

# Surveillance Was the Norm in U.S. Politics Long Before COVID-19 | Foreign Affairs

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Since late March, Hong Kong has walled itself off from the outside world. Only residents returning to the city are still allowed in. Upon arrival, each is handed an electronic wristband that connects to the wearer's smartphone. Once home, people are told to walk the perimeter of their apartments, establishing a virtual boundary that they must not cross for two weeks. If they step outside the perimeter, the wristband will send an alert to government officials. Violators face a hefty fine and up to six months in jail.

Hong Kong's use of digital surveillance in the fight against the novel coronavirus—along with that of many other governments, including [several U.S. states](#)—has stirred a fierce debate about balancing public health and privacy. Yet the underlying problem precedes the current crisis. Corporations and governments have been amassing intimate personal data about ordinary citizens for years.

[...]

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