# Fraud cases in England and Wales hit record high with rise in AI-driven scams



Fraud cases in England and Wales surged by more than one million last year, marking a 33 per cent increase and reaching a record high since 2017, according to new data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). The estimated total fraud incidents rose from three million in 2023 to 4.1 million in 2024, with approximately 7 per cent of adults becoming victims of scams during the year.

Fraud, defined as a deliberate act of deception for personal gain or causing loss to another, has manifested in increasingly sophisticated forms in the digital era. One particularly severe case involved Des Healey, a 60-year-old man from Brighton, who was duped out of £75,000 through an advanced scam utilising artificial intelligence (AI), cryptocurrency, and impersonation of well-known personalities.

In August 2023, Mr Healey encountered a video on Facebook that falsely featured endorsements from tech billionaire Elon Musk and financial expert Martin Lewis promoting a new bitcoin investment scheme. He later discovered the video had been manipulated using AI to simulate their approval. Initial engagement began when Mr Healey provided personal information in response to the advertisement, though he had not yet transferred any funds. This initiated contact with an individual identifying as “Carl Heinz,” who promised lucrative returns on further investments.

Mr Healey revealed to The Independent, “I’ll be totally honest with you, when all this started, I thought I was going to get a couple of hundred quid for Christmas. And then this guy is talking about thousands, but I have to invest now.” The scammer instructed him to install remote access software and use apps such as Revolut and Binance to transfer money. He was shown fabricated websites depicting rising investment values but was denied the ability to withdraw funds. Under pressure, Mr Healey initially invested £15,000 of his own money and subsequently took out loans amounting to £70,000 from multiple banks.

The deception continued for approximately eighteen months. When Mr Healey’s son expressed concern, he reported the fraud to the police and recognised the extent of the scam. Mr Healey said of his communications with the scammer, “That’s when I finally heard the real person,” after previously believing he had forged a genuine friendship. While two banks have since written off the fraudulent loans, Mr Healey remains liable for around £27,000 plus interest to other lenders. He is currently facing potential bankruptcy and extreme personal distress, including reliance on antidepressant medication.

Mr Healey has discussed his ordeal in national media and on a podcast hosted by Martin Lewis to raise awareness. Others have also come forward with similar experiences, including a mother who lost £150,000. The case falls under Authorised Push Payment (APP) scams, where victims are manipulated into voluntarily transferring funds. New regulations introduced in October 2024 offer reimbursement for such scams up to £85,000 provided the case is reported promptly, but Mr Healey’s losses predate this policy and thus are not covered.

Nationally, 75 per cent of fraud victims lost money, with around two-thirds fully recovering their losses. However, nearly one million incidents resulted in financial losses that victims could not recoup. The most prevalent type of fraud remains bank and credit account fraud, with 2.4 million incidents last year, encompassing unauthorised use of bank details and fraudulent account openings. Card fraud continues to rise despite industry efforts.

Consumer and retail fraud increased by 35 per cent to 1.1 million incidents, often involving purchase scams, counterfeit products, and non-delivery of goods. Recent figures from Lloyds Bank show Oasis fans lost over £2 million to ticket scams due to high demand. Digital fraud mechanisms often make it difficult to trace responsible parties, especially in cryptocurrency transactions.

Victims of consumer fraud frequently recover little to none of their money, with only 52 per cent recovering any losses. Computer virus attacks affected approximately 149,000 individuals, with no full compensation reported, as private individuals generally lack suitable cyber insurance.

Wayne Stevens, national fraud lead at the charity Victim Support, emphasised to The Independent, “Being a victim of fraud can unravel your entire life. We have supported people who have lost life changing amounts of money – forcing them to sell treasured possessions, or in extreme cases, into bankruptcy or homelessness.”

The availability of personal information through social media further exacerbates fraud risks, allowing scammers to impersonate acquaintances or create convincing deceptions based on accessible details. Despite the scale of the problem, only about one in seven fraud cases are reported to law enforcement agencies due to shame and stigma, complicating efforts to address and reduce fraud in England and Wales.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2024> - This source confirms the 33% increase in fraud cases in England and Wales in 2024, from around 3 million incidents in 2023 to 4.1 million, as reported by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). It also details the rise in bank and credit account fraud and consumer fraud statistics mentioned in the article.
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/fraud-scam-ai-victim-bank-crypto-b2738650.html> - The Independent article covers the detailed case of Des Healey, including the use of AI, cryptocurrency, and impersonation scams leading to his £75,000 loss, as well as interviews and quotes from him and Wayne Stevens of Victim Support, corroborating the human impact and fraud methods in the article.
3. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2024> - This source provides earlier 2024 fraud statistics from the CSEW, showing trends in fraud increases, bank and credit account fraud, and consumer fraud which align with the article’s data and context about the rising fraud incidents throughout the year.
4. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/753249/fraud-offences-england-and-wales/> - Statista reports on the number of fraud and computer misuse offences recorded in England and Wales for 2023/24, supporting the article’s claim about record high fraud offences and the challenges in tracking digital fraud mechanisms.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-fraud-initiative-reports/national-fraud-initiative-report-2022-2024-html> - The National Fraud Initiative report provides information on fraud detection and recovery efforts by public bodies, supporting the article’s broader context on how fraud cases are handled and the role of institutions in addressing the fraud problem.
6. <https://www.lloydsbank.com/news-and-insights/press-releases/2024/lloyds-bank-warns-oasis-fans-about-ticket-scams.html> - This Lloyds Bank press release supports the article’s mention of consumer fraud involving ticket scams where Oasis fans lost over £2 million, illustrating a concrete example of the types of consumer scams rising in the UK.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/fraud-scam-ai-victim-bank-crypto-b2738650.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data