



A Survivor's Guide to Location Tracking

A Note on Language

In this toolkit, we will sometimes use the word woman/women and feminine pronouns for simplicity and to recognize the significant impact technology-facilitated violence has on women and girls. We recognize that TFCBV also impacts trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people. We hope that all people impacted by TFCBV will find these documents useful.

Location privacy is critical to safety. Phones and apps can share location with other people, sometimes without our knowledge. In addition, location tracking devices and built-in GPS in cars can all be misused to monitor location. Location tools can also be used to increase safety (to know where your children or pets are), for convenience (to find lost phones or keys), or to know if an abusive person is nearby.

There are times when you may want more location privacy, particularly if you're worried that someone is tracking you. This guide offers information and strategies to help you figure out if you're being tracked and, if so, decide what to do.

Step 1: Prioritize Your Safety

Get more information. Navigating violence, abuse, and stalking can be difficult and dangerous. Anti-violence workers can help you figure out options and local resources and help you create a plan for your safety. You can use www.sheltersafe.ca to find local resources.

Trust your instincts. Perpetrators are often very determined to maintain control over their victims, and technology is one of many tools they use to do this. If it seems like the person knows too much about you, they might be monitoring your devices, accessing your online accounts, tracking your location, or gathering information about you online.

Step 2: Narrow Down How Your Location Is Being Tracked

- Is there a pattern to what the other person knows? Do they know where you are in real-time or do they only know where you've been afterwards?
- Do you share your phone account with others? Does anyone else have access to your phone or know how to log on to your account?
- Are you using apps that share your location? If so, who can see that information?
- Could your friends or family be sharing your location, for example through social media?

Step 3: Learn More About How that Technology Works

Phones and Mobile Devices

- Phones track your location through GPS built into your phone, Wi-Fi connections that may reveal location, and cell phone towers that connect your phone to the network. You can turn off some location sharing, but emergency services and phone companies will be able to access your location whenever the phone is on.
- Phones connected to your [Apple](#) or [Google](#) account have features designed to help find lost phones. Anyone who has access to your account can see the location of your phone.
- Your phone, tablet, or laptop will also make a record of all the Wi-Fi networks you've connected to. You may be able to delete all or part of that history.

Apps and Social Media

- You might be sharing your location through social media and other apps. Check the location and privacy settings in each app.
- Camera and photo apps often store the location where a photo was taken, and include that information when you share a photo. You can usually turn off location in the settings of the camera and photo apps. Remember that location could also be revealed by what's in the photos, such as landmarks.
- Friends might share your location through social media by checking you into a certain location, or mentioning you by name in a post that includes a specific location. If you use that app, you may be able to set up notifications so that you know if others share your location, or you might be able to change your privacy settings to not allow others to share your location or tag your name in a post.
- Some apps request your location. Examples include shopping apps, ride-share services, or food delivery services. Someone with access to those accounts could see your location.
- Spyware (also called stalkerware) installed on your phone, tablet, or laptop can track your location. This type of app could be installed without your knowledge and may not be visible on the phone. Read more about [mobile spyware](#).

Global Positioning System (GPS) devices

- Many cars have built-in navigational systems that could reveal a history of where you've been to anyone with access to the system.
- GPS devices can also be placed in a vehicle or personal belongings to track someone. These devices can be inexpensive, small, and easily hidden. GPS devices usually need to be connected to a power source.
- GPS tracking information can be real-time (i.e. sharing the data directly to the person who installed the GPS via a website or their phone) or it can record location history to be reviewed later.

Location Trackers

- Newer location tracking devices are small and can be hidden in a bag, backpack, or gifts.
- Unlike GPS devices, these location trackers don't have to be connected to a power source and can last for months without being recharged.
- These location devices are connected to an app or online account.
- Location trackers use some combination of GPS, active RFID (radio frequency identification), Bluetooth le (low energy), and Wi-Fi networks.

Step 4: Safety and Privacy Strategies

There are steps you can take to secure your location. There isn't one "right" way to respond. What works for some may not work or be safe for you.

Caution: making changes will often alert the other person, and they might become more abusive. They might try to track you another way or force you to share your location again. It might also erase evidence. Consider speaking with an advocate about safety planning. If you need an anti-violence worker, please go to www.sheltersafe.ca.

Documenting What's Happening

You can document what is happening if it feels safe before you make any changes. You have the option to share this with law enforcement or an attorney, or save it for later. Documenting the abuse can also help you make or update a safety plan.

- Even without knowing how your location is being tracked, you can document what's happening. What has the abusive person said that indicates they know your location? When and where have they shown up when you didn't expect them? What else do you know or suspect that makes you think you're being tracked? Be as specific as possible.
- If you know how you're being tracked, take pictures or screenshots if possible. Some technology will have traces or records of someone else's access to your location information.
- If you show someone else what's happening, make a note of who it was and when you told them.

Finding the Device or Service

- Check for hidden GPS devices or other location-tracking services in your belongings or vehicle.
- In your car, check in the trunk, under the hood, inside the bumper, and under and between the seats. You could ask a trusted mechanic or law enforcement to see if they can find the device.
- In your belongings, look for any items that don't belong to you; remember that a device can be as small as a quarter. For gifts that are non-electronic (such as a toy), look for any electronic parts that shouldn't be part of the toy.

Reporting the Abuse

- Victim service providers can help you explore options for reporting to law enforcement or discuss civil remedies.
- Consider notifying law enforcement, if it feels safe to do so. Their capacity to investigate your complaint may vary depending on resources and knowledge.
- Get help from a civil attorney or legal aid organization. You may also consider seeking a civil order of protection on your own or with the support of an advocate or attorney.
- You could also contact the company to request that the abusive person's access to your location is removed or get more information on how to gain more control over your location sharing.

Removing, Blocking, or Jamming

- If it's safe, you can remove the tracking device or turn off location sharing.
- You can decide when to keep the location tracking working and when to turn it off as part of your safety plan.
- Some counter-surveillance equipment will "jam," or stop, the communication of a location tracking device, but this may also stop other signals, such as phone communication.

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is part of a continuum of violence that can be both online and in-person. If you or someone you know is experiencing TFGBV, you are not alone. You can use sheltersafe.ca to find a shelter/transition house near you to discuss options and create a [safety plan](#). You don't need to stay in a shelter to access free, confidential services and support.

Adapted for Canada with permission from NNEDV's Safety Net project, based on their resource [Survivor's Guide to Location Tracking](#).



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