

Stalking

Stalking is unwanted and/or repeated surveillance by an individual or group toward another person. Stalking behaviors are interrelated to harassment and intimidation and may include following the victim in person or monitoring them.

Stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. Stalkers may use overt and covert intimidation, threats and violence to frighten their victims. They may engage in vandalism and property damage or make physical attacks that are meant to frighten.

Unlike other crimes that involve a single incident, stalking is a pattern of behavior. It is often made up of individual acts that could, by themselves, seem harmless or noncriminal, but when taken in the context of a stalking situation, could constitute criminal acts.

Although stalking is illegal in most areas of the world, legal definitions of stalking differ depending on where you live.

Some of the actions that contribute to stalking may be legal, such as gathering information, calling someone on the phone, texting, sending gifts, emailing, or messaging. They become illegal when they breach the legal definition of harassment (e.g., an action such as sending a text is not usually illegal, but it becomes illegal when frequently repeated to an unwilling recipient).

Stalking is serious, often violent, and can escalate over time. Similar to crimes of sexual violence, stalking is about power and control.

Cyberstalking – the Use of technology to stalk. As technology and digital platforms continue to grow, so do the chances that someone could interact with a victim in an unwanted, sexual manner.

Some examples of cyberstalking include: persistently sending unwanted communication through the internet, such as spamming someone's email inbox or social media platform, posting threatening or personal information about someone on public internet forums, video-voyeurism, or installing video cameras that give the stalker access to someone's personal life, using GPS or other software tracking systems to monitor someone without their knowledge or consent.

Psychological effects on victims

The definition of stalking includes that a reasonable person would feel fear. It is important to note that fear is often masked by other emotions: anger, frustration, hopelessness or despair. Victims of stalking usually feel anxious, nervous, isolated, become stressed, or develop signs of depression. Victims experience disruptions in their daily life necessary to escape the stalker, including changes in employment, residence and phone numbers - this takes a heavy toll on the victim's well-being.