

NATIONAL FRAUD INTELLIGENCE BUREAU MONTHLY THREAT UPDATE



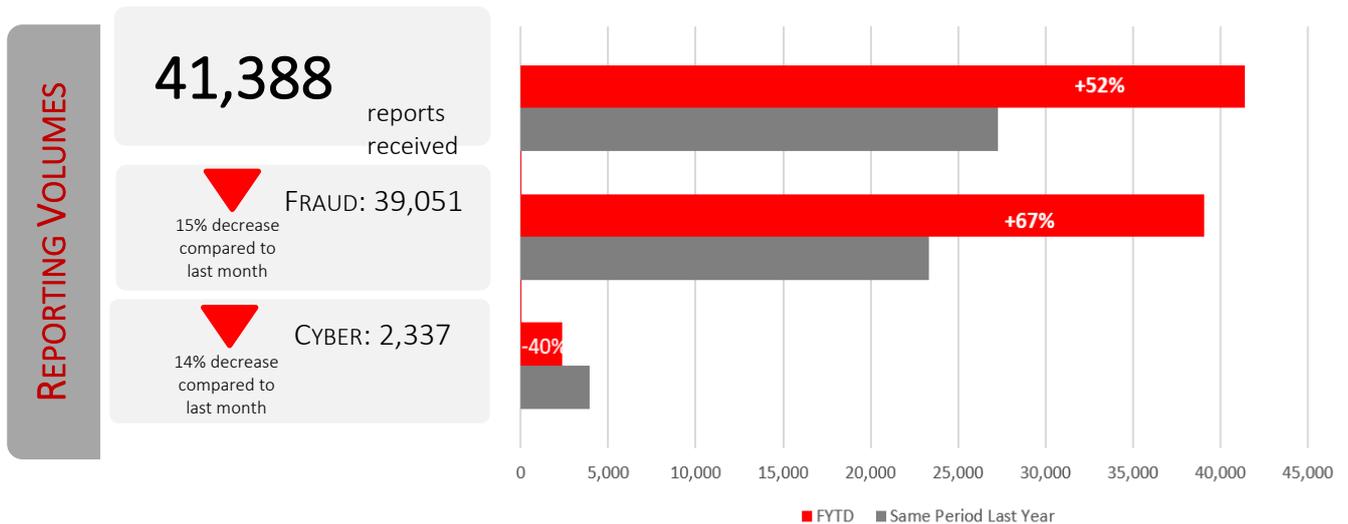
May 2021

Overview of Fraud and Cyber Dependant
Crime Trends



FRAUD AND CYBER DEPENDENT CRIME TRENDS

ACTION FRAUD CRIME REPORTING VOLUMES IN APRIL 2021



- Reporting (crime and information reports) decreased from 68,548 in March to 56,811 in April.
- Total losses dropped again compared to the previous month from £275,192,021 in March to £197,193,601.
- Dating fraud reporting dropped after the highest levels seen last month but remains at high levels compared to the same times last year.
- Investment fraud reports dropped compared to the previous month but again shares sales and other financial investments are still at high levels, investment fraud overall showed an increase of 55% from the 2020 baseline average.
- Online shopping fraud reporting has dropped to the lowest amount since October 2020, likely due to the easing of restrictions and the opening of non-essential retail. Mandate fraud¹ dropped this month from the highest levels seen last month since January 2020 but they are still consistently high figures over the past few months.
- Abuse of Position of Trust has increased once more to the highest levels since October 2020. Reports have been increasing steadily over the last few months and appears linked to lockdowns.
- Advance Fee frauds have been steadily climbing over the past few months and are now at the highest levels since November 2020.
- The continuation in high reporting for cybercrime compared to the previous year appears to coincide with the reopening of businesses as well as rollout of the vaccine, both which have created opportunities for cyber criminals.

NOTABLE REPORTING TRENDS

April's MO's: There continues to be a significant number of reports relating to delivery branded smishing reported previously, with messages asking customers to click a link to either reschedule or pay for an underpaid delivery charge. There are a whole host of websites relates to package redelivery and delivery fees. In addition, there continues to be a significant number of suspect websites related to phishing scams involving text messages purporting to be from a bank stating that a new payee or new device has been added.

Reports have been received relating to fake job offers, phone calls offering fake insurance cover, gym equipment, games consoles and household appliances. Websites purporting to offer investments, shipping containers, airline tickets, loans, and driving licence renewals were common last month.

¹ Mandate Fraud is where fraudsters obtain details of direct debits, standing orders or account transfer details and amend them to transfer money to other accounts.

EMERGING ISSUES

Fake British Gas emails reported over 500 times in 48 hours: Action Fraud received 537 reports in 48 hours relating to fake emails purporting to be from British Gas. The emails state that the recipient is due a refund because of overpayment and there is a link to a phishing website requesting personal and financial information.

Sextortion Tactic targets Canadian Youngsters: Canadian Police are warning youngsters of the emergence of new sextortion scam where scammers are superimposing a victim's face onto a nude photo or a video of an individual engaging in sexual acts. The scammer threatens to send the image/video to family or friends unless the victim pays money. Although the reports are based in Canada, it is highly possible that we may see cases of this in the UK².

Coronavirus: Reports relating to vaccines, for example surveys and vaccination confirmations has increased, likely due to the opening of vaccinations to younger age groups. Action Fraud are continuing to receive reports of 'fake fit to fly' Covid-19 test certificates. Scammers are spoofing government approved companies offering covid tests. This may become a rising trend dependent on how restrictions are lifted in the coming months³.

Charity Scams: Fraudsters have been using Covid-19 to solicit donations by impersonating legitimate charities. With the Covid crisis in India being widely reported globally, it is likely fraudsters may use the crisis in India to scam members of the public wanting to help. We are also likely to see in the longer term, any impact because of the covid crisis both in the UK and internationally, for example increases in mental health issues or access to vaccinations in poorer countries (Covax), are likely to lead to an increase in charity scams.

Holiday Fraud and Travel Zones: NFIB have issued an alert to warn members of the public about the risk of holiday fraud and ticketing scams following the government's announcement of the road map out of lockdown. The government have announced a travel light system for international travel with a handful of green list destinations announced for quarantine-free travel. It is likely that scammers may target those looking for holidays to countries on the green list, such as Portugal, which are likely to be in high demand.

Job Application Fraud: The UK economy has started to pick up following easing of restrictions and opening of non-essential retail. As the economy recovers, it is expected that recruitment will increase as more jobs become available. With this increase in recruitment, it is likely fraudsters will target individuals through large recruitment platforms offering non-existent jobs and requesting personal and financial information or payment for non-existent courses or upfront costs, such as criminal records checks.

Youngsters and mental health problems: There has been a reported increase in volume of youngsters suffering from mental health problems and a surge in the number being referred to mental health services due to the pandemic⁴⁵. We know through prior research that individuals with mental health issues were more likely to fall victim to scammers.

² [RCMP warn of new sextortion tactic targeting youth | CBC News](#)

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/16/fake-covid-vaccine-and-test-certificate-market-is-growing-researchers-say>

⁴ [Mental health of children and young people during pandemic | The BMJ](#)

⁵ [Almost 40% of young people are waiting too long for mental health treatment | UK News | Sky News](#)