

**Unauthorized my Social Security Direct Deposit Changes
Through May 2018
A-01-18-50669**



September 2019

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine the amount of Social Security benefits misdirected because of unauthorized *my Social Security* direct deposit changes through May 2018.

Background

In January 2013, the Social Security Administration (SSA) began allowing individuals to change their direct deposit information using its *my Social Security* service. Shortly after SSA made this change, we and the Agency began receiving fraud allegations related to unauthorized direct deposit changes.

In September 2015, we issued a report on payments misdirected because of unauthorized direct deposit changes made through *my Social Security* in Calendar Year 2013. In August 2017, we issued a report on payments misdirected because of unauthorized direct deposit changes made through *my Social Security* in Calendar Years 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Our current review assessed *my Social Security* direct deposit changes in 2015 and 2016 not included in our August 2017 report and transactions from January 2017 through May 2018. We combined these results with our prior reviews to report overall results from January 2013 through May 2018.

Findings

We estimate \$33.5 million in benefits for 20,878 beneficiaries was misdirected from January 2013 through May 2018 because of unauthorized direct deposit changes made through *my Social Security*.

Year	Beneficiaries with Misdirected Benefits	Misdirected Benefits	Misdirected Benefits Not Returned
2013	12,202	\$20.1 million	\$11.3 million
2014	4,474	\$6.8 million	\$3.0 million
2015	2,345	\$3.6 million	\$2.6 million
2016	925	\$1.4 million	\$1.1 million
2017	712	\$1.2 million	\$0.3 million
2018 (through May)	220	\$0.4 million	\$0.2 million
Total	20,878	\$33.5 million	\$18.5 million

We also estimated that, from January 2013 through May 2018, SSA prevented \$23.9 million in benefits from being misdirected from 19,662 beneficiaries whose direct deposit account was changed without their authorization.

We are not making additional recommendations for corrective action because, in a September 2016 report, we recommended SSA identify and implement appropriate technology that results in a high level of confidence in the identity of *my Social Security* users. As of June 2019, the Agency had not implemented the recommendation. Also, in a May 2019 report, the Government Accountability Office recommended—and SSA agreed to—strengthen its electronic identity verification processes.