



# Consumer Services

**2018-2019  
ANNUAL REPORT**



a  well-informed  
*Marketplace*

Financial Services for Consumers and Businesses



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# Message

**from Robin L. Wiessmann**



I am pleased to present the fourth annual Consumer Services report on the work of our dedicated Financial Services for Consumers and Businesses staff, as well as the financial issues facing Pennsylvanians.

This report explains the work of our staff to help Pennsylvania consumers and residents resolve issues with financial institutions regulated by the department. The department also provides a host of presentations covering information about detecting and reporting suspected elder financial exploitation, saving for retirement, avoiding scams and fraud, and building essential financial capability skills.

Our work continues to be guided by the four goals set forth in Governor Tom Wolf's Consumer Financial Protection Initiative: 1) help protect consumers in debt from illegal, predatory, and/or costly types of lending; 2) protect senior citizens from financial exploitation; 3) identify and promote new ways to help

working adults save for their retirement; and 4) establish a state government interagency financial education exchange for consumers.

I am pleased to note excellent progress in all four goals. The effort of the Financial Services staff complements the ongoing supervisory and enforcement responsibilities of the department, to maintain integrity in the ever-changing financial services industry and to ensure consumers and businesses are well informed about the marketplace.

This year, we use more data to illustrate our work with the Department of Corrections to provide the reentry population with financial skills. Using a data-driven approach helps us track and measure how we are performing and identify areas for improvement.

As you read this report, I hope that you ask yourself: What can I do to be better informed about my finances?

I suggest three things:

- Learn how to protect yourself and your money at [dobs.pa.gov](https://dobs.pa.gov) or visit us on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn;
- Connect with the people and organizations that are forming a network of consumer protection across Pennsylvania; and
- Contact us at 1.800.PA.BANKS, if you have questions or complaints about financial issues.

Robin L. Wiessmann

Pennsylvania Secretary of Banking and Securities

# About the Department

The Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities was created by Act 86 of 2012, which merged the Pennsylvania Securities Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Banking into one agency under the governor's jurisdiction. The department's mission is to regulate financial services and work to ensure consumers and businesses are well-informed about the marketplace.

Here are some of the ways the department balances its mission of ensuring financial institution safety and soundness with our concern for the financial protection of Pennsylvania's families:

- We regulate nearly 200 state-chartered banks, trusts and credit unions to safeguard that Pennsylvanians' deposits are available when they are needed.
- We license and register more than 24,000 consumer lenders, including mortgage brokers, originators and lenders; auto sales finance companies; debt services companies; check cashers; pawnbrokers; and money transmitters. We also enforce compliance with state and federal laws so that consumer borrowers will have confidence in their transactions.
- We register more than 200,000 investment professionals who conduct securities-related business in Pennsylvania, and we review securities offerings made to Pennsylvanians each year.
- Our Consumer Services staff provide free help to anyone with a question, concern or complaint about Pennsylvania financial institutions or products. Simply call 1.800.PA.BANKS or visit [dobs.pa.gov](http://dobs.pa.gov) and a trained professional will respond within 24 hours.
- Our Investor Education and Consumer Outreach staff presents non-commercial, educational programs at senior citizen expos, community center functions, schools and other public events that teach consumers basic and advanced investment principles and how to protect their money.

The Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities is accredited by the Conference of State Bank Supervisors, the American Association of Residential Mortgage Regulators and the National Association of State Credit Union Supervisors. We are active members of the North American Securities Administrators Association, the National Association of Consumer Credit Administrators and the Money Transmitter Regulators Association.

Our work is mainly funded by the assessments and fees paid by Pennsylvania's regulated financial community. No taxpayer dollars are used to support our work.

## Consumer Services Office News

Consumer Services staff handled more than 4,200 complaints/inquiries last year, with about 90 percent of those being telephone calls.

The Consumer Services Office is staffed year-round by a team of trained professionals, who are committed to helping Pennsylvanians with financial issues and questions.

The toll-free 800 number is staffed Monday-Friday from 8:00 AM-5:00 PM.

In service for more than 40 years, our Consumer Services Office assists consumers with their financial questions. Callers deal with one point of contact, rather than being passed from person to person within the department. This continuity results in faster resolution of issues. Each call may be followed by hours of individual assistance, online research, and follow-up, during which time staff works closely with regulatory and legal offices to identify, report and, when possible, resolve issues for consumers.

The average time for Consumer Services to resolve complaints and inquiries is under five days.

This year, continuing education for Consumer Services Office staff included participation in the Educational Committee for the National Association of Consumer Credit Administrators (NACCA) and participation in the American Association of Residential Mortgage Regulators.

Christine Hodge, chief of the Consumer Services Office, also leads the Commonwealth Call Center Collaborative ("4C"), which is a subcommittee of the Pennsylvania State Agency Financial Exchange (PA \$AFE). More than 10 different state government agencies collaborate on improving call-center services to their respective constituents.

## Consumer Services Office Operations

***Q: Must people provide their names?***

A: Consumers are not required to provide their names to receive an answer. However, to process a complaint, we do require some personal information, which is handled in a strictly confidential manner.

***Q: How long does it take you to process and resolve a question or complaint?***

A: About 85 percent of the time we resolve issues the same day. For those issues that do take longer, it is almost always because we are waiting on additional information from the individual consumer, or a formal response from the financial services entity. We typically allow the financial services entity to respond within 30 days.

***Q: What are the financial issues that most concern people?***

A: Most questions we receive are about deposit accounts (checking/savings), money transmission services, mortgages, and scams.

***Q: When you cannot help, to where do you refer people?***

A: It is sometimes difficult for consumers to find the right government agency to assist them. Our Consumer Services professionals understand this challenge and will refer people to the correct regulatory or law enforcement agency.



In the past year, we have worked with the following agencies to help resolve consumer questions and complaints:

## Federal Agencies

Commodity Futures Trading Commission	Financial Industry Regulatory Authority
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	National Credit Union Administration
Department of Labor	Office of the Comptroller of the Currency
Federal Bureau of Investigations	Securities and Exchange Commission
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	United States Postal Inspection Service
Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Federal Reserve Board	Internet Crime Complaint Center

## State Agencies

Office of Administration	Department of Human Services (formerly Department of Public Welfare)
Department of Aging	Insurance Department
Department of Agriculture	Department of Labor & Industry
PA Attorney General	Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS)
Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)	Department of Revenue
Department of Education	PA State Police
PA e-Health Partnership	Department of Transportation (PennDOT)
PA Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)	PA Treasury
PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)	Public Utility Commission
PA Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA)	PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency

## Other Governmental Agencies to Which We Have Referred Questions & Complaints

Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation	New York Department of Financial Services
Maryland Commissioner of Financial Regulation	North Carolina Commissioner of Banks
Delaware State Bank Commissioner	Pennsylvania local police departments
New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance	

## Investor Education and Consumer Outreach Office News

Informed consumers are better able to protect themselves from frauds and scams and to make decisions that improve their financial well-being. Our department's outreach staff participates in hundreds of public events each year – legislative expos, seminars in community and senior centers, and large-scale events. We offer educational materials and presentations, outreach programs, professional development workshops, brochures and online tools on a wide range of topics. All of our resources and programs are free and available in all parts of the commonwealth.



**21,000+ Consumers**



**350+ Presentations**



**55 Counties**

### **FAST FACTS:**

21,235 attendees at 359 investor education and consumer outreach events

2,165 people at 94 consumer protection presentations

10,992 seniors at 54 senior expos

1,554 professionals at 18 elder abuse prevention trainings

483 working adults at 17 STaRT retirement planning presentations

18 classroom presentations with 575 students

56 Fraud Bingo presentations to 1,139 seniors



## ► Our Education Coordinators Give Presentations On...



**Consumer Protection:** A series of presentations delivered in your community, customized to the audience. Topics include:

- Credit Reports and Scores
- Avoiding Scams and Identity Theft
- Banking Basics
- Preparing for Big Purchases

## ► ...Investing For Financial Independence



**Start Today and Retire Tomorrow (STaRT)** discuss retirement planning, with the goal of helping you to determine your retirement goals and how to help you get there.



**Investing 101** introduces savings and investing. It covers: Why we need to save and invest, the difference between saving and investing, types of investment, the power of compound interest, investigating before you invest, technology and investing, and diversification.

## ► ...Protecting Senior Citizens



**Campaign for Wise and Safe Investing** is a statewide outreach program in partnership with the Pennsylvania AARP Consumer Issues Task Force that provides retirees and senior citizens with information on how to recognize, avoid, and report financial fraud and abuse. Community presentations are offered through a grant from the Investor Protection Trust.



**Fraud Bingo** is a fun and interactive presentation that teaches consumers how to protect themselves from investment and fraud by playing a familiar game: Bingo! Players learn how to detect financial fraud by identifying scams affecting their own city or town.



**Scam Jam** is financial fraud prevention programming geared for retirees and seniors. Includes multiple guest speakers through contact and coordination with local, county, and state government agencies.



**Elder Financial Abuse Prevention** is innovative, research-based programs that train medical doctors, lawyers, social workers, senior service providers, and other partners to recognize and report financial abuse targeting their clients, especially those suffering from mild cognitive impairment.

### ► ...Students



**Save and Invest PA!** We partner with schools and colleges to teach students to pursue financial goals and financial independence through this introduction to the basics of investing and avoiding investment fraud.

### ► ...Military



**Making Sense of Finance** This conference program is designed to address financial and investing challenges faced by members of the military, veterans, and their families. This is made possible through the PA Military Finance Alliance, a multi-agency collaborative effort.

Our goal is to provide innovative programs to educate and inform Pennsylvanians.

### Our Accomplishments:

- Launched the FinLit Forum, a conference-style program involving multiple state and non-profit agencies that provides students with critical financial knowledge to be successful in the next stages of their lives.
- Created a guide for investment advisers to understand the opioid epidemic in relation to client financial hardships.
- Developed new fraud prevention and scam awareness material, such as a cybersecurity presentation to help prevent identity theft, data breaches, and cyber attacks.
- Raised awareness of the common red flags of fraud and conducted senior focused presentations throughout the commonwealth during May (Older Americans Month) and June (World Elder Abuse Awareness Day).
- Presented multiple fraud-awareness sessions at the PA Farm Show, the largest indoor agricultural event held in the United States.
- Strengthened our partnership with the AARP Consumer Issues Task Force through quarterly meetings to keep up-to-date on the latest frauds and resources for consumers.
- Hosted Senior\$afe trainings on elder financial abuse detection and prevention for financial institutions.
- Participated in national and state committees that advance the protection of seniors from financial abuse.
- Shared investor education resources, including Investment Fraud Bingo, an innovative teaching tool being used by regulators internationally.
- Discussed issues surrounding financial exploitation at local task forces and elder justice roundtables to protect older and vulnerable investors and populations.
- Reinforced the importance of retirement planning through the STaRT Today and Retire Tomorrow program.
- Introduced to investors the newest series of investor education booklets from *Kiplinger* magazine that focus on the different life stages.

*To schedule a program in your community or with your organization, contact us at [informed@pa.gov](mailto:informed@pa.gov).*

## Successful Reentry

In 2016, the department began working with the Department of Corrections to assist juvenile lifers that would be eligible for release learn basic financial capability skills. This included information about establishing a bank account, checking credit reports, budgeting, and general financial preparedness to help with transition back into society.

Since that time, the collaboration has evolved to provide similar instructional content to all inmates preparing to be released. Presentations are conducted inside each State Correctional Institute (SCI) to a cohort of inmates and cover financial topics that are important for day-to-day living.

Reality Fairs are done in partnership with the Pennsylvania Credit Union Association to provide inmates with a live budgeting exercise, during which they manage costs and expenses based on a simulated profession. Reentry Fairs provide similar content to prepare inmates for transitioning back into society but are conducted by SCIs and the Department of Corrections.

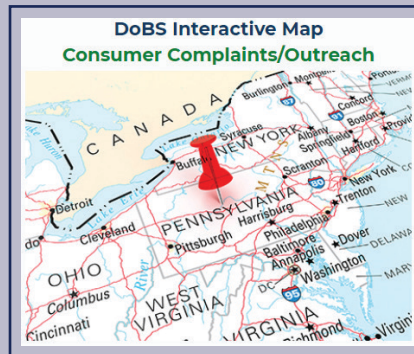
	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	Total Numbers
Inmates	2698	5435	6470	14,603
<b>EVENTS</b>				
Presentations	62	109	105	276
Webinars	4	4	1	9
Reentry Fairs	0	2	17	19
Reality Fairs	1	6	0	7
Total Events:	67	121	123	311

In addition to reaching over 14,000 reentrants through more than 300 events, the department is conducting a longitudinal study of the reentering population, in partnership with BetaGov, a New York University initiative, to measure efficacy of the program.

## Other News For 2018-19

This past year saw a reduction in the number of complaints and inquiries received by the department. Historical trend data suggests that during stressed economic times, the department receives a higher number of complaints. There was a slight decrease in complaints regarding bank account management and mortgage. However, there was an uptick in the number of complaints and inquiries related to vehicle sales finance transactions. Trend analysis is one way the department stays informed of emerging issues to help better protect consumers.

This year, we introduced an interactive map to visually show the complaints and inquiries received, as well as the outreach events and presentations by department staff.



The PA Money Talks blog continued to give consumers, stakeholders, and policymakers a look at some of the critical issues to the department, including cybersecurity, the role of women in finance, and the importance to consumers of regulatory oversight.

In August 2018, the department launched the week-long Next Generation Bankers Academy, which introduced 22 college students to the financial services industry and to regulatory agencies like the department. The students experienced hands-on learning and interacted with senior bank leaders from the Harrisburg region.



Our publications, including our quarterly newsletter, website ad social media channels are robust resources for consumers. Several resources have been revamped, including those related to the programs and presentations of the department and resources to detect and report suspected elder financial exploitation. They are available online at: <https://www.dobs.pa.gov/Consumers/Pages/default.aspx>

## Legislative Updates

Through the enactment of the Economic Growth, Regulatory Reform, and Consumer Protection Act of 2018, federal legislative changes, brought about new consumer protections, including the ability to freeze and unfreeze credit reports without fees. In the context of several large data breaches, this important tool gives consumers the ability to prevent fraudulent activity.

## Trends in Financial Issues

Each year, we take the opportunity to examine several of the often complex financial issues we discuss with consumers in-person or on the telephone. In this report, we will discuss affinity fraud, identity theft and fake checks.

### AFFINITY FRAUD

Affinity scams exploit the special trust and friendships that exist in groups to overcome people's skepticism. Typically these are investment solicitations but can occur through other schemes. Affinity fraud is a type of scam that takes an emotional, as well as financial, toll on its victims. This is one of many scams that target a group of people who take pride in their shared religions, ethnic or professional characteristics. Rather than questioning the scam, the victim allows the friendship to cloud their judgement. Both the financially unsophisticated and the seemingly sophisticated can fall victim.

### What Is The Problem?

Affinity fraud operations are hard to identify and stop because victims are often in denial or too embarrassed to report the crime to authorities. There is often a feeling that the money or property that was gifted to the perpetrators was freely given so there's nothing anyone can do. This is far from the truth. At the very least, the victim should report the crime so that no more group members are affected.

### What You Should Know

Investing always involves some degree of risk, but you can minimize it by asking questions and getting the facts before you invest. To avoid affinity scams:

- Investigate before you invest. No matter how trustworthy the person seems who brings the investment opportunity to your attention, never base a decision solely on the recommendation of an affinity group member. Investigate thoroughly and check the truth of every statement you are told about the investment. Be aware that the person telling you about the investment might have been fooled into believing that the investment is legitimate when it is not.
- Question investments that promise spectacular profits or "guaranteed" returns. If an investment seems too good to be true, then it probably is. Similarly, be extremely leery of any investment that is said to have no risks; very few investments are risk-free. The greater the potential return from an investment, the greater your risk of losing money. Promises of fast and high profits, with little or no risk, are classic warning signs of fraud.
- Be skeptical of any investment opportunity that is not in writing. Fraudsters often avoid putting things in writing, but legitimate investments are usually written down. Avoid an investment if you are told they do not have time to write down the particulars about the investment. You should also be suspicious if you are told to keep the investment opportunity confidential.
- Don't be pressured or rushed into buying an investment before you have a chance to think about or investigate it. Just because someone you know made money, or claims to have made money, doesn't mean you will, too. Be especially skeptical of investments that are pitched as "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunities, particularly when the promoter bases the recommendation on "inside" or confidential information.

Many affinity scams involve “Ponzi,” or pyramid, schemes. This is when new investor money is used to make payments to earlier investors in order to give the illusion that the investment is successful. This ploy is used to trick new investors to invest in the scheme and to lull existing investors into believing their investments are safe and secure. In reality, the fraudster almost always steals investor money for personal use. Both types of schemes depend on an unending supply of new investors; when the inevitable occurs, and the supply of investors dries up, the whole scheme collapses and investors discover that most, or all, of their money is gone.

### What Can We Do To Help?

Call the Consumer Services Office to be sure that you are dealing with a legitimate investment. We can help you to determine if the investment is properly registered. If you have been scammed, we can begin the process of collecting information for our department to investigate.

### IDENTITY THEFT

Nearly 60 million Americans have been affected by identity theft, according to a 2018 online survey by The Harris Poll. This type of crime is relatively common, and it is probably safe to assume it will not be decreasing any time soon.

Common ways that identity theft perpetrators can use information for their financial gain include:

- *Bank account takeover* – The criminal uses your personal information to open an account in someone else’s name or to take over your account.
- *Fraudulent loans or leases* – The criminal uses your information to fraudulently obtain a loan or lease.
- *Employment or tax-related schemes* – The criminal uses your Social Security number and other personal information to gain employment or file an income tax return.
- *Credit card account purchases* – The criminal uses your credit card or credit card number to make purchases not authorized by the cardholder.
- *Phone or utility services* – The criminal uses your personal information to obtain a cell phone or a utility account.
- *Government benefits* – The criminal uses your personal information to fraudulently obtain government benefits.



## What Is The Problem?

It is nearly impossible to prevent criminals from accessing your personal information and using it to commit fraud in your name. Although you do your best to safeguard your personal information, some security aspects are out of your control. For example, a company you do business with can experience a data breach, exposing your personal information.

Are you an easy target? That depends, in part, on how well you protect your information. Another factor is how well others, to whom you've entrusted your information, are protecting it.

There is no way to prevent identity theft, but there are steps you can take to help minimize the risk. Knowing those steps may give you some control to safeguard your personal information and identity.

Consider this, if an identity thief had access to all of the information in your email account, what information would be found? The account might include everything from old bank and credit card statements to electronic pay stubs, to documents gathered for a mortgage application. And, of course, once an identity thief has access to your email account, it would be easy to quickly change the password so that you can not access it.

Whether you're online or out and about, there are ways you can help combat identity theft. Some of the steps you can take are listed below.

## How To Help Protect Yourself From ID Theft Online

Your online behaviors might effect your risk of identity theft. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Be careful how and where you share your personal information when you're on the Internet via computer or a mobile device.
- Give your home Wi-Fi network a name that isn't tied to your home. For instance, if your street address is 321 Main St., don't name your Wi-Fi network, "321 Main." You don't want to make yourself an obvious target.
- Give your Wi-Fi network a strong and unique password so would-be intruders can't easily access your network and, perhaps, the devices connected to it.
- Make sure the passwords for your online accounts are strong and unique. Using the same password on multiple accounts certainly makes it easier for you to remember, but hackers will score big time when it's discovered that you are using one password. If your login information is the same for all accounts, especially your bank account, imagine the consequences.
- Be wary of logging into accounts or making transactions on public Wi-Fi networks, even if that network is password protected. Coffee-shop Wi-Fi passwords are easy to access. With the right tools, a cyber thief on the same network could follow your online moves and capture everything from your login credentials to the credit card information you type in while shopping.
- If you must do business on a public Wi-Fi network, consider using a VPN, or virtual private network. A VPN creates a secure connection to another network over the internet to shield your browsing activity from prying eyes.

## How To Help Protect Yourself From ID Theft Offline

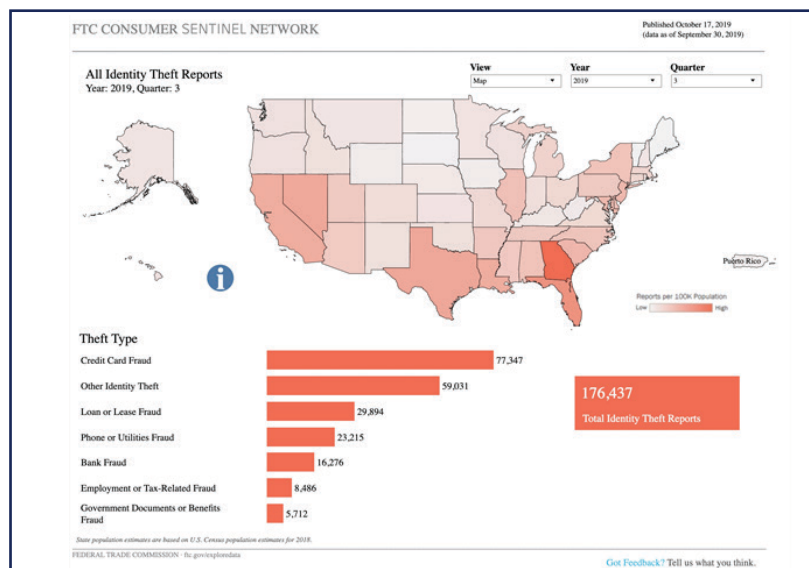
There are also plenty of precautions you can take offline, to help protect yourself from identity theft. Your goal is to reduce the chance identity thieves will be able to put their hands on your personal information. So, consider how they could access it around your home.

- An unlocked mailbox is an easy target for thieves who steal identities the old-fashioned way. Every thing from credit card mailings to your annual W-2 statement could be taken. A secure mailbox can be a wise and relatively inexpensive investment to help protect your identity.
- Dumpster diving is still a thing. If you're throwing away documents loaded with your personal information without first shredding them, you're making it easy for any identity thief who's willing to search through your trash. That thief could obtain vital information, including old bank statements, healthcare claims, and other discarded paperwork.
- Do you allow strangers into your home? Think of the occasional appliance repair person, cable TV installer, or other unknown person you allow beyond the front door. Unless you're with them throughout their visit, and depending on where you keep your incoming mail or important documents, they might have easy access to your personal information without you ever noticing.
- You might want to consider purchasing a document lockbox at home or a security deposit box at your bank, to safeguard your most important documents.

## What Do We Do To Help ?

Even if you do everything correctly, you might still become a victim of identity theft. Remember, breaches occur regularly, and companies where you have accounts may be among those affected, putting your personal identifying information in the wrong hands.

If you find that you're a victim of identity theft, you should contact the company(ies) involved and place a fraud alert on your credit report. Monitor your credit for any unauthorized access. You may also want to file a police report.



Source: Federal Trade Commission

The Consumer Services Office may be able to contact the company(ies) involved, if they are a licensee, and bring your situation to their attention. In addition, we can provide resources to assist you.

No one can prevent identity theft; however, do what you can to help protect your personal information from being lost, stolen, or otherwise compromised. Recognize that the security of your information is only as strong as the weakest link in a chain that includes the many businesses, government agencies, and other entities that you trust with it.

## FAKE CHECKS

You accept a check as payment for an online transaction. Later, your bank informs you that the check is counterfeit and now you are on the hook for the funds. The person who gave you the check is not answering your calls, emails or messages. Typically, this is a scenario associated with online transactions, mystery shopper, lottery or inheritance scams.

John Doe  
Mary Doe  
1234 Main Street  
Anytown, PA 11111

PAY TO THE  
ORDER OF \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
DOLLARS

ANYTOWN BANK  
Anytown, PA 11111

FOR \_\_\_\_\_

1 : 35050035 : 303030 : 4321

4321  
10-0000000

ROUTING NUMBER ACCOUNT NUMBER

DO NOT INCLUDE  
THE CHECK NUMBER

Once you deposit the check into your account, your bank makes the funds available by the next business day as required by the Expedited Funds Availability Act and Regulation CC. This includes cashier's and certified checks, Treasury checks, U.S. postal money orders, checks drawn on a Federal Reserve Bank or Federal Home Loan Bank, and checks issued by a state or local government.

## What Everyone Should Know

It can take several weeks for your bank to discover that the check is fake. When a check that is subject to next-day availability of funds is deposited, a bank will typically provide a receipt indicating the date on which the funds will be available. This receipt provides an opportunity to communicate to you that, although funds may be made available provisionally the next business day because of federal law, this availability does not mean the item has been paid by the issuing bank. You should exercise caution when dealing with third parties with whom you have no prior relationship or experience.

Once the check is sent to the payor bank and determined to be counterfeit, the payor bank will flag it as counterfeit and return it to the depository bank. This process could take several weeks. When the check is returned unpaid, the depository bank will deduct the amount of the check from your account and may demand repayment, if the account has insufficient funds.

You assumed that the check was paid because the funds were labeled as available and now you blame the bank for this misunderstanding; however, it has simply complied with federal law by providing a provisional credit within the EFAA/Regulation CC timeframe.

## What Do We Do To Help?

“How do you spot a fake check?”

This is a familiar question encountered by the Consumer Services Office staff. We can discuss your situation and contact the bank on your behalf. Our goal is to be sure that you understand what took place and how to prevent any future incidents. We will work with your bank on your behalf to reach an amicable solution.

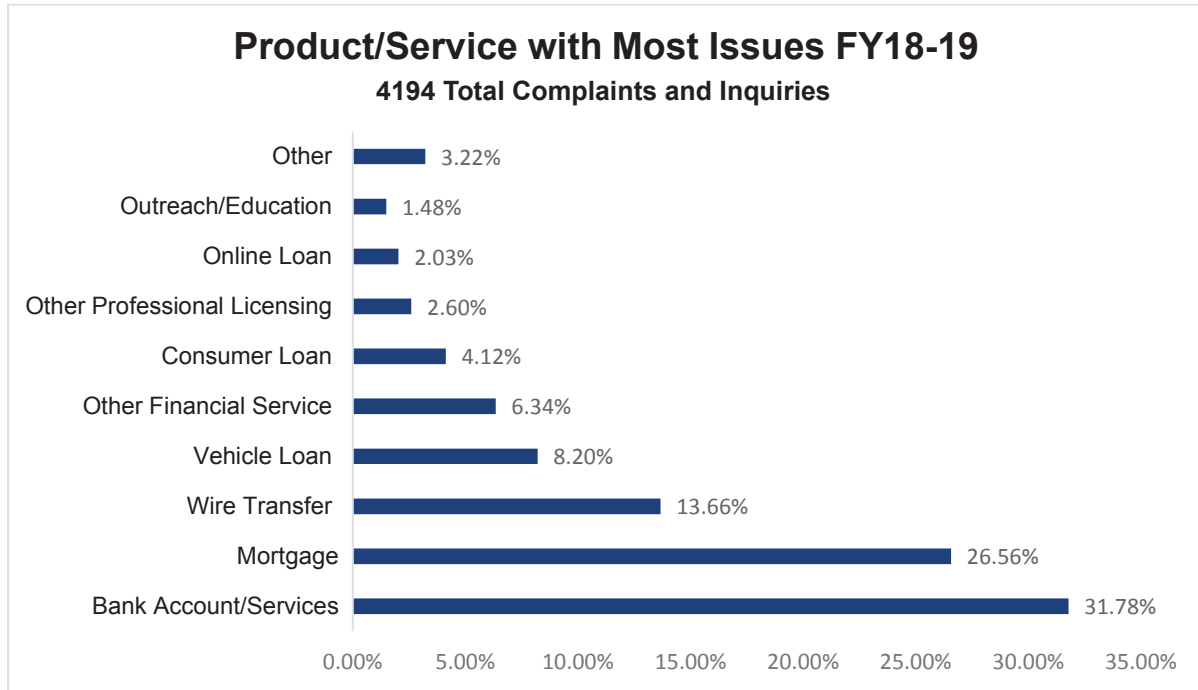
Spotting a fake check can be tricky or almost impossible; however, here are some signs to look for:

- The edges of the check are smooth rather than perforated. Smooth edges could mean the check was printed from a computer.
- A fake check may not display a bank logo, or an incorrect bank address or no address.
- At the bottom, every real check is a series of digits in an unusual font, representing the bank routing number, the account number and the check number, generally in that order – this is known as the MICR (magnetic ink character recognition), which is read by check sorting machines. Fake MICR numbers may be shiny rather than dull.
- The MICR line does not match the check number at the upper right-hand corner.
- The bank routing number is missing or may contain more than nine digits.
- The check amount is less than \$5,000.00, which is the size of a deposit that federal law requires be made available to you within five days. Checks of higher amounts are subject to longer holding periods.
- The paper may be lighter than an authentic check and may also feel slippery.
- The signature is stained or contains gaps, has a digitized appearance or many up and down pen strokes that may indicate the signature was forged.

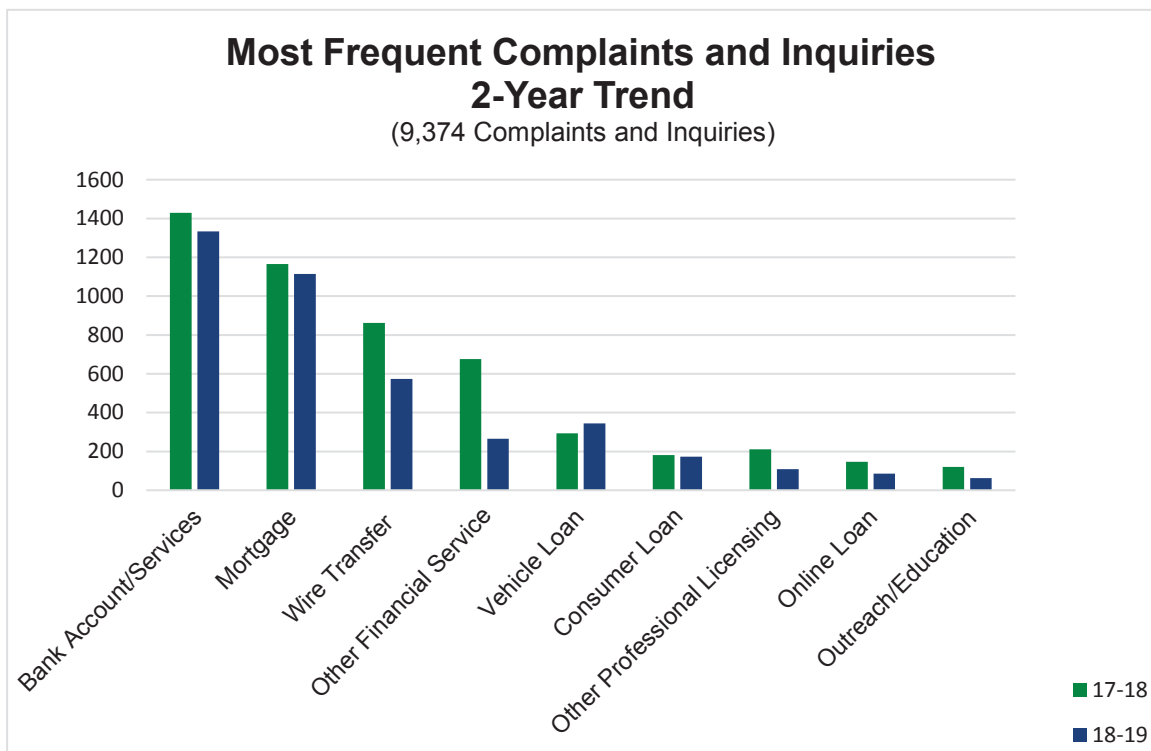
A good rule of thumb is to know with whom you are dealing before accepting a check as payment. If you must accept a check, ask that the check be drawn on a local bank or a bank with a local branch to verify the check is valid. Keep in mind that some fake checks are almost impossible to detect.

The image shows two checks side-by-side for comparison. Both checks are from John Doe, Mary Doe, 1234 Main Street, Anytown, PA 11111. The top check is a real one, indicated by a large green checkmark to its right. It has a MICR line at the bottom that reads "1 : 35050035 : 303030 : 4321". The bottom check is a fake one, indicated by a large red "FRAUD" stamp and a red X to its right. It has a MICR line at the bottom that reads "1 : 35050035 1: 303030 : 4321". A red circle highlights the difference in the MICR line: the top check has a space before the second set of digits, while the bottom check has a space before the first set of digits. Both checks have a routing number of 35050035, an account number of 303030, and a check number of 4321. The top check also has a date field and a box for the amount in dollars.

## Common Issues and Metrics



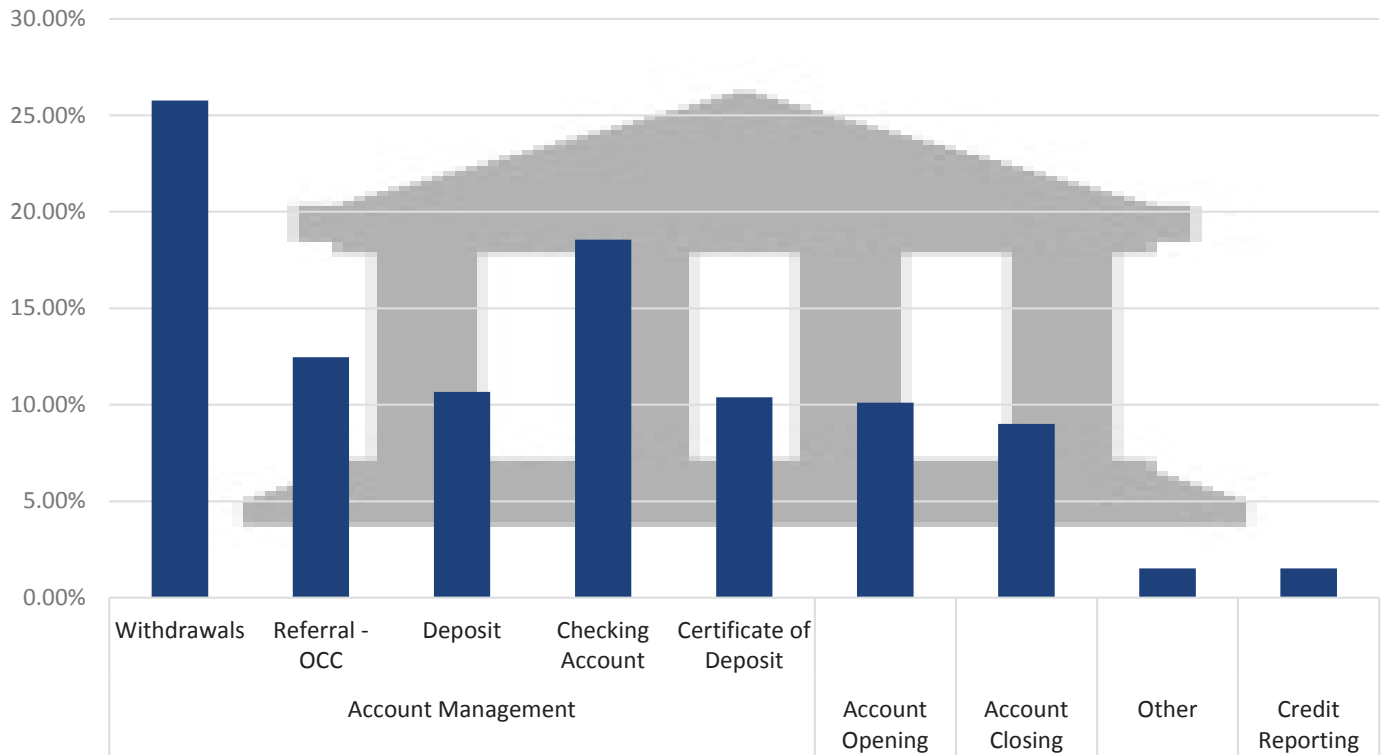
*Bank Account/Bank Services is the most common complaint/inquiry, with Mortgage being the second most frequent complaint/inquiry.*



*All major complaints categories, except for vehicle loan complaints, decreased last year. The category with the largest decrease by volume is Wire Transfer complaints.*

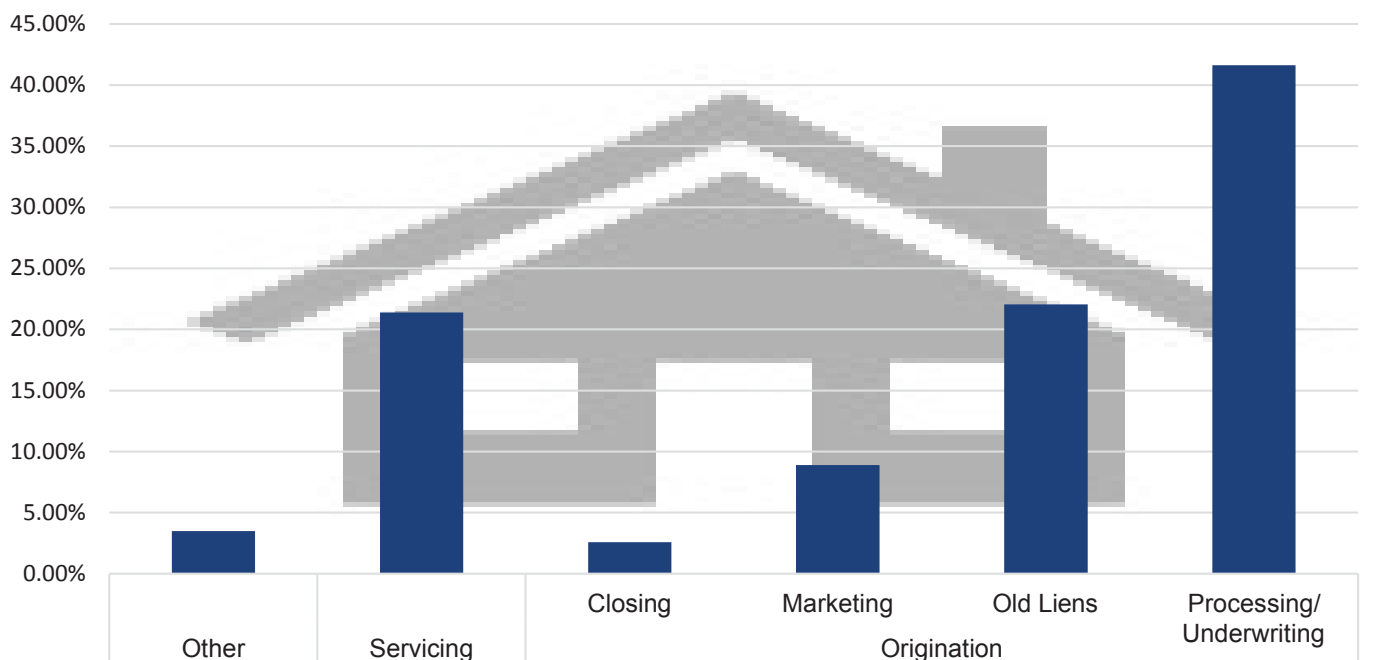
### Bank Account/Service Issues FY18-19

(1333 Complaints and Inquiries)



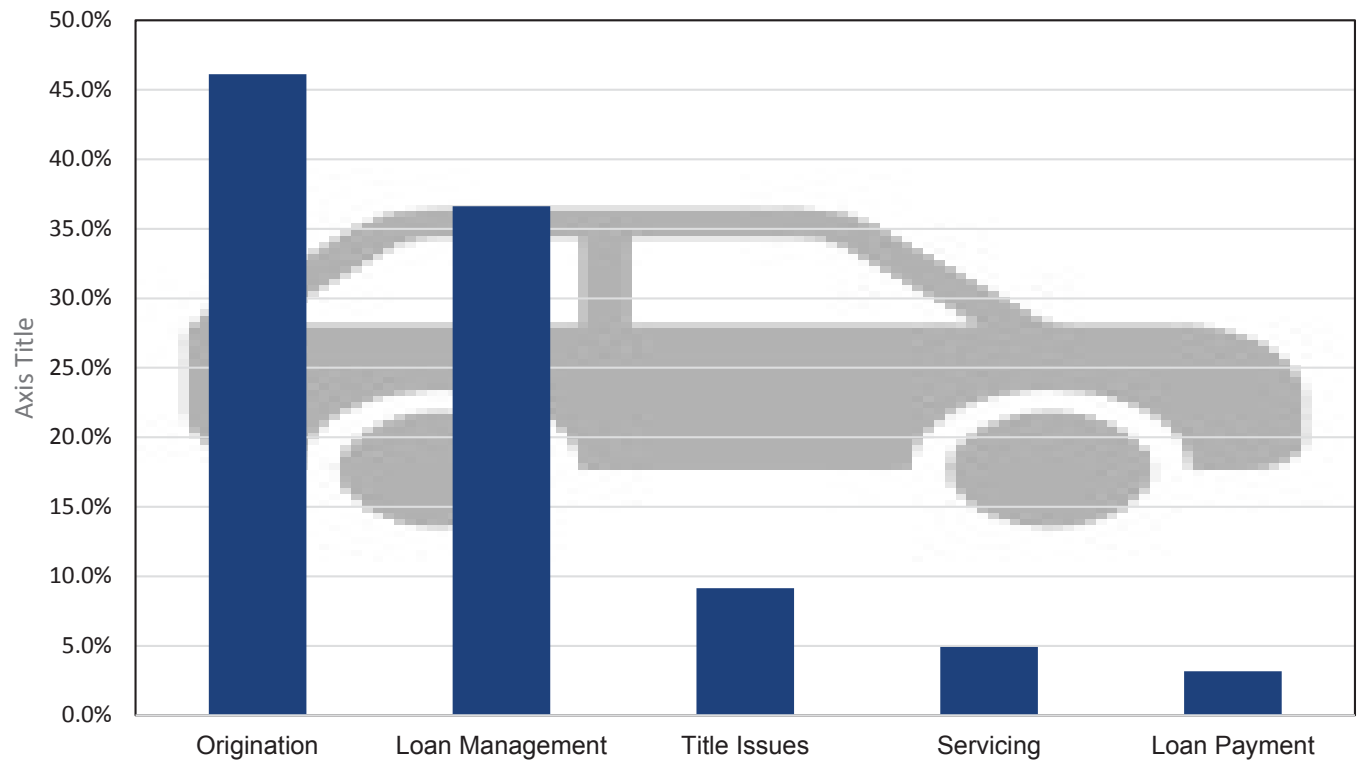
### Breakdown of Mortgage Issues FY18-19

(1114 Complaints and Inquiries)



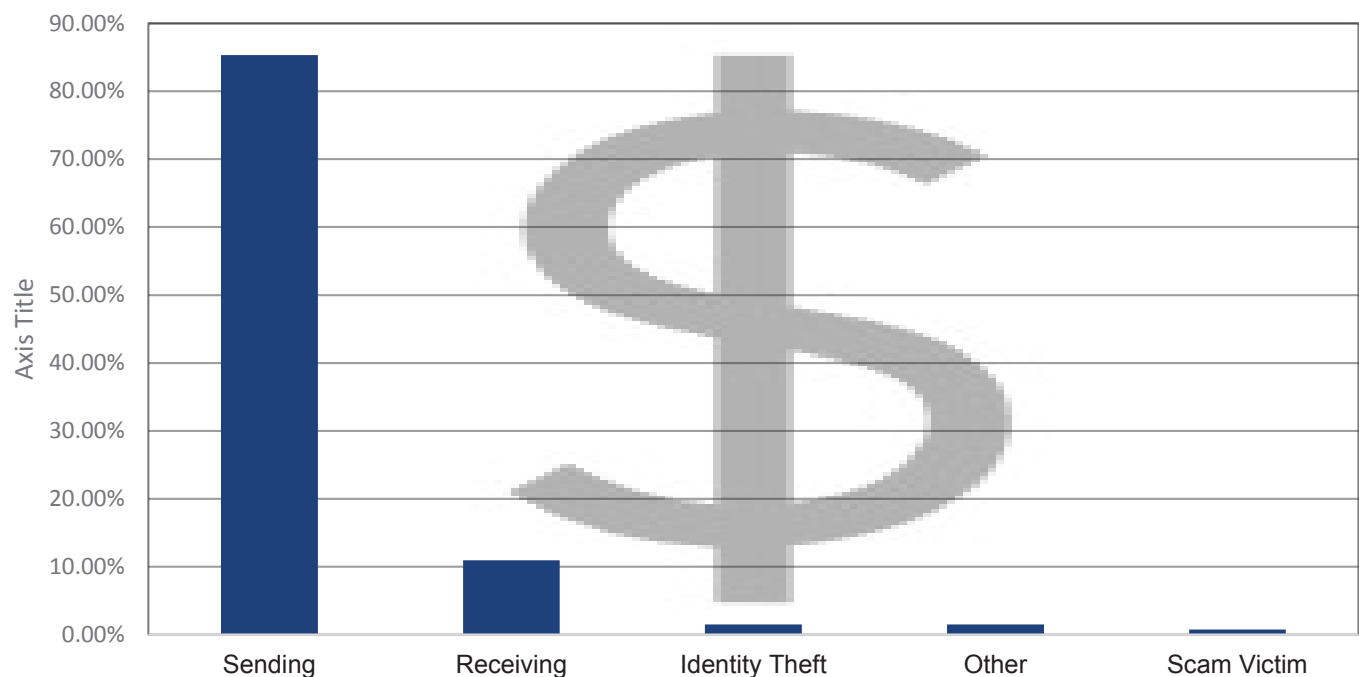
### Vehicle Loan Issues FY18-19

(344 Complaints and Inquiries)



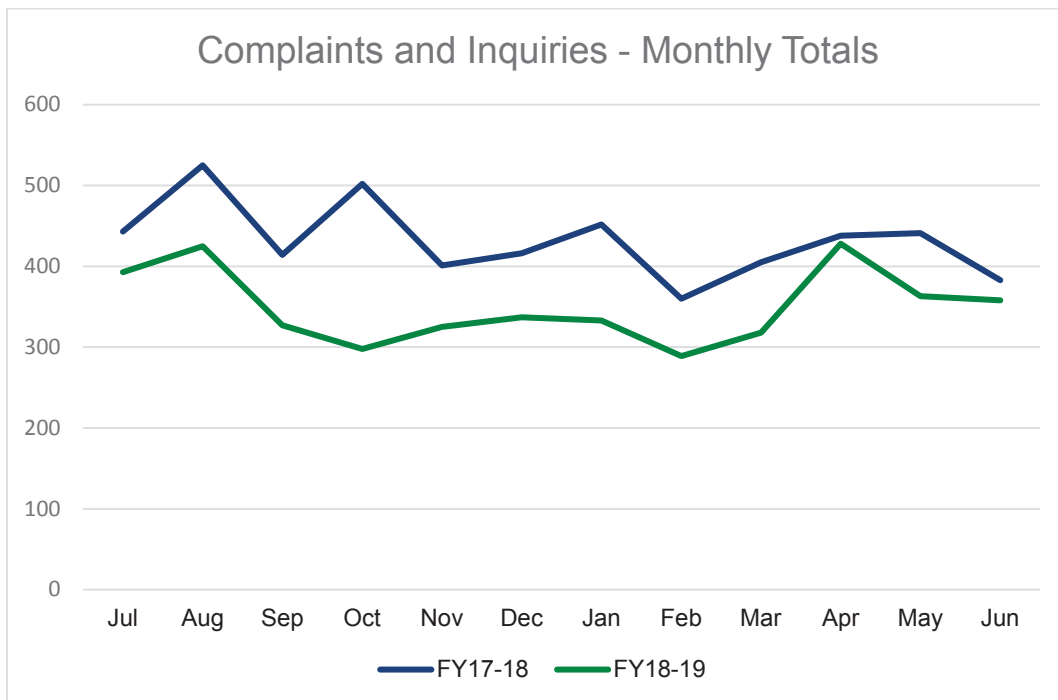
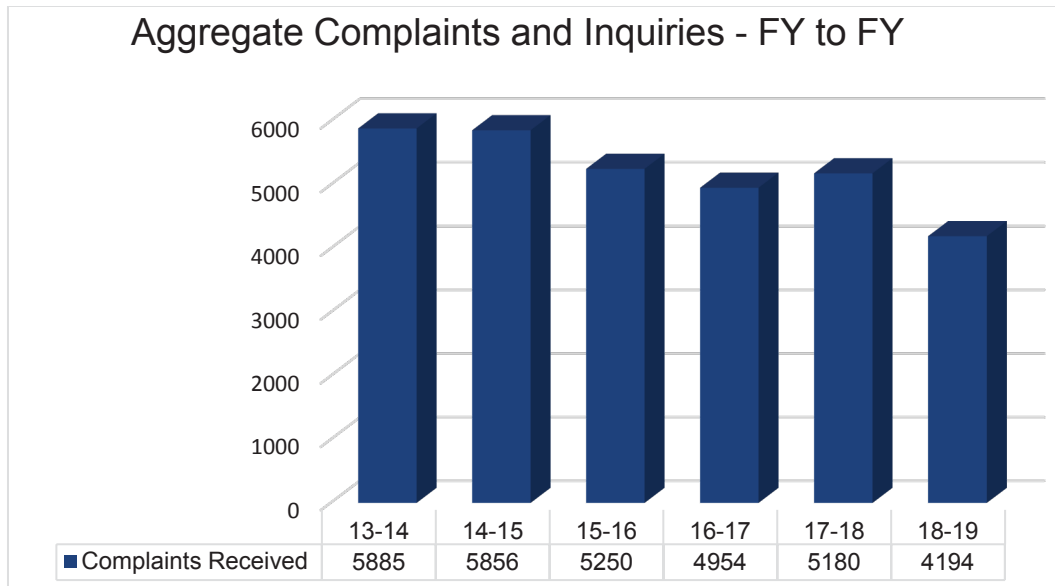
### Wire Transfer Issues FY18-19

(573 Complaints and Inquiries)





### Complaints and Inquiries Trends – Comparative Analysis



## Questions | Information

Act today to stay informed, educate yourself and others, and contact us for help. At the Department of Banking and Securities, we encourage Pennsylvanians to

### Connect

- Like PA Banking and Securities on Facebook
- Connect with PA Banking and Securities on LinkedIn
- Follow @PABankingDept on Twitter
- Subscribe to the department's newsletter "[The Quarter](#)"

### Learn

- About the department at [dobs.pa.gov](https://dobs.pa.gov)
- About our [programs and presentations](#)
- Schedule outreach at [informed@pa.gov](mailto:informed@pa.gov)
- Search our [online calendar](#) to attend an event

### Contact

- To file a complaint: [dobs.pa.gov/Consumers/Pages/File-a-Complaint.aspx](https://dobs.pa.gov/Consumers/Pages/File-a-Complaint.aspx)
- For questions about financial transactions: 1.800.PA.BANKS (800.722-2657 or 1.800.600.0007)
- Out of State 717.787.1854 | Media Inquiries 717.214.6036
- PA Department of Banking and Securities | 17 N Second Street, Suite 1300 | Harrisburg, PA 17101

### Publications

The department offers FREE brochures and hand-outs on various financial topics that are available to the public through request or by download as (PDF) at [dobs.pa.gov](https://dobs.pa.gov). If you are interested in receiving these publications, please contact us at: [informed@pa.gov](mailto:informed@pa.gov) or 1.800.PA.BANKS (1.800.600.0007).

### Topics

Each topic below may have several different publications. Please inform us of the topic on which you would like more information, and we will provide a list of the relevant publications.

- Investing for Adults
- Protection for Seniors
- Investing for Military and Veterans
- Investing for Students and Young Adults
- Investors: Protect Your Money
- Consumers: Protect Your Money

### Information

Please provide us with the following information (phone or email).

- Contact Name
- Organization
- Shipping Address
- Phone Number
- Email Address
- Topics

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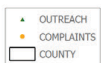
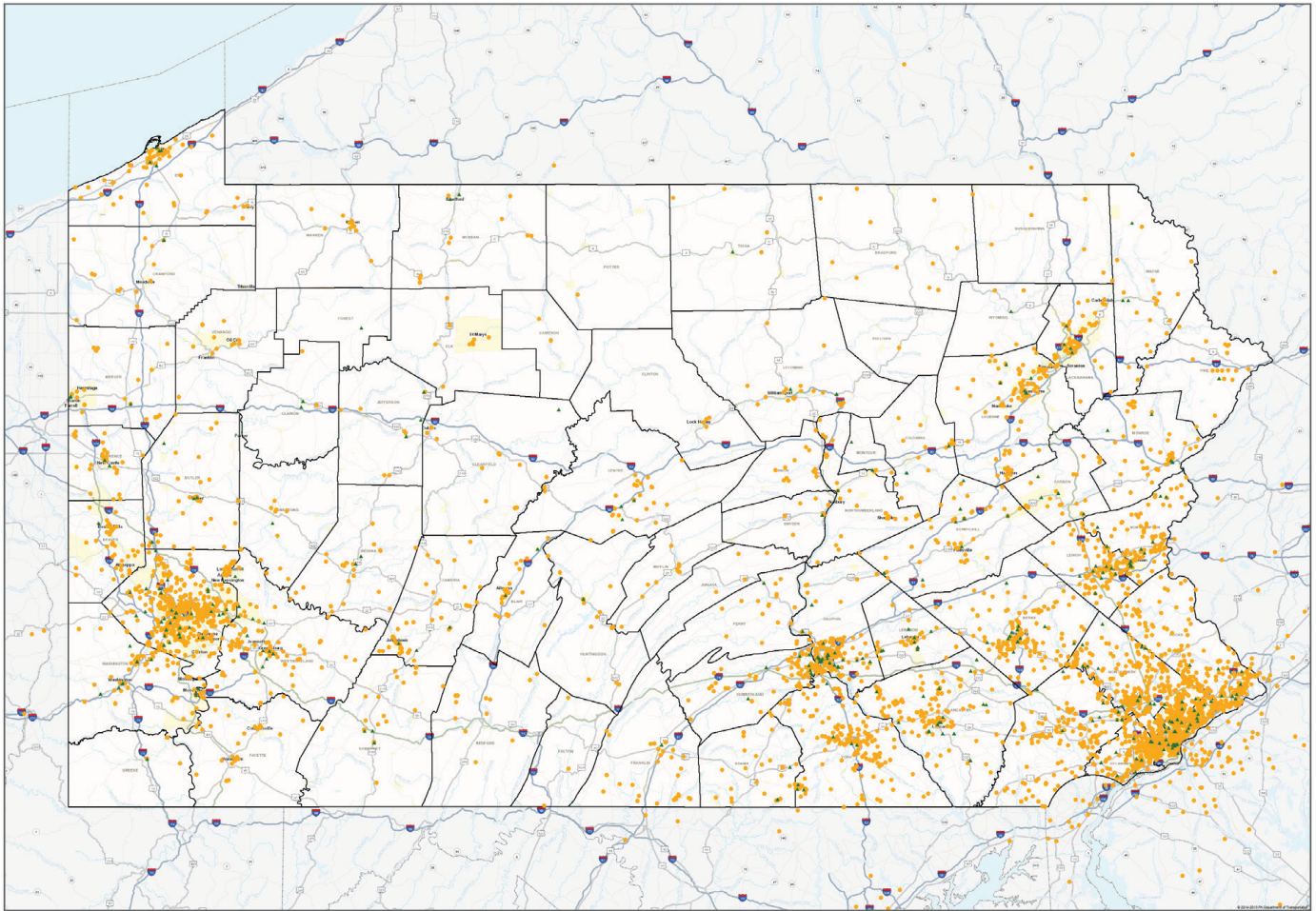


# NOTES

## Complaints & Outreach

### COMPLAINTS & OUTREACH

PA COUNTIES



Date: 3/26/2019

Stay involved with Governor Wolf's Consumer Financial Protection Initiative by following:  
**#GovWolfCFPI**

# CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION INITIATIVE



PROTECTS  
AGAINST  
"EASY MONEY"  
SCAMS



PREVENTS  
ELDER  
FINANCIAL  
ABUSE



HELPS WORKING  
ADULTS PLAN  
FOR RETIREMENT



ESTABLISHES  
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Protect. Regulate. Inform.