DIGITAL PRIVACY

Privacy

Why it matters and why it must be defended

A short text on the right not to be watched.

01

Privacy is not hiding

Closing the bathroom door doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. Neither does sealing a letter in an envelope. Privacy is the ability to decide **who knows what about you, when and for what purpose**.

A person with privacy gets to choose. A person without it can be watched, sorted and judged without ever deciding anything. Privacy is not a luxury: it is a condition of being free.

DECIDE

You choose what you share and with whom, instead of someone else deciding for you.

PROTECT

Your data can be used against you: to scam you, manipulate you or discriminate against you.

BE FREE

People who know they are being watched change what they say, what they read and who they talk to.

02

“I have nothing to hide”

It is the most repeated line against privacy, and it fails for several reasons.

> Saying you don't care about privacy because you have nothing to hide is like saying you don't care about free speech because you have nothing to say.

1. **Everyone hides things, and that is normal.** Your medical history, passwords, bank balance or private conversations are not shameful secrets. They are nobody else's business.
2. **What is legal today may not be tomorrow.** Laws and governments change. A harmless detail today can be compromising in another country or another era.
3. **Data gets things wrong.** A profile built from your data can be wrong and still decide whether you get a loan, a job or insurance.
4. **It isn't only about you.** Your address book is full of other people. Protecting your data also protects everyone in it.

03

Privacy and freedom go together

A free society needs people to be able to think, read, speak and meet without feeling that someone is looking over their shoulder.

EXPRESSION

To speak your mind honestly, you need to be able to do it without fear of reprisal.

ASSOCIATION

Unions, parties, collectives and communities depend on their members not being exposed.

INFORMATION

Reading about a subject should never make you a suspect.

DISSENT

Every social change began with someone who thought differently and needed room to organise.

How surveillance changes behaviour

There is research on what being watched does to people. A 2016 academic study by researcher Jon Penney found that after the 2013 revelations about mass surveillance in the United States, visits to Wikipedia articles on sensitive topics, such as terrorism, went down. Those readers had done nothing wrong: they simply stopped informing themselves. This is known as the **chilling effect**.

04

How privacy is lost today

It rarely happens all at once: it builds up, almost always unannounced.

1. **Commercial surveillance.** Apps, websites and ads collect data about what you do, where you are and what interests you. That data is combined, sold and used to profile you.
2. **State surveillance.** Some governments collect communications and metadata in bulk, at times with little independent oversight.
3. **Leaks.** The more that is stored, the more can be lost. Databases holding personal information are breached regularly, and what leaks cannot be un-leaked.
4. **Giving up for convenience.** We accept terms without reading them because there is no clear alternative or because it is easier.

05

The problem of unequal power

Whoever gathers your data knows a lot about you. You know almost nothing about them. That imbalance is the real problem.

THEY KNOW	YOU DON'T KNOW	THE RESULT
What you buy, what you search for, where you sleep, who you talk to and at what time.	Who holds your data, how long they keep it or who they share it with.	They can influence what you see, what you pay and what you decide, without you noticing.

Privacy restores some balance. It does not remove the power of companies or governments, but it limits it and forces them to justify themselves.

06

A recognised human right

Privacy is not an opinion: it is written into the foundational texts of human rights.

1. **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 12.** It establishes that no one should suffer arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence.
2. **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Article 8.** It recognises everyone's right to respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence, and limits what public authorities may do.
3. **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the GDPR.** The Charter protects both private life and personal data, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) puts that second right into practice.

07

Those who need it most

For many people, privacy is not a comfort: it is safety. And a tool that protects people in danger works best when everyone uses it.

JOURNALISM

Without confidentiality, sources don't dare to speak.

DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

If an abuser finds an address or tracks a phone, a life is at risk.

MINORITIES

Orientation, religion or politics can bring persecution, depending on where you live.

ACTIVISM AND RIGHTS DEFENCE

Organising safe from reprisals is part of the job.

08

Encryption is not a crime

Encryption is mathematics that lets only the intended readers read a message. It protects your online banking, your messages and your purchases.

> There is no encryption that works only for the good guys. A back door built for the authorities is also an open door for criminals and hostile governments.

Defending encryption is not defending crime, just as defending locks is not defending burglary.

09

What you can do

You don't need to be an expert. Small steps kept up over time matter more than a radical change you abandon after a week. No tool solves everything: each protects one part and has limits worth knowing.

1. **Start with the basics.** Unique passwords, two-step verification, updates.
2. **Choose private messaging.** Signal encrypts messages end to end.
3. **Protect your connection.** A VPN such as Mullvad hides your traffic.
4. **Look after your device.** GrapheneOS adds far more protection.
5. **Consider digital cash.** Monero makes payments private by default.
6. **Share less.** Ask if the data is needed before you give it.
7. **Talk about it.** Tell family and friends why it matters.

10

What we stand for

1. **Privacy is a right, not a privilege.** It belongs to everyone, not only to those who have something to lose.
2. **Privacy doesn't need justifying.** Whoever wants to violate it is the one who must give reasons.
3. **Data that isn't collected can't leak.** The safest course is not to keep what you don't need.
4. **Encryption protects everyone.** Weakening it weakens society as a whole.
5. **Choice is freedom.** Each person decides what to share and with whom.
6. **Privacy is defended together.** The more people use it, the safer it is for those who need it most.
7. **It is never too late to start.** The first step, however small, already counts.

References: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 12); European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 8); Penney, J., "Chilling Effects: Online Surveillance and Wikipedia Use" (2016).