

Gail Cunningham, Vice President of Membership and Public Relations, [National Foundation for Credit Counseling](#)

Being in first place usually brings with it bragging rights, but not if it's the top spot in the Federal Trade Commission's annual complaint report. For the 12th year in a row, identity theft has held that dubious distinction, as ID theft complaints once again topped the 2011 list. Of more than 1.8 million complaints filed in 2011, 15 percent were related to identity theft.

Although smartphones have brought great convenience into people's lives, they have also brought with them another opportunity for thieves to access personal data and use it to their advantage. As a matter of fact, a recent [study](#) by Javelin Research found that smartphone users are approximately 33% more likely to become a victim of identity theft than non-users. Further, the Javelin study also revealed that 62% of smartphone users **do not use**

password protection, allowing anyone who finds or steals their phone to have access to the contents which typically includes a vast amount of personal information.

To increase awareness and provide identity theft protection resources, the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, the National Sheriffs Association and the National Association of Triads, Inc. are joining together to host the fifth annual Protect Your Identity Week (PYIW) October 20-27 during National Crime Prevention Month. The campaign will offer broad-based ID theft protection education in addition to focusing on the threats related to smartphones with the 2012 theme of "ID Theft Protection on the Go."

During the week, events will be held nationwide in communities across the country, providing consumers with the opportunity to shred sensitive documents free of charge, obtain ID theft protection information, and responsibly recycle unused mobile devices. It is anticipated that more than 100 events will be held from coast-to-coast. All events are free of charge and open to the public. To locate the PYIW event closest to you, go to www.ProtectYourIDNow.org. Clicking on the website map will provide details of events in your area.

