

Tor joins forces with VPN company to create new browser for increased privacy

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Cookies. Fingerprinting. Tracking. Surveillance. Spyware. Geostalking.

It's a rough neighborhood out there for denizens of the web.

Whether you want to anonymously provide whistle-blowing details on a corrupt business operation or you just want to check today's weather, simply logging on is fraught with threats to your privacy.

This week, two major players in the field of online privacy joined forces to release a super-private [browser](#) that they say will "make life harder for those who collect data from you."

Mullvad VPN, a highly respected service based in Sweden, where providers are legally protected from being forced to collect traffic-related data, joined with the Tor Project, begun in the 1990s with a commitment to the simple principle that "Internet users should have private access to an uncensored web," to develop the Mullvad browser, which is free and available for download immediately.

"The mass surveillance of today is absurd," Jan Jonsson, CEO at Mullvad VPN, said in a statement released Monday. "We want to free the internet from mass surveillance."

Just any virtual privacy network is not enough, Jonsson maintains. Users need a trustworthy VPN coupled with "a privacy-focused browser" as good as the Tor Project's.

Huge amounts of data are mined through most browsers. The Tor browser "is the best in the field of privacy-focused browsers," Mullvad VPN stated in a press release this week. "That's why we reached out to them."

Tor has long been a preferred vehicle for anonymously accessing the web. Although Tor has earned a reputation for being host to unsavory and [criminal activity](#), such as child pornography distribution and financial scams, it also serves an invaluable role as a refuge for dissidents, activists, journalists, whistleblowers and [crime victims](#) who

need a strong veil of privacy for extremely sensitive online communications.

But while Tor is considered safe and secure, data still must pass through public relays. Data would remain secure, but the user's ISP may detect that Tor is being accessed, and that in itself, fairly or not, could trigger suspicions about possible unlawful activity.

The advantage of VPNs over Tor include speed, the ability to spoof a location and avoid political censorship or geographical blocking of content, and protecting public wifi communications. But unlike Tor, which is highly secure because of its decentralized nature, VPNs rely on the trustworthiness of the VPN provider for ultimate security.

The Mullvad browser will rely on the best features of Tor and trustworthy VPNs.

It operates in private mode by default. No cookies are saved, and cache and history are not tracked. Strong fingerprinting protection is provided. That means it reduces the number of identifying characteristics of a computer that helps trackers identify users. Mullvad cloaks data that would otherwise reveal such identifying features as type of browser, installed extensions or apps, and connected devices.

While the Tor browser is sometimes saddled by sluggish connection speeds, Mullvad should operate at an optimal pace.

The Mullvad browser does not need to be used with the company's VPN. Users are advised to check out prospective VPNs for trustworthiness.

"Developing this browser with Mullvad is about providing people with more [privacy](#) options for everyday browsing and to challenge the current business model of exploiting people's behavioral data," said Isabela

Fernandes, executive director of The Tor Project.

"When we collaborate, we want to drive change and raise people's awareness that digital rights are human rights," she said.

More information: [mullvad.net/en/blog/2023/4/3/m ... the-mullvad-browser/](https://mullvad.net/en/blog/2023/4/3/m...the-mullvad-browser/)

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