

Survey explores impact of technology-facilitated abuse

September 18 2020



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A team from The University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and University College London is examining how domestic and sexual violence survivors are being impacted by Internet of Things

(IoT) technology, which enables everyday devices to collect, send and receive data.

UQ Law School's Professor Heather Douglas said lawyers, health and [social workers](#), and counselors were being urged to share their insights via a survey.

"The interconnection of everyday devices via the Internet—including smart objects such as TVs, fitness trackers and smartphones—is helpful, but in the wrong hands these devices can pose serious security and privacy risks," Professor Douglas said.

"An example that I've come across is a perpetrator remotely altering the position of a security camera so they can watch a victim-survivor. The IoT can also aid perpetrators with monitoring victim-survivors through appliances and systems in residences. The risks of IoT technology are ever-changing, and technology-facilitated abuse is evolving with it."

QUT Faculty of Law's Dr. Bridget Harris said [domestic violence](#) perpetrators often used technology to coerce, control and entrap.

"This can have serious impacts on the wellbeing and safety of victim-survivors," Dr. Harris said.

"To protect and empower those subjected to abuse, we need to urgently explore and enhance knowledge in this area."

A 2019 study with 65 Australian women who had experienced domestic violence found 85 percent had been subjected to technology-facilitated abuse, Professor Douglas said.

"As more people get smartphones and use [smart home technology](#), instances of this form of abuse are likely to increase," she said.

Professor Douglas said the survey would extend previous research to compare how Australian and UK domestic violence service providers are responding to this relatively new form of abuse.

"We hope our findings will contribute to policy and legal reform to improve the privacy and safety of survivors of domestic and sexual violence," Professor Douglas said.

"Our goal is to help prevent and reduce technology-facilitated abuse and provide a framework for professionals to best help survivors. Ideally, the results will also encourage IoT developers to think about how to stop perpetrators of abuse from exploiting their technology."

The survey is led by Dr. Leonie Tanczer from the Gender and IoT research team at University College London's Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy, in collaboration with Professor Douglas and Dr. Harris.

More information: Australian participants are invited to [complete the survey](#) by Friday 16 October, with a separate survey for UK participants.

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Survey explores impact of technology-facilitated abuse (2020, September 18) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-09-survey-explores-impact-technology-facilitated-abuse.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.