



## Reproductive Coercion and Technology

[Reproductive coercion](#) happens when an abusive person takes away a person's choices about [sexual and reproductive health](#) through control, threats, and violence. People may also experience [barriers to sexual and reproductive health care](#), social supports, employment, education, and housing that impact their lives and choices. Control of sexual and reproductive health doesn't just affect cis heterosexual women, people of all genders and sexual orientations can be impacted.

Beyond individual abusive experiences, whole communities experience control of sexuality and reproduction through rape and forced childbearing in slavery, conflict zones, and refugee camps; and forced sterilization, termination, adoption, and removal – all of which may be considered tactics of ethnocide or [genocide](#). This disproportionately impacts people of color, indigenous people, sexual and gender minorities, and people with disabilities.

### Technology & Privacy

Technology can be used as a tool of reproductive coercion and has a significant impact on privacy. One example of technology that can come with privacy risks are apps that allow people to track menstrual cycles, sexual activity, and other health information (sometimes called period-tracking or fertility apps). However, sexual and reproductive health privacy is impacted by many other kinds of information technology. For example:

- An abusive person could use a survivor's phone or a shared account to track health status, location, messages, internet searches, and calls.

- A company (for example a [data broker](#)) might use location and search information to build an online profile, facilitate advertising, or provide that information in response to a legal request.
- A legal entity (or private individuals seeking to report a survivor's activities to legal systems) might seek information about location, appointments, health care, communications, internet searches, and other data related to a survivor's activities.

The information that technology captures about daily life makes it possible for an abuser to learn detailed and intimate information that can be used to control a survivor's sexual and reproductive health.

If you are worried that someone might be using technology to control your choices about your sexual or reproductive health, some of the following tips might help you. While these tips might make it difficult for you to use technology in your daily life, they can be helpful short-term measures while you [find ways to respond](#) to the abuse you are experiencing.

### **Location Privacy**

How can you reduce your risk of this kind of information being used against you? When going somewhere that you don't want someone else to know about, first take steps to plan for location privacy. This might include:

- Avoid searching for the locations, or making plans or appointments using your phone, email, internet browser, or messaging apps;
- Turning off location on your phone, apps, car, or other services – or not bringing those things with you,
- Paying in cash or getting a one-time pass rather than using a transit pass connected to your name, or
- Searching for [location tracking](#) devices in your belongings.

Learn more about privacy, phones, and reproductive health:

- [Survivor's Guide to Phones](#) (Safety Net)
- [Security Planner](#) (Consumer Reports)
- [Surveillance Self-Defense Guide](#) (Electronic Frontier Foundation)
- [Guide to Abortion Privacy](#) (Digital Defense Fund)
- [Data Detox Kit](#) (Tactical Tech)
- [Buyer's Guide to Reproductive Health apps and tools](#) (\*privacy not included, Mozilla Foundation)

### **Privacy of Communications and Information**

If you are seeking health information and services, you might search the internet, use social media, send emails or messages, make calls, set appointments, plan trips, and make other arrangements through your phones or other devices. All of that information could be found by someone else and used in abusive ways. Some strategies to avoid that could include:

- Use a computer at a library. *Note: Do not log into personal accounts like Google or iCloud when searching.*
- A computer at community center, workplace, or school may also be an option, but some of these places might make a record of you using the computer or your activities on the computer.
- Be cautious if using a friend's phone, because there might be privacy or safety consequences for them.
- Use a web form to send messages.
- Don't use your regular phone number or email to receive a confirmation or reply. Set up a new email address and virtual voice number (for example MySudo, Burner, or Google Voice) not connected to your other accounts.

## **Health Privacy**

There are many reasons to use an app or other tool to track sexual and reproductive health. Choose tools that store your personal information securely, meaning that no one else including the company can access the information. You can read the privacy policy to learn what information will be collected from you and why. Learn more about [health privacy](#). If you have questions about the privacy and security of any particular app, contact a victim service provider to help you make that assessment.

**Get more information.** Navigating violence, abuse, and stalking can be difficult and dangerous. Advocates can help you figure out options and local resources and help you create a plan for your safety. You can [contact a national helpline](#) to be connected with local resources.

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