

Your Car Is Spying on You: What Drivers Need to Know About Privacy Risks

June 17, 2025 - Modern cars are packed with smart technology—and that includes tools that track your every move. From GPS tracking to microphones and cameras, today's vehicles are quietly collecting sensitive personal data. Most drivers have no idea how much of their information is being recorded, stored, and sometimes sold.

According to consumer privacy experts and multiple investigations, at least 25 major automakers are gathering data from your car's sensors, infotainment system, and even your smartphone when it's connected. This includes:

- Where you drive
- How fast you go
- Whether you brake hard or swerve
- Who you call or text via Bluetooth
- What apps you use on the dashboard

In some cases, microphones and in-cabin cameras are active too. And yes, many carmakers are selling or sharing that data with insurance companies, advertisers, and even law enforcement.

That data can cost you. If your car's data shows you're a "risky driver," your insurance rates could go up—even if you've never filed a claim. GM was recently hit with federal action for sharing OnStar user data with insurers without proper notice.

Privacy experts warn that what your car learns about you could be used to profile your habits, behaviors, and even emotional state. This kind of information, if misused or stolen, poses serious privacy risks.

Oregon's new law is a good first-step to driver privacy. In May of this year, Oregon passed the nation's first law directly targeting how automakers handle your personal data. Under the law:

- Automakers must delete personal data if a consumer requests it.
- Drivers have the right to see what data is collected.
- Automakers must stop selling data for advertising.

The law applies to all automakers doing business in Oregon. Advocates hope it sets a national example.

How old is safe? If you're driving a car built before 2010, you're likely not being tracked. Most serious data collection started after that. From 2015 onward, almost every new car comes with connected services that share data. If you're driving something from 2020 or newer, assume your car is tracking you unless you've turned it off (and even that might not be enough).

Can you opt out? Yes, but it takes work. Here's how to take back some control:

- Use Privacy4Cars.com to run a privacy report using your car's VIN.

- Check your car's app settings. Look for "Data Privacy" or "Sharing Preferences." Turn off third-party data sharing.
- Submit a privacy request to your automaker. Ask what data they have, how it's used, and request deletion if allowed.
- Contact known data brokers that collect vehicle data and ask to see (and delete) your information.

If you're in California or Oregon, you have stronger rights under state law. Other states may offer limited protections. California law (CCPA/CPRA) since 2020 specifically allows opt-out of data selling, deletion, and viewing.

The bottom line is that your car might be a smarter ride, but it could also be a rolling surveillance device. If you care about your privacy and your wallet, take time to understand what your vehicle is doing with your data. Then, take action to protect it.

Your car belongs to you. Your data should too.

by Jim Malmberg

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