



**Security Freeze Legislation:
Awareness and Incidence of Placement Among
Consumers 18+ in Seven States**

By Jennifer H. Sauer and Neal Walters

New Jersey Annotated Questionnaire

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Purpose and Methodology

Given that security freezes are a fairly recent development (with most laws passed over the last four years) and they have, until fairly recently, only provided a small fraction of the population access to the service, it is safe to presume that very few people today have a security freeze placed on their credit files. However, the actual number of people who currently have placed a security freeze has not been made publicly available by the credit bureaus. In spring 2007, AARP conducted a research study to gauge awareness of security freeze laws and determine the number of adult consumers who have placed a security freeze in seven states. The selected states had laws in effect for at least one year and allowed all consumers to place a security freeze on their credit report. This survey also explored the possible barriers to placing, thawing, and managing a freeze.

The survey found that ***both awareness of security freeze laws and the incidence of placing a security freeze are very low***. Moreover, the data suggest that information on how to place a freeze, the fees associated with placing or lifting a freeze, and the process involved in placing or lifting a security freeze may be barriers to consumers actually taking this protective measure. **In all, this survey yields three major recommendations:** 1) consumer organizations and advocates should heighten consumer education and information efforts; 2) state and federal legislation should be pursued to allow all consumers in every state to easily place a security freeze at minimal or no cost; 3) ongoing research should be instituted to track awareness and incidence of the security freeze law as well as assess the effectiveness of public outreach efforts to increase security freeze placement

Methodology: Between April 1 and May 6, ANR completed 8,412 interviews with adults, aged 18 and older, living in California, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maine, Nevada, New Jersey, and North Carolina – 1,200, or slightly more, interviews in each state. Selection of the states were based on two criteria: 1) the state allowed all consumers to proactively place a security freeze on their credit report, and 2) the security freeze law had been in effect for at least 1 year before the date of the survey. The sample was generated using a random digit dialing process designed to reach all households in each state respectively with telephone service. The total sample of 8,412 respondents yields a maximum statistical error of ± 1.1 at the 95% level of confidence. The maximum statistical error for the total sample of 1,200 respondents is $\pm 2.8\%$ at the 95% level of confidence.¹ The data were weighted to reflect the actual distribution of age and gender for the population in each state.² ***While significant differences exist between the states with respect to most survey question responses, the overall the data trends are the same. Therefore, this report will discuss overall findings of the total seven state population of 8,412 respondents.***

Some questions may exceed 100% due to rounding or the use of multiple response question formats. The total N and subgroup n's may appear to not add up accordingly from question to question due to multiple criteria established for different groups or types of respondents to move from one question to another. Please contact the author for a copy of any individual states' annotated survey.

For more information about this research, please contact Jennifer H. Sauer at 202-434-6207 or jsauer@aarp.org.

¹ This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would be within ± 1.07 or 2.8 percentage points, respectfully, of the results obtained had everyone in the population been interviewed.

² Weight values ranged from a low of 0.38 to a maximum of 2.21. The average weight value was 1.17.

New Jersey Security Freeze Questionnaire

(New Jersey Respondents 18+ N =1,200; Sampling Error =±2.8%)

(Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses)

1. To begin, have you ever contacted a national credit bureau, such as Experian, Equifax, or TransUnion, to request a copy of your credit report?

% n=1,200
42 Yes
57 No
2 NOT SURE
<1 REFUSED

2. As far as you know, do you have the right to *block* creditors, lenders, or other businesses from reviewing your personal credit report or files in order to establish new credit in your name without your permission?

% 1,200
38 Yes
45 No
17 NOT SURE
<1 REFUSED

3. Have you ever heard of or read about the national credit bureaus being required to provide consumers like you the opportunity to block your personal credit report from being used by lenders or creditors to establish new credit in your name without your permission?

% n=1,200
31 Yes
65 No
3 NOT SURE
<1 REFUSED

4. Could you tell me what this is called? [DO NOT READ LIST]

% n=376
2 Security Freeze
2 Credit Freeze
0 Freezing credit
<1 Credit report Freeze
0 Credit file Freeze
1 Any Other Word(s) Freeze
4 Fraud Alert
4 Other name or reference **NOT** using the term 'freeze'
86 Does Not Know Name
1 REFUSED

4a. There are a lot of different services out there to protect consumers. We are interested in whether or not you may have heard the name of this *particular* service. As I read the following, please tell me if you recognize it's name:

% n=1,108
6 Credit Report Block
10 Financial Protection Service
16 Fraud Alert
4 Security Freeze
61 NOT SURE
4 REFUSED

5. Where have you heard or read about this – [IF NECESSARY SAY, “Where have you heard or read about the national credit bureaus being required provide consumers the opportunity to freeze their credit files and block creditors from using your credit report information?”] [DO NOT READ]

% n=400
9 Family/friends
9 My bank/credit union
<1 The senior center
3 Got flier in the mail
2 Consumer organization/flier or mail
6 Consumer org website
1 Consumer org representative
4 Government/agency website
1 Government/agency flier/mail
1 Government/agency representative
1 Colleague at work
1 Employer
18 Newspaper
8 Financial news/magazine/literature
21 Other: _____
18 Can't remember/NOT SURE
3 REFUSED

IF Q4 OR 4a = FRAUD ALERT, SKIP TO QUESTION 16.

6. Do you currently have a security freeze placed on your credit files that now blocks lenders and creditors from using your personal information to establish new credit in your name without your permission?

% n=326
28 Yes
63 No
8 NOT SURE
2 REFUSED

6a. And why not?

- % n=236
- 3 Fees to high/costs too much
- 7 Never heard of it/Didn't know you could this
- 14 Haven't gotten around to it
- 3 Doesn't seem like it would work/protect me much
- <1 Other family or friends or people said it doesn't work
- 4 Want to have access to my credit/this would block *me* from accessing my credit
- 1 Seems complicated
- 44 NOT SURE/No reason
- 7 REFUSED
- 18 Other: (specify): _____

6b. How likely is it that in the next 6 months you will sign up with a national credit bureau to place a security freeze on your credit files? *Would you be extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?*

- % n=218
- 5 Extremely likely
- 8 Very likely
- 30 Somewhat likely
- 26 Not very likely
- 28 Not at all likely
- 3 NOT SURE
- 0 REFUSED

[SKIP TO Q7]

6c. In general, how easy was it for you have this freeze placed on your credit files? *Would you say it was extremely easy, very easy, somewhat easy, not too easy, or not at all easy for you to have this done?*

- % n=90
- 21 Extremely easy
- 38 Very easy
- 31 Somewhat easy
- 3 Not too easy
- 3 Not easy at all
- 5 NOT SURE/REFUSED

6cc. Did the credit bureau issue you a pin number to access your account?

- % n=18
- 54 Yes
- 28 No
- 13 NOT SURE
- 6 REFUSED

(6d). Why do you think that was?

% n=32
22 Difficulty with representative
1 Technological problems
3 Didn't understand the law
1 Difficulty getting to post office
0 Couldn't figure out how it worked/it works
0 PIN or PASSWORD/PASS CODE is too much for me to remember
1 Problems with getting answers to questions
29 Other – specify - _____
41 NOT SURE / CAN'T REMEMBER
2 REFUSED

RESPONDENT GROUP DEFINITIONS

“AWARE/USER” → (Q3 = YES OR (Q3 = NO AND Q4a = “SECURITY FREEZE”)) AND Q6 = YES

“AWARE/NONUSER” → (Q3 = YES OR (Q3 = NO AND Q4a = “SECURITY FREEZE”)) AND Q6 = NO, NOT SURE, OR REFUSED
“NOT AWARE” → (Q3 = NOT SURE OR REFUSED) OR (Q3 = NO AND Q4a ≠ “SECURITY FREEZE”)

7. What [IF aware/user INSERT “is” OTHERWISE IF aware/nonuser INSERT “would be”] your MAIN or TOP reason for placing a freeze on your credit files? [DO NOT READ] [ACCEPT ONE RESPONSE/ANSWER]

% n=308
52 Protect self from identity theft
8 Block any businesses or lenders from unnecessarily viewing credit files
<1 Keep family members from utilizing credit files for personal use
2 Other family members/friends/colleagues at work did
2 Friends recommended
1 My bank/credit union/financial advisor recommended
2 Was a victim of identity theft
11 Other (specify): _____
4 WOULD NOT BLOCK CREDIT FREEZE [VOLUNTEERED]
15 NOT SURE
3 REFUSED

8. About how much does a national credit bureau charge residents in New Jersey to *sign up* to block their credit files or place a freeze on the credit files:

% n=308
16 Nothing or free
<1 Nothing if you are a victim of ID theft
1 Less than \$5
<1 Between \$5 and \$10
2 \$10
1 More than \$10
0 \$12
3 More than \$12
76 NOT SURE / CAN'T REMEMBER
1 REFUSED

9. In your opinion, would you say these fees seem [reasonable, too high, or too low]?

% n=22
42 Reasonable
52 Too high
0 Too low
6 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

10. Would you be more or less likely to sign up to place a freeze on your credit files if the fee was at least half of the amount the credit bureau currently charges New Jersey?

% n=6
69 More likely
31 Less likely
0 Current fee does not matter to me
0 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

11. Would you be more or less likely to place a freeze on your credit files if doing so was *free* of charge New Jersey?

% n=6
100 More likely
0 Less likely
0 Current fee does not matter to me
0 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

12. About how much do the credit bureaus charge residents in your state to lift the block or freeze on their credit files so that a lender or creditor may review for a new loan or purchase?

% n=308
12 Nothing or free
<1 Nothing if victim of identity theft
<1 Less than \$5
0 Between \$5 and \$10
1 \$10
0 More than \$10
0 \$12
1 More than \$12
85 NOT SURE / CAN'T REMEMBER
1 REFUSED

13. In your opinion, would you say these fees seem [reasonable, too high, or too low]?

% n=5
93 Reasonable
7 Too high
0 Too low
0 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

14. Would you be more or less likely to sign up to place a freeze on your credit files if the fee *for lifting* it was *at least half* of the amount the credit bureau currently charges in New Jersey?

% n=1
100 More likely
0 Less likely
0 Current fee does not matter to me
0 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

15. Would you be more or less likely to place a freeze on your credit files if the fee for lifting was *free* of charge in New Jersey?

% n=1
100 More likely
0 Less likely
0 Current fee does not matter to me
0 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

[SKIP TO Q22]

16. This service is called a security freeze, and in New Jersey the national credit bureaus are required to provide this protection to you. Basically, a security freeze would block creditors or lenders from using your credit information to establish new credit in your name without your permission. When you want to open a new credit account or get a new loan, you can lift the freeze on your credit file for others to review, either for a period of time or for a specific creditor.

Now knowing this, how likely are you to sign up to place a freeze on your credit files in the next 6 months? *Would you say you are extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?*

% n=892
7 Extremely likely
11 Very likely
25 Somewhat likely
20 Not too likely
33 Not at all likely
4 NOT SURE
1 REFUSED

16b. Could you briefly explain why you would not be more likely to sign up to place a freeze on your credit files?

17. To place or activate a freeze on your credit files, you could sign up with one or *each* of the three major credit bureaus. In some states, consumers can sign up to place a freeze with a major credit bureau for a fee of about \$10. For individuals registering with each of the three major credit bureaus this could total \$30.

In your opinion, would you say these fees seem [reasonable, too high, or too low]?

% n=892
 53 Reasonable
 37 Too high
 3 Too low
 5 NOT SURE
 1 REFUSED

18. How likely would you be to sign up to place a freeze on your credit if you had to pay each credit bureau...

[RECORD ANSWER FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING] [IF RESPONDENT SAYS "EXTREMELY LIKELY", THEN AUTOFILL REMAINING ITEMS IN SERIES AS "EXTREMELY LIKELY" AND SKIP TO Q20]

\$10? [IF NECESSARY: *Would you be extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?*]

What if you had to pay each credit bureau \$7?

What if you had to pay \$5?

What if you had to pay any amount from \$1 but less than \$5?

%	%	%	%	n=892
\$10	\$7	\$5	\$1 < \$5	
5	12	23	32	Extremely likely
9	14	16	18	Very likely
29	25	23	19	Somewhat likely
19	16	10	5	Not too likely
36	31	26	23	Not at all likely
1	2	1	2	NOT SURE
1	1	1	1	No answer

19. How likely would you be to sign up to place a freeze on your credit files if it were *free* of charge? *Would you be extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?*

% n=892
 52 Extremely likely
 15 Very likely
 15 Somewhat likely
 5 Not too likely
 11 Not at all likely
 1 NOT SURE
 1 No answer

20. Some states allow the credit bureaus to charge consumers a fee, typically less than \$10, *for lifting* their freeze so that a lender or creditor can review their files for a new loan or account. How likely would you be to sign up to place a freeze on your credit if the fee to lift it was:

\$10 [IF NECESSARY: *Would you be extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?*"]

What if you had to pay each credit bureau \$7?

What if you had to pay \$5?

What if you had to pay any amount from \$1 but less than \$5?

%	%	%	%	n=892
\$10	\$7	\$5	\$1 < \$5	
6	9	16	25	Extremely likely
6	7	12	14	Very likely
20	20	21	20	Somewhat likely
21	19	13	9	Not too likely
44	41	35	30	Not at all likely
3	3	2	2	NOT SURE
1	1	1	1	No answer

21. How likely would you be to sign up if lifting the freeze on your credit files were *free* of charge? *Would you be extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?*

% n=892
 47 Extremely likely
 16 Very likely
 15 Somewhat likely
 5 Not too likely
 14 Not at all likely
 1 NOT SURE
 1 REFUSED

[THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ASKED OF ALL RESPONDENTS]

22. Several states will be requiring credit bureaus to lift a credit freeze within 15 minutes of a consumers request. However, in New Jersey, you may have to wait up to 3 days after you notify the credit bureaus to let your information be available to a lender for establishing new credit. How important is it to you that [New Jersey] require the national credit bureaus to lift a consumers' credit freeze within 15 minutes after being notified to do so. *Would you say this is extremely important to you, very important, somewhat important, not that important, or not at all important to you?*

% n=1,200
 31 Extremely important
 27 Very important
 19 Somewhat important
 10 Not too important
 10 Not at all important
 2 NOT SURE
 1 REFUSED

23. Currently, to place a freeze on their credit files, you have to get and complete forms providing the credit bureaus with personal financial information and then send the forms in by certified mail. Generally speaking, in thinking about placing a freeze on your credit files, how [easy] would this process be for you?

- % n=1,200
- 6 Extremely easy
- 12 Very easy
- 32 Somewhat easy
- 22 Not too easy
- 25 Not at all easy
- 3 NOT SURE
- 2 REFUSED

24. Again, in thinking about **[IF aware/users INSERT “managing your credit freeze” OTHERWISE INSERT “signing up to place a freeze on your credit files and managing your freeze”]**, how **[IF aware/users INSERT “do you” OTHERWISE INSERT “would you want to”]** contact the national credit bureaus? **[IF aware/users INSERT “Do you” OTHERWISE INSERT “Would you want to”] contact them.....: [ASK ABOUT AND RECORD ANSWER FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING. ASK FIRST THREE IN RANDOM ORDER]**

%	%	%	%	n=1,200
Yes	No	Not Sure	Refused	
50	43	6	1	Electronically through the credit bureau’s website?
43	50	7	1	By calling a credit bureau over the phone and responding to recorded questions?
79	16	4	1	By calling a credit bureau over the phone and talking with a representative?
29	58	11	2	What other way [IF aware/users INSERT “Do you” OTHERWISE INSERT “Would you want to”] contact the national credit bureaus?

25. Besides contacting a national credit bureau, what other places in your community could you turn to for more information about placing a freeze on your credit files? **[DO NOT READ]**

- % n=1,200
- 4 The local library
- 2 Police department
- 20 Bank
- 3 Credit union
- <1 Church
- 2 Financial advisor/broker
- 1 Senior center
- 0 Federal trade commission
- <1 Securities commissioner
- 1 Courthouse
- 9 Other

Identity Theft - ALL

26. During the last five years, has anyone misused your credit card or checking account to make a purchase or get money without your permission?

% n=1,200
16 Yes
82 No
1 NOT SURE
2 REFUSED

27. Did you report this experience to anyone?

% n=192
73 Yes
16 No
11 Bank / Company / Gov't / Other Org Contacted Me
0 NOT SURE [DO NOT READ]
<1 REFUSED [DO NOT READ]

28. To whom did you report it? [DO NOT READ]

% n=162
4 Family/friends
<1 Better Business Bureau
32 My bank/credit union
54 Credit card company
1 Loan company/agency
0 Consumer protection agency
14 Police
2 A lawyer
1 FBI
1 State Attorney General or State consumer agency/person – Securities Commission
Federal Trade Commission
1 Utility company – energy/electric/gas; phone;
10 Other (specify):
4 NOT SURE
1 REFUSED

29. During the last five years, has someone used your personal information like a social security number or account number to obtain new credit cards or loans in your name OR to open other new accounts in your name without your permission?

% n=1,200
4 Yes
93 No
1 NOT SURE
2 REFUSED

30. Did you report this experience to anyone?

% n=49
78 Yes
22 No
0 Bank / Company / Gov't / Other Org Contacted Me
0 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

31. To whom did you report it? [DO NOT READ]

% n=39
12 Family/friends
3 Better Business Bureau
10 My bank/credit union
34 Credit card company
2 Loan company/agency
0 Consumer protection agency
38 Police
5 A lawyer
5 FBI
2 State Attorney General or State consumer agency/person – Securities Commission
0 Federal Trade Commission
3 Utility company – energy/electric/gas; phone;
9 Other (specify
0 NOT SURE
0 REFUSED

32. How concerned are you, personally, about becoming the victim of identity theft – that is the crime where someone steals your social security number or other personal information and uses it to commit fraud – are you *extremely concerned, very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?*

% n=1,200
33 Extremely concerned
29 Very concerned
22 Somewhat concerned
9 Not too concerned
5 Not at all concerned
<1 NOT SURE
2 REFUSED

33. In the past 12 months, have you received a letter from your bank, credit union, or other financial institution, or perhaps a retailer or other business alerting you to a breach in security or release of personal or financial information that could negatively affect your finances or credit files?

% n=1,200
20 Yes
75 No
4 NOT SURE
2 REFUSED

34. How important is it to you that New Jersey work closely with the national credit bureaus and other businesses and agencies to protect consumers from identity theft and other forms of financial fraud?

% n=1,200
45 Extremely important
40 Very important
8 Somewhat important
2 Not that important
2 Not at all important
1 NOT SURE
2 REFUSED

Demographics

% n=1,200
47 MALE
53 FEMALE

D1. What is your age as of your last birthday? [RECORD IN YEARS]

% n=1,200
27 18-34
29 35-49
21 50-64
17 65+
1 Don't Know
6 Refused

D2. What is your marital status? Are you currently.....

% n=1,200
49 Married,
4 Not married, but living with your partner
2 Separated
8 Divorced,
9 Widowed,
24 Currently Single and never been married.
<1 DON'T KNOW
5 REFUSED

D3. [IF D2 = 1 ASK: "Are you or your spouse currently a member of A-A-R-P?" IF D2 = 2 ASK: "Are you or your partner currently a member of A-A-R-P?" OTHERWISE ASK: "Are you currently a member of A-A-R-P?"]

% n=1,200
26 Yes
69 No
2 DON'T KNOW
3 REFUSED

D4. Thinking about state elections for New Jersey Governor and Legislators in the last ten years, which of the following best describes your voting behavior? Would you say you vote...

%	n=1,200
45	Always
23	Most of the time
6	About half the time
7	Seldom
15	Never vote
1	DON'T KNOW
4	REFUSED

D5. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a...

%	n=1,200
22	Republican
31	Democrat
25	Independent
12	Or, something else
4	DON'T KNOW
7	REFUSED

D6. In general, how often do you go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email? Would you say several times a day, about once a day, 3-5 days a week, 1-2 days a week, once every few weeks, less often than every few weeks, or do you never go online to use the Internet or check email?

%	n=1,200
39	Several Times a Day
15	About Once a Day
8	3-5 Days a Week
6	1-2 Days a Week
4	Once every few weeks
3	Once a Month or Less
23	Never go online
<1	DON'T KNOW
4	REFUSED

D7. What is the highest level of education that you completed? (READ)

%	n=1,200
8	0 to 12 th grade, but with no diploma
37	High school graduate or equivalent
9	Post high school education, but with no degree
13	2 year college degree
14	4 year college degree
3	Post-graduate study, but with no degree
11	Graduate or professional degree
<1	DON'T KNOW
4	REFUSED

D8. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Are you currently....

- % n=1,200
- 7 Self-employed full-time
- 3 Self-employed part-time
- 45 Employed full-time
- 9 Employed part-time
- 19 Retired and not working at all
- 4 Unemployed, but looking for work
- 9 Not in the labor force for other reasons
- <1 DON'T KNOW
- 5 REFUSED

D9. Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino origin or descent?

- % n=1,200
- 9 Yes
- 85 No
- 1 DON'T KNOW
- 6 REFUSED

D10. And which of the following best describes your race?

- % n=1,200
- 70 White/Caucasian
- 11 Black/African American
- 4 Asian
- <1 Native American or Alaskan Native
- <1 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 7 Or are you some other race
- 1 DON'T KNOW
- 7 REFUSED

D11. We realize income is a private matter and so rather than ask anything specific about your income, I'd like to ask you to please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household's income before taxes in 2006. Was it... [READ]

- % N=1,200
- 4 Less than \$10,000
- 6 \$10,000 but less than \$20,000
- 9 \$20,000 but less than \$35,000
- 13 \$35,000 but less than \$50,000
- 9 \$50,000 but less than \$60,000
- 7 \$60,000 but less than \$75,000
- 30 \$75,000 or more
- 4 DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE
- 19 REFUSED

D12. What is your 5-digit zip code? _ _ _ _ _

THANKS AND HAVE A GOOD DAY / NIGHT!

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, published bimonthly; *AARP Bulletin*, our monthly newspaper; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, our bimonthly magazine in Spanish and English; *NRTA Live & Learn*, our quarterly newsletter for 50+ educators; and our website, www.aarp.org. AARP Foundation is our affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



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**For more information about this survey please contact Jennifer H. Sauer at:
202.434.6207 or email jsauer@aarp.org**