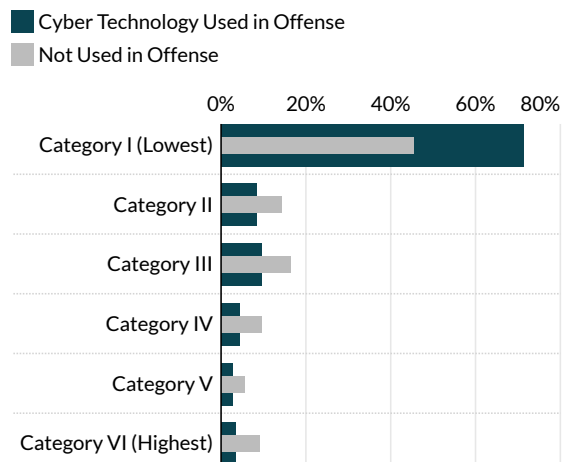# Key Findings

1 Between 2014 and 2021, 2,590 sentenced individuals used at least one of three types of cyber technology—hacking, cryptocurrency, and the dark web—in connection with a federal offense, and the number increased substantially during the time studied from 2014 to 2021. However, this number represented less than one percent of the total federal caseload.

Dark Web
287

Cryptocurrency
241

Hacking
74

200

0

2014   2021
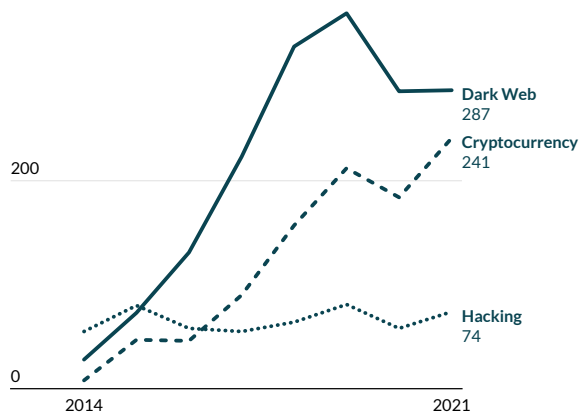
2 Individuals who used cyber technology in their offense were more likely to be White, male, younger, and have completed at least some college than other sentenced individuals.

o Over two-thirds (68.6%) of individuals who used cyber technology in their offense were White, compared to 21.5 percent of other sentenced individuals.

o While 94.0 percent of those who used cyber technology were male, 86.8 percent of other sentenced individuals were male.

o Almost a quarter (22.4%) of individuals who used cyber technology had a college degree, compared to 5.8 percent of other sentenced individuals.

3 Individuals who used hacking, cryptocurrency, or the dark web in their offense had less criminal history than individuals who did not use cyber technology in the commission of a federal crime. Less than half of other sentenced individuals were in Criminal History Category (CHC) I, the lowest category.

■ Cyber Technology Used in Offense
□ Not Used in Offense

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

Category I (Lowest)

Category II

Category III

Category IV

Category V

Category VI (Highest)

4 The most common offenses committed by individuals who used cyber technology in their offense were child pornography (28.9%), fraud (27.5%), drug trafficking (20.6%), and money laundering (8.9%).

| Crime Type	Percent
Child Pornography	28.9%
Fraud/Theft	27.5%
Drug Trafficking	20.6%
Money Laundering	8.9%
Sexual Abuse	7.0%
Firearms	1.5%
Stalking/Harassing	1.2%
National Defense	0.9%
Forgery/Counterfeit/Copyright	0.8%
Extortion/Racketeering	0.6%
Other	2.1%

Hacking

The creation or use of computer code in addition to phishing schemes and brute force attacks, including sophisticated hacks involving programming and lower tech hacks.

Trends

Between fiscal years 2014 and 2021, 525 individuals used hacking techniques in the commission of their federal offense. There was not a discernible trend during this time-period. The number of sentenced individuals who used hacking techniques ranged from a low of 55 in fiscal years 2014 and 2017 to a high of 81 in fiscal year 2019.

Figure 9. Hacking Crime Trends, Fiscal Years 2014–2021
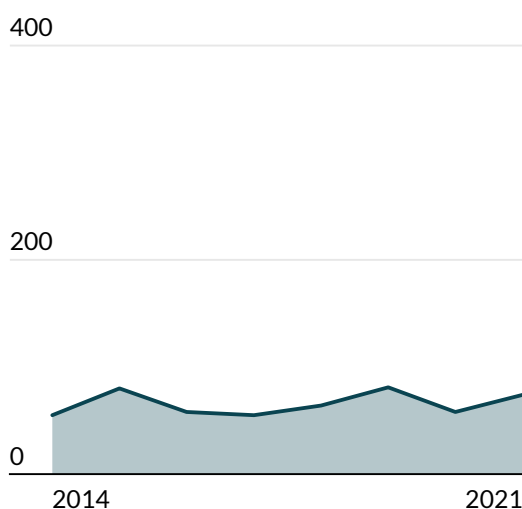
Crime Types

A substantial majority of individuals who used hacking techniques in the commission of a federal offense were convicted of a financial crime. Fraud was the most common offense (77.7%) followed by money laundering (6.9%), stalking/harassing (5.0%), and sexual abuse (3.3%).

Figure 10. Federal Crimes Using Hacking Assistance, Fiscal Years 2014–2021

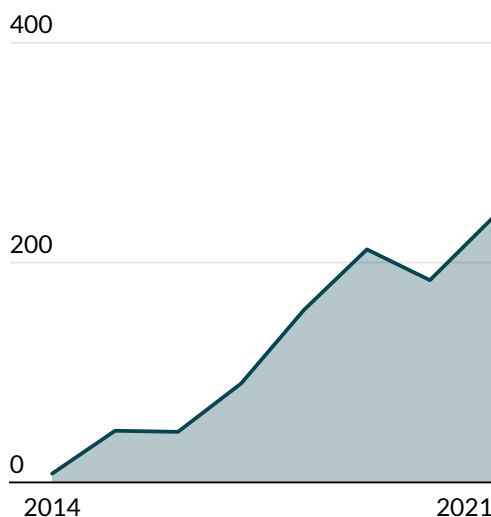| Crime Type	Percent
Fraud/Theft	77.7%
Money Laundering	6.9%
Stalking/Harassing	5.0%
Sexual Abuse	3.3%
Extortion/Racketeering	2.1%
Child Pornography	1.9%
Other	3.1%

Cryptocurrency

The broad name for digital currencies that use blockchain technology to work on a peer-to-peer basis. Cryptocurrencies do not need a bank to carry out transactions between individuals. The cryptocurrency network keeps track of all the transactions and ensures that no one reneges on a transaction.

Trends

Between 2014 and 2021, 985 sentenced individuals used cryptocurrency in the commission of their offense. The use of cryptocurrency to commit crime increased substantially from 2014 to 2021. In 2014, eight individuals used cryptocurrency in the commission of their offense. In 2015, this number increased to 47, and in 2021, reached a high of 241 individuals.

Crime Types

Individuals who used cryptocurrency were convicted of a wide variety of offenses. The most common type of crime committed by individuals using cryptocurrency was drug trafficking (39.6%), followed by fraud (25.3%), and money laundering (19.7%). Child pornography and sexual abuse were committed by 4.1 percent and 2.6 percent, respectively.

Figure 11. Cryptocurrency Crime Trends, Fiscal Years 2014–2021

Figure 12. Federal Crimes Using Cryptocurrency Assistance, Fiscal Years 2014–2021

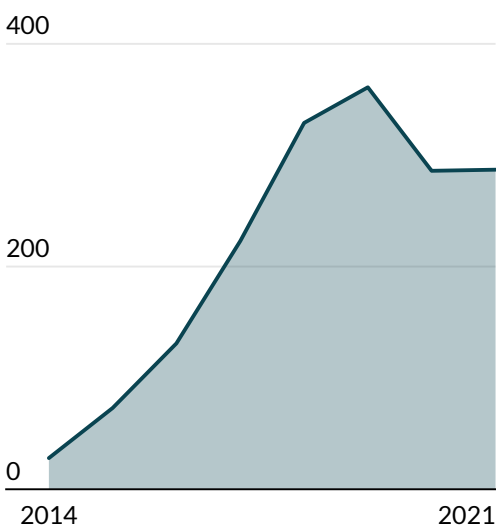| Crime Type	Percent
Drug Trafficking	39.6%
Fraud/Theft	25.3%
Money Laundering	19.7%
Child Pornography	4.1%
Sexual Abuse	2.6%
Firearms	2.1%
National Defense	1.5%
Forgery/Counterfeit/Copyright	1.0%
Other	4.2%

Dark Web

A part of the internet located beyond the reach of traditional internet browsers. It is accessible only through the use of special software and is designed to allow users and website operators to remain anonymous and difficult to trace.

Trends

Between fiscal years 2014 and 2021, 1,718 sentenced individuals used the dark web in the commission of their offense. The number of individuals using the dark web to commit an offense increased from 28 individuals in 2014 to 361 in fiscal year 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the federal caseload. A total of 286 and 287 individuals who used the dark web in their offense were sentenced in fiscal years 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Figure 13. Dark Web Crime Trends, Fiscal Years 2014–2021

Crime Types

Individuals who used the dark web in the commission of their federal offense were more likely to be sentenced for child pornography than other sentenced individuals. More than 40 percent (42.7%) were sentenced for child pornography. Approximately a quarter (25.7%) were sentenced for drug trafficking, followed by fraud (11.2%), sexual abuse (8.3%), and money laundering (5.8%).

Figure 14. Federal Crimes Using Dark Web Assistance, Fiscal Years 2014–2021

Crime Type	Percent
Child Pornography	42.7%
Drug Trafficking	25.7%
Fraud/Theft	11.2%
Sexual Abuse	8.3%
Money Laundering	5.8%
Firearms	2.0%
National Defense	0.9%
Forgery/Counterfeit/Copyright	0.9%
Other	2.5%