

11/18/2014

By Administrator

The effects of identity theft can be traumatic and lasting, according to a report recently released by the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC). [Identity Theft: The Aftermath 2013](#) is part of a series of studies, beginning in 2003, based on survey responses from confirmed identity theft victims who contacted the ITRC for assistance.

The latest report found that identity theft doesn't only affect victims financially – it can trigger a broad range of emotions that can impact victims' future behavior.

“When people think of identity theft, they typically imagine stolen credit cards, bank account numbers or tax refunds, but our research found that identity theft takes many forms besides financial identity theft, including the use of stolen identities to commit criminal, medical, and government identity theft,” said ITRC President Eva Velasquez in an [Op-Ed](#) to *The Hill*. “These types of identity theft often have greater impact on victims than the theft of financial data. They take longer to resolve, cause greater out of pocket expense, and generally leave victims feeling more violated and emotionally scarred.”

Some of the key findings of the report include:

- Identity theft victimizes people of all ages and income levels.
- Sixty-one percent of the respondents reported that new accounts were created using their stolen personal information, and more than half experienced identity theft involving existing accounts.
- Nearly 40 percent of respondents were victims of government-related identity theft, such as imposters obtaining tax refunds from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) using their identities, and only 55 percent of those who dealt with the IRS had been able to get the refunds

due them at the point of responding to the survey.

- More than 40 percent of respondents who dealt with law enforcement were dissatisfied with the interaction.
- Respondents experienced a range of emotions as a result of the identity theft, the most common of which were fear for their personal financial security (69 percent), rage and anger (65 percent), a sense of powerlessness (50 percent), and feelings of betrayal (50 percent).
- Six percent of respondents reported that they had suicidal feelings as a result of identity theft.

Thirty-two percent of the respondents said that the identity theft had caused problems with their ability to get credit cards or other forms of credit, and nearly 20 percent said that it had affected their employment (either losing jobs or being denied jobs). While identity theft often caused stress in victims' relationships with their families and others, it also prompted some victims to make positive changes in their behavior such as regularly reviewing their credits reports, freezing their reports, reviewing their privacy settings on social networks, being more careful about the personal information they post online, and changing their passwords more frequently.

Identity theft victims often have to contact multiple entities to try to resolve their problems. In addition to the dissatisfaction that many felt in dealing with law enforcement agencies, nearly 29 percent of the respondents characterized their interactions with debt collection agencies concerning identity theft as "poor" or "terrible," 25 percent were unhappy with their dealings with financial institutions, and 20 percent were dissatisfied with how they were treated by credit reporting agencies. In the report, Matt Cullina, a member of the ITC board and CEO of IDT911, an identity theft service provider, observed that the private and public entities have an opportunity to make a good impression when identity theft victims turn to them for assistance, but a negative interaction can have the opposite effect, potentially swaying victims' decisions about with whom to do business and even who to vote for in elections. "It would benefit all organizations to ensure their services are empathetic, attentive and respectful when assisting identity theft victims," said Cullina.