

Online Surveillance

In This Module

- What is surveillance?
- What are some current trends and issues in online surveillance?

Surveillance

Surveillance is the monitoring of behavior, activities, or information for the purpose of gathering information, or influencing or managing someone's actions or behaviors

Activity

What comes to mind for you when you hear the term surveillance?

Where Does Surveillance Happen?

Surveillance happens around the world and increasingly happens with the aid of technologies such as:

- Facial recognition software
- CCTV cameras
- Tracking cookies
- Location tracking

Where Does Surveillance Happen?

- Surveillance tends to be more prevalent and invasive in more repressive regimes, but it is still present in democracies worldwide
- Surveillance can be done by governments as well as private companies and corporations

Activity

What are some examples of online surveillance?

Debates on Surveillance

Some argue in favor of the benefits of certain kinds of surveillance:

- Surveillance for the purposes of solving crimes, such as breaking up a child pornography ring or a terrorist operation
- Surveillance for the purpose of security, such as stopping cyber warfare activities
 - Examples of cyber warfare include Russia's attacks on Ukraine's power grid

Debates on Surveillance

Surveillance has many negatives and can be abused and become invasive. It can be used to:

- Monitor and target people, such as political opponents to a repressive regime
- Stifle free speech and free expression

Debates on Surveillance

People concerned about surveillance and potential censorship may actually self-censor themselves to avoid issues or trouble. Debates around security issues often question how much is too much surveillance.

Debates on Surveillance

Surveillance and data gathering on the internet are increasingly discussed as well. Some issues include:

- Companies and online service providers gather massive amounts of data about users
- User data might not be secured well and can end up being accessed via data breaches
- Online tracking and data gathering can also be quite invasive

Pre-Activity Reminder

Surveillance can be a tricky issue to discuss.

Remember to be respectful and listen to others. If you feel the conversation is getting heated or off track, it is okay to pause and reset!

Activity

Do you feel that online surveillance has an effect on your online experience and use of digital tools?

Activity

Are there situations where surveillance is acceptable?

What are the risks and drawbacks of surveillance?

Takeaways

- Surveillance is a difficult issue and generates a lot of debate and discussion
- Surveillance can be done by governments, private companies, businesses, and, increasingly, online content platforms
- The information presented here today is a brief overview; continue to read, explore, and learn more about these issues for yourself

Resources

Mozilla Foundation's Internet Health ([link](#))

“Freedom on the Net” report from Freedomhouse ([link](#))

“Internet Freedom” series from UNESCO ([link](#))

Guide on Privacy and Surveillance at FreePress.net ([link](#))

Surveillance Self-Defense Guide from the Electronic Frontier Foundation ([link](#))

Questions?

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