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The role of human microchipping in human trafficking

Domina Petric, MD

Human trafficking is a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services or commercial sex. Traffickers sometimes embed RFID chips into their victims. Technology has helped traffickers to operate in complete anonymity, especially when it comes to criminal payments via Bitcoin.

The United States Department of Justice defines human trafficking as a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services or commercial sex. Those most at risk for recruiting include vulnerable demographics: homeless people or runaways, domestic violence victims, undocumented and documented immigrants. The internet has made the facilitation of human trafficking easier, but it has also improved circumstances for victims and survivors.

One way in which technology changes this dynamic is by allowing recruiters to operate through the veil of anonymity. Traffickers often conduct conversations via the **Dark Web**. According to Europol's Internet Organized Crime Threat Assessment from the year 2015, 40 percent of criminal-to-criminal payments take place in **Bitcoin**, a decentralized digital currency without a central bank.

Traffickers have gone as far as embedding GPS tracker chips into their victim's bodies. An article in Principia Scientific International detailed the story of a doctor X-raying a patient who had handed him a note saying, "I have a tracker in me". The woman had been enslaved by a pimp who implanted an RFID chip of the sort used to locate lost pets.

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