



Improving Online Scam Reporting For Older Adults

Americans over 60 lose \$650M a year to online hacks and scams. These scams should be reported to government agencies like the FBI and FTC, but many don't know that reporting is important. Those who do often cannot complete the reports they start.

Chronic under-reporting means that U.S. intelligence and law enforcement lack information about online scams. Making online reporting forms easier for older adults to complete would make the problem more visible and help law enforcement cut down on crime.

Research

To improve online reporting forms for older adults, we engaged older adults themselves. The Aspen Tech Policy Hub collaborated with three senior centers in San Francisco to host a reporting-themed design thinking workshop and focus group with elders.

Elders were asked to describe their most frustrating online experiences and moments when they had felt unsafe online. Next, they were given an example scam and asked to fill out the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center's reporting form. Learnings and recommendations from these activities are described here.



About the Hub

The Aspen Tech Policy Hub is a fellowship program for technologists engaging in policy. Inaugural tech policy fellows Ginny Fahs, Steven Buccini, Anil Dewan, and Ora Tanner conducted the research behind this report. For more, visit aspentechpolicyhub.org

Recommendations:

Older adults identified pain points on the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center's reporting form and recommended new form features:

Pain Point on Current Form	Recommendation for New Form
Blurred form fields	Use reveal logic so users only see fields relevant to their situation
Squished on tablet and mobile	Optimize text size and form fields for mobile and tablet
Lost work with accidental movements	Cache inputs Save-as-you-go
Small text size	Use large text Build to be read-aloud compatible
Confusing vocabulary	Explain jargon like spoofed email, similar domain, email intrusion
Confusing requests	Explain IP address and how to find it
Printing	Signal good moments to print Offer PDF download

Checklist for Senior Inclusion:

Older adults' perspectives should inform the design of most government forms, since most government services need to be accessed by Americans of all ages. Government designers can use this checklist to confirm that their designs are older adult friendly.

- Can this form be completed in one browser window?
- Can this form cache/save responses despite an accidental swipe?
- Does this form assume user understands copy & paste?
- Does this form use vocabulary that most users will understand?
- Can this form be easily printed?
- Can this form be accessed and reasonably used on a smartphone?
- Can this form be accessed and reasonably used on tablet?
- Will users have an alternative if they cannot fill out the digital version of this form?

Prototype

The Aspen Tech Policy Hub prototyped a new reporting form that adheres to design guidelines and collects additional data about scams conducted on social media and dating platforms. The form prototype utilizes the United States Web Design System, has been tested with older adults, and incorporates their feedback.

The main difference between this prototype and existing forms is the increased focus on online dating and social media: two of the most prevalent scams among older adults. The prototype solicits details about the platforms where cybercrime happens and the tactics attackers are using there. Explore the prototype at fenses.org/ic3-form.

For more on this research, visit aspentechpolicyhub.org.