

<http://www.coindesk.com/europol-bitcoins-popularity-growing-in-illicit-online-markets/>

Europol: Bitcoin's Popularity Growing in Illicit Online Markets

[Yessi Bello Perez \(@yessi_kbello\)](#) | Published on February 24, 2015 at 20:20 BST
News



Bitcoin is increasingly being used to pay for livestreams of child sex broadcasted over illicit Internet sites, according to a new Europol report.

Produced by Europol's EC3 cybercrime centre, the [report](#) sheds new light on the commercial sexual exploitation of children online, while providing evidence that individuals with a sexual interest in children are becoming more entrepreneurial.

"Live streaming of abuse for payment is no longer an emerging trend but an established reality", the report said.

It continued:

"There is a clear shift from traditional credit card payments to the ones providing the most anonymity, namely alternatively payment options, including virtual currency."

In line with the [International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children's](#) (ICMEC) findings, the report said that "there is apparent migration of commercial child sexual exploitation, along with other criminal enterprises, from the traditional payments system to a new, largely regulated digital economy made up of hosting services, anonymising Internet tools and pseudonymous payment systems".

The [Internet Watch Foundation](#) (IWF) identified 22 websites hacked with commercial templates exclusively accepting bitcoin in July last year. The news comes after Europol [issued a report](#) on Internet crime in 2014, in which it outlined a number of scenarios involving bitcoin.

The report, called the [Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment](#) (iOCTA), examined the use of bitcoin on various dark web sites, organised crime and individuals, and called digital currencies an "enabler" for cybercriminals as well as a challenge for law enforcement.

[Europol image](#) via Shutterstock