

Stalking

FACT SHEET

In Maryland, stalking is a crime and is legally defined as a malicious pattern of approaching or pursuing someone in order to make the person feel afraid that they or someone else will suffer serious bodily injury, assault, rape or sexual offense, false imprisonment or death, or the stalker intends to cause, knows, or should know that such conduct will cause serious emotional distress to another person (Criminal Law §3-802). Stalking can include behaviors such as:

- Watching, following, approaching, or assaulting you at home, work, or in a public place
- Repeatedly sending unwanted love notes or gifts
- Breaking into or vandalizing your property or going through your garbage
- Contacting your friends or family to gain information or spread rumors about you
- Making threatening calls, hang-ups, or sending threatening texts
- Sending hate mail, e-mail, or instant messages
- Using social media websites to track or harass
- Using surveillance such as a private detective, cameras, or tapping your phone
- Installing spyware or GPS tracking software on your computer or cell phone

An estimated **13.5 million people** are stalked in a one-year period in the United States.¹

Nearly **1 in 3 women** and **1 in 6 men** have experienced stalking victimization at some point in their lifetime.¹

More than half of all victims of stalking indicated that they were stalked before the age of 25, and nearly **1 in 4** were stalked before the age of 18.¹

Most stalking victims are stalked by someone they know, as **40%** are stalked by a current or former intimate partner and **42%** are stalked by an acquaintance.¹

Cyberstalking

With the increase in our daily use of technology to connect with one another, work, and go to school, cyberstalking is an increasingly prevalent form of abuse. Cyberstalking is the unwanted pursuit, harassment, or contact of others using electronics.

1 in 4 victims of stalking report being stalked by some form of technology (such as e-mail or instant messaging).²

97% of victim service providers surveyed in 2014 indicated that sexual assault and domestic violence victims who seek their services are being harassed, monitored, and threatened by someone misusing technology.³

¹ Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., & Kresnow, M. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2016/2017 Report on Stalking. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvstalkingreport.pdf>

² *Stalking Fact Sheet* (n.d.). SPARC. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/SPARC_StalkingFactSheet_2018_FINAL.pdf

³ A Glimpse from the Field: How Abusers Are Misusing Technology. (2015). National Network to End Domestic Violence. Retrieved November 23, 2022 from <https://www.techsafety.org/blog/2015/2/17/a-glimpse-from-the-field-how-abusers-are-misusing-technology>

In 2022, the Maryland Senate passed a bill to improve Maryland's stalking law by adding tracking without consent (for instance via stalkerware on a phone or via air tags and other similar tracking devices) and other electronic communication to the criminal stalking statute. Modifying the stalking statute will also permit peace and protective orders to be issued based on this conduct.⁴

Stalking and Sexual Violence

Sexual violence may be part of a stalker's pattern of behavior.⁵ This can include following a victim to plan a sexual assault and threatening sexual violence if a victim does not engage with the stalker.

Women stalked by abusive partners experienced sexual abuse at **significantly higher rates** compared with women not stalked by abusive partners.⁶

31% of women stalked by an intimate partner were also sexually assaulted by that partner.⁷

Safety Tips

Rely on Trusted People

- Inform roommates, coworkers, friends, and family about the stalking and seek their support.
- Let them know your safety is a concern, and to not have contact with the stalker.
- Let security staff at your school, work, or residence know about your concerns.

Protect Your Technology

- Keep passwords private and change any that may have been compromised.
- Check your phone, tablet, and laptop location settings and be aware of GPS tracking applications that may have been unknowingly installed on your cell phone.
- Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Consider getting a new phone number or phone if your technology has been compromised.

Preserve Your Privacy

- Do a web search for your full name; request that sites remove your personal information.
- Avoid personal information such as your real name, birthday, or location for online accounts.
- Request your family and friends not tag you or the location on pictures they are posting.

To learn more, check out MCASA's [Stalking Brochure](#) and [Technology and Safety Brochure](#). For more information, visit **SPARC Stalking Awareness** at <https://www.stalkingawareness.org> and the **Coalition Against Stalkerware** at <https://stopstalkerware.org>.

⁴ HB0148: Criminal Law - Stalking – Definition. (July 8, 2022). Maryland General Assembly. Retrieved November 14, 2023, from <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0148?ys=2022RS>⁵ Stalking and Sexual Violence Fact Sheet (n.d.). SPARC. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Stalking-Sexual-Violence-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

⁶ Logan, T.K. & Cole, J. (2011). Exploring the Intersection of Partner Stalking and Sexual Abuse. *Violence Against Women* 17(7), 904-924.

⁷ Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, N. (1998). *Stalking in America: Findings from the national violence against women survey* (NCJ#169592). Washington, DC: NIJ CDC.