

Case Studies: Cryptocurrency

The Polaris FIU reviewed cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline which included information regarding cryptocurrency. This document includes selected cases that contain significant details and illustrate how cryptocurrency is involved in situations. As of July 2021, Bitcoin was the most frequently mentioned cryptocurrency.

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Polaris received \$3.5 million through competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant # 90ZV0138-01- 00. The project will be financed with 77.7% of federal funds and 22.3% (\$1.002 million) by non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

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Case 1:

A caller reported that her partner was threatening to post online nude photos of her and partially nude images of her minor children. The caller stated that her partner would post the images unless she sent him \$1,500 through Bitcoin.

Case 2:

A caller reported a suspicious situation involving his friend he met online via Facebook. The caller stated his friend is being forced to work for someone. The caller reported that individuals are forcing his friend to hack into personal accounts like PayPal accounts. The caller's friend stated that these controllers do not allow her to leave an unknown location. The friend stated she needs \$20,000 in Bitcoin to be released. This situation matches a type of financial scam common on the Internet.

Case 3:

A caller provided information about an adult female who is not being paid for her modeling work. The caller believes this woman is in debt to her employer because she borrowed several hundred thousand dollars from them. The caller reported that they have never met the woman, as they only communicate via online messenger. The caller reported they have sent the woman tens of thousands of dollars via CashApp. The caller stated he sends money to the woman via CashApp or Bitcoin. This situation matches common internet scams.

Case 4:

A caller reported several Instagram accounts selling child sexual abuse material. The caller stated that buyers can purchase the child sexual abuse material using several payment methods, including Bitcoin and Amazon gift cards.

Case 5:

A caller reported that minors are being forced to make pornographic videos. A group of exploiters is allegedly posting the videos on secured VPN sites. The caller stated that buyers can purchase the materials using cryptocurrency.

Continued Case Studies: Cryptocurrency

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Case 6:

A caller reported his minor daughter is missing and in a sex trafficking situation. The daughter told the caller that she engages in commercial sex with adult men, using the app KIK to advertise herself to commercial sex buyers. The caller believes his daughter is with an adult male trafficker that she communicates with via Kik, TextApp, Twitter and Snapchat. The daughter has an active rideshare account but the caller is unsure how she is paying for it, as she does not have a credit card. The caller's daughter does however have a Bitcoin account.

Case 7:

A caller texted the hotline looking for shelter. She stated that two men took her identification and branded her leg, and that she is currently in a motel. She reported that she was in a relationship with one of the men, and he coerced her to do online cam shows through fear and intimidation. The caller's controllers convert earnings from the online cam shows to Bitcoin.