



# Who Is Watching You? The Truth About Your Phone and Your Data

*You know your data is not safe. You often saw many online tips. You watched many videos. But still you typed your real email and data into yet another app anyway. Like everyone else did.*

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## Introduction

Most people will not admit the fact that, they know their phone is collecting their data. They seen on TikTok about turning off location. They also saved an Instagram post about app permissions. They also watched many videos on YouTube about VPNs once and thought yes, I should really do that. But still they opened a new app, clicked allow on permissions without reading them, and moved on with their day. This is not stupidity, This is how the system is designed. It makes it easy to give up your data. But makes it complicated to protect it.

You also know that every app on your phone knows more about you than most of your friends do. It knows when will you wake up, where you go for lunch, which products you looked at for thirty seconds before closing the tab, and which message you typed but deleted before sending. This is not a conspiracy Theory. This is the business model of almost every free service you have ever used.

***"Your devices may not be listening to your conversations. But they knows your habits so well that they does not need to ."***

## Technology Overview

Whenever you install an app. It asks for permissions. Camera permission, microphone permissions, contacts access, location access, media access and many more. Mostly people taps allow without even reading anything, because apps will not work otherwise, and sometimes saying no feels complicated.

What happens after you taped allow access is where it gets interesting. The apps will start building a profile on you. It's not just about your name and email. It involves your movement patterns. The time you checked your profile each morning. How long you pause on certain content? What were you searching late at night when nobody were watching? This data gets sold to advertisers, shared with third parties, and can be stolen by hackers.

Many Pakistanis have never heard of **PECA (Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act)**. PECA has legal access to Pakistanis information. This is an extra layer of protection most people are unaware of. PECA gives government authorities the power and access to request your personal data from ISPs Internet service providers and telecom companies. That's not a criticism of the law. It's simply a fact worth knowing so you can decide how much of your life to put online.



Figure 1: Common data collection methods used by mobile applications.

## Key Findings & Impact

The risks go beyond targeted advertising. When someone gathers enough of your scattered personal information then identify theft happens. They can open your bank accounts or apply for loans in your name. They can clean all amount in your accounts by pretending that they are you. These types of financial frauds happens when your email and phone number, leaked in a data breach. Your private photos or messages can become blackmail material, and in less your data can be used to keep you angry, anxious or addicted by showing you designed content.

Have you ever experienced this that you mentioned a product out loud and then later, you sees an ad for it. Most people have experienced it and I personally found it very unsettling. Most Companies says that our phones are not recording our conversations. But they already holds our data that involves our location history, browsing habits, purchase patterns, social connections and many more that you don't even need to be recorded . You just need to be understood. And after years of your clicks and late night searches , these systems understands you very well.

## What's Next?

Protecting yourself does not requires that you have to became a cyber security expert. Start with the basics that you find boring. Open your apps in your devices and check which apps have access to your camera, your microphone, your contacts, and your location. There will be most of the apps that don't even need it. Remove it. You should use different passwords for your different accounts, and always use a password manager. Think twice before entering your real phone number and email into websites.

Nobody is going to delete all their apps. Nobody is going to stop using free services for themselves that took payments with your personal data. That is fine its real life. But you have to stop pretending that you do not know



what is happening. Your phone and your devices is a window into your life , that companies, government and criminals are looking through. And you are allowed to save yourself by closing the curtains of windows.

### About the Author

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