

ISPy with my eye



Image: ChatGPT/Kim Komando

Settle into your Sunday, friend. *Ocean's Eleven* made casino break-ins look slick. Tailored suits, laser grids, dramatic music. Real life? Sometimes the weirdest door into a fortress is something nobody's even looking at.

Casinos have cameras, guards, firewalls and people whose whole job is basically "protect the chips, stare at screens." But hackers found a strange way toward a high-roller list.

 **What odd smart gadget helped hackers sneak into a North American casino network?** A) A smart slot machine, B) The smart ice maker at the bar, C) A smart thermometer in the lobby fish tank or D) An Elvis impersonator's Bluetooth sideburns? Get ready, the answer's being dealt at the end.

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 **WOW!** Incognito mode doesn't hide your browsing from the company that sells you internet. Your provider sees every site visited by every device in your home. Congress scrapped the rule that would've required your permission before providers shared that data.

 **Read time:** 2.5 minutes

“Kim, I listen to your show on KTAR. I have a question. If I use incognito mode, does my internet company still see the sites I visit and track me?”
— **Mike in Phoenix**

Mike, pull up a chair. Short answer? Yes. Incognito keeps your history off the computer. Your provider still sees it all.

Every click in your home runs through the internet service provider's pipes. In 2017, Congress killed FCC rules that would've forced providers to get your permission before sharing your data. It's been open season ever since.

Here's the kicker. When the FTC dug into the six biggest providers, it found several promised not to sell your data, then let it be used, shared and monetized by others anyway. The fine print does the dirty work. (Classic.)



What your ISP can see

- Every site every device in your house visits, and exactly when. That little padlock hides what's on the page, not the name of the site.
- How long you stay and how much you download.
- Which apps you use and, if they're also your TV company, what you watch.
- Your real-time location if they're your cell carrier, too.
- And yes, the adult sites. Incognito won't hide them. The site name, the time stamp and the device are right there on their end.

It gets worse. The FTC found some providers sort customers into sensitive buckets like race and sexual orientation to target ads. Carrier location data ended up with car salesmen, property managers, bail bondsmen and bounty hunters. Bounty hunters! Without customers knowing.



Lock it down

1. **Dig into privacy settings.** Log in to your provider's account online and find the privacy settings. Opt out of everything. FYI, it's usually buried. Keep clicking.
2. **Turn on secure DNS in your browser.** In Chrome, go to **Settings > Privacy and security > Security > Use secure DNS**. It hides some addresses you look up.
3. **Use a VPN.** It wraps everything leaving your home in an encrypted tunnel. Your provider sees one thing: that [you're connected to a VPN](#). Not the sites. Not the time you spent there. Nothing to package up and pass along.