

## A Glossary of Terms Used in Online Illicit Market Operations

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**ABSTRACT:** This brief serves as a simple, and partial dictionary of key terms that may be observed in various illicit markets operating on the Open, Deep, and Dark Web. These terms appear in alphabetical order and may be used to characterize markets, services, or participants. This is a living document and will be updated periodically.

**BIN List:** The Bank Identification Number, also called the Issuer Identification Number (IIN), which consists of the first six or eight digits of a payment card such as a credit or debit card. This number can be used to identify the institution who issued the card originally. Carders and data thieves use BIN lists to document the quantity of cards they have for sale, and use them to index their materials for buyers.

**BTC:** Abbreviation used for BitCoin, a cryptocurrency that operates without any central bank backing. Payments are directly sent from user-to-user through an encrypted network utilizing blockchain to publicly record the transactions. Bitcoins are created through a process called mining, and can be exchanged for various goods and services on or off-line.

**Checking Service:** A resource used to verify that a dump or account is both active and valid before use by the buyer. Commonly used by carders and hackers.

**CVV:** The Card Verification Value of a credit or debit card, which is a security code either on the front or back of a card, used to verify the card itself. The term CVV or CVV2 is actually part of the larger jargon of the financial service industry, but has been co-opted by hacker and data thieves to refer to a credit or debit card number, track data, and CVV information that enables the cardholder to make purchases online or over the phone.

**Cryptocurrency:** A digital or virtual currency that utilizes a decentralized back-end infrastructure with cryptography to secure the payment process and conceal the payment recipient and sender details. They are also not backed or issued by a central bank or government. There are a range of cryptocurrencies, though Bitcoin is arguably the most well-known.

**Cryptomarket:** A forum or shop hosted on the Dark Web, or Tor, where vendors typically offer illegal

products (drugs, firearms, etc.) and typically accept cryptocurrencies as payment. The anonymized nature of the communications process has made them more attractive as a sales platform for illicit digital goods vendors, such as data sellers. One of the most well-known cryptomarkets was the Silk Road, a high-profile drug market.

**Dark Web:** The portion of the Internet that can only be accessed via the use of specialized encryption software and browser protocols. Individuals can only access the Dark Web through the use of a service like Tor, or the Onion Router. The content hosted on the Dark Web cannot be indexed by any search engines, nor can they be accessed through traditional web browsers. Various illicit markets operate on the Dark Web, particularly drug vendors.

**Deep Web:** The portion of the Internet that is hosted and accessible through the Open or Surface Web, but may not be accessible through search engines for various reasons, such as that the content is behind paywalls or is password protected. Illicit market operations may operate on the Deep Web, particularly well-organized or savvy operators.

**Dump:** A stolen credit card or bank account number and the associated customer data, thus a dump of data. Dumps are typically sold by carders via forums and shops on the Open and Dark Web, and are advertised by country or region, as well as by financial institution using BIN lists. Dumps may also include the information contained on the magnetic strip tracks on the back of the card.

**Escrow:** A process of payment and money management used by operators on the Open and Dark Web to ensure customer satisfaction. Typically, this occurs by establishing an actor as an escrow agent for the forum or shop who then retains funds on behalf of buyers, which are then released to the vendor when the buyer confirms satisfactory receipt of their purchased good or service.

**Exit Scam:** The unexpected closure of a Dark Web forum or individual shop with no notice to customers after they have acquired sufficient trust and escrowed funds from customers. The operators then retain the escrowed funds, while customers are left with nothing.

**Finalize Early (FE):** The process of giving funds to a vendor that have been retained in escrow before full receipt or delivery of goods by the buyer. FE is largely observed in Dark Web market operations and presents risks to buyers because they may be scammed or ripped off by untrustworthy vendors.

**Forum:** An asynchronous communications platform where individuals post in “threads,” whereby a question or comment is made, and then subsequent responses are attached to create a running discussion. Content may be separated by topic, to create a range of sub-forums which are managed by moderators or administrators. There are “open” forums where participants can view content without a username or password. “Closed” forums require individuals to create accounts and log in to view content.

**Fullz:** A dump of customer data that contains all of the information associated with the account and account holder, including card number, track data, and customer details. This term signifies the volume and depth of information available to a potential carder.

**ICQ:** A free online instant messaging service (pronounced “I Seek You”) that is popular among hackers and carders as a means of communication.

**Jabber:** A free online instant messaging service popular among illicit market operators, especially hackers and carders.

**Logins:** The username, password, and in some cases, secret question answers sold by data vendors in order to gain access to customer accounts electronically and remove funds or acquire sensitive information.

**Moderators:** An actor who has been designated by a forum operator to be responsible for managing the content and activity within a specific sub-forum or the forum as a whole. In many carding forums, moderators assess the quality of sellers within the markets, and may assign rankings to individuals based on their performance.

**Open Web:** Sites and content hosted on web servers that can be accessed through any sort of web browser (i.e. Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome). This content

can be indexed by search engines, like Google or Bing, as the site operators have not specified directions in the “robots.txt” for search engines not to display the webpage. A range of illicit markets operate on the Open Web, including digital and physical goods vendors.

**PGP:** Pretty Good Privacy, an encryption program that utilizes cryptography and authentication to secure communications between actors, including text, email, and files. Content can be encrypted and decrypted through the use of keys which can be exchanged and shared. Some Dark Web markets and communications are encrypted via PGP to secure the flow of information.

**Ripper:** A rip-off artist, or vendor who takes money from buyers and then either provides bad product or no product whatsoever. A seller may be informally labelled as a ripper by other market actors, or formally by moderators to diminish their perceived trustworthiness and harm their overall profits.

**Scam:** A product or vendor that is not legitimate, as in a scammer or rip-off.

**Shop:** A website maintained by a single operator or vendor in order to sell product, which can be hosted on the Open or Dark Web. These sites may require you to register first before you can see their content or may require a deposit in order to view their products. Additionally, these sites may not provide accurate feedback compared to the overall number of transactions completed.

**Skimmer:** Physical devices designed to capture and store the magnetic stripe data from debit and credit cards. This term encompasses the way that information is stolen from a consumer, as the readers skim or capture the data from a credit or debit card as it is passed through an ATM or credit card reader

**Tor:** The Onion Router, a free proxy and encryption protocol that hides the IP address and location details of the user. TOR, once downloaded and installed, encrypts an individual’s web traffic and routes it through a network of other Tor users’ systems that is randomized, making it difficult to locate the actual source of any user’s computer.

**Unverified Seller/Vendor:** A first time seller, or new operator within an illicit market running through forums, as little is known about them or their trustworthiness. This label is often given to the vendor by a forum moderator, but may be changed over time.

Verified Seller/Vendor: A known illicit market vendor who has an established reputation and can be trusted. This label is formally given by forum moderators, though they may be viewed as verified informally among participants. This status may change in the event the vendor does not continue to provide good service or quality products.

WU: Abbreviation for Western Union, a popular wire transfer service. Illicit market operators may accept Western Union, especially among carders and hackers, though they may add additional percentage surcharges due to the potential inconvenience to acquire the funds.