

Digitally mediated domestic violence

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Domestic violence survivors can be abused, monitored and controlled through a host of techniques and digital technologies, says QUT Associate Professor Molly Dragiewicz.

"Surveillance, identity theft and intrusion are increasingly emerging as challenges for victims, advocates and support services," she said.

Professor Molly Dragiewicz and Dr Bridget Harris, criminologists in QUT's School of Justice, are embarking on a study of domestic [violence](#) survivors' experiences of intrusion, surveillance and [identity theft](#) via communication technology.

Professor Dragiewicz said technology-facilitated abuse could take many forms.

"There has been little research on the ways domestic violence perpetrators use technology to intrude on victims' lives in Australia, but overseas studies have identified cases of abusers using their victims' credit cards to run up debt and logging into accounts and changing information such as usernames and passwords.

"Other studies have documented women receiving phone calls from someone impersonating a police officer who tries to intimidate them and dissuade them from make a formal complaint about the abuse," Professor Dragiewicz said.

"Victims are forced to spend a lot of time and effort to regain control of

their devices and accounts but can have trouble getting help to resolve these issues.

"The problem is compounded by the fact that many online platforms cross jurisdictional boundaries, making options for responding more complicated."

Dr Harris said the study would provide an Australian evidence base to inform practice around this type of abuse.

"As our everyday lives migrate online, we can expect useful tools like GPS-linked mobile apps, the Internet of Things, and online payment systems to pose unintended and distinct security and privacy risks for domestic violence survivors," Dr Harris said.

"domestic violence survivors need access to safe and secure information communication services to not only engage socially but to seek help and information.

"This study will gather information from survivors, community legal centres, and domestic violence service providers to document the challenges of dealing with technology-facilitated abuse, including in rural, regional and remote areas where online resources are especially important.

"Our findings can be used to advocate for improvements to law and policy that will make communication services more secure for all consumers."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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