



Wisconsin's Top 10 Consumer Complaints of 2024

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MADISON, Wis. – As the state's primary consumer protection agency, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) responded to 11,374 written consumer complaints in 2024. The resulting mediations, enforcement actions, and settlements returned over \$23 million to Wisconsin consumers through refunds and restitutions directly returned to consumers, and civil forfeitures deposited into the state's common school fund for the benefit of public education.

"The Consumer Protection team is deeply committed to educating and protecting the citizens and visitors of our state, as well as committed to assisting victims of scams, fraud, and identity theft with recovery," said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. "I am proud of the team's hard work and dedication in serving Wisconsin consumers, and encourage anyone facing consumer issues in Wisconsin to access DATCP's free online resources or contact our Consumer Protection Hotline. They are here as a resource."

The top ten complaint categories of 2024 are:

1. Landlord-Tenant Issues

With 2,525 complaints filed in 2024, landlord-tenant issues remained DATCP's number one consumer complaint category. The most common disputes between landlords and tenants reported to DATCP include failure to maintain the premises, security deposit returns, unauthorized entry, mold and infestation, inadequate disclosures, and unsatisfactory service.

A recent case highlights the importance of landlord-tenant issues in Wisconsin and is just one example of DATCP's many efforts to protect consumers from predatory and illegal business practices. In December 2024, the Wisconsin Department of Justice announced a settlement of a \$1.7 million lawsuit against Milwaukee-based Berrada Properties Management, Inc. after a referral from DATCP, whose investigators alleged the company had violated landlord-tenant law. The agreement with Berrada Properties Management included remediation and restitution programs requiring the company to return an estimated \$850,000 to tenants, among other obligations. Landlords and tenants alike can learn more about their rights and responsibilities from DATCP's free Landlord-Tenant Guide, available online at LandlordTenant.wi.gov.

In addition to landlord-tenant issues, DATCP received other housing related complaints including 45 complaints about manufactured housing and manufactured housing community concerns.

2. Telemarketing

Telemarketing was DATCP's second most-reported consumer complaint category of 2024, with 1,513 complaints. Issues include phishing and spoofing, imposter scams, robocalls, harassment, and Do Not Call Registry violations. While the complaints in this category have generally decreased over the last few years, that does not mean the calls themselves are decreasing. Instead, consumers are using tools like the Do Not Call Registry and anti-spam technologies built into the latest cell phones to reduce those calls. Even if they use these helpful tools, it remains important for consumers to file complaints with DATCP, as this helps the department combat illegal telemarketing and scam operations in partnership with other state and federal agencies.

3. Home Improvement

There were 664 consumer complaints filed with DATCP in the home improvement category in 2024. Top concerns include quality of work, delays in performance, failure to provide services and materials, failure to honor warranties, deceptive and misleading representations, and failure to disclose lien rights. One example of a DATCP investigation into home improvement complaints determined that a home improvement company called MD Construction received homeowner payments for projects, but then left the work unfulfilled. Instead, the business spent customer money on personal expenses and refused to provide refunds. The owner was sentenced to five years of probation and ordered to pay over \$128,000 in restitution.

4. Identity Theft

DATCP received 618 complaints of identity theft in 2024, an increase over the previous year. The top issue in this category remains online account takeovers, with many of the complaints involving compromised Facebook accounts. Social media profiles being taken over by a bad actor can lead to serious and long-term consequences, as the scammer could use a compromised account to access the owner's personal finances, take control of their internet-based business, or spread the scam to their friends. Other major issues include fraud, data breaches, and compromised identification documents. While prevention is the best way to combat identity theft, victims of identity theft can contact DATCP for assistance with recovery and protecting their identity against further fraud.

5. Telecommunications

In 2024, DATCP received 527 complaints from consumers about their telecommunications services. Consumers reported issues about billing disputes, customer dissatisfaction, agreed-upon terms not being followed, deceptive and misleading representations, refund and adjustment policies, and denial of cancellation requests. Consumers should carefully read their contracts and policies to understand the extent and limitations of the services they purchase, and keep the original documentation for the length of their agreement and service plans.

6. Medical Services

Consumers filed 439 complaints related to medical services in 2024. The top issue in this category was medical billing disputes. Other topics include unsatisfactory service and misleading representations. In one 2024 complaint, a consumer was billed \$1,900 for a procedure after being told it would be covered by insurance. However, after DATCP mediation efforts, the mistake was identified and the balance was waived.

7. Motor Vehicle Repair

There were 341 motor vehicle repair complaints filed with DATCP in 2024. Consumers reported issues such as unsatisfactory quality of work, damage and loss of property, failure to honor agreements or perform work, performance delays, and charges for work not permitted by the vehicle owner. Following one complaint about a vehicle that was allegedly damaged while in a repair shop's care, DATCP mediated a resolution where the business agreed to waive more than \$1,000 in towing costs and cover the full repair bill, which was over \$3,000.

8. Motor Vehicle Sales (New and Used)

The eighth most common consumer complaint in 2024 concerned sales of both new and used motor vehicles, about which DATCP received 297 complaints. The most common issues cited in these complaints were inadequate disclosures, prize notice mailers, and untrue, deceptive and misleading representations. DATCP works closely with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) on motor vehicle complaints, as WisDOT is the state agency responsible for regulating sales while DATCP handles issues of advertising and marketing.

9. Travel

DATCP received 244 travel complaints in 2024. The travel category covers a variety of areas such as airlines, hotels and lodging, auto rentals, and travel service bundles, with common

consumer complaints including billing disputes, refund and adjustment policies, failure to provide services, failure to return deposits, and unsatisfactory service.

10. Motor Vehicle Accessories

DATCP's tenth most common consumer complaint category of 2024, having received 141 complaints, was motor vehicle accessories. Refunds, failure to deliver products, and deceptive and misleading representations were the top issues reported by consumers.

More Consumer Issues and Resources

While DATCP traditionally announces its top ten consumer complaints, the agency would also like to highlight other important issues that follow closely behind. Consumers filed many complaints in the categories of entertainment and recreation, warranties and extended warranties, major appliances, timeshares and timeshare resellers, furniture and home furnishings, and medical devices. Following some of these complaints, DATCP's mediation resulted in consumers receiving thousands of dollars in refunds on products and services like timeshare memberships, malfunctioning refrigerators, and concert tickets.

DATCP receives tens of thousands of requests for assistance and resources every year through written complaints, inquiries to the Consumer Protection Hotline, free presentations on consumer protection issues, and more. The Consumer Protection team assists the public every day with many more issues not listed above. Whether mediating a dispute between a consumer and a business, investigating, educating the public, or guiding consumers on scam or identity theft recovery services, DATCP's mission is to serve Wisconsin consumers. The agency's Bureau of Consumer Protection is ready and able to help – however necessary.

For more information and consumer protection resources, or to file a complaint, visit DATCP's Consumer Protection webpage at [ConsumerProtection.wi.gov](https://consumerprotection.wi.gov). DATCP's Consumer Protection Hotline can be contacted at (800) 422-7128 or DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.

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CONSUMER COMPLAINT STATISTICS
2024

<u>RANK IN 2024</u>	<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u># OF COMPLAINTS</u>
1	Landlord/Tenant	2,525
2	Telemarketing	1,513
3	Home Improvement	664
4	Identity Theft	618
5	Telecommunications	527
6	Medical Services	439
7	Motor Vehicle Repair	341
8	Motor Vehicle Sales	297
9	Travel	244
10	Motor Vehicle Accessories	141

Total number of Trade and Consumer Protection consumer complaints received in 2024:
11,374