

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION  
PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

# Consumer Data Spotlight

## Protection *FTC reporting back to you*

Data Spotlight

## Bitcoin ATMs: A payment portal for scammers

By: Emma Fletcher September 3, 2024   

Bitcoin ATMs (or BTMs)<sup>[1]</sup> have been popping up at convenience stores, gas stations, and other high-traffic areas for years.<sup>[2]</sup> For some, they're a convenient way to buy or send crypto, but for scammers they've become an easy way to steal. FTC Consumer Sentinel Network data show that fraud losses at BTMs are skyrocketing, increasing nearly tenfold from 2020 to 2023, and topping \$65 million in just the first half of 2024.<sup>[3]</sup> Since the vast majority of frauds are not reported, this likely reflects only a fraction of the actual harm.<sup>[4]</sup>

Cryptocurrency surged as a major payment method for scams in recent years, along with the massive growth in crypto payments on fake investment opportunities.<sup>[5]</sup> But now crypto is a top payment method for many other scams, too.<sup>[6]</sup> Widespread access to BTMs has helped make this possible. Reports of losses using BTMs are overwhelmingly about government impersonation, business impersonation, and tech support scams.<sup>[7]</sup> And when people used BTMs, their reported losses are exceptionally high. In the first six months of 2024, the median loss people reported was \$10,000.<sup>[8]</sup>

In the first half of the year, people 60 and over were more than three times as likely as younger adults to report a loss using a BTM.<sup>[9]</sup> In fact, more than two of every three dollars reported lost to fraud using these machines was lost by an older adult.<sup>[10]</sup>