

A Dark Side of Technology: Estimating the Effect of Online Dating Services on Rape

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Advances in technology and emerging platforms have transformed how firms and customers search for goods and services. Yet, these technologies can introduce societal challenges by increasing user victimization in ways previously overlooked. Constructing a novel dataset with monthly panels from January 2005 to December 2018 and exploring state-specific legislation, I show that the rise of online dating services induces sexual crimes, especially in areas without Internet-dating safety laws. While the impact of these state statutes starts dissipating after three years, the evidence underscores the need for online dating companies and policymakers to implement measures to moderate and safeguard these services.