



Employment Scams

Morgane Coat, Master’s candidate

Briefing Note

Vol. 1 No. 7



Research Chair
in Cybercrime Prevention



Table of contents

- 1. Definition and scope.....p. 1
- 2. Victim profilep. 1
- 3. Risk factorsp. 2
- 4. Recommendations.....p. 2
- 5. Study limitationsp. 2
- 6. References.....p. 2

Introduction

Employment scams involve a “job offer [...] with high pay and options to work remotely and with flexible hours. To get the job, a candidate must **complete forms that require personal, sensitive information** and may be required to ‘purchase equipment’ with part of the proceeds of what turns out to be a **fake check**.”¹ The victim may also be asked to **pay for “training,”** or they may be **“overpaid” by the scammer with a fake check** and asked to “wire back the excess money.”¹ In 2018, employment scams were considered **the riskiest kind of scam in North America.**^{1,2} In the same year, in Canada, employment scams cost **412 victims over \$4.5 million.**³

Victim profile

According to the Better Business Bureau, in 2018, **students, military personnel / veterans and 18–24-year-olds** were more susceptible to employment scams than any other scam.¹ Another author states that the risk remains **high for people up to 29 years of age.**⁴ A third study holds that even though 45–54-year-olds report this kind of scam more often, **all age groups are susceptible.**⁵ Individuals **with a lower income**⁵ as well as **newcomers**⁶ are also more at risk.

The Research Chair in Cybercrime Prevention was created on the initiative of the University of Montreal, Desjardins and the National Bank of Canada. Led by Benoît Dupont, researcher at the International Centre for Comparative Criminology at the University of Montreal, its mission is to contribute to the advancement of research on cybercrime phenomena from the perspective of its prevention.

Risk factors

People **actively looking for a job** or a **better-paying job** are more likely to fall victim to employment scams.⁵

Recommendations

Awareness campaigns about employment scams should be implemented at **job centres** and **legitimate online job sites** to help individuals distinguish between scams and legitimate job offers.⁵

Since young adults are using cheques less and less, it might be useful to educate them on **how they work**.¹

Study limitations

At this time, there are almost **no empirical studies** looking into employment scam victimization. The few studies that have been conducted focus more on how algorithms can be used to help distinguish between scams and legitimate job offers posted on online job search sites.

In Australia, statistics show that over the last 3 years, monetary losses resulting from employment scams were up to **4 times higher in June and July than during the rest of the year**. It might therefore be worthwhile to explore this issue further in Canada.⁷

References

1. Better Business Bureau (BBB). (2019). Tech-Savvy Scammers Work to Con More Victims: 2018 BBB Scam Tracker Risk Report. BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust.
2. Risk is determined by exposure (prevalence of a scam type reported by individuals who suffered monetary losses and by those who were exposed to scams but avoided losses) (BBB, 2019).

susceptibility (likelihood of losing money when exposed to a scam type) × monetary loss (median dollar amount reported for a particular scam type).

3. Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (2019). Unpublished data.

4. Howington, J. (2015, September 12). Survey: More Millennials Than Seniors Victims of Job Scams. *Flexjobs*.

5. Jorna, P. (2016). The relationship between age and consumer fraud victimisation. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 519(2016), 1-16.

6. Rickard Straus, R. (2020, February 26). Fake job offer scam dupes thousands into laundering money for criminal gangs. *This is Money*.

7. Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC). (2019). Scam statistics.

