

GLOBAL STUDY

Workplace GPS Tracking in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK

FEBRUARY 2018

About TSheets by QuickBooks

TSheets is a time tracking and scheduling app used in more than 100 countries worldwide. The app is GPS-enabled, allowing employers to see where their employees are working when they are on the clock. For more information, visit the [GPS Time Tracker](#) page on the TSheets website or call 888 836 2720 (USA), 1800 726 313 (Australia), or 0800 453 429 (New Zealand). For media inquiries, please contact media@tsheets.com.

Contents

- Introduction..... 3
- History of GPS Tracking..... 4
- Methodology..... 5
- Global GPS Study Findings..... 7
 - How many employees use GPS tracking at work?..... 7
 - How do employees feel about being tracked by GPS?..... 8
 - Top concerns about GPS tracking..... 10
 - Other reactions to GPS tracking in the workplace..... 13
 - Top benefits of GPS tracking..... 14
 - Other benefits of GPS tracking..... 14
 - Are employers breaking the law?..... 17
 - How many workers use GPS for personal use?..... 23
 - Why do employees enable GPS on non-work apps?..... 25
- Conclusion..... 26
 - Top Tips for Employers..... 27
 - Raw Data..... 28
 - Additional Resources..... 28
 - Citations..... 28

Introduction

GPS tracking is one of the world's most sophisticated everyday technologies. When we need directions, we rarely give a second thought to the billion-dollar system orbiting 12,000 miles above our heads. The technology is literally everywhere all of the time. Increasingly, this includes the workplace.

To discover how widespread workplace GPS tracking has become, TSheets commissioned a series of studies in four major global markets — the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK — to look at how employers are using the technology and how employees react to GPS tracking apps both inside and outside of the workplace. This report presents the findings of these studies.

History of GPS Tracking

Although GPS tracking was developed in the US, it was the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik 1 in 1957 that first inspired the technology¹. William Guier and George Weiffenbach of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory realized they could locate Sputnik 1 using the Doppler effect. Reversing the process would enable them, in theory, to pinpoint locations on the Earth. The US Navy began testing this theory in the 1960s. Subsequent research by the US Air Force in the 1970s showed promise but was held back by the cost². Ultimately, it was the Cold War that convinced the US government that a fully operational GPS system was worth the investment.



This is why the technology remained top secret until 1983 when a civilian plane crash prompted President Reagan to announce GPS would be opened up to non-military use. Six years later, in 1989, the Magellan Corporation released the first portable GPS device, known as the Magellan NAV 1000³. Another milestone followed in 1994 when the US government asked national phone networks if cellphone towers could be used to locate 911 callers. This did not use GPS technology, but it was the first time cellphones had been used to locate members of the public. The following year, a tech company called SnapTrack was founded in California. SnapTrack would later go on to develop the first GPS system small enough to run on a cellphone⁴. The technology we know today was born.

¹ Global Positioning System. (2017). En.wikipedia.org. Retrieved 27 October 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Positioning_System

² Global Positioning System History. (2017). NASA. Retrieved 27 October 2017, from https://www.nasa.gov/directorates/heo/scan/communications/policy/GPS_History.html

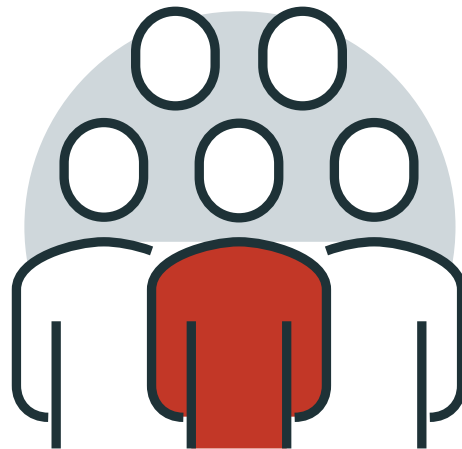
³ Sullivan, M. (2018). A brief history of GPS. PCWorld. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://www.pcworld.com/article/2000276/a-brief-history-of-gps.html>

⁴ Brownell, B. (2017). Should we thank President Reagan for Google Maps?. Mother Jones. Retrieved 27 October 2017, from <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/04/you-are-here-book-hiawatha-bray-gps-navigation/>

Methodology

Between October 2016 and August 2017, TSheets by QuickBooks commissioned Pollfish to carry out four surveys: one in the US, one in Canada, one in Australia, and one in the UK. All of the survey respondents were over the age of 18 and “employed for wages.” The global sample was 2,500 employees, comprising 1,000 respondents in the US, 500 in Canada, 500 in Australia, and 500 in the UK. TSheets designed and paid for the surveys but did not choose, identify, or directly contact the respondents.

Each survey followed a similar structure, starting with the question: “Have you ever been required to use GPS tracking at work?” Employees who answered “yes” to this were shown a slightly different survey to those who answered “no” — allowing comparisons to be made between each cohort’s opinions about the technology. In this report, some of the survey questions have been rephrased slightly to facilitate these comparisons, but the overall sense of the questions remains unchanged. For clarity, the data has been rounded to the nearest decimal point, which is why some percentages in this report add up to 99 or 101. To view each of the surveys in its original format, please use the links provided under “Raw Data.”



Core Survey Questions



Employees who have used GPS tracking at work

1. Have you ever been required to use GPS tracking at work?
2. What was your experience having your location tracked by GPS at work?
3. How often did/does your employer track your location?
4. Did your employer inform you about GPS tracking before it was introduced?
5. Do you have any concerns about GPS tracking at work?
6. If you had concerns, what did you do about them?
7. Did you see any benefits from GPS tracking at work?
8. How often do you use the following apps on your phone with location services enabled?
9. How do you decide when to enable location services?



Employees who have not used GPS tracking at work

1. Have you ever been required to use GPS tracking at work?
2. If your employer tracked your location by GPS at work, how would you feel about it?
3. If your employer made GPS tracking mandatory, what would you do?
4. Do you have any concerns about GPS tracking at work?
5. Do you think there are any benefits to GPS tracking at work?
6. How often do you use the following apps on your phone with location services enabled?
7. How do you decide when to enable location services?

Additional questions were added into the UK, Australian, and Canadian versions of the survey to account for different laws relating to the use of GPS tracking in the workplace. The answers provide some insight into how closely employers are following the regulations.

Global GPS Study Findings

How widespread is workforce GPS tracking and what do employees think about it?

The four GPS tracking studies TSheets commissioned in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK all sought to establish, first and foremost, how many employees are using the technology. The studies also considered whether these employees have different views about the technology to those who have not used GPS tracking at work. Lastly, the studies examined the respondents' experiences with GPS tracking outside of the workplace.

How many employees use GPS tracking at work?

Employers in the US, UK, Australia, and Canada appear to be adopting workforce GPS tracking at remarkably consistent rates. Close to 1 in 3 employees in each country said they have been asked to use a GPS tracking app at work. Businesses in Canada appear to have the most GPS users — where 39 percent of employees said they have direct experience with the technology. Australia is next with 36 percent, followed by the US with 32 percent. In the UK, 31 percent of employees said they have used a GPS tracking app at work.



Have you ever been required to use GPS tracking at work?

	Yes	No
US	32%	68%
Canada	39%	61%
Australia	36%	64%
UK	31%	69%

Are employees only tracked during work hours?

Privacy is often a hot topic with GPS tracking — both inside and outside of the workplace. Best practice and, in many cases, the law dictates that employers should only be able to use the technology during work hours. And yet, a significant proportion of workplace GPS users in all four countries said their employer tracked them 24 hours a day. The numbers range from about 1 in 10, in Australia, to as many as 1 in 5 in the UK.

Each nation has its own set of privacy laws and regulations, and although these do not always address GPS tracking specifically, none allow it to go unchecked. Twenty-four-hour tracking is expressly banned in many parts of Australia and only permitted in extremely rare circumstances in Canada and the UK. In the US, meanwhile, several lawsuits have been filed against employers using 24-hour or intrusive monitoring⁵. And some argue that more regulations are needed⁶. (See “[Are employers breaking the law?](#)”)



How often did/does your employer track your location?

	24 hrs a day	Only at work	Not sure
US	15%	55%	30%
Canada	16%	57%	27%
Australia	11%	48%	41%
UK	21%	55%	25%

How do employees feel about being tracked by GPS?

The studies reveal that employees in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK who have used GPS tracking at work tend to have very different opinions about the technology to those who have not. The data suggests the more familiar people are with workplace GPS tracking, the more comfortable they are with it. This was true in all four countries in which the surveys were conducted.



⁵ Arias v. Intermex Wire Transfer, LLC. (2018). Law360.com. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://www.law360.com/cases/55a830cbcd136f7db2000002/dockets>

⁶ Waddell, K. (2017). Why Bosses Can Track Their Employees 24/7. The Atlantic. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/01/employer-gps-tracking/512294/>

Employees who have used GPS tracking at work

Among employees who have used GPS tracking at work, opinions were broadly similar in each of the four countries in which the studies were conducted. More than half of these respondents in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK expressed positive views of the technology, while around 40 percent said they felt neutral about it. Australia had the highest proportion of negative views among GPS users — close to 1 in 10 — while in the US, Canada, and the UK, the proportion was closer to 1 in 20.

What was your experience having your location tracked by GPS at work?

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
US	54%	41%	5%
Canada	58%	36%	6%
Australia	54%	38%	9%
UK	54%	42%	4%



Employees who have not used GPS tracking at work

Employees who have not used GPS tracking at work generally held less positive views about the technology. Again, this was true in all four countries in which the studies were conducted. Asked how they would feel if their employer introduced GPS tracking into their workplace, just 8 percent of British and Canadian respondents, and 11 percent of Australian respondents, said they would support the move. In the US, as many as 16 percent said they would respond positively to GPS tracking if it was introduced — twice the proportion of British and Canadian respondents — suggesting that US employees are more open to the idea of workplace tracking than their counterparts in the other countries.

Canada was the only country where the majority of non-GPS users expressed concerns about the use of GPS tracking at work, with 55 percent saying they would have a negative feeling about the introduction of the technology. By comparison, feelings in the US, UK, and Australia were more typically neutral or positive. The US study recorded the lowest proportion of negative responses among non-GPS users, where around a third (38 percent) of respondents expressed a negative view.

If your employer started tracking your location by GPS at work, how would you feel about it?

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
US	16%	46%	38%
Canada	8%	37%	55%
Australia	11%	43%	47%
UK	8%	42%	50%

Top concerns about GPS tracking

In addition to discovering how employees generally feel about the use — or proposed use — of GPS tracking, the four studies also sought to identify specific concerns. For many, privacy was not at the top of the list.

Employees who have used GPS tracking at work

In three out of the four countries in which the surveys were run — the US, Canada, and Australia — employees who have used GPS tracking at work did not identify privacy as their main concern about the technology. In the US and Canada, the impact on their phone's battery life ranked No. 1. In Australia, it was the fear of having to pay for more cellphone data. Only British employees who have used GPS tracking at work identified privacy as their greatest concern.

Employees who have not used GPS tracking at work

Employees who have not used GPS tracking at work were generally more concerned about privacy than those who have. In this cohort, employees in Australia and the UK ranked it at the top of their list of concerns. Employees in Canada were most concerned about being micromanaged, while, in the US, the impact on cellphone data use topped the list. The data suggests US employees are typically less concerned about privacy than their British or Australian counterparts when it comes to the use of GPS tracking.

Top concern for employees who have used GPS at work



Battery use



Battery use



Data use



Privacy

Top concern for employees who have not used GPS at work



Data use



Micromanagement



Privacy



Privacy

International comparison of GPS tracking concerns

Battery life

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	61%	39%
Canada	49%	51%
Australia	54%	46%
UK	41%	59%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	70%	30%
Canada	66%	34%
Australia	60%	40%
UK	53%	47%

Phone data

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	57%	43%
Canada	40%	60%
Australia	56%	44%
UK	39%	61%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	71%	29%
Canada	63%	37%
Australia	60%	40%
UK	54%	46%

Being tracked after work

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	46%	54%
Canada	44%	56%
Australia	54%	46%
UK	36%	64%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	66%	34%
Canada	74%	26%
Australia	66%	34%
UK	68%	32%

Privacy

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	52%	48%
Canada	46%	54%
Australia	55%	45%
UK	51%	49%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	68%	32%
Canada	76%	24%
Australia	67%	33%
UK	70%	30%



Trust

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	45%	55%
Canada	46%	54%
Australia	49%	51%
UK	42%	58%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	61%	39%
Canada	72%	28%
Australia	66%	34%
UK	66%	34%



Micromanagement

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	46%	54%
Canada	49%	51%
Australia	45%	55%
UK	47%	53%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	61%	39%
Canada	77%	23%
Australia	59%	41%
UK	64%	36%



Sharing location with boss

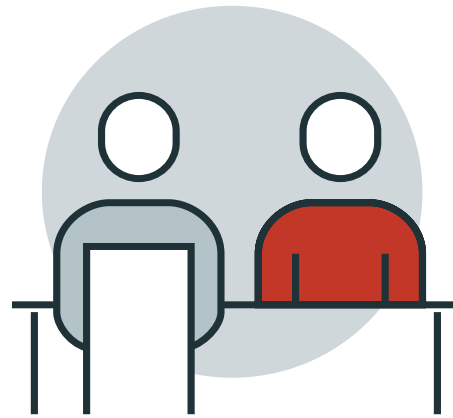
Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	29%	71%
Canada	35%	65%
Australia	42%	58%
UK	35%	65%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Concerned	Not concerned
US	34%	66%
Canada	44%	56%
Australia	42%	58%
UK	33%	67%

Other reactions to GPS tracking in the workplace

The studies revealed a wide range of reactions to GPS tracking. Some employees said they did nothing at all while others went so far as to quit their jobs over it. Once again, feelings were stronger and less positive among employees who had not used the technology in the workplace. In Australia, for example, as many as 17 percent of non-GPS users said they would quit or would threaten to quit if their employer introduced the technology. By comparison, only 10 percent of Australian employees who have used GPS tracking at work said they did, in fact, quit or threaten to quit their jobs. In the US, Canada, and the UK, this figure drops to just 6 percent of GPS users.

The majority of British and Canadian GPS users said they “did nothing” when the technology was introduced into their workplaces. Others said they raised the issue with a manager or union representative. In the US, 39 percent of GPS users said they discussed it with a manager — compared to just 19 percent in the UK. In all four countries, roughly 1 in 10 said they complained about it to their colleagues. Surprisingly, given the higher level of concern about privacy among non-GPS users, only about a third of this cohort in each nation (rising to 42 percent in the UK) said they would seek confirmation from their employer that they would only be tracked during work hours.



When GPS tracking was introduced, how did you respond?

Employees who have used GPS at work				
	US	Canada	Australia	UK
Did nothing	33%	54%	45%	54%
Talked to manager	39%	20%	25%	19%
Talked to union rep	10%	10%	9%	6%
Complained to colleagues	12%	10%	10%	14%
Threatened to quit	2%	2%	6%	3%
Quit my job	4%	4%	4%	3%

If GPS tracking was introduced, how would you respond?

Employees who have not used GPS at work				
	US	Canada	Australia	UK
Did nothing	26%	18%	19%	14%
Verify I would only be tracked while on the clock	35%	32%	33%	42%
Talk to manager	16%	17%	17%	16%
Talk to union rep	8%	15%	11%	16%
Complain to colleagues	7%	6%	3%	2%
Threaten to quit	4%	4%	8%	5%
Quit my job	5%	8%	9%	5%

Top benefits of GPS tracking

Employees were very clear about the benefits that GPS tracking can bring to the workplace. Across both cohorts (people who have used GPS at work and those who have not) and in all four countries in which the studies were conducted, “tracking travel time and mileage” was identified as the No. 1 benefit.



Other benefits of GPS tracking

After “tracking travel time and mileage,” employees in all four countries in which the studies were conducted generally agreed about the benefits of GPS tracking, highlighting safety, efficiency, accountability, and its ability to make payroll systems more robust.

In the US, employees who have used GPS tracking at work ranked “ensuring I get paid what I’m owed” a close second – less than one percentage point behind “tracking travel time and mileage” – followed by “accountability” and “safety” in third and fourth place, respectively. Employees who have not used GPS at work agreed with this assessment, identifying the same top-four benefits.

Outside of the US, Canadian employees ranked “accountability,” “trust,” and “efficiency” as the top benefits of GPS tracking after “tracking travel time and mileage”. In Australia, “safety,” “accountability,” and “ensuring I get paid what I’m owed” made the top four – in that order. UK respondents identified the same benefits but placed a lower emphasis on safety. Here, “accountability” took the No. 2 spot followed by “ensuring I get paid what I’m owed.” Safety was fourth on the list.



Does GPS tracking improve safety?

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	36%	64%
Canada	37%	63%
Australia	41%	59%
UK	40%	60%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	51%	49%
Canada	51%	49%
Australia	41%	59%
UK	48%	52%

Does GPS tracking increase efficiency?

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	37%	63%
Canada	36%	64%
Australia	50%	50%
UK	40%	60%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	53%	47%
Canada	59%	41%
Australia	54%	46%
UK	59%	41%

Does GPS tracking help to build trust?

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	39%	61%
Canada	35%	65%
Australia	49%	51%
UK	49%	51%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	57%	43%
Canada	66%	34%
Australia	60%	40%
UK	71%	29%

Does GPS tracking ensure employees are paid what they are owed?

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	25%	76%
Canada	39%	61%
Australia	42%	58%
UK	41%	59%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	39%	61%
Canada	47%	53%
Australia	47%	53%
UK	43%	57%

Does GPS tracking promote accountability?

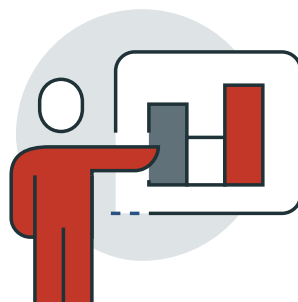
Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	25%	75%
Canada	32%	68%
Australia	36%	64%
UK	38%	62%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	38%	62%
Canada	45%	55%
Australia	45%	55%
UK	42%	58%

Could GPS tracking help you to track travel time/mileage at work?

Employees who have used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	23%	76%
Canada	29%	71%
Australia	33%	67%
UK	31%	69%

Employees who have not used GPS at work		
	Disagree	Agree
US	29%	71%
Canada	34%	66%
Australia	39%	61%
UK	24%	76%



Are employers breaking the law?

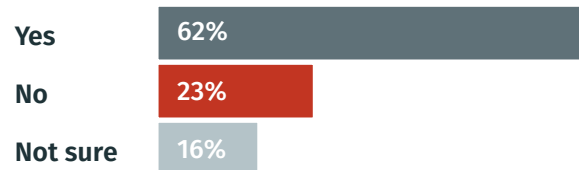
As discussed above (see “[Are employees only tracked during work hours?](#)”), each of the four countries featured in this study has its own legal framework for the use of workplace monitoring systems such as GPS. But there are some similarities between them, such as protections against 24-hour tracking.

USA

In the US, states such as California and Wisconsin have passed specific laws to control the use of GPS tracking in the workplace. Wisconsin’s GPS Privacy Act (known as 2015 Wisconsin Act 45⁷) criminalizes the use of GPS technology — including smartphones and mobile devices — to track someone’s location without their consent. Failure to obtain consent can result in a \$10,000 fine, a Class A misdemeanor, and a nine-month jail sentence.

It is a similar story in California, where tracking employees without consent is a misdemeanor under penal code 637.7⁸ resulting in a \$1,000 fine and up to 12 months in jail. Nationally, less than two-thirds of US employees who have used GPS tracking at work say they were given an opportunity to provide consent.

Did your employer tell you about GPS tracking before it was introduced?



Canada

Canada’s privacy law is known as the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)⁹. It applies to federally regulated organizations and details how and when workplace monitoring is permitted. Before implementing GPS tracking, employers must share a policy with employees justifying its use. They must also explain what is being tracked and why, obtain written consent, and ensure the system can and will be shut off when the employee is not at work.

As discussed above (see “[Are employees only tracked during work hours?](#)”), 16 percent of Canadian employees who have used GPS tracked at work indicated they were tracked 24 hours a day. Further, only 40 percent said they could turn the system off at any time, and just 37 percent were given

⁷ Wisconsin Legislature: 2015 Wisconsin Act 45. (2018). Docs.legis.wisconsin.gov. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/related/acts/45>

⁸ Law section. (2018). Leginfo.legislature.ca.gov. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=637.7.&lawCode=PEN

⁹ Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act. (2018). Laws-lois.justice.gc.ca. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-8.6/page-11.html>

advance notice before it was introduced. Of those who did receive notice, 52 percent said it was provided verbally. Only 40 percent said they were asked to give consent. Eight percent said GPS tracking was not used for work purposes but to investigate their personal lives. Eleven percent — more than 1 in 10 — said it was used to track where they went during work breaks.



How much control did you have over GPS tracking?

	Yes	No
I could turn it off at any time	40%	60%
I could only turn it off when I wasn't working	34%	66%
I could not turn it off — it was on all the time	26%	74%

Before introducing GPS tracking, did your employer do any of the following?

	Yes	No
Give you advance notice	37%	63%
Share a company policy about GPS tracking	30%	70%
Explain how GPS tracking would be used	41%	59%
Explain why GPS tracking was being introduced	36%	64%
Explain what data would be collected	41%	59%
Ask for your consent	40%	60%
Explain that you could withdraw consent	24%	76%
None of the above	10%	90%

How did your employer communicate this information?

	Yes	No
On a poster	8%	92%
In a newsletter	10%	90%
Via a union rep	9%	91%
In a letter	20%	80%
Verbally	52%	48%
In an email	43%	57%
Not applicable	6%	94%

How did your employer use GPS tracking?

	Yes	No
To monitor performance	36%	64%
To improve safety	35%	65%
To improve efficiency	48%	52%
To prevent theft of company property	20%	80%
To investigate customer complaints	11%	89%
To check my location throughout the day	33%	67%
To investigate my personal life	8%	92%
To find out where I would go during my breaks	11%	89%

Australia

Australian GPS tracking regulations vary between states and territories, creating a mixed picture for employers when it comes to compliance. In 2014, the Australian Law Reform Commission put forward a proposal to remedy this, but at the time of this report's publication, it had not been adopted¹⁰. The general rule is employees' rights to privacy must be balanced against employers' rights to protect property and measure performance.

New South Wales¹¹ and Australian Capital Territory¹² have both passed specific laws governing the use of GPS tracking in the workplace. In New South Wales, employers must provide a 14-day written notice period before GPS tracking can be introduced. The same notice period applies in Australian Capital Territory, but employers must also use this to get employees' feedback on the proposal. Further, if an ACT employer installs a GPS tracking device in a company vehicle, the vehicle must display a sign informing the driver they are being tracked.



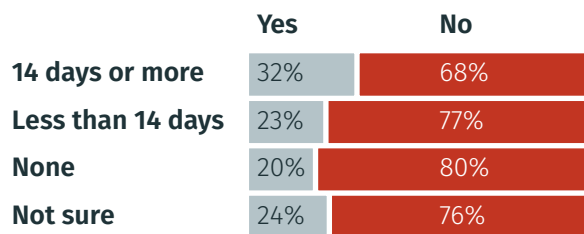
¹⁰ Uniform workplace surveillance laws | ALRC. (2018). Alrc.gov.au. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/13-surveillance-devices/uniform-workplace-surveillance-laws>

¹¹ WORKPLACE SURVEILLANCE ACT 2005 . (2018). Www8.austlii.edu.au. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/wsa2005245/

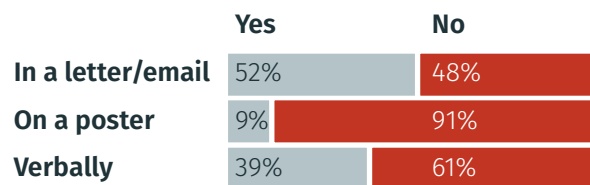
¹² Workplace Privacy Act 2011 (2018). Legislation.act.gov.au. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2011-4/current/pdf/2011-4.pdf>

More than two-thirds of employees surveyed in Australia were not given any notice before GPS tracking was introduced. Almost 40 percent received this notice verbally. While the majority of drivers said their employer did display a notice about GPS tracking in their vehicle, the remaining 42 percent said no sign was displayed or that they were not sure if it was displayed.

How much notice did your employer give?



How was the notice given?

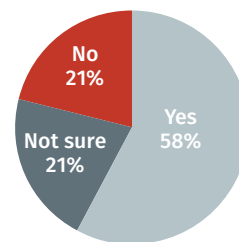


Did your employer discuss any of the following with you before GPS tracking was introduced?

	Yes	No
What kind of surveillance would be done	38%	62%
How the surveillance would be done	41%	59%
When the surveillance would start	46%	54%
Whether the surveillance would be continuous or intermittent	29%	71%
Whether the period of surveillance would be limited or ongoing	30%	70%
None of the above	7%	93%



Did your vehicle display a sign saying it was being tracked?



UK

British privacy law doesn't mention GPS tracking specifically, but it does pay close attention to the way personal data is handled — especially if that data can be used to identify people. This was established by the Data Protection Act of 1988¹³ which was superseded in May 2018 by the General Data Protection Regulation¹⁴. According to the Nathan Trust, the GDPR follows a similar approach, requiring employers to justify the use of GPS tracking and to demonstrate that other measures were considered but rejected on legitimate business grounds¹⁵.

Around 1 in 3 British employees who have used GPS tracking at work said they received advance notice before it was introduced. A similar proportion said they were told how and why it would be used. Almost half (48 percent) were informed verbally. More than a third (38 percent) said they were not able to turn GPS tracking off after work hours. A significant number said their employer used GPS tracking to improve safety or efficiency, prevent theft, and improve customer service, but a small proportion (5 percent) revealed the technology was used to investigate their personal lives.

Before introducing GPS tracking, did your employer do any of the following?

	Yes	No
Give you advance notice	31%	69%
Share a company policy about GPS tracking	29%	71%
Explain how GPS tracking would be used	34%	66%
Explain why GPS tracking was being introduced	31%	69%
Discuss the benefits of GPS tracking	26%	74%
Ask for your consent	32%	68%
Explain that you could withdraw consent	19%	81%
Tell you who was collecting the data	23%	77%
Explain when GPS tracking would be used	34%	66%
Tell you who is responsible for authorizing GPS tracking	17%	83%
Discuss what data would be collected	29%	71%
None of the above	16%	84%

¹³ Data Protection - GOV.UK. (2018). Gov.uk. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>

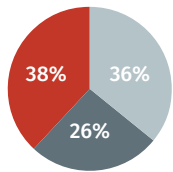
¹⁴ Guide to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). (2018). Ico.org.uk. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/>

¹⁵ Is tracking GPS location always Employee Monitoring under GDPR? (2017). Nathan Trust. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://www.nathantrust.com/tracking-gps-location-always-employee-monitoring-gdpr/>

How did your employer communicate this information?

	Yes	No
On a poster	6%	94%
In a newsletter	11%	89%
Via a union rep	6%	94%
In a letter	16%	84%
Verbally	48%	52%
In an email	40%	60%
Not applicable	13%	87%

How much control did you have over GPS tracking?



- I could turn it off at any time
- I could only turn it off when I wasn't working
- I could not turn it off – it was on all the time



How did your employer use GPS tracking?

	Yes	No
To monitor performance	38%	62%
To improve safety	42%	58%
To improve efficiency	42%	58%
To prevent theft of company property	20%	80%
To investigate customer complaints	14%	86%
To check my location throughout the day	40%	60%
To find out where I would go during my breaks	6%	94%
To investigate my personal life	5%	95%

How many workers use GPS for personal use?

The final section of each survey looked at how often employees in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK use GPS tracking in apps that are commonly used outside of work: weather apps, fitness trackers, Google, maps, and social media.

The data reveals that US employees are the most likely to enable location services in non-work apps, with only 16 percent disabling GPS on weather apps, 16 percent disabling GPS for Google searches, and 17 percent disabling GPS on map apps. Twenty-eight percent of the US respondents said they disable GPS on social media apps. Less than half of the US respondents (47 percent) said they had used a GPS-enabled fitness tracker before, but this was, nonetheless, the largest proportion of the four countries featured in the study (compared to 41 percent in Canada, 34 percent in Australia, and 33 percent in the UK).



Similarly, Canadian, Australian, and British employees were more likely to use GPS on weather apps, map apps, and for Google searches than in social media apps or fitness trackers. Out of all four nations, British employees appear to be the least likely to enable GPS on non-work apps, with just 57 percent using location services for Google searches and 41 percent using location services for social media. True to type, British employees are most likely to use location services when checking weather forecasts, with 79 percent saying they enable GPS for this purpose — second only to US employees. According to the data, Australian employees are least likely to enable GPS on weather apps.

Do you use location services on a weather app?

	No	Yes
US	16%	84%
Canada	27%	73%
Australia	39%	61%
UK	33%	67%

Do you use location services for Google searches?

	No	Yes
US	16%	84%
Canada	27%	73%
Australia	40%	60%
UK	43%	57%

Do you use location services on social media apps?

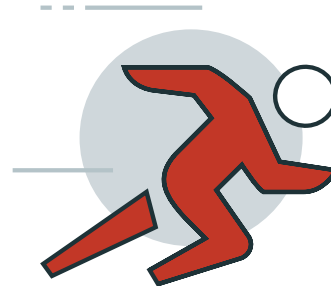
	No	Yes
US	28%	72%
Canada	44%	56%
Australia	44%	56%
UK	59%	41%

Do you use location services when using a map app for directions?

	No	Yes
US	17%	83%
Canada	23%	77%
Australia	29%	71%
UK	28%	72%

Do you use location services on a fitness tracking app?

	No	Yes
US	53%	47%
Canada	59%	41%
Australia	66%	34%
UK	67%	33%



Why do employees enable GPS on non-work apps?

Few employees in the US, Canada, Australia, or the UK said they enable location services in non-work apps without reason. Just 16 percent in the US and Canada and 9 percent in Australia and the UK said “I don’t think about it, I just turn it on” when asked how they decide when to use location services.



The most popular reason for enabling location services in all four countries was “When I trust the app I’m using.” This was typically followed by “If the app requires location services.” A small proportion of the respondents in each country said they never use apps that require location services: 16 percent in Australia followed by 11 percent in the UK, 10 percent in the US, and 5 percent in Canada.

How do you decide when to enable location services

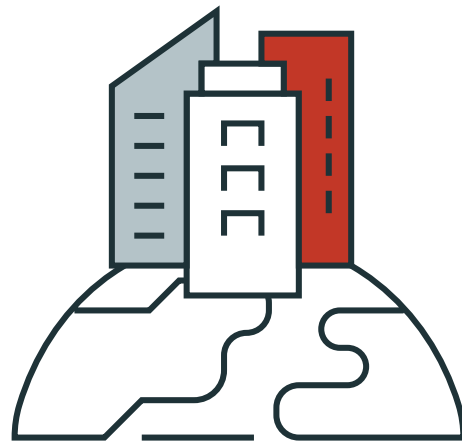
	US	CA	AU	UK
I don’t think about it, I just turn it on	11%	16%	9%	9%
When it saves time	12%	17%	9%	7%
When I trust the app I'm using	23%	26%	25%	37%
If the app requires location services	21%	14%	25%	25%
It depends how frequently the app tracks my location	8%	10%	5%	3%
It depends how much battery power the location services use	9%	5%	5%	4%
It depends how much cell data the location services use	10%	7%	6%	4%
I never use apps that require location services	7%	5%	16%	11%

Conclusion

The studies show workplace GPS tracking is common in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK. In each country, around a third of the employees surveyed reported that they have been required to use an app that tracks their location at work. The majority described it as a positive experience, but on average, more than 1 in 10 said they were tracked 24 hours a day. Not surprisingly, these employees were more likely to express concerns about privacy.

More surprising is the fact that many employees — especially in the US and Canada — were more concerned about practical problems than privacy, such as the impact on their phone data and battery life. This may be because many employees use work apps on personal phones rather than phones provided by their employer.

A consistent finding in all four countries was that employees who have used GPS tracking at work tend to be much more comfortable with the technology than those who have not. When asked how they would feel about if their employer introduced GPS tracking, only around 1 in 10 employees who had not used it in the workplace said they would support the move. But more than 50 percent of the employees who have used GPS in the workplace expressed support. Similarly, workplace GPS users generally showed higher levels of support for the benefits of GPS tracking and lower levels of concern about the potential drawbacks.



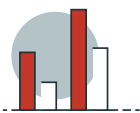
Regardless of whether employees have used GPS tracking at work or not, there was broad agreement about how it can benefit the workplace. Tracking travel time was universally acknowledged as a useful application. There was also a consensus on potential safety and efficiency benefits. Many liked the fact that the accountability cuts both ways. Employees are accountable for their work and employers are accountable for paying employees what they are owed. As well as reducing time theft, GPS tracking may be tackling wage theft.

Outside of the workplace, only around 1 in 10 respondents, on average, said they always disable GPS on personal apps like maps and weather apps. Revealingly, the most popular reason for choosing to enable location services in a personal app was, in all four countries, “When I trust the app I’m using.”

This brings us to the critical factor with GPS tracking: trust. Currently, the data suggests employees who are more familiar with the technology are more likely to trust it. But as GPS tracking continues to become more widespread and more workers are exposed to it, will this continue? This would be an ideal topic for a future benchmarking study.

Top Tips for Employers

5 things to consider before introducing GPS tracking



Do your research

Only use a GPS tracking system that automatically disables as soon as the employee clocks off for a break and at the end of the workday.



Get legal advice

Make sure you have a clear understanding of GPS tracking and privacy laws in your jurisdiction(s). If in doubt, seek professional legal advice.



Have a clear policy

Establish a clear GPS tracking policy before you introduce the technology. Consult your employees about the technology before you share the company policy with them.



Give notice

Provide written notice to employees explaining how, why, and when GPS tracking will be used. Outline the benefits for them and for the company, and ask for their feedback.



Nominate a contact

Consider nominating a company representative for GPS tracking. Provide his or her contact information to your employees so they know who to speak to if they have any questions.

Raw Data

All of the raw data used in this report is available free-of-charge from the Pollfish website.

- US data: <https://www.pollfish.com/dashboard/results/12736/972688199>
- Canada data: <https://www.pollfish.com/dashboard/results/308890/-1536574906>
- Australia data: <https://www.pollfish.com/dashboard/results/273752/1274421092>
- UK data: <https://www.pollfish.com/dashboard/results/308957/711551406>



Additional Resources

[The Surprising Truth: What Employees Think of GPS Tracking in the Workplace](#)

[The Surprising Truth: What Do Aussie Workers Really Think About GPS Monitoring?](#)

[How Canadian Employees Feel About GPS Tracking in the Workplace: New survey data reveals how and when employers track their employees](#)

[How UK Employees React to GPS Tracking in the Workplace: New survey data reveals how and when employers track their employees](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions About GPS Tracking](#)

Citations

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