity theft silo may be having a positive impact.....	14
F: Despite an overall increase in the percentage of survey respondents who had a satisfactory experience with their financial institution, those who did not are still taking strong actions.....	16
G: In keeping with reports from other entities, the number of victims dealing with government identity theft issues continues to remain high.....	16
H: Despite victimization, engagement in multiple online activities continues to increase.	17
I: The methods by which victims discover their identity theft varies widely among the victims surveyed. While traditional methods of discovery remain constant, victims are still discovering their victimization in a number of jarring ways.....	18
J: The obstacles created by identity theft crimes consist of more than just an inability to obtain credit (32.7 percent) or loans (28.4 percent).	19
OTHER FINDINGS	20
METHODOLOGY	33
APPENDIX	34

Figures in Paper

<i>Figure 1:</i>	How much do you trust the following entities (regardless of whether or not you currently use them) to use the personal information you provide responsibly?	9
<i>Figure 2:</i>	Since this crime began, have you experienced any of these emotions even for a short period of time?	10
<i>Figure 3:</i>	Thinking about the following entities - that might be responsible for protecting your personal information - please indicate how much responsibility you believe each one has.	12
<i>Figure 4:</i>	Financial Identity Theft Issues - New Accounts	14
<i>Figure 5:</i>	Financial Identity Theft - Existing Accounts	15
<i>Figure 6:</i>	If unauthorized transactions were conducted, or new accounts were opened, with a bank, credit union or other financial institution, please rate your level of satisfaction with how they handled the issue/s	15
<i>Figure 7:</i>	If you had unauthorized activity on existing accounts, did this experience cause you to change banks, credit unions or credit card companies?	16
<i>Figure 8:</i>	Government Identity Theft Issues	16
<i>Figure 9:</i>	Online Activities	17
<i>Figure 10:</i>	How I discovered the identity theft	18
<i>Figure 11:</i>	How has your life been impacted by this crime?	19
<i>Figure 12:</i>	Criminal Identity Theft Issues	20
<i>Figure 13:</i>	Medical Identity Theft Issues	21
<i>Figure 14:</i>	What was the amount of time between when the crime actually started and when you found out, "the moment of discovery"?	22
<i>Figure 15:</i>	How much time you have spent on clearing your identity theft case, to date.	22
<i>Figure 16:</i>	How long did it take for you to resolve your identity theft issue? If it's ongoing, check "Not yet cleared".	23
<i>Figure 17:</i>	Listed below are some reasons why you may not have been able to eliminate or correct negative information	24
<i>Figure 18:</i>	Why didn't you file a police report?	26
<i>Figure 19:</i>	If you dealt with a law enforcement agency, please rate your level of satisfaction with how they handled your issue/s	26
<i>Figure 20:</i>	If you dealt with a credit bureau(s), please rate your level of satisfaction with them.	27
<i>Figure 21:</i>	If you dealt with a collection agency, please rate your level of satisfaction with them	27
<i>Figure 22:</i>	How has this experience affected your relationship with others	28
<i>Figure 23:</i>	What behaviors do you CURRENTLY use to minimize your future risk of becoming a victim of identity theft again?	29
<i>Figure 24:</i>	(Breach notification) Did you do any of the following after you received it?	30
<i>Figure 25:</i>	After dealing with a breach notification, did this cause your trust in and of the following industry sectors to change?	31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"It's truly made me feel like nothing is safe"

- ITRC Aftermath Respondent

Identity theft creates barriers to success that affect more than just the victim's finances or the ability to obtain loans or credit. This crime can lead to the inability to obtain housing, employment, or even medical services including prescriptions needed to manage an existing or new health condition. When you combine this with the emotional and behavioral repercussions, one realizes how devastating this crime continues to be.

The ITRC's *Aftermath* studies have always been recognized for their focus on addressing the impact of identity theft on its victims. The *Aftermath 2014* report is the latest in this series of studies, which began in 2003.

The realization that identity thieves' use more than just the "financial" silo to wreak havoc on the reputations of innocent victims is essential when developing a more thorough understanding of the complexities this crime. Victim's identities can be used to not only secure new financial accounts or takeover existing ones, but also for obtaining a variety of goods and services. Identities can also be used to receive medical goods or services, government goods or benefits, or during the commission of a crime.

For the last fifteen years, the ITRC has recognized that identity theft creates roadblocks in the lives of victims. These roadblocks are not apparent until the victim attempts to move forward in life and is thwarted. Whether they are attempting to secure a rental house, a car loan, or even employment, the barrier that is created by the discovery of identity theft is real and persistent. Additional issues present themselves for those with limited financial (and otherwise) resources. A domino effect is surely created.

For example, if a victim is unable to obtain employment or housing due to fraudulent information on their background check or credit report, this can lead to an inability to meet the basic needs for themselves or for their families. This in turn can lead to the need for additional financial resources to bridge the gap while they repair the damage. For those who do not have the financial resources at hand, and/or cannot rely on family and friends, a reliance on safety net programs is created, which are not always available in the short term. This situation just highlights the fact that, through no fault of their own, victims can suffer long-term effects that significantly impact their forward momentum.

From the victim's standpoint, five emotions continue to stand out year after year, going back to even the earliest of the *Aftermath* studies. The five emotions are:

- Feelings of annoyance and frustration
- Fear regarding personal financial security

- Rage or anger
- Sense of powerlessness or helplessness
- Feelings of betrayal

The findings in this year's study indicate that victims continue to suffer a variety of consequences despite national efforts to support victims, and attempts to broaden public education and awareness in the understanding of identity theft. Numerous highly publicized data breaches have created an increased desire for risk minimization information. Industrious thieves continue to invent new means to monetize identities for which there are few available risk minimization techniques. The Sisyphean task of creating new remediation plans belongs to all stakeholders and together we must work to build more universal mechanisms to protect against and detect identity theft, and provide resources to assist with the aftermath.

HIGHLIGHTS

A: Identity theft crimes erode trust in the basic mechanisms that victims believed were in place to protect them. In addition to the specific questions that asked for responses regarding the loss of trust, this theme was persistent throughout the open ended questions and remarks made by numerous respondents.

B: Identity theft crimes continue to generate strong emotional responses from victims. “Frustration or annoyance” (79 percent), “fear regarding personal financial safety” (66 percent), “rage or anger” (62 percent) and a “sense of powerlessness or helplessness” (54 percent) have consistently topped the list of emotions and feelings felt by survey respondents over the years.

C: Victims believe that the protection of personal information falls on a number of entities, from the individual to the apps we use. According to respondents, this responsibility falls most heavily on the individual (83.2 percent), companies or retailers they do business with (80.3 percent) and data brokers or companies that collect information about them (80.2 percent).

D: The ways thieves use and monetize information is varied and elaborate. Financial identity theft continues to be the most prevalent, but the margins are closing. Victims often experience several different types of identity theft.

E: Risk minimization techniques and universal mechanisms in the financial identity theft silo may be having a positive impact. Financial identity theft involving NEW accounts dropped nearly 7 percent in 2014 to 54.4 percent. EXISTING account takeover among survey respondents was down 12.5 percent. In addition, survey responses reflected a 10 percent increase in the level of satisfaction for financial institutions, with 44.9 percent indicating “Good” or “Excellent”.

F: Despite an overall increase in the percentage of survey respondents who had a satisfactory experience with their financial institution, those who did not are still taking strong actions. In 2014, there was a 10.2 percent increase in the number of respondents who changed their bank/credit unions or credit card companies after unauthorized activity occurred on an existing account.

“The ITRC Aftermath Study is an important reminder of the need for all organizations to provide successful resolutions while remaining compassionate and respectful when assisting identity theft victims,” said Matt Cullina, CEO of IDT911. “It is critical to strengthening customer relationships, as well as upholding the integrity of their brand.”

- Matt Cullina, ITRC Board of Directors and Subject Matter Expert

G: Consistent with reports from other entities, the number of victims dealing with governmental identity theft issues continues to remain high.

Nearly 32 percent of the survey respondents reported issues involving their Social Security number being used for employment purposes, fraudulent driver's licenses obtained, or false tax returns. Nearly 13 percent of the respondents indicated that state taxes were filed in their name, while 16.2 percent indicated that federal taxes were filed.

H: Despite victimization, engagement in multiple online activities continues to increase.

Most online activities reflected increases over 2013, with an 11.3 percent increase in the number of survey respondents using mobile devices for online purchases, and a 7.6 percent increase in the number of participants with social media accounts.

I: Discovery methods vary widely among the victims surveyed.

While traditional methods of discovery remain constant, some unique and often jarring methods were reported. Some examples of those are: *"I called Amex for my balance and was asked which card. Several cards were opened fraudulently"*, *"I received a call asking if it was ok to cash a check written in my name"*, and *"My license was suspended because someone used my SSN when they got pulled over"*.

J: The obstacles created by identity theft crimes consist of more than just an inability to obtain credit (32.7 percent) or loans (28.4 percent).

While those areas are certainly prevalent, there are additional areas of impact that should not go unrecognized, such as having existing credit cards cancelled (16.3 percent), experiencing employment issues (15.6 percent) and facing the inability to pay bills (15.2 percent).

INTRODUCTION

The Identity Theft Resource Center® developed *Identity Theft: The Aftermath*™ as a means by which anyone interested in identity theft may view this crime through the eyes of a victim. These annual surveys provide a snapshot of the victim experience for a given year. This is not a random sample study.

The survey respondents for the *Identity Theft: The Aftermath 2014* are victims of identity theft who contacted the ITRC in 2014 for assistance in resolving their cases. ITRC has compared some of the responses in this year's study to those from past years' to identify trends that may have influenced identity theft issues year over year. Outcomes and opinions of individual victims are influenced by a multitude of factors, including changes in the law, media coverage of specific issues, changes in the education/advocacy climate, and/or assistance provided by the ITRC's skilled advisory staff.

The *Aftermath* survey provides insight not just into what victims experience and the actions they have taken, but also captures how those victims feel about these experiences with respect to influencing future decisions.

Statements included in some of the sections below are in the words of the victims themselves and are extracted from the open commentary section of the *Aftermath* survey. The inclusion of these statements encourages the reader to remember that behind each of the numbers represented in this survey there exists a person whose life has been impacted.

The *2014 Aftermath* study represents victims who contacted the ITRC during the 2014 calendar year. Information, which was mandatory, includes state of residence, age when crime began, and household income level.

- 330 victims responded from 40 states. It should be noted the area the victim lives in is not to be misconstrued as the location of the crime.
- Of the 330 respondents, 9.7 percent of victims were under the age of 18 when the crime began. All other age groups were almost uniformly represented. Other age categories were as follows: 18-29 (14.5 percent); 30-39 (20.6 percent); 40-49 (18.8 percent); 50-59 (16.3 percent); and 60+ (20 percent).
- Of the 330 participants, nearly half (47.9 percent) had household incomes less than \$50,000.

KEY FINDINGS

A: Identity theft crimes erode trust in the basic mechanisms that victims believe were in place to protect them.

In addition to the specific questions that asked for responses regarding the loss of trust, this theme was persistent throughout the open-ended questions and remarks made by numerous victims.

Figure 1: How much do you trust the following entities (regardless of whether or not you currently use them) to use the personal information you provide responsibly? Please use a scale from 1 to 5, where “1” means you do not trust them at all and “5” means you trust them completely.

<i>Figure 1 (n=264)</i>	Do not trust them at all	2	3	4	Trust them completely
Social networking websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.	40.1%	24.2%	28.4%	5.7%	1.5%
Your email provider	15.5%	11.7%	40.2%	26.1%	6.4%
Websites you use or do business with	16.2%	14.3%	39.4%	27.0%	3.1%
Brick and mortar entities with which you do business	22.2%	16.5%	33.9%	22.2%	5.2%
Banking or investment companies	16.1%	11.8%	23.5%	31.0%	17.7%
Communication tools or services (e.g. instant messaging, video calls)	25.8%	21.4%	38.5%	10.3%	4.0%
Websites in which you post comments or act as a participant	32.5%	22.0%	34.2%	9.4%	2.0%
Smartphone or tablet apps	22.3%	27.1%	36.7%	10.8%	3.2%
The government	31.0%	20.0%	27.5%	13.7%	7.8%
Your cell phone provider	17.9%	20.6%	37.4%	17.5%	6.6%
Your Internet service provider	16.4%	18.0%	39.5%	18.4%	7.8%
Your health insurance provider	14.8%	15.6%	29.7%	23.4%	16.4%
Advertisers	60.0%	22.8%	11.2%	4.4%	1.6%
Companies that collect and sell information (data brokers)	72.1%	11.0%	11.0%	2.8%	3.2%

Strong distrust was apparent within several industries. Data brokers were not trusted at all by 72.1 percent of the survey participants, followed by advertisers at 60.0 percent. Websites on which you post comments or act as a participant were not trusted by 32.5 percent of the respondents, followed by the government, which was not trusted by 31 percent of the survey participants.

Banking or investment companies were trusted completely by 17.7 percent of the respondents with health insurance providers next at 16.4 percent.

B. Identity theft crimes continue to make a strong emotional impact on the lives of victims.

"These strong responses demonstrate, as we have continued to state, that victims suffer more than just an impact upon their finances. Forceful and immediate after effects exist, but we also know from our discussion with victims over extended periods of time, that the feelings of loss of trust, fear for financial security for self and family members and even sleep disturbances can persist even after other emotions taper off."

-Eva Velasquez, ITRC President and CEO

Loss of trust is not the only emotional impact upon someone when they become a victim of identity theft. "Frustration or annoyance" (79 percent), "fear regarding personal financial safety" (66 percent), "rage or anger" (62 percent) and a "sense of powerlessness or helplessness" (54 percent) have typically topped the list of emotions felt by survey respondents over the years. The initial and continuing impact of identity theft is of particular importance as we continue to stress the existence of an individual behind each statistic.

Figure 2: Many times a wide variety of emotions are experienced by identity theft victims. Most of these are normal and pass over time. Since this crime began, have you experienced any of these emotions even for a short period of time? (Check all that apply)

<i>Figure 2 (n=252)</i>	2014	2013	2009	2008	2007
Denial or disbelief	44%	42%	49%	31%	34%
Frustration or annoyance	79%	81%			
Frustration			74%	68%	74%
Annoyance			67%	64%	66%
Rage or anger	62%	65%	78%	65%	80%
Isolation	23%	24%	24%	27%	24%
Feelings of betrayal	52%	50%	49%	60%	48%

Feelings of guilt or that you caused this to happen or did something wrong	22%	21%	24%	22%	27%
Shame or embarrassment	30%	29%	27%	24%	29%
Fear regarding my personal financial security	66%	69%	57%	52%	56%
Fear for financial security of family members	36%	31%	33%	32%	33%
Fear for my physical safety	20%	18%	16%	14%	14%
Loss of ability to trust	44%	46%	29%	31%	28%
Sense of powerlessness or helplessness	54%	50%	63%	63%	57%
Overwhelming sadness	28%	32%	36%	32%	29%
Inability to concentrate	27%	28%	29%	27%	30%
Misplaced anger	20%	27%	26%	23%	25%
Start or relapse into unhealthy or addictive behaviors	9%	9%	9%	12%	12%
New physical illnesses or renewal of illnesses that were under control	12%	15%	15%	9%	19%
Sleep disturbances	36%	40%	43%	40%	47%
Feeling suicidal	4%	6%	8%	4%	6%
Other	8%	3%			
None of these apply	8%	3%			

C: Victims believe that the protection of personal information falls on a number of entities, from the individual to the apps we use.

As seen in *Figure 3* below, the survey respondents believe that the protection of personal responsibility falls most heavily on the individual (83.2 percent), companies or retailers they do business with (80.3 percent) and data brokers or companies that collect information about them (80.2 percent).

Figure 3: Thinking about the following entities - that might be responsible for protecting your personal information - please indicate how much responsibility you believe each one has.

Figure 3 (n=276)	None	Some	Fair Amount	A lot	A tremendous amount
You, as an individual	2.6%	6.2%	8.1%	13.9%	69.2%
Your Internet browser, such as Safari, Chrome or Explorer	3.4%	14.2%	17.9%	30.2%	34.3%
The apps you use	6.2%	13.5%	20.0%	31.9%	28.5%
Companies or retailers you do business with online or offline	3.4%	8.0%	8.3%	25.0%	55.3%
Manufacturers of mobile phones, tablets, or other devices that collect information about how and when you use the device	4.9%	11.0%	16.7%	22.8%	44.5%
The websites you use	4.2%	11.8%	16.4%	32.7%	35.0%
The data brokers or companies that collect information about you, including sites you visit/use	3.9%	6.6%	9.3%	25.3%	54.9%
Your Internet service provider	6.8%	13.6%	12.8%	26.8%	40.0%
The government	7.3%	12.2%	11.8%	18.3%	50.4%

"Privacy is a complex issue, tangled up in politics, economics, criminal justice, and technology. These responses show an expectation that multiple stakeholders take a lot of responsibility, or tremendous responsibility, for getting the balance right."

- Paul Bond, ITRC Board of Directors and Privacy Expert

D: Monetization of information by thieves is varied and elaborate.

Financial identity theft continues to be the most prevalent type of identity theft, but the margins are closing. Instead of asking respondents to clarify what "type" of identity theft they experienced, we asked them to tell us more about the activities that were involved in their case. Through the answers provided, we then categorized the "type" of identity theft as *financial* (new or existing accounts), *medical*, *criminal* or *governmental*.

Overall categories and percentage of survey respondents:

- **New financial accounts opened (54.4 percent down from 61 percent in 2013):** New credit cards (32.6 percent), new loans (21.5 percent), and new utility accounts (20.9 percent) were the top three forms of financial identity theft reported by the survey respondents for 2014. This represents a shift away from new cellular accounts, reflecting a decrease of nearly nine percent from last year's figures.
- **Existing financial accounts used/taken over (39.9 percent down from 52 percent in 2013):** Victim information was used to make charges or transactions on existing credit cards (24.0 percent), checking or savings accounts (16.6 percent), other types of financial accounts like, PayPal (16.2 percent), debit cards (12.7 percent), and on existing loans or lines of credit (9.7 percent).

"I live in constant fear my bank account and savings could be wiped out at any time. After identity theft happens you are constantly looking over your shoulder and in constant fear it will happen again"

- ITRC Aftermath Respondent

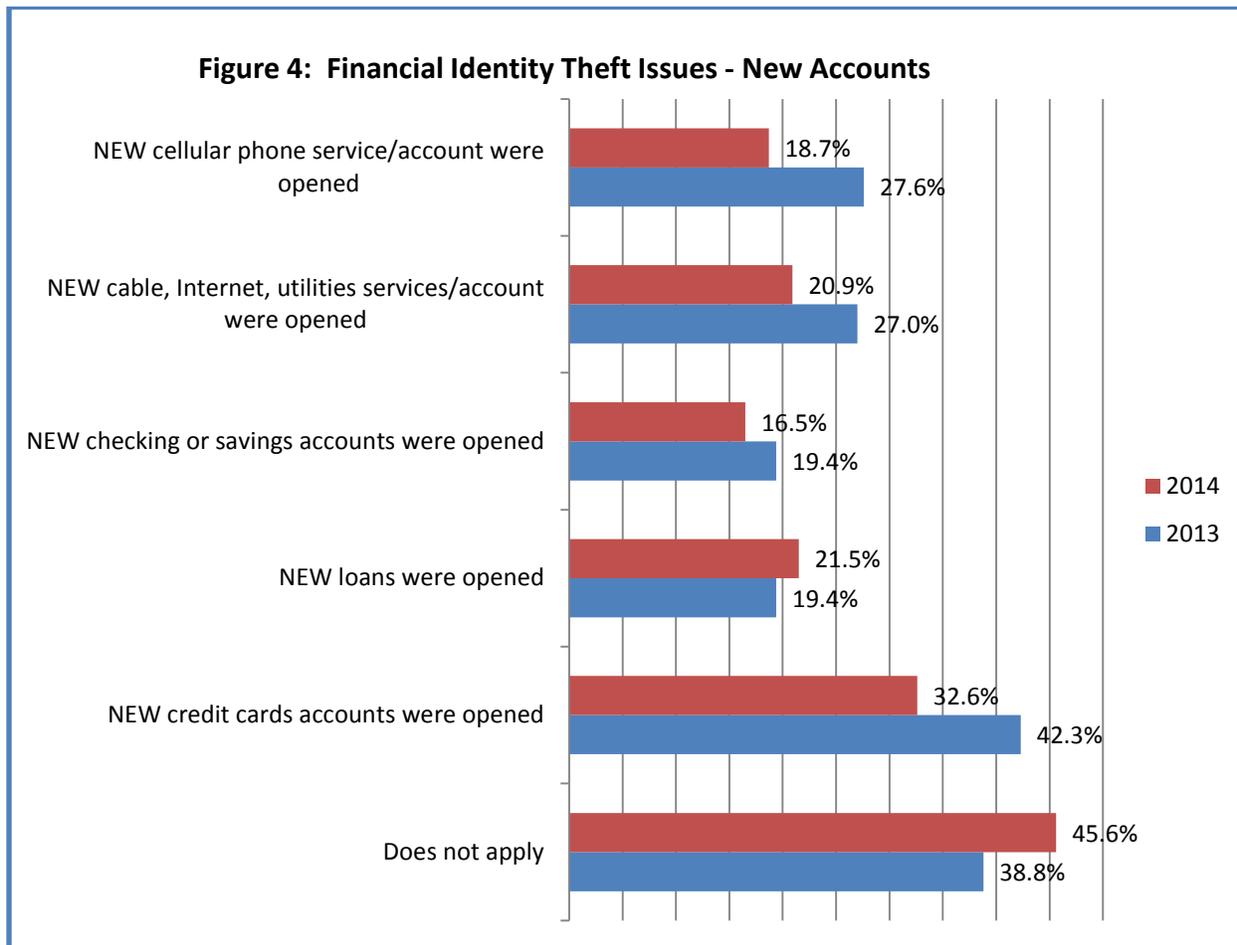
- **Financial "Other" (39.5 percent down slightly from 43 percent in 2013):** Victim information was used to rent or lease a dwelling (apartment, house, etc.) or vehicle, or auto insurance was provided in an accident.
- **Criminal (12.5 percent down from 18 percent in 2013):** Victim information was given to law enforcement during the commission of a crime (infraction, misdemeanor, or felony).
- **Governmental, including tax refund (31.6 percent, down from 39 percent in 2013):** Victim information was used to obtain a driver's license, file taxes, or to obtain a job (Social Security number provided to employer). Government agency benefits, such as unemployment, food stamps, and Social Security, were reported by only 6.6 percent of the respondents, down from 11.4 percent in 2013.
- **Medical (no change from 2013 at 20.1 percent):** Victim's information was used to obtain medical goods or services, including prescriptions and office visits.

"Crooks know that there is a ready market for any type of personal information that can be used to impersonate identity theft victims to get financial or other benefits – It's like the Gold Rush, and personal information is the gold."

- Susan Grant, ITRC Board of Directors and Consumer Advocate

E: Risk minimization techniques and universal mechanisms in the financial identity theft silo may be having a positive impact.

Financial identity theft involving NEW accounts dropped nearly 7 percent in 2014 to 54.4 percent. EXISTING account takeover among survey respondents was down 12.5 percent. (Figure 4, n=316)



"I received a call asking if it was ok to cash a check written in my name."

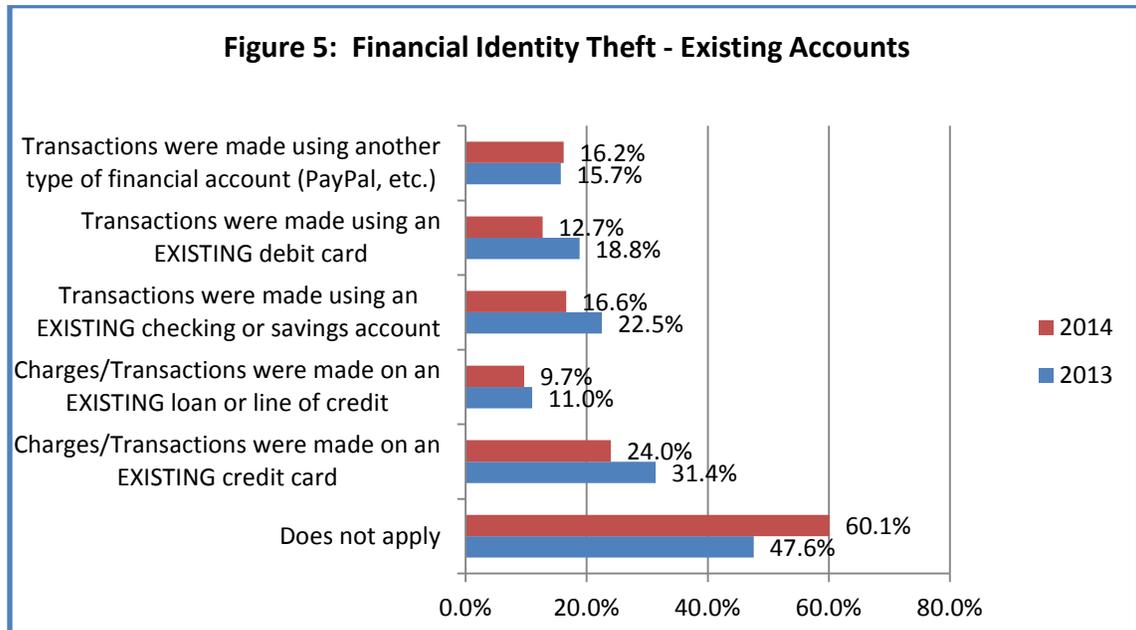
"When I was screened for an apartment a flag came up on my identity because there was a warning."

"My license was suspended because someone used my SSN when they got pulled over."

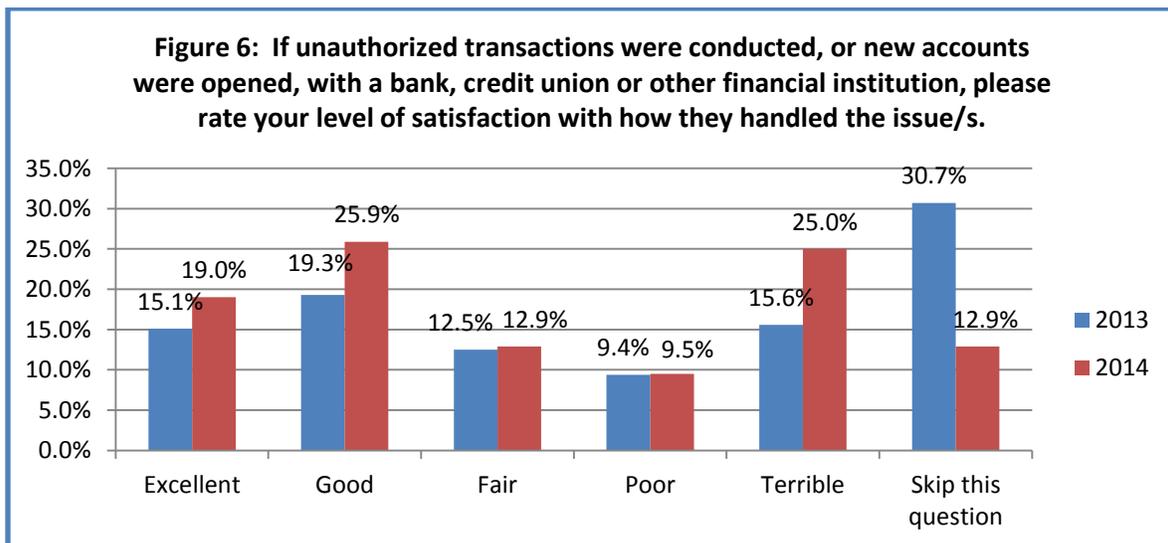
"Unemployment contacted my employer to verify I was still working; a claim had been filed under my name/SSN."

- ITRC Aftermath Respondents

Identity theft involving existing accounts was experienced by nearly 40 percent of the survey participants. This represents a decrease of more than 12 percent from 2013 survey figures. (Figure 5, n=308)



In addition, 2014 survey responses reflected a 10 percent increase in the level of satisfaction for financial institutions, with 44.9 percent indicating "Good" or "Excellent." (Figure 6, n= 116)

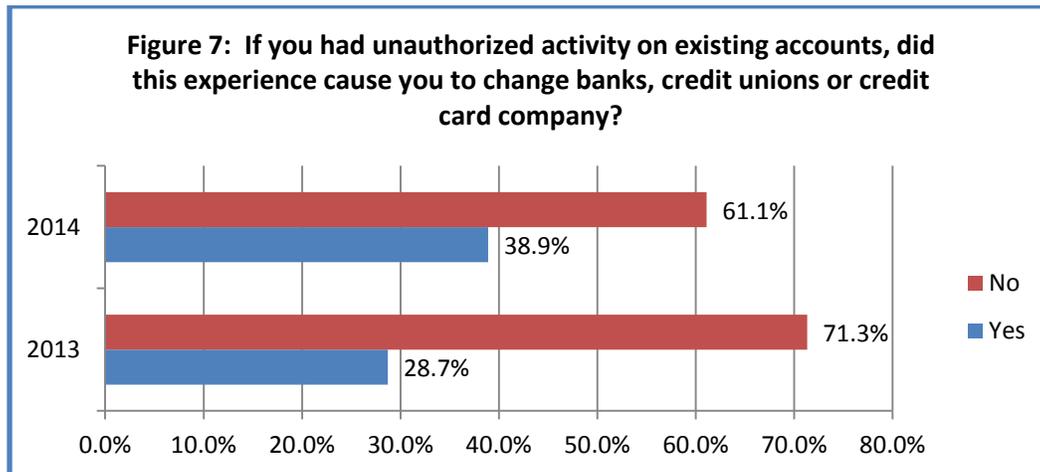


"I would just like to say that what happened enters my mind every single day and I do worry no matter what I have done or do. It is like waiting for the other shoe to drop! I was very pleased with the financial institution at the time for the way they recognized what was happening and how they handled it"

- ITRC Aftermath Respondent

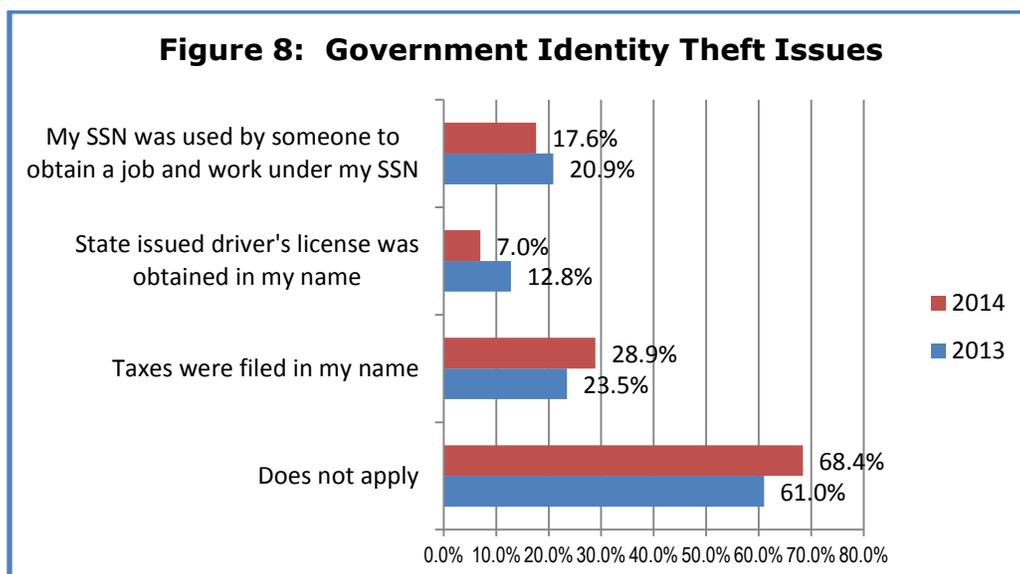
F: Despite an overall increase in the percentage of survey respondents who had a satisfactory experience with their financial institution, those who did not are still taking strong actions.

In 2014, there was a 10.2 percent increase in the number of respondents who changed their bank/credit unions or credit card companies after having unauthorized activity on an existing account. (Figure 7, n=113)



G: In keeping with reports from other entities, the number of victims dealing with government identity theft issues continues to remain high.

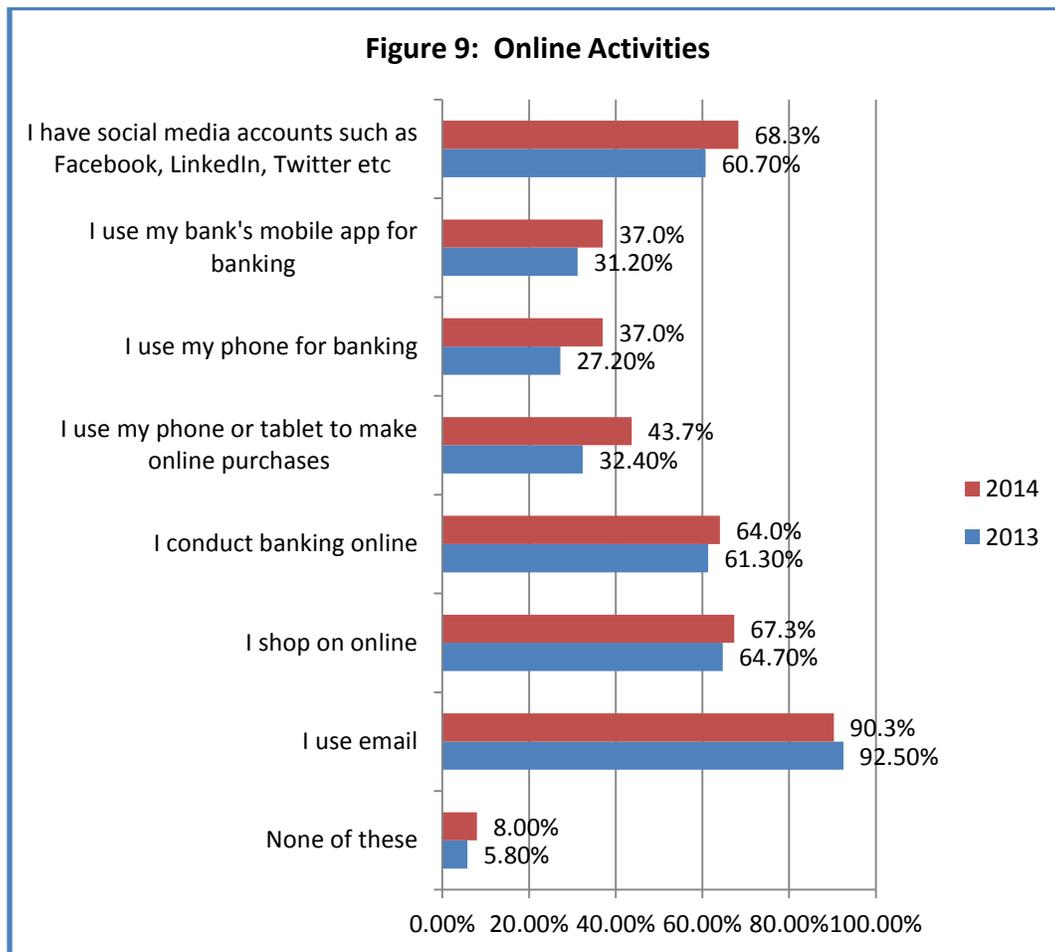
Nearly 32 percent of the survey respondents reported issues involving a Social Security number being used for employment purposes, fraudulent driver’s licenses obtained, or false tax returns. For 2014, there was a 5.4 percent increase in the fraudulent filing of taxes, with nearly 13 percent of the respondents indicating state taxes were filed and 16.2 percent indicating the filing of federal taxes. (Figure 8, n=301)



H: Despite victimization, engagement in multiple online activities continues to increase.

Most online activities reflected increases over 2013 figures, with an 11.3 percent increase in the number of survey respondents using mobile devices for online purchases, and a 7.6 percent increase in the number of participants with social media accounts.

In 2014, 9 out of 10 survey respondents indicated they use email, 67.3 percent report that they shop online, and 37 percent use their phone for banking. Use of mobile devices to make online purchases continued to grow, with an increase of more than 10 percent over last year's survey. (Figure 9, n= 300)

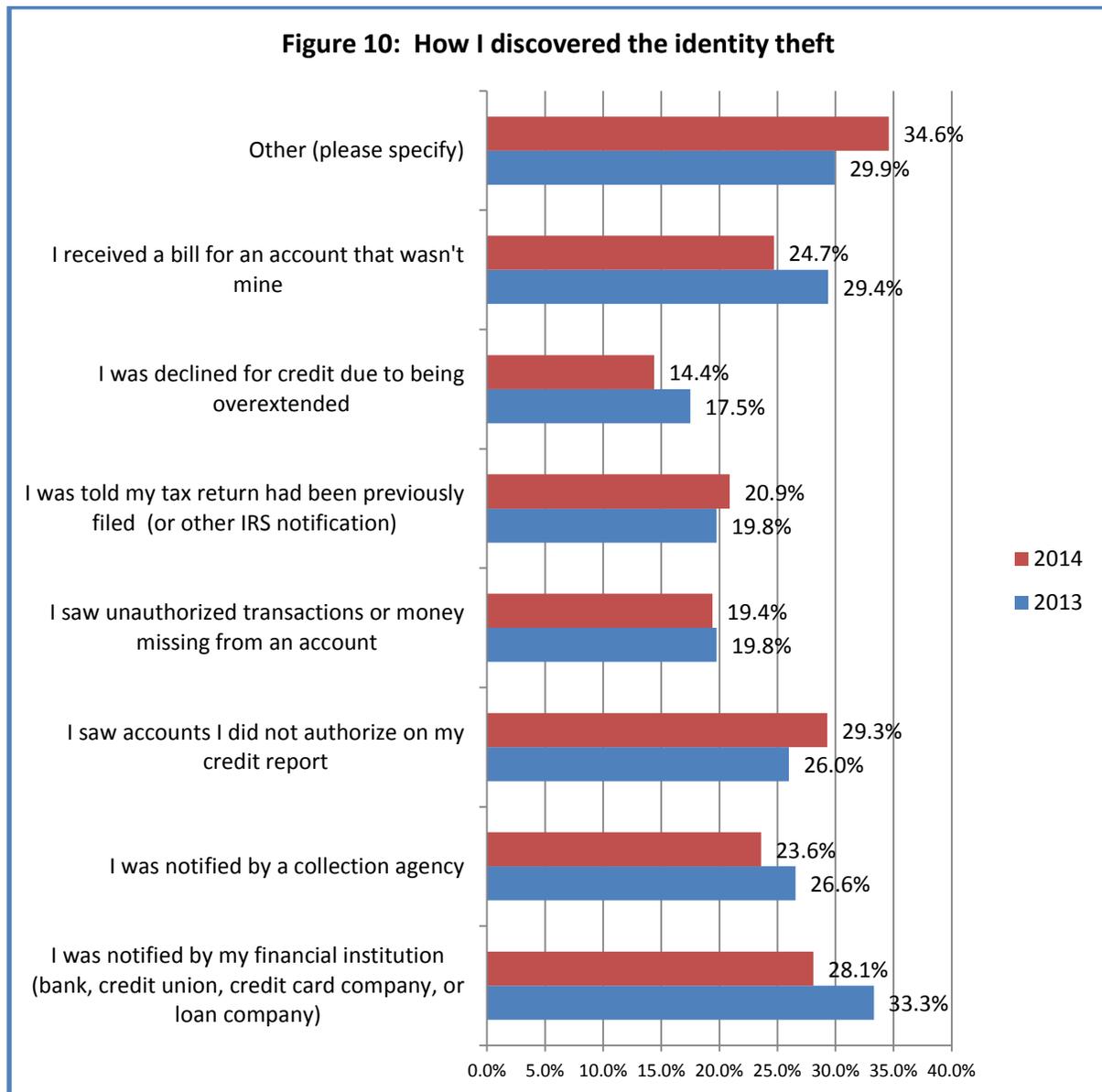


"Ten years ago, we were not ready to combat the dynamic trends of online fraud. The good news is that all stakeholders have embraced the responsibility to do more to protect information and mitigate the damage done by identity thieves. Consumers and victims are remaining resilient when it comes to re-engaging in the online world and embracing the convenience that technology has to offer after they have been victimized."

-Mike Cook, ITRC Board of Directors and Industry Expert

I: The methods by which victims discover their identity theft varies widely among the victims surveyed.

While traditional methods of discovery remain constant, victims are still discovering their victimization in a number of jarring ways. (Figure 10, n=263)



"Many times I felt very alone in this process to fix all my personal data. The credit rating bureaus made it extremely difficult for me to get any protection. My fraud alerts are ignored. The police dept made no attempt to help track the identity of the thief. I had some leads and they did nothing and were impossible to reach to follow up with. I had to file 2 reports and both times they seemed uninformed as to the gravity of the situation and its aftermath."

- ITRC Aftermath Respondent

J: The obstacles created by identity theft crimes consist of more than just an inability to obtain credit (32.7 percent) or loans (28.4 percent).

While those areas are certainly prevalent, there are additional areas of impact that should not go unrecognized, such as having existing credit cards cancelled (16.3 percent), experiencing employment issues, and facing the inability to pay bills (15.2 percent). (Figure 11, n= 257)

Figure 11: How has your life been impacted by this crime? (Check all that apply)					
	2014	2013	2009	2008	2007
My ability to get credit cards was affected and/or I was denied a credit card	32.7%	32.4%	53.0%	45.0%	52.0%
Ability to obtain other types of loans was affected and/or I was denied other types of loans	28.4%	32.4%	40.0%		
Ability to obtain other financial accounts (such as checking or savings) was affected and/or I was unable to open other financial accounts	16.7%	22.9%	this answer was not provided		
Interest rates on existing credit cards increased	14.4%	12.9%	21.0%	33.0%	36.0%
Credit card(s) I had was cancelled	16.3%	13.9%	29.0%	34.0%	27.0%
Collection agencies still calling	19.5%	22.3%	47.0%	39.0%	53.0%
My ability to get a job has been affected and/or I have been unable to get a job	12.1%	14.5%	14.0%	23.0%	18.0%
Lost my job	3.5%	5.0%	3.0%	5.0%	N/A
Unable to pay bills	15.2%	17.9%	23.0%	28.0%	N/A
None of these apply	39.7%	27.3%	this answer was not provided		
Other	22%	25.7%	this answer was not provided		

"While the long term trend lines are headed in the right direction, with a few exceptions, the secondary impacts on identity crime victims are still unacceptably high. The ability to obtain new credit cards has improved by nearly 20 percent during the past five years, but nearly one third of victims still have difficulty. More important, though, is the fact that the ability to get or keep a job remains an issue for far too many people, who find their identity compromised through no fault of their own."

- James Lee, ITRC Director Emeritus, Industry Expert

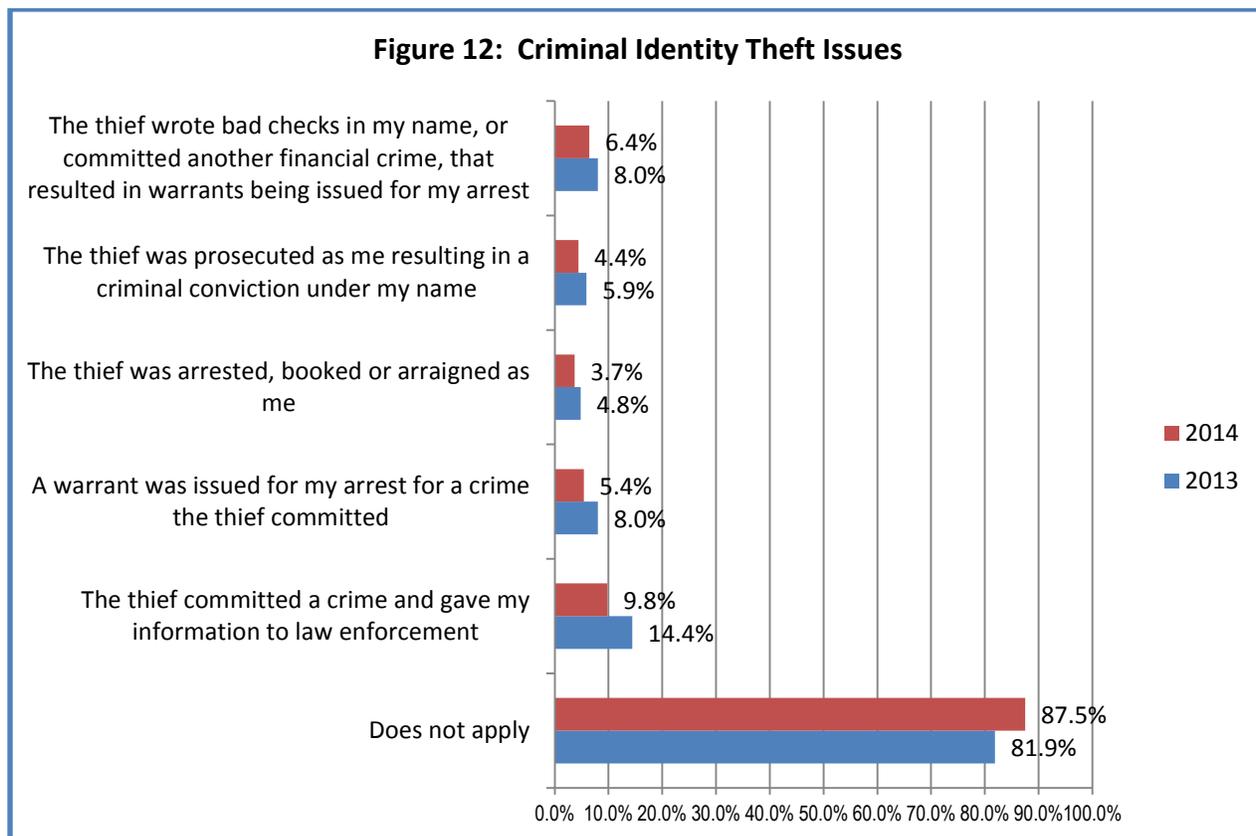
OTHER FINDINGS

Identities are valuable to thieves, regardless of the financial status of the victim. Identity theft continues to victimize people of all ages and income levels. Just under half of survey respondents (47.9 percent) had a household income level of less than \$50,000.

There was a slight shift in the age demographics, with the greatest change occurring in the 19-29 year old category (Generation Z), down nearly 5 percent in the number of respondents from 2013.

Criminal identity theft issues were reported by 12.5 percent of the survey respondents, down from 18.1 percent in 2013.

This type of crime includes the thief providing the victim's information during a crime (9.8 percent), bad checks being written (6.4 percent) or warrants being issued in the victim's name for a crime (5.4 percent). (Figure 12, n= 296)



"Was not able to get cell phone service for myself, because of poor credit and not knowing it...Was not able to get electricity for my new home without taking time away from work to go to the institution and provide evidence of who I was...Was not able to make purchases quickly, because of identity verification requirements. Was not eligible for a refi on my house"

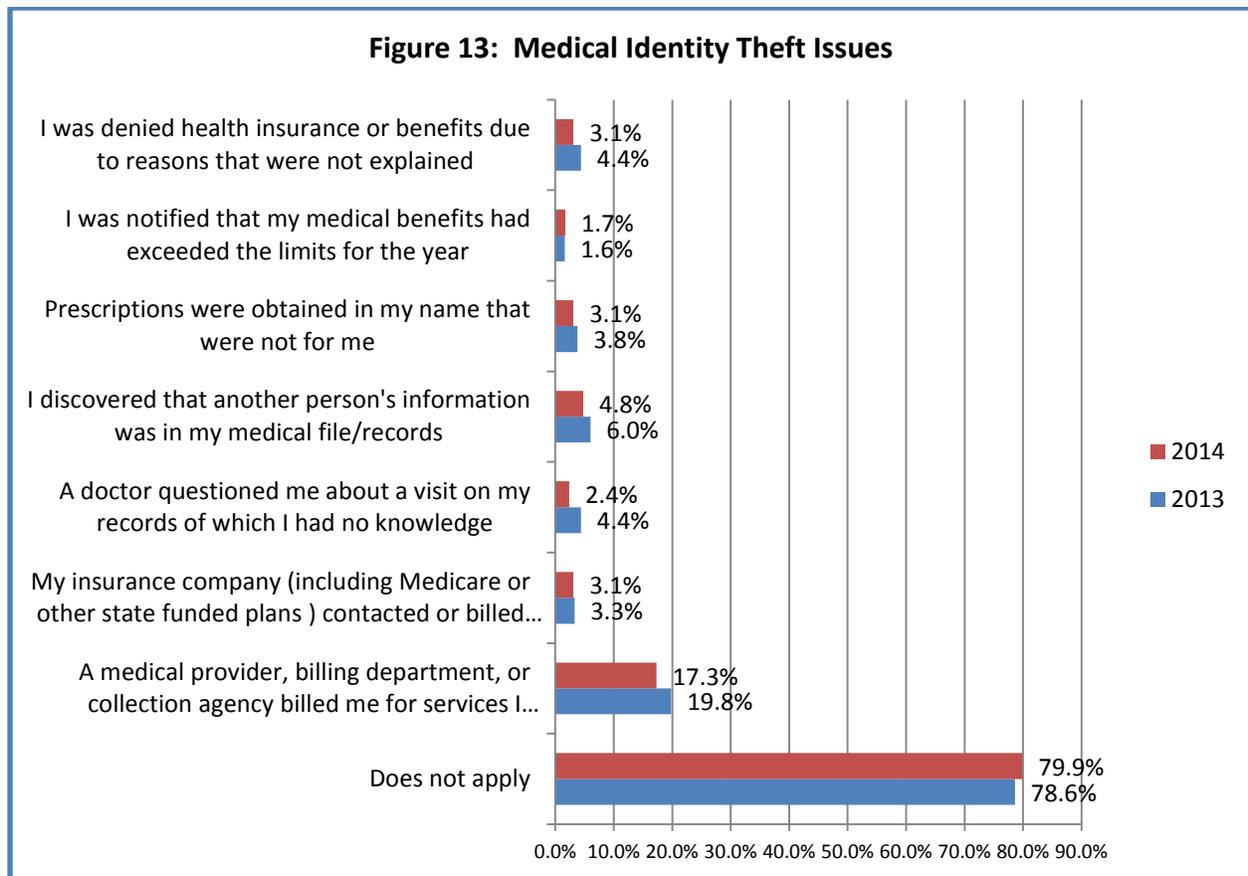
"I may not be able to continue my career path because drug charges were placed in my name, as well as many traffic citations. I am currently pursuing a degree in nursing. With drug charges I would not be allowed to get certified. Resulting in years in school wasted, thousands of dollars thrown away..."

"Issue qualifying for government assistance, like medical and food stamps because it says my minor child is receiving state disability income"

"I no longer shop online. I am constantly checking my bank and credit card accounts to make sure nothing is going on. I constantly worry about what will happen next. I hate to go to the mailbox for fear some one has again used my personal information fraudulently".

- ITRC Aftermath Respondents

Medical identity theft issues were reported by 20.1 percent of the survey respondents. Just over 17 percent of those who answered this question indicated they found out about the crime via a bill for services they never received. Nearly five percent discovered someone else’s health information in their medical records. (Figure 13, n=294)

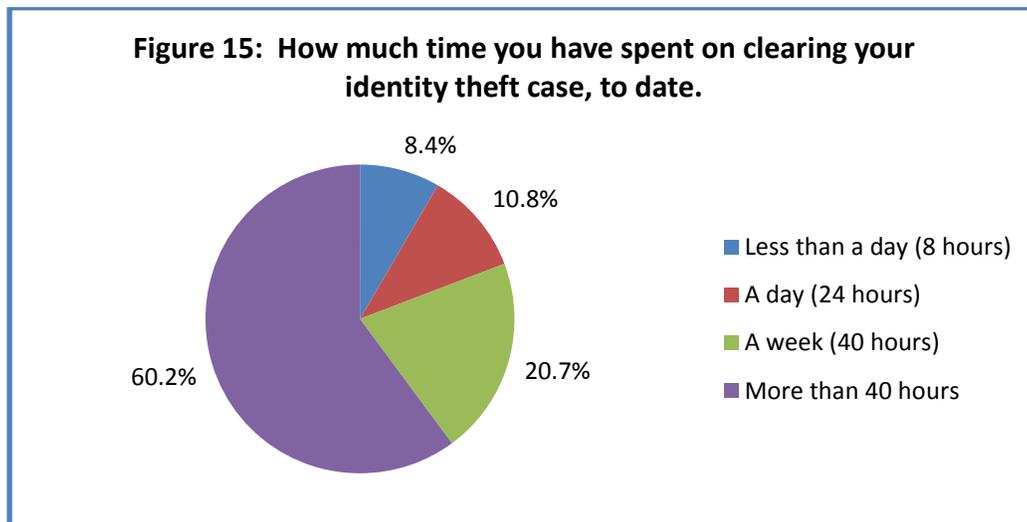


Time elapsed between first incident and discovery by victims

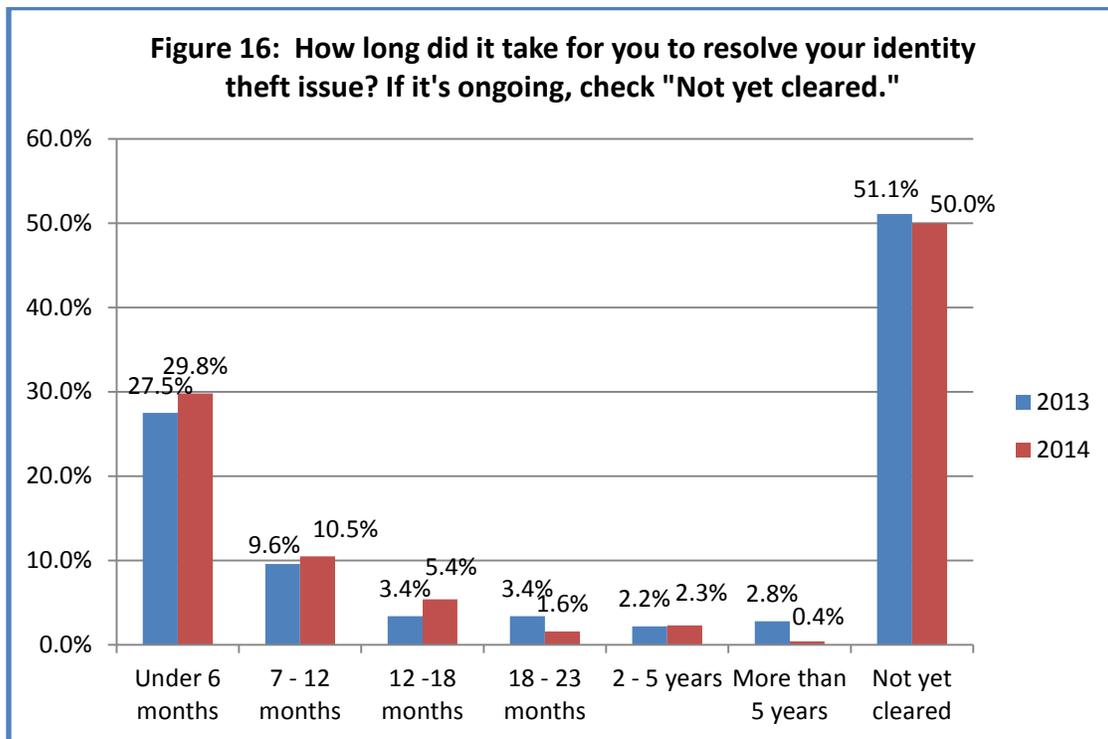
Earlier detection has been demonstrated to decrease the time and energy a victim will spend in resolving the issue. There was no real increase in early detection rates, which means we must continue to educate the public regarding proactive self-detection methods. (Figure 14, n=260)

Figure 14: What was the amount of time between when the crime actually started and when you found out, "the moment of discovery?"					
MONTHS PASSED	2014	2013	2009	2008	2007
0-3	48.5%	48.1%	45.0%	47.0%	42.0%
4-6	8.1%	8.3%	11.0%	10.0%	11.0%
7-12	10.4%	10.5%	10.0%	14.0%	11.0%
13 - 24	11.2%	9.4%	10.0%	8.0%	17.0%
2-3 years	6.9%	7.7%	9.0%	8.0%	9.0%
More than 3 years	15.0%	16.0%	14.0%	12.0%	11.0%

In regard to how much time was being spent resolving or mitigating identity theft issues, 60 percent of respondents stated they had already spent more than 40 hours of their time trying to clear their case at the time they responded to the survey. (Figure 15, n=251)



When it comes to how long it takes for victims to resolve their identity theft issues, 50 percent of the survey respondents indicated it was “not yet cleared” at the time they responded to the survey. (Figure 16, n=258)



"I spend several hours each month monitoring and updating each issue. I also had to tell my boss about it when unemployment was filed in my name."

"The severe time demands from hours spent on clearing my name, has served to limit my time with others."

"To be sure that my information was not used I spent a month on the phone with various departments and entities at one time. For example I had to go to <the Department of Motor Vehicles> stand in line for two hours and ask that a fraud alert be added to my file. Now when I need to renew my license I have to go in person and they have my photo on file. Now multiply that one action by 50 and that is only the surface of how long it all took and how much more inconvenient everything I do has become, but I guess more secure."

- ITRC Aftermath Respondents

Inability to resolve the issue and lingering effects

Barriers to resolution are often out of the victim’s control. Issues such as fraud alerts being ignored (16.7 percent) and credit agencies not removing incorrect information (16.3 percent) are generally difficult for victims to influence.

“I don’t know how to clear my report” showed a positive decrease from 2013, down 7.5 percent from 2013 figures. This is an encouraging sign that victims are learning how to follow through on this mitigation process. (*Figure 17, n=251*)

Figure 17: Listed below are some reasons why you may not have been able to eliminate or correct negative information. (check all that apply)					
REASON	2014	2013	2009	2008	2007
Because it was a member of my family, I do not wish to proceed	2.8%	1.1%	4.0%	10.0%	7.0%
I clean my report only to have imposter start again	8.0%	10.7%	7.0%	13.0%	16.0%
I don't know how to clear my report	15.1%	22.6%	25.0%	23.0%	16.0%
Civil litigation still on	6.8%	6.8%	14.0%	15.0%	21.0%
My accounts keep getting sold to new collection agencies – although cleared by creditor	13.1%	13.6%	14.0%	28.0%	22.0%
I could not prove my innocence even with a police report.	9.6%	12.4%	20.0%	27.0%	26.0%
Could not prove my innocence - I could not get a police report	6.0%	7.9%	12.0%	18.0%	19.0%
My SSN is in other people’s files	8.8%	12.4%	18.0%	18.0%	22.0%
Credit agencies will not remove it	16.3%	18.6%	29.0%	N/A	32.0%
Credit agencies keep putting incorrect information back on my credit reports	16.7%	14.7%	29.0%	30.0%	31.0%
I gave up	12.4%	12.4%	27.0%	20.0%	25.0%
I do not have a fraud alert and the imposter is active	6.0%	3.4%	16.0%	8.0%	6.0%
Fraud alerts ignored – imposter is active	16.7%	20.9%	20.0%	23.0%	19.0%
Offender is an ex-spouse, I have to go back to court to fix this	3.6%	3.4%	4.0%	2.0%	6.0%
None of these apply	49%	47%			

In our previous analysis of the response “I gave up” we internally asked the question: what causes victims to stop trying to clear their names? Continuing to clear one’s name would provide an obvious benefit to the individual. When we couple the response “I gave up” (12.4 percent) with “I don’t know how to clear my report” (15.1 percent) we believe this could be an indicator of frustration and resignation rather than ignorance. The trend over the last five *Aftermath* studies has shown a decrease in these responses. We are optimistic regarding reasons. Greater access to resources and better remediation techniques (for some types of identity theft) may be giving victims the strength and hope to continue to wade through the process.

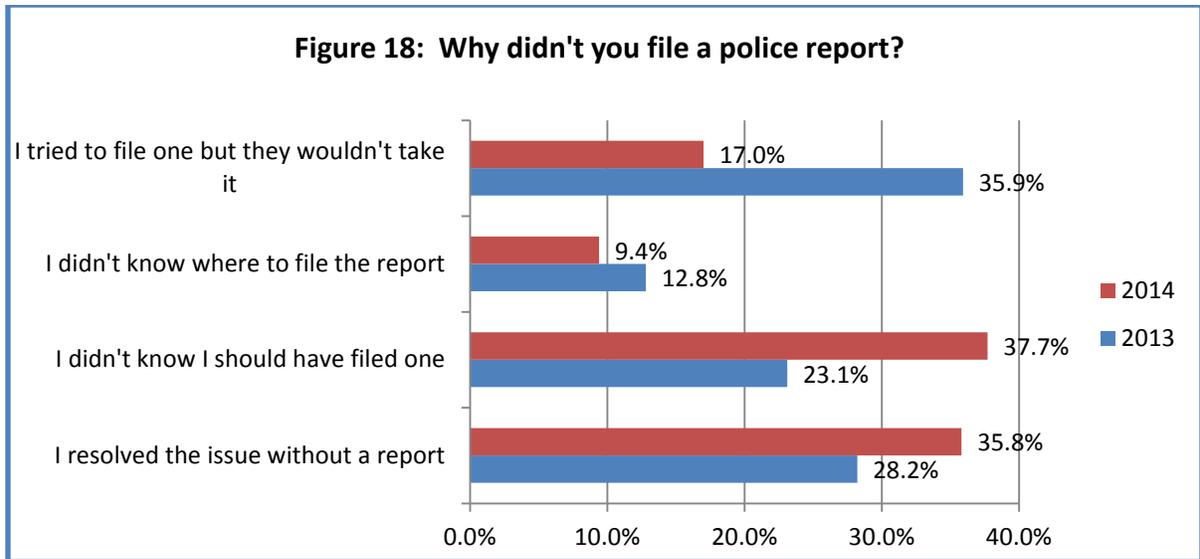
Again, it is important to remember that respondents in this survey are not a random population sample, rather they are individuals who contacted the ITRC for, and received, one-on-one case assistance. Even with a step-by-step plan provided to them, the task can be daunting and feel overwhelming enough to stop trying.

Victim experiences/satisfaction with organizations

Obtaining a police report to document the identity theft incident remains a crucial step in the remediation process. This year, 78.6 percent of individuals responded “yes” to the question “Did you file a police report?”

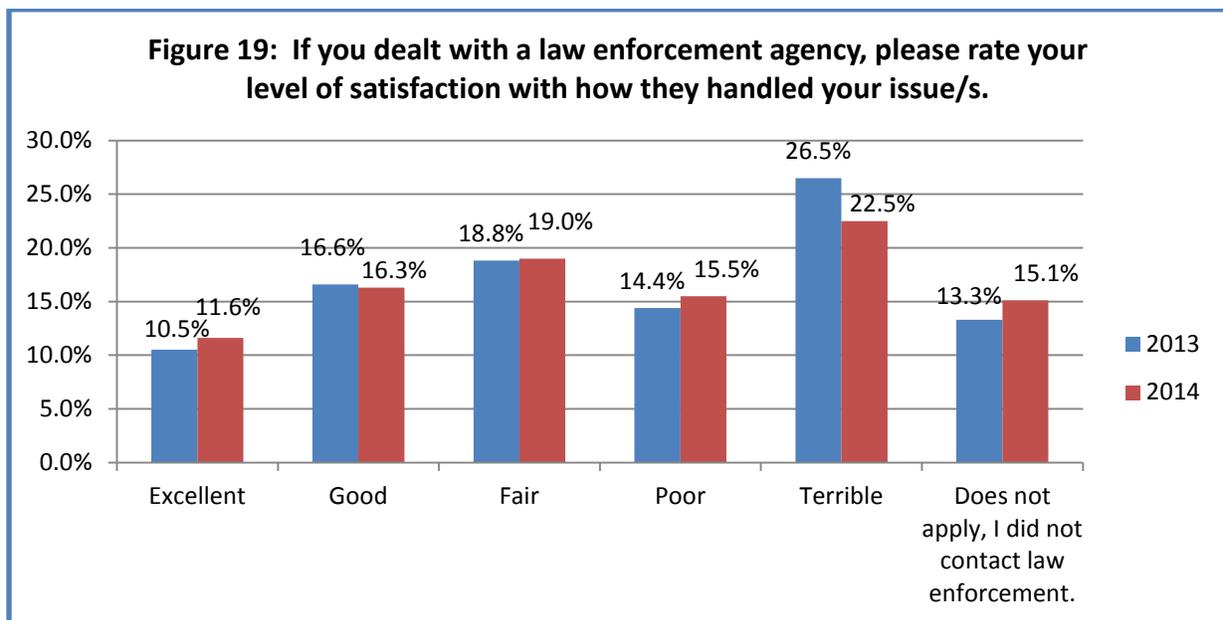
We view the fact that there was a 7.6 percent increase in the number of respondents who indicated that they were able to resolve the issue without a report as a positive one. This could be an indicator of the type of issue experienced, or could be due to better remediation techniques within the industry sector. Either way, we are pleased to see less effort placed on the victims in this regard.

While we find it gratifying that there was a significant drop of 18.9 percent in the number of respondents who indicated that the police wouldn’t file a report, we cannot celebrate the fact that 17 percent of respondents who indicated they did not file a report, stated it was because they were unable to do so (*Figure 18, n=53*). With the prevalence of this crime, and the national attention it receives, this number should be much lower.

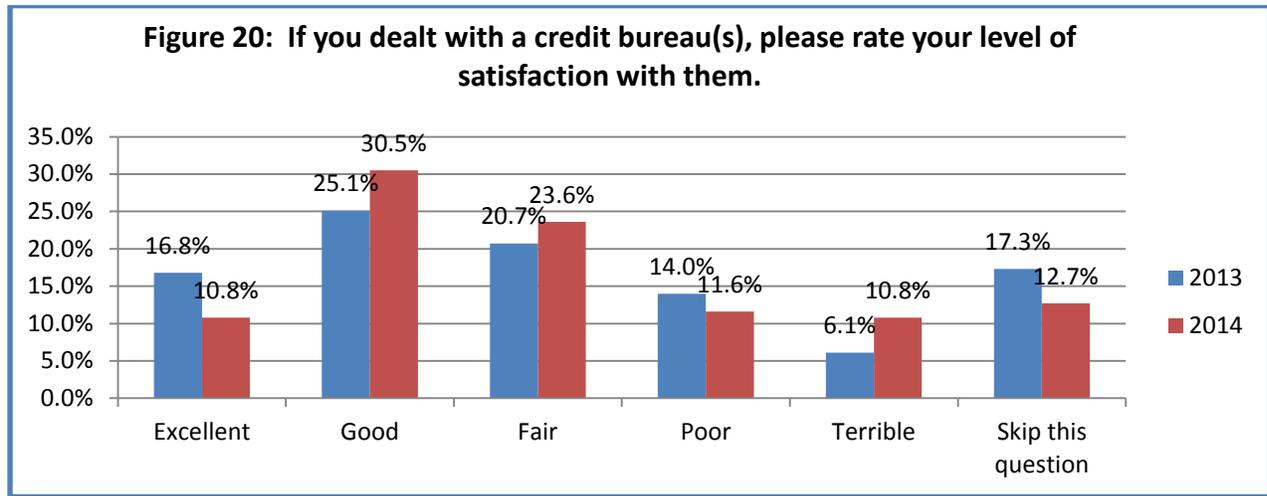


Unfortunately, dissatisfaction with law enforcement occurs when victims attempt to obtain the much needed police report. Consistent with past years, 38 percent of respondents who dealt with law enforcement were dissatisfied with the interaction, with 15.5 percent rating the experience as “poor” and 22.5 percent rating it as “terrible.” (Figure 19, n=258)

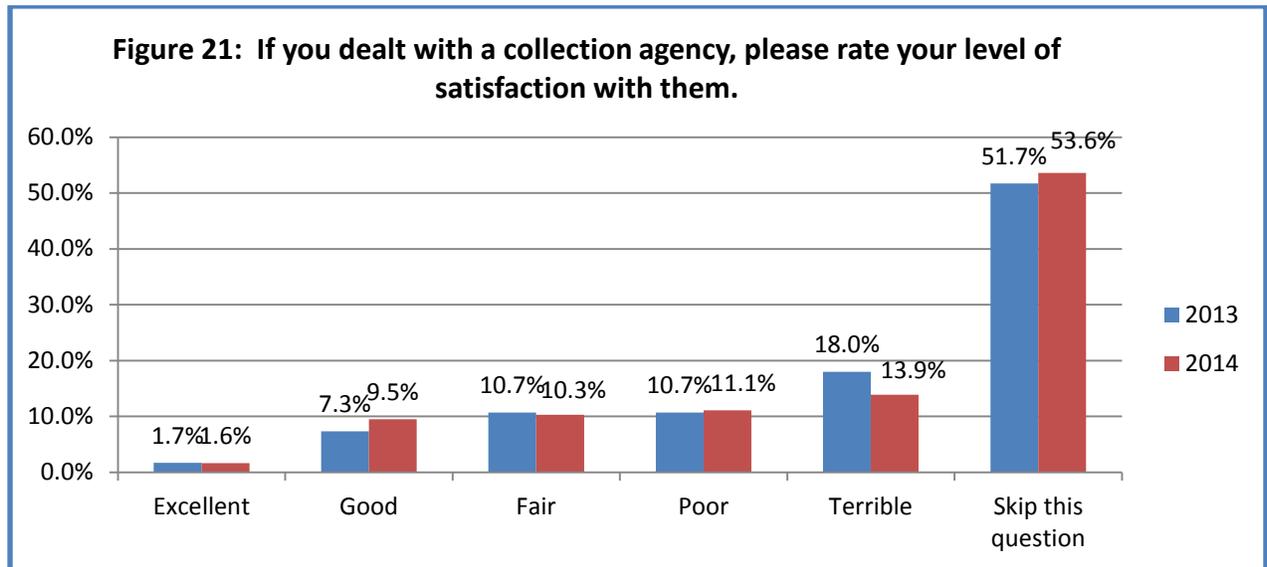
We recognize the challenge that government entities are faced with when dealing with large volumes of requests for services. However, it remains tremendously important, particularly for government entities, to evaluate and respond to this type of feedback. Unlike other industries, which will lose customer engagement if satisfaction levels are low, government entities will see no such loss of clientele. Victims must avail themselves of these important resources and do not have choices regarding from whom they obtain them.



The following tables are representative of respondents' satisfaction levels with other entities with which they may have had to interact in order to resolve their identity theft matters. (Figure 20, n=259, Figure 21, n=252)



More than 40 percent of the survey respondents gave the credit bureaus a ranking of "excellent" or "good," compared with 22.4 percent considering them "poor" to "terrible."



Relationships with others

It is not just individual emotions that are effected. This crime can affect those close to the victim. Most victims are connected to numerous other people, such as family, friends, and co-workers, and their feelings and reactions have a significant influence on the environment and people around them. For example, employees may have to miss work in order to resolve an issue, which in turn impacts all their co-workers and managers. For the spouse or caregiver, the time taken away from those activities can impact the others in the family.

Figure 22: How has this experience affected your relationship with others?

Figure 22 (n=244)	2014	2013	2009	2008	2007
Friends are not supportive and think I'm over-reacting	7.4%	8.0%	9%		
Friends are supportive	21.7%	25.4%	44%		
Employer is not supportive	6.1%	4.6%	3%		
Employer is supportive	9.4%	12.1%	18%		
Family life is stressed	20.1%	28.3%	37%		
Family/significant other is supportive	28.3%	24.9%	43%	42%	51%
Family doesn't understand or is unsupportive	13.1%	19.0%	asked separately		
Relationship has ended or been severely negatively impacted	9.0%	13.8%	13%	12%	12%
Other	11.1%	8.1%			
None of these apply	42.2%	32.0%			

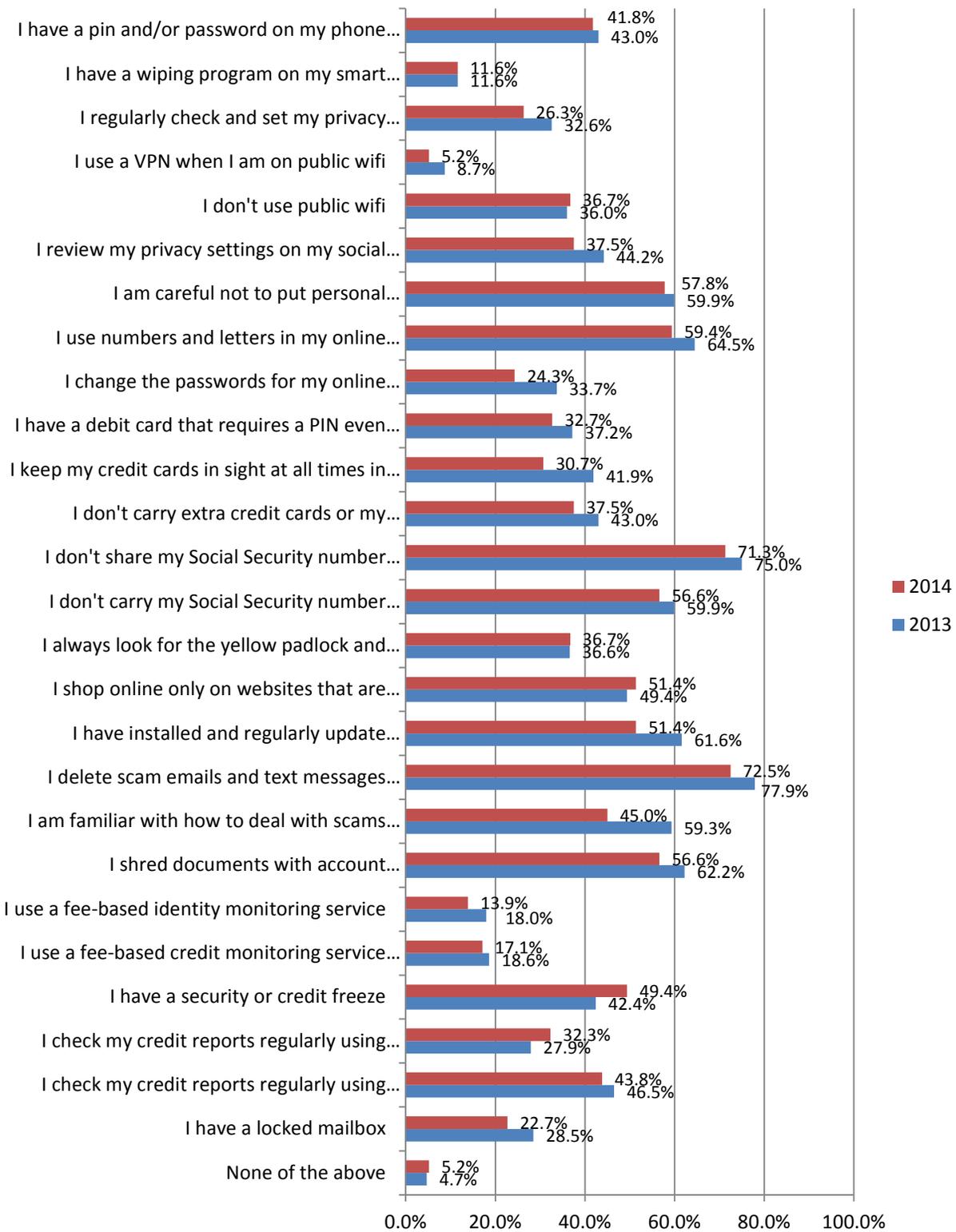
"I get overwhelmed whenever there is a new occurrence and start to feel afraid for my safety and security each time. I feel guilt that this event will affect my and my husband's financial security, or my job. Each time something happens, my life/sleep/work performance is disrupted so that I can focus on fixing or minimizing the damage done as quickly as possible."

- ITRC Aftermath Respondent

Consumer behaviors after the crime

Consumers are taking advantage of protections in place in the financial sector, as they continue to regularly review credit reports (76.1 percent, up slightly from 2013), and place security or credit freezes on said reports (49.4 percent, up from 2013). (Figure 23, n=251)

Figure 23: What behaviors do you CURRENTLY use to minimize your future risk of becoming a victim of identity theft again? (Check all that apply)



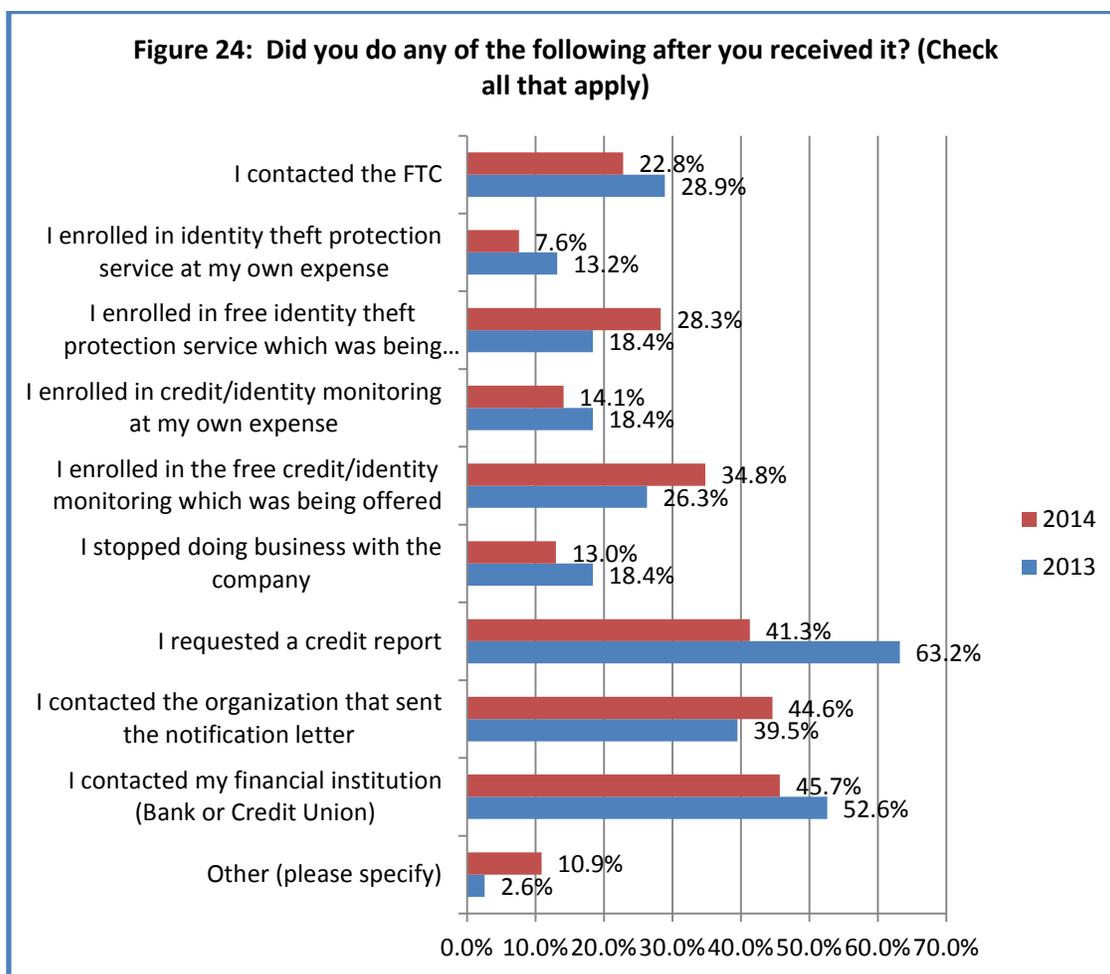
Data breach notification letters

Reported data breaches in the U.S. hit a record high in 2014, with 783 data breach incidents captured on the Identity Theft Resource Center's [2014 Data Breach List](#).

With so much national attention being paid to large, high-profile data breaches, the ITRC again posed the question, "Did you receive a data breach notification letter in 2014?" More than 42 percent of the survey respondents said yes, for an increase of 18.6 percent over the number reported for 2013 (23.9 percent).

Of those respondents who indicated they had received a breach notification letter, follow-up activities included: (Figure 24, n=92)

- 45.7 percent contacted their financial institution (down 6.9 percent)
- 44.6 percent contacted the organization that sent the notification (up 5.1 percent)
- 41.3 percent requested a credit report (down 21.9 percent)
- 34.8 percent enrolled in the free credit/identity monitoring which was being offered (up 8.5 percent)



With this question below regarding data breach notification, we identify another area where survey respondents expressed a loss of trust with those entities that handle personal information. (Figure 25, n=101)

Figure 25: After dealing with a breach notification, did this cause your trust in any of the following industry sectors to change?			
	No	Somewhat	Yes
Financial / Banking / Credit Industry	28.6%	34.7%	36.7%
Business Industry	24.2%	34.7%	41.1%
Government / Military Sector	41.3%	26.1%	32.6%
Medical / Healthcare Industry	45.1%	25.3%	29.7%
Education Sector	58.0%	19.3%	22.7%

In Conclusion

"Millions of individuals deal with the aftermath of this crime annually. When reviewing all of these charts and statistics it can be hard not to get caught up in the depersonalization of all this data. It is crucial to realize that there is so much more to each and every response than just a corresponding percentage point. Each time we add a number to the identity theft victimization statistics, there is a person behind it, a life that is altered. It is not just the individual victim that is affected, but also the people around them who must deal with the consequences."

- Julie Ferguson, ITRC Chairman of the Board

The Identity Theft Resource Center has long recognized that identity theft, in its many variations, continues to be a significant and constant problem for both consumers and businesses. Through these *Aftermath* surveys, the ITRC has sought to capture statistics and analyze the results to identify where there may be shortcomings in providing necessary information, in order to develop educational campaigns to fill in those gaps and better inform consumers.

This information also helps to identify trends that often provide indicators of positive growth and strengths in various activities, such as - better protection of personal information, better business practices, and improved interactions with consumers.

The more the ITRC can identify and understand the needs of consumers, the better it will be in meeting those needs. These surveys continue to empower us by

providing the information needed to understand how this crime affects different individuals and therefore how best to assist in remediation.

Throughout this paper we have allowed the voices of these victims to be heard regarding each of these issues. As is our tradition, we feel the best closing would be to allow one of them to describe their identity theft experience and how it affected them, as well as how they look to the future.

"This experience has turned my retirement into a full time job, one without compensation but with many expenses.

My case involved the fraudulent attempts (some successful) of opening many accounts in my name, while also extracting money from my legitimate account even though it was password-protected.

Even though I had proactively placed security freezes with all three CRA's, one agency allowed the perpetrator(s) to open a credit-monitoring service with them and was suppling the fraudsters with my credit reports, giving them even more of my personal information. And this despite the fact that they paid for the credit-monitoring membership with a card that was without funds.

Finally, the impact on my life has been incalculable. To feel uncomfortable while in my own home and insecure when I leave it creates a situation with no respite. To have to secure any important documents to off-site locations creates an ongoing scenario of back and forth activity to conduct personal business. To have to shut down most online access since that was the perpetrator's mode of choice creates a life for me that moves so much more slowly...But to the ITRC, I want to give many thanks. You have been an information lifeline."

- ITRC Aftermath Respondent

METHODOLOGY

The ITRC staff designed and administered the *Identity Theft: The Aftermath 2014* survey. This is the eighth time the ITRC has undertaken this project. A number of independent industry specialists participated in preparing the final summary.

Respondents to this survey were all assisted by the ITRC during the 2014 calendar year. These respondents were confirmed as identity theft victims by ITRC victim advisors. It is important to remember this survey is not a census survey, rather it reflects the victim population that responded to the survey invitation.

Information includes state of residence, age when crime began, and household income level.

- 330 victims responded from 40 states. It should be noted the area the victim lives in is not to be misconstrued as the location of the crime. Anecdotally, the ITRC continues to note the vast majority of these cases are multi-jurisdictional in nature.
- Of the 330 respondents, 9.7 percent of victims were under that age of 18 when the crime began. All other age groups were almost uniformly represented. Other age categories were as follows: 18-29 (14.6 percent); 30-39 (20.6 percent); 40-49 (18.8 percent); 50-59 (16.3 percent); and 60+ (20 percent).

The annual *Aftermath* surveys closely mirror each other in terms of questions asked and reflect details to further understand new methods of identity theft. In 2009, 41 questions were asked.

ITRC emailed 3,023 invitations to participate in the 2014 survey. A total of 330 victims participated in the online (web-based) survey.

APPENDIX

ⁱ The Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC) is a nonprofit, grant and donation funded organization that focuses exclusively on the issues surrounding identity theft and in providing assistance to victims without charge, from the moment of discovery through final resolution. www.idtheftcenter.org. Email: itrc@idtheftcenter.org, Phone: 858-693-7935, Victim Hotline: 888-400-5530.

ⁱⁱ Matt Cullina: Currently serving as Secretary on the Board of Directors for the ITRC, Mr. Cullina has 15 years of insurance industry management, claims and product development experience. He spearheaded MetLife Auto & Home Insurance Co.'s personal product development initiatives, managed complex claims litigation and served as a corporate witness for Travelers Insurance and the Fireman's Fund Insurance Co.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eva Velasquez: Currently the President and CEO of the Identity Theft Resource Center, Ms. Velasquez is a driven leader with more than 25 years of experience serving the community and assisting victims of crime. Ms. Velasquez most recently served as the Vice President of Operations for the San Diego Better Business Bureau, where she managed the Bureau's department that supplies the core services of dispute resolution, arbitration, and pre-purchase information to the public. Prior to that appointment, Ms. Velasquez spent 21 years at the San Diego District Attorney's Office, with the last 11 of those years spent investigating and assisting in the prosecution of economic/financial crimes, with a focus on consumer protection issues. In addition, she served as the Chairman of the Consumer Fraud Task Force for 13 years, and was a past Vice President of the California Consumer Affairs Association.

^{iv} Paul Bond: Currently on the Board of Directors for the ITRC, Mr. Bond is a lead U.S. attorney in data security compliance and Partner with Reed Smith LLP. Bond has counseled a broad swath of clients in more than 200 data security breach situations and has helped defend more than 60 such privacy-related class actions. He is a member of the Global Regulatory Enforcement Group and the International Association of Privacy Professionals and selected as one of four "Rising Stars" in Privacy and Consumer Protection Law by Law 360.

^v Susan Grant: Currently on the Board of Directors for the ITRC, Ms. Grant is the Director of Consumer Protection at the Consumer Federation of America. She works specifically in the areas of privacy, identity theft, online safety and security, telemarketing, electronic and mobile commerce, deceptive marketing, fraud, and general consumer protection issues. Ms. Grant heads CFA's Consumer Protection Institute, conducts CFA's annual Consumer Complaint Survey, and is a recognized authority on combating consumer fraud and deception.

^{vi} Mike Cook: Currently on the Board of Directors for the ITRC, Mr. Cook is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer and of XOR Data Exchange and has more than 25 years of experience building data sharing solutions for risk, operational efficiencies and compliance. In 2002, Cook co-founded ID Analytics, building it from concept stage into a high-growth, profitable company serving more than 280 enterprise clients, including five million consumers. He was also a member of the executive team which developed Consumer Credit Associates (now Innovis) into the "fourth national credit bureau" and he has held senior management roles with Experian, Early Warning Services and American Express.

^{vii} Julie Ferguson: Currently serving as the Chair on the Board of Directors for the ITRC, Ms. Ferguson is a Senior Vice President of Industry Solutions at Ethoca and is one of the industry's foremost experts on Internet payments fraud. Ms. Ferguson has more than 20 years of experience in the online payments and fraud management industry and holds patents for secure transaction order management processing and preventing fraudulent electronic transactions. Prior to joining Ethoca, Ms. Ferguson was Vice President of Emerging Technologies at Debix and Co-Founder and Vice President of Emerging Technologies.

^{viii} James Lee: Former ITRC Board Chairman and now a Director Emeritus, Mr. Lee is Vice President, AALU in Washington, DC, former Chairman of the ANSI Identity Theft Prevention and Identity Management Standards Panel (IDSP), and former Senior Vice President and Chief Public & Consumer Affairs Officer for ChoicePoint Inc.