

# TOP 5 REASONS WHY SENIORS ARE TARGETS



For older people, the consequences of misplaced trust are often severe. Scams cost UK citizens billions of pounds every year and behind these figures there are huge numbers of heart breaking tales. Scams are massively under reported, as is fraud in general, it is estimated that less than 5% of victims report a scam experience to the authorities. According to National Trading Standards the average age of victims of mail scams is 74, showing that these criminals tend to prey on older, and often more vulnerable members of society.

**Older people can be at higher risk of falling prey to a scam for a number of reasons.**

## 1) Decision Making / Understanding

Cognitive function can decline with age, meaning that even those older people who do not suffer from a dementia or mental health problem can make poor decisions that leave them vulnerable to scams. Older people may not understand or keep up to date with changes in legislation protecting their legal rights. For example, a tenacious door to door salesperson or cold caller, may not explain the 7 day cooling off period correctly, if at all.

## 2) Availability

Seniors are seen as a target because they are generally retired, less mobile, and likely to be at home more often.

## 3) Isolation/Loneliness

Families move away and sometimes have little or no regular contact with their parents. This lack of interaction means that some older people don't necessarily have close contact with the people they most trust to help them review decisions.

Friendships may be limited which can leave older people vulnerable to a 'friendly' cold caller who drops by the house. Some scams are even perpetrated by seemingly trusted people who work to build new friendships first and then prey on vulnerabilities later.

## 4) Health

As we age, health problems mean that many older people have difficulty keeping up with the maintenance of their property and this is a well-known attraction to con artists. Many of our senior citizens are unable to carry out DIY jobs and rely on other sources for help. Having a dementia can exacerbate the problem of health vulnerability.

## 5) Prosperity

Money is one of the most notable reasons for senior vulnerability as scammers see them as a supply of wealth that includes property, life savings and other assets.

Maybe it's time to sit down with your parent, relative or friend and calmly talk about the threat of scammers. If you live some distance away from the older person then perhaps consider contacting relatives, friends and neighbours to periodically check on their welfare, or consider using the services available from Home Instead Senior Care. Family members may help seniors to avoid the humiliation and potential financial devastation of being conned.

# IMPACT OF CRIME ON THE ELDERLY

The impact of scams and fraud on the elderly is significant.

## 1) Emotional Distress

Worrying about the likelihood that a scam could happen again can be very distressing for older people and take a long time to recover from. The breach of trust that scammers cause can also lead to isolation as seniors withdraw from social interaction involving other people.

## 2) Inability to Recover Financially

Lost income from a financial or property scam may be almost impossible to recover from if the individual is reliant on this as their source of income. Seniors are attractive to fraudsters because either they have assets which have built up over a lifetime or they have more disposable income due to minimal outgoings. Recovering financially in later life is impossible for many.

## 3) Loss of Independence

Fraud related crime is often the catalyst that can bring an end to emotional and financial independence and can have an impact on the lifespan of older people.

## 4) Poor Self Esteem

Many victims become embarrassed, ashamed and regretful of their decisions, which can lead to poor self-confidence. This lack of self esteem can significantly diminish the quality of life of an older person, forcing them to question their judgement in all future decision making.

## 5) Vicarious Victimization

'Vicarious victimisation' exists where a person has not been a victim of a scam or crime, but has a real fear of becoming one. They may have a partisan view of society, which can happen especially to those who are housebound and only get their news from the media.

If a senior family member is living alone, a Home Instead CAREGiver can be alert to the risks of scams and become the eyes and ears of their client, bringing reassurance and protection for the family as well as providing companionship, home help and transportation.

