

Identity Theft

Identity theft, identity piracy or identity infringement occurs when someone uses another's personal identifying information, like their name, identifying number, or credit card number, without their permission, to commit fraud or other crimes.

The term identity theft was coined in 1964. Since that time, the definition of identity theft has been legally defined throughout both the U.K. and the U.S. as the theft of personally identifiable information. Identity theft deliberately uses someone else's identity as a method to gain financial advantages or obtain credit and other benefits.

The person whose identity has been stolen may suffer adverse consequences, especially if they are falsely held responsible for the perpetrator's actions. Personally identifiable information generally includes a person's name, date of birth, social security number, driver's license number, bank account or credit card numbers, PINs, electronic signatures, fingerprints, passwords, or any other information that can be used to access a person's financial resources.

The majority of identity theft victims do not realize that they are a victim until it has negatively impacted their lives. Many people do not find out that their identities have been stolen until they are contacted by financial institutions or discover suspicious activities on their bank accounts.[28] According to an article by Herb Weisbaum, everyone in the US should assume that their personal information has been compromised at one point.[28] It is therefore of great importance to watch out for warning signs that your identity has been compromised. The following are eleven indicators that someone else might be using your identity.

1. Credit or debit card charges for goods or services you are not aware of, including unauthorized withdrawals from your account
2. Receiving calls from credit or debit card fraud control department warning of possible suspicious activity on your credit card account
3. Receiving credit cards that you did not apply for
4. Receiving information that a credit scoring investigation was done. They are often done when a loan or phone subscription was applied for.
5. Checks bouncing for lack of enough money in your account to cover the amount. This might be as a result of unauthorized withdrawals from your account
6. Identity theft criminals may commit crimes with your personal information. You may not realize this until you see the police on your door arresting you for crimes that you did not commit
7. Sudden changes to your credit score may indicate that someone else is using your credit cards
8. Bills for services like gas, water, electricity not arriving in time. This can be an indication that your mail was stolen or redirected
9. Not being approved for loans because your credit report indicates that you are not credit worthy
10. Receiving notification from your post office informing you that your mails are being forwarded to another unknown address
11. Your yearly tax returns indicating that you have earned more than you have actually earned. This might indicate that someone is using your national identification number e.g. SSN to report their earnings to the tax authorities

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