

STALKING & HARASSMENT OF TRANS PEOPLE

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FORGE

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The Stalking Prevention and Awareness Resource Center

(SPARC) defines stalking as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or the safety of others; or suffer substantial emotional distress. SPARC frequently refers to a helpful concept—SLII (Surveillance, Life Invasion, Intimidation, and Interference through sabotage or attack)—that helps people identify stalking behaviors. SLII was developed in 2017 by T.K. Logan and R. Walker as a multidimensional framework for assessment and safety planning.

You can learn more about Supporting LGBTQ Victims of Stalking with [this resource](#) created by SPARC and FORGE.



Stalking can be committed by anyone—it's often someone that the victim knows, but we are seeing an increasing amount of stalking and online harassment that is specifically targeting someone because of their trans identity, or relationship to a trans/nonbinary person. Several stalking and intrusive techniques have become more common in the past few years, including doxing (also spelled doxxing) and swatting.



You've likely heard about both doxing and swatting if you follow mainstream news since these tactics are being used against politicians, judges, and others in the public eye. Let's look more closely at what these tactics are.

Doxing is distributing private information about someone online or in other public

forums. Typically, doxing includes disclosing details such as the victim's address, phone number, workplace, children's schools, medical history, and/or other sensitive personal information online. The person posting this information also encourages other people to harass or harm the person they are doxing. Doxing is considered an extreme form of cyber-bullying and always has a malicious intent.

Swatting is when a false report is made to the police with the intent of luring law enforcement to a location. Typically the false report is for something like a hostage situation or bombs at the location—reports that are intended to create a false sense of urgency and danger in order to result in a large, armed police response, which is extremely dangerous to the victim. [Swatting comes from SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team, referring to having a SWAT team called out on someone.]

Swatting, doxing, and stalking are all related. All involve interfering in someone's life and privacy, making people less safe in their homes and often leading to additional hardships such as legal or financial issues. Doxing can enable swatting by making it easier to find a victim's location. Stalking can include both invading someone's life to find out personal information and invading someone's life through tactics like doxing and swatting.



WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO TRANS COMMUNITIES?

There are extensive examples of stalking, doxing, and swatting tactics being used to target trans communities and those who support trans communities.

We are seeing a consistent and intense rise in anti-trans legislation and hate in the United States. When there is a rise in inequality and hate, there is also a rise in interpersonal violence and coordinated attacks on communities. When we talk about stalking and anti-trans harassment, we're also talking about white supremacy, mass shootings, and other forms of extremism. (Note: this doesn't mean that everyone who stalks or doxes someone is motivated by racist or anti-trans beliefs). Further, there are many connections between abusive behavior and mass violence, which has been used to intimidate, harass, and harm trans/nonbinary communities. There are also links between conservative extremism and

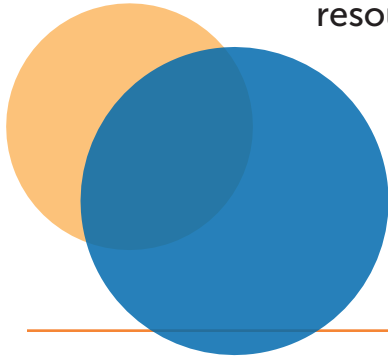
HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES:

- [Doxing, Vigilantes, and Transmisogyny](#) by Abigail Curlew: An article describing personal experience and patterns of online harassment and doxing, particularly targeting trans women.
- ['I'm Scared for my Followers'](#) by Anya Zoledziowski. An article on trans content creators facing increasing amounts of harassment.
- [LGBTQ Safe Spaces National Needs Assessment Final Report](#). In early 2023, The [Anti-Violence Project](#) conducted a survey of LGBTQ+ businesses, spaces and groups and found high rates of anti-LGBTQ+ violence targeting these organizations.

violence, with many people learning tactics of violence from online groups.

[Two-thirds of mass shootings are committed by people who abuse their partners](#). Many mass shootings are directly tied to domestic violence—with someone targeting their partner, children, and others. But even in other events—school shootings, for example, most perpetrators have a history of abusive behavior including stalking, harassment, domestic violence, and the like.

To learn more about these connections check out these resources:



- From [Respect Together: The Connection Between Mass Violence, Racism, and Sexual Violence](#)
- From the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): [The Links Between Racialized and Gender-Based Violence](#)
- A research article [“Understanding how hatred persists: situating digital harassment in the long history of white supremacy”](#)

There is less research connecting other forms of violent attacks to intimate partner violence, but the links are there.

- **The tactics of violence and control overlap.** Stalking, for example, is a tactic being used by anti-trans activists, religious extremists, white supremacists, [male supremacists](#) or “men’s rights” advocates, and others to attack, discredit, and scare people who speak out or even simply exist in ways they don’t agree with.
- **The rhetoric and victim-blaming overlap.** There is extensive focus on how the targets or victims of such violence should be responding, instead of how to stop or prevent such harm from happening. There is pressure for trans people to be less visible, less outspoken, and less themselves as a way to avoid violence.

Any sort of stalking, harassment, doxing, swatting, or life invasion can be overwhelming and terrifying, no matter what the harm-doers’ motivation is.

Everyone should have the right to live their lives without violence.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The threat of stalking, doxing, and swatting understandably influence people’s experiences online and offline. The choices that we each make in terms of our safety and response will be unique, based on our lives, values, needs, and access. For example, where we live, how we make money, how we connect with other people will all influence our decision-making as well as the choices we have. The ideas below are some of the options for safety planning and navigating risks.

FORGE teamed up with SPARC to create resources about the unique dynamics that LGBTQ+ stalking survivors experience. This includes being targeted for our identities, being stalked in LGBTQ community spaces (including online spaces or through apps), and facing threats specific to our identities. Though [this guide](#) (also referenced at the



We also see major links between hate groups and attacks on trans people and their supporters.

- White supremacist groups have stated that anti-drag events are great for recruiting to their causes. [Learn more here.](#)
- Healthcare providers of gender-affirming care are one major target of online harassment and doxing. [This report provides more details.](#)
- Online hate against trans folks is massive. Learn more with this article: [Exposed: The Scale of Transphobia Online.](#)
- Check out GLAAD's guide to [Online Hate Speech and Disinformation](#) to learn more.

beginning of this article) is written for advocates, survivors of stalking may find it helpful.

Understand what is happening

Many survivors find that being able to recognize or name what is happening to them can be helpful. The guide created by FORGE and SPARC may be helpful to validate that what is being done to you is stalking.

For people facing online harassment, it may feel helpful to know the context

the harassment or hate is coming from. Some online hate comes from trolls or bot accounts. [This post focuses on online harassment](#) due to pro-Palestine views, but the information applies to so many other topics.

Other online hate targets people for their identities or beliefs (for example those who are outspoken about trans-affirming care). Sometimes though, the hate or harassment can be personal. Other times, it may be confusing as to why a person is being targeted. No matter what, know that it is not your fault, that you have the right to your identity and to express it, and to be safe in virtual spaces as well as offline.

Harassment by acquaintances or strangers may start online and become in-person stalking or harassment. Stalking may start in person and spread to the virtual world. Some stalking is done by intimate partners or former partners. Stalking may be a way for that person to stay in your life or keep control of you. Again, this is not your fault.

Safety Planning

Unfortunately, there is no "right" way to respond to get a stalker to stop. However, there are some things you can do to try to mitigate the harm and keep yourself safer.

SPARC compiled information about [safety planning for stalking here](#). It may be helpful to talk through these tips with a trusted person or an advocate. Safety planning can include thinking about who you want to tell about the stalking, how to make

your daily life feel safer for you, and ways to manage the impact of the stalking. This might look like telling your coworkers so they know not to let the stalker in the building, changing your daily routine, or getting new locks on your home.

Documentation

Documenting harassment or stalking may help you to identify patterns, help you believe that this is happening/did happen, and should you want to involve law enforcement at any point (or have to), this can help.

- [Here is an example of a stalking log.](#)
- If the stalking or harassment is online, consider checking out [Tech Safety's Documentation Tips](#).

Privacy settings

A lot of stalking is facilitated by technology. Even when the stalking is happening in person, the stalker may use social media posts, GPS tracking, or other technology to assist in monitoring or following the survivor. Survivors may find it helpful to think about what information of theirs is identifiable and online. Some people make second, more secure social media accounts, so the stalker doesn't realize they're being locked out of main accounts. Some people block and amp up privacy on their main accounts. Talk to others about your preferences/wishes about sharing pictures, tagging, or other details related to you.

Think about what you share

Some people change their sharing habits in addition to changing privacy settings. For example, instead of posting on social media about a new job, someone may just tell their friends individually or in a group chat. This can make it harder for the stalker to identify new information about your life.

People also make decisions about what they tell others about themselves online. For some people, it is important to be out as trans in online communities, and some people do not value that.



Additional tools to increase online security

- The Electronic Freedom Federation (EFF) provides tools for [Surveillance Self-Defense](#). These can help with electronic/tech safety, surveillance out in the real world, and more.
- EFF provides [tips specifically about doxing here](#).
- Another guide is the [Anti-Doxing Guide for Activists](#).

The above resources provide more extensive information on online security and can be used by anyone—whether you consider yourself an activist or not.

Get Support

Who can you get support from? Some of the insidiousness of stalking is making people doubt their reality. Having someone else witness and believe you can be a huge support. Stalkers may also target friends and family, which could lead them to distance themselves from you. Discuss this with them, so they understand this



CONCLUSION

Remember that everyone deserves a life free of violence. Some of the tips above may help increase your safety while we work towards a world where everyone's life and identity is respected.

is not your fault, and you can safety plan together.

Gender affirmation

Stalkers may be targeting someone because of their gender or use their gender as a weapon—for example sharing old pictures of someone as an attempt to out them or make them relive pre-transition life events. Trans people are being harassed and doxed for simply existing. Getting emotional support and affirmation from others can help to decrease the impact of such attacks.

Believe others

Many people report feeling dismissed when they share their experiences of being stalked. If someone discloses to you that they feel uncomfortable with someone else's behavior, take that seriously.

Focus on the stalker's actions—"It's not okay that she's doing that." Or "He should listen when you say no." SPARC has created [a resource for friends and family with more tips](#).

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