

Why is stalkerware a problem?

Coercive-controlling behaviour is a very dangerous aspect of abusive relationships. Perpetrators isolate their partners and make them emotionally dependent. They use assault, threats, intimidation, humiliation and more to instil a constant sense of fear in their victims.

Stalkerware ensures that a perpetrator know everything about his victim's life. He can manipulate his partner into believing he is always watching and ready to harm her at any moment – a powerful god watching over every moment. He will use information to control and gaslight his victim, causing her to doubt her own mental health.

It is crucial for women in abusive relationships to know they are not crazy but being watched – and that there is a way out!

How can you protect yourself from stalkerware?

- Use a strong password and change it for different accounts and devices.
- Regularly check the apps that you have on your phone and what permissions they have.
- Block the installation of apps from unknown sources on your phone (only android).
- Install an anti-virus and/or anti-spyware app on your phone.
- Do not share your password with anybody.
- Do not use fingerprint or face ID to unlock your phone – as soon as you are unconscious your partner can easily trick these systems.



Stalkerware

A hidden danger on your phone

If you are in an abusive relationship, please reach out for support. You can live a life without violence!

Are you controlling your partner? She deserves a better life. Reach out to us for support on changing your behaviour!

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What is stalkerware?

Stalkerware is software somebody installed on your phone without your knowledge.

Depending on how much money that person is willing to spend, he can:

- See your photos
- Read your SMS
- Read your WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, etc. messages
- Get recordings of your phone calls
- Turn on your camera and microphone
- See your location
- ...

This software is available online and anybody can buy it.

How does stalkerware get on my phone?

Anybody with physical access to your phone can install stalkerware. Many sellers have detailed explanations of how to install stalkerware or even offer mobile phones with pre-installed stalkerware applications that abusers can then give as gifts.

Once the software is on your phone, it is invisible. There is no icon to show that it is installed on your phone and it doesn't send you any notifications.

How do I know if I have stalkerware on my phone?

Technology is constantly changing. This makes it difficult to give a definite list of stalkerware symptoms. Here are some clues:

- You constantly have to charge your phone, even though you haven't changed your mobile phone use.
- You use much more internet than you did before, even though you haven't changed your mobile phone use.
- Your list of app permissions shows an app that you don't know and has permission to access your microphone, location, text messages, calls, camera and more.
- You are in an abusive relationship or your partner is increasingly controlling and he has access to your phone and knows your passwords.
- Your partner knows where you are, he knows of conversations that he wouldn't know about normally, he comments about how he always knows where you are and what you are doing.

If you think your partner's behaviour is suspicious, trust your instincts!

Is it safe to remove stalkerware?

Some stalkerware notifies the abuser when you delete it. Your partner's violence might escalate if you remove the app from your phone. Make a safety plan first! You can reach out to support services for help.

Do not use your phone to research information on stalkerware or support services – the person who installed the stalkerware will see what you are doing.

In addition, it might not be safe to use your personal computer. Rather, use the computers at your local library or ask a friend if you can use their computer.

How do I remove stalkerware?

If you want to remove stalkerware from your phone, you can try doing a factory reset of the phone, which would delete all the apps and put your phone settings back to the way they were when you first got the phone. Additionally, it is a good idea to change all passwords for your e-mail and other accounts, since your partner probably knows them now.

Do you want to report the abuse to the police? In this case, deleting the app would delete the evidence of the crime.

