

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sleigh the scammers! Bank of Scotland issues fraud warning to last-minute Christmas shoppers

- **Analysis shows the number of online shopping scams across Scotland increased by almost two-fifths (38%) in December last year**
- **Most common goods reported as part of festive purchase scams are trainers and clothes**
- **Average amount lost in the run-up to Christmas is £435**

Scots are being urged to watch out for festive fraudsters while shopping online, as scammers look to cash in on the last-minute rush in the run-up to Christmas.

New research from Bank of Scotland reveals that the number of online shopping scams across Scotland increased by 38% in December last year (compared to December 2020).

The average amount Scottish people were tricked into handing over was £435. However, those aged between 55 and 64 lost more than double that, around £1,100 on average.

Purchase scams occur when someone is tricked into sending money directly to someone else's account via bank transfer (also known as a Faster Payment) to buy goods or services that don't exist.

Most of these scams start via online platforms such as Instagram or Facebook Marketplace, with victims lured in by the promise of cut-price or hard-to-find goods, especially during busy shopping periods like Christmas.

The most common items to be reported by Scots as part of online shopping scams in a typical December include trainers, clothes and gaming consoles.



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Consumers urged to be on their guard against scam threat

Meanwhile a poll commissioned by Bank of Scotland found a third of Scottish adults (34%) would take more of a risk at Christmas by purchasing from a website they haven't heard of before, if they are buying something that is hard to find elsewhere.

And around one in 10 Scots (12%) would take more risk if their priority is to find the cheapest option. This is a particular concern at the moment, with more than three-quarters (76%) of Scottish people saying the current rise in the cost of living makes them more keen to seek a bargain at Christmas.

The research also found that three in five Scots (60%) still consider a bank transfer (also known as a Faster Payment) to be a safe payment method for buying items online, despite it offering much less protection than paying by credit or debit card.



Liz Ziegler, Fraud Prevention Director, Bank of Scotland, said:

“With people especially keen to bag a bargain this Christmas given the cost of living squeeze, heartless fraudsters will be ready to trick unsuspecting victims out of their hard-earned cash.

“Online shopping scams come in all shapes and sizes, but the vast majority start with items advertised on social media, where it’s too easy for fraudsters to use fake profiles and advertise goods that simply don’t exist.

“The safest way to pay for things online is always by debit or credit card, and buy from a trusted retailer. Remember that if a deal looks too good to be true, it usually is.”

‘Missed parcel’ delivery scams

Another scam popular among fraudsters at this time of year involves fake emails and text messages which claim a parcel is awaiting delivery, and asking the recipient to click on a link to pay a fee.

The website will ask for personal and banking details and the fraudsters can then use this information to impersonate the victim’s bank.

Worryingly the research found that almost a quarter of Scottish adults (23%) say they always or often click on links in messages that appear to come from a delivery company.



Top tips to stay safe from scams this Christmas:

- Always use your debit or credit card when you shop online. This helps to protect your money should anything go wrong.
- Low prices and great deals can hide scams. See if you can find them elsewhere. And remember, if an item is selling out, fraudsters can charge more to trick desperate buyers.
- Fraudsters use social media to post scam offers. They can even send them straight to your inbox. Always search for deals yourself.
- Make sure a seller or website is genuine. Look for good reviews from different buyers. Be wary of mixed, bad or no reviews at all. It's safer to buy from a trusted retailer.
- Ask questions before you buy. If a seller can't give any details about an item or tries to hurry you into paying, it's a sign of a scam
- Never click on links in messages, even if you think you know the sender. Visit the genuine website of the delivery company to track a parcel.

Notes to editors

Scam transaction data

Figures based on analysis of relevant purchase scams reported by Bank of Scotland customers with transactions date between 1st to 24th December 2021, with comparisons made to equivalent figures from 2020.

Consumer research

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2323 adults, of which 180 are from Scotland. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st – 3rd November 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

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