

Online romance scams: A modern form of fraud

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Over the last 20 years, the rapid development of digital communication technology has given rise to new forms of social interaction on social media. Digital communication technologies can overcome physical,

social and psychological barriers in building romantic relationships. Around 1400, dating sites/chats have been created over the last decade in North America alone. Solely in the UK, 23% of Internet users have met someone online with whom they had a romantic relationship for a certain period and that even 6% of married couples met through the web.

While [communication](#) technologies have revolutionized, and continue to revolutionize, the modalities of interaction and the building of emotional attachment on the one hand, on the other, the online dating industry has given rise to new forms of pathologies and crime. Online romance scams are a modern form of fraud that have spread in Western societies along with the development of [social media](#). Through a fictitious Internet profile, the scammer develops a [romantic relationship](#) with the victim for 6-8 months, building a deep emotional bond with the aim of extorting economic resources in a manipulative dynamic. There are two notable features: on the one hand, the double trauma of losing money and a relationship, on the other, the victim's shame upon discovery of the scam, an aspect that might lead to underestimation of the number of cases. Sixty-three percent of social media users and 3% of the general population report having been a victim at least once. Women, [middle-aged people](#), and individuals with higher tendencies to anxiety, romantic idealization of affective relations, impulsiveness and susceptibility to relational addiction are at higher risk of being victims of the scam. Understanding the psychological characteristics of victims and scammers will allow at-risk personality profiles to be identified and prevention strategies to be developed

More information: Anna Coluccia et al, Online Romance Scams: Relational Dynamics and Psychological Characteristics of the Victims and Scammers. A Scoping Review, *Clinical Practice & Epidemiology in Mental Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.2174/1745017902016010024](https://doi.org/10.2174/1745017902016010024)

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