

Identity Theft: Your chances of becoming a victim may depend where you live

October 3rd, 2006

Year after year in this information age, the problem of identity theft has become a widespread marketplace issue. As recent as last year the Federal Trade Commission reportedly received over 250,000 complaints. The business sector estimates much higher figures of damage, reporting that it affected more than 18 million Americans over the past two years and cost business and government billions of dollars.

There is reason to believe now that the chances for you, the consumer, to become a victim may depend on what geographic location you reside. Best Places Expert, Bert Spelling, announced on July 13, 2006, the results of a national study he led to discover that there are clear geographic and socio-economic divides that affect cities at risk.

iJacking - Identity Theft defined

Intersections, Inc., an identity management solutions company, concurrently coined a new term,

iJacking: (i-jak-ng) noun: - An emotionally devastating crime that drains your accounts, hurts your reputation and leaves you financially paralyzed when thieves assume your identity or use your Social Security number to commit fraud crimes. The term attests to the great personal harm caused by identity theft and the limited ability to recover financially in most cases.

Bay Area, West Coast Most "At Risk"

The study came up with a number of links between behavioral tendencies prevalent in various regions as well as a rating list of the 50 largest U.S. metropolitan areas from most to least risky for identity theft. It finds the San Francisco Bay Area to be the most at risk area of the country for identity theft. The West Coast appears to be the most unsafe for this relatively burgeoning threat as nine of the top ten cities most at risk for identity theft are on the West Coast, while most of the cities rated safest fall to the East.

The study found a number of behavioral trends that seem to lead to increased risk of identity theft exposure, and found that cities with higher incidents of risky attributes also had higher frequency of identity theft. It used over 80 metrics grouped into four categories:

1. Technology Impact
2. Lifestyle Risks
3. Transaction Habits
4. At Risk Behavior

Everyday transactions appear to put millions at risk. Frequent credit card use such as when dining or online, frequent ATM use, and frequent Internet use all contribute to overall increased likelihood of falling prey to identity theft. These trends make the West Coast most susceptible as cities like San Francisco, San Jose, and Denver rank with the highest percentiles for related technology risk factors like the prevalence of online banking, purchasing , and overall spending online.

Methamphetamines and Identity Theft

Another interesting correlation is that between methamphetamine and identity theft. The study also finds a clear connection between an increased rate of methamphetamine usage and increased frequency of identity theft. The cities with the highest rates of methamphetamine usage, San Francisco, San Jose, Salt Lake City, and Denver, also rank first, fourth, seventh, and third, respectively, as the cities most at risk for identity theft.

Identity theft is obviously a new type of growing crime with a number of risk factors that are seemingly difficult to avoid in everyday life. As we learn about this problem erupting in our society, more and more information becomes available to help consumers defend themselves against this faceless threat. Data from studies is still limited.

Amicus Curia will continue to update this site with information regarding this problem and suggest potential remedies as they become available, and expresses no opinion as to the usefulness of the subscription services that Intersections Inc., the company referenced above that supported this study and its publication, provides to consumers to protect them from identity theft.

Conclusion

Until solutions and safeguards in the marketplace become more effective, bankruptcy can become the last resort for clearing up debt resulting from identity theft. There are some who have exhausted all administrative remedies but find themselves with no other option beside bankruptcy to eliminate debt they never incurred and can never hope to pay. Unfortunately Amicus sees a growing number of clients that suffer from identity theft as they become completely exasperated from failed attempts to cure their liability and reports of disputed debts. If you find yourself in this unfortunate situation, we are willing and able to help you.

If you are in debt and would like to find out more about the options available to you. Give Amicus Curia a call at **(360)427-3599**.

Sources:

www.bestplaces.net