

# SmartSafe research findings

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Our *SmartSafe* project, funded by Victoria Legal Aid, aimed to examine the emerging issue of technology-facilitated stalking in the context of domestic violence.

We wanted to know if mobile technologies are presenting further opportunities for the perpetration of stalking and domestic violence against women. To explore this issue, we conducted a multiple methods research project consisting of interviews, focus groups and surveys. We conducted two surveys, one with 152 workers in the domestic violence sector and one with 46 victim/survivors.

Our findings show that:

- Mobile technologies allow perpetrators access to victim/survivors 24 hours a day
- Perpetrators are using mobile technologies to abuse and harass women easily, instantaneously and at a distance
- Perpetrators are using technology to create a sense of omnipresence in women's lives through, for example, the use of GPS tracking on smartphones, and monitoring women's social media accounts
- Mobile technologies are being used as an easy way for perpetrators to punish and humiliate women
- A wide variety of technology is being used in partner stalking, including text messaging, social media, GPS, and photo and video technologies
- Women report that perpetrators are using mobile technologies to control and monitor them from a distance
- Technology is often used in stalking both during the relationship and after separation
- Technology is used by perpetrators to humiliate and publically shame women, often in sexualised ways.

- The use of technology in stalking has a significant impact on women's mental and physical wellbeing, their day to day routines, employment, parenting and relationships
- Women who have experienced technology-facilitated stalking have often experienced other forms of domestic violence including emotional, financial and sexual abuse
- Women are reluctant to seek help, often feel embarrassed about their experiences and fear they will not be believed
- When women do seek legal help by taking out an intervention order, it is not always effective in stopping perpetrators from stalking women via mobile technologies
- Domestic violence sector workers need assistance and training to support their work with women who are experiencing technology-facilitated stalking
- There needs to be more consultation and cooperation between the domestic violence sector and the telecommunications industry so women are able to more safely and easily use new mobile technologies
- Developers of smartphone technologies, such as Apple and Google, need to ensure that there are easier and clearer ways to minimise the possibilities of being stalked and tracked with their products
- In order for victim/survivors to be able to use mobile technologies safely, we need to take technology-facilitated stalking seriously and develop effective practice, policy and legal responses to address the use of technology as a tactic of abuse

More information: [www.smartsafe.org.au](http://www.smartsafe.org.au)