

For immediate release

Identity theft: many Canadian adults still in the dark about the serious repercussions this phenomenon could have on their lives

- 45% of Canadian adults didn't know if they've been a victim of identity theft, their future credit card purchases could be declined;
- 74% have never asked for a report from a credit reporting agency to confirm the accuracy of their credit record;
- Restoring an identity can be very stressful and often involves many administrative and legal steps.

Montreal, March 18, 2008 – With March being the Fraud Prevention Month in Canada, Sigma Assistel releases results of its national survey on Identity Theft. According to this survey, many Canadian adults still don't really understand to what extent identity theft impacts their lives and the lives of their loved ones. If you are a victim of identity theft, your credit record can be severely compromised. Restoring your identity can be a legal and administrative nightmare. In other words, you're in for a good dose of stress!

According to the survey:

- 37% of respondents were not aware that a fraudster could buy something like a household appliance on credit from a major retailer using the victim's name.
- Just under half of all Canadian adults (45%) didn't know that if their identity is stolen, an institution or retail store could decline their future purchases on credit.
- One-quarter of Canadian adults (25%) were unaware that identity theft could damage their personal credit score for months or even years.
- 57% of Canadian adults had no idea that they could have to pay a traffic ticket without ever having committed a violation.

According to Pierre Julien, Director of Business Development and Marketing: "These survey results are proof that Canadians need proactive and reactive help with respect to identity theft. Restoring your identity is no easy task. You'll likely need to contact a number of organizations including banks, credit card issuers, government services, credit reporting agencies, the police, etc. And if you don't go about these steps properly or if you neglect to inform certain organizations, you and your family will be in for a long haul in the months and years ahead. And that could mean a lot of stress for everyone involved."

The best strategy is prevention

As is the case for any type of fraud, prevention is still the best strategy. When it comes to prevention, the survey showed that Canadian adults have taken some commendable steps in the right direction:

- More than 8 out of 10 Canadian adults (83%) always, or most of the time, check to make sure all transactions listed on each one of their credit card statements are accurate.
- 9 out of 10 Canadian adults (90%) always, or most of the time, check to make sure all transactions on their bank statements are accurate.
- 88% of Canadian adults rarely or never dispose of their receipts or bank statements without first ripping them up or shredding them.
- Virtually all Canadian adults (95%) never clean out their wallets in public places (e.g., when they are waiting in a line up or dining at a restaurant, etc.).

The survey also looked at what you can do on a daily basis to protect yourself against identity theft. We learned that:

- Only one out of 4 Canadian adults (26%) has requested a report from a credit reporting agency to check the accuracy of his/her credit record.

- Just over one out of 5 Canadian adults (21%) keeps valid credit cards that are no longer used.
- Nearly half of all Canadian adults (52%) always carry their social insurance card or number in their wallet.

According to Louise Des Ormeaux, General Manager of Sigma Assistel, one way to minimize the risk of identity theft is to memorize your social insurance number and keep your card in a safe place, such as a safety deposit box at a financial institution. Data from the 2006 survey on this subject showed that 30% of Canadian adults have rented a safety deposit box from their financial institution. "This very basic but effective step could save you a lot of headaches in the end," explained Ms. Des Ormeaux.

Finally, according to the survey, one out of 10 Canadian adults (10%) has already been a victim of identity theft, and 7 out of 10 Canadian adults (69%) say they are very or somewhat concerned about identity theft, whereas in the 2006 survey it was one out of 15 Canadian adults (7%) and six out of 10 Canadian adults (63%) respectively.

About the survey

This survey was conducted by SOM Survey, Opinion, Polls and Marketing on behalf of Sigma Assistel between January 9 and 29, 2008. In total, 1,002 interviews were conducted with a representative sample of Canadian adults. The sampling plan provides proportional estimates with a maximum margin of error of plus or minus 3,2% at a 95% confidence level (19 times out of 20). The data was statistically weighted to accurately reflect the composition of Canadian adults by region, gender and age based on 2001 Census information.

About Sigma Assistel

Sigma Assistel, a Canadian leader in telephone assistance and a subsidiary of Desjardins Financial Security, serves more than 5 million Canadians today. In the past few years, Sigma Assistel has recorded growth rates ranging between 10% and 20%. The company strives to offer cost-competitive solutions to meet the needs of groups, businesses, and organizations concerned about the well-being of their employees, members, and clients. Sigma Assistel is committed to

providing appropriate, high-quality assistance services – anytime and anywhere, no matter what the nature of the request. These services, which are available 24/7, include Health Assistance, Legal Assistance, Home Assistance, Travel Assistance, Roadside Assistance, as well as ID Theft and Restoration Assistance and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). For more information about Sigma Assistel, visit the company's website at www.assistel.com.

Source: Sigma Assistel

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