



# Year in Review 2019



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# Welcome word

NordVPN was created eight years ago around a single idea: to free the internet from censorship and surveillance. Since then, we've worked relentlessly to make it available and open to everyone.

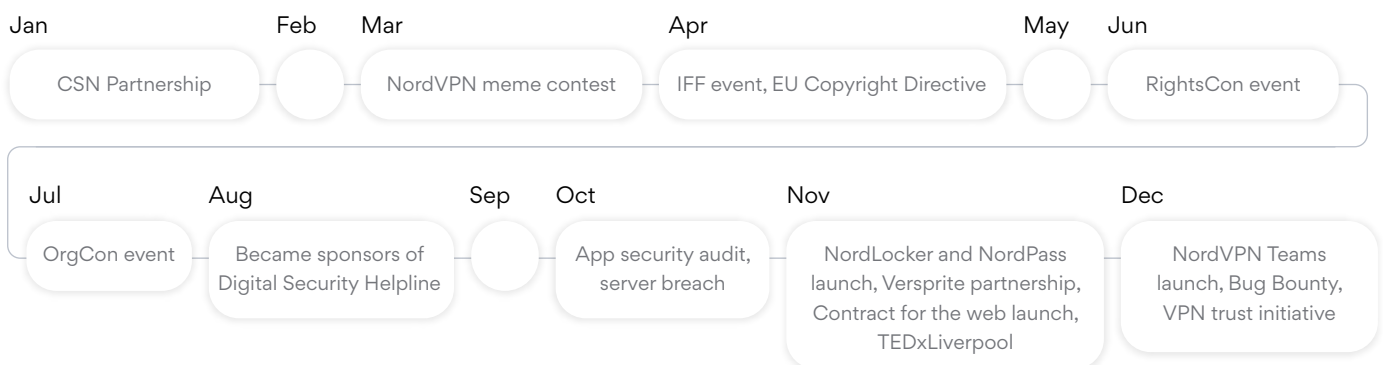
2019 proved to be another eventful year for NordVPN. It brought us new product launches, significant improvements in our service, important partnerships, and some hard lessons too.

In this Annual Report, you will find NordVPN's key highlights from 2019. Enjoy!

Ruby Gonzalez

Head of Communications at NordVPN

## Timeline of 2019





## Transparency

NordVPN is committed to protecting user privacy and security online. We are 100% true to our zero-logs policy — we never log the activities of our users.

### **As of December 31st, 2019 we state the following:**

We have NOT been served any National Security letters;

We have NOT been served any gag orders;

We have NOT been served any warrants from any government organization.



### **Security Audit**

We have completed an application security audit conducted by an independent auditor VerSprite. VerSprite is one of the leading cybersecurity consulting firms, which specializes in finding threats, risks, and vulnerabilities in application software.

NordVPN's application penetration test covered our API endpoint and Clients' Panel, mobile apps for iOS and Android, and desktop applications for Windows and macOS.

Auditors focused on identifying high-impact vulnerabilities that could lead to IP leaks, breaching confidential user data, and overall privilege escalation. They didn't find any critical-level vulnerabilities.



## Social Responsibility

We always believed that the internet should be safe from surveillance and censorship. Last year has been quite busy as we've worked to make that a reality. Here's a recap of what NordVPN did in 2019.

### Support to communities and NGOs

In extreme cases of censorship or online privacy violations, NordVPN offers a free temporary service — Emergency VPN. It provides access to websites or services that may be restricted and helps hide activists' identities online.

NordVPN received 774 Emergency VPN access requests in 2019. More than 430 of them came from Venezuela, which currently faces severe press and internet regulations. We also received requests from Hong Kong, Iran, and other countries with strict internet censorship and heavy surveillance.

More than 300 VPN licenses were donated to support NGOs and activists fighting in Hong Kong. Also, 500+ VPN licenses were provided as in-kind donations to over 40 different organizations and initiatives aligned with our values — fighting for human rights and internet freedom. In addition to these donations, we contributed more than \$130,000 to nonprofit organizations like Access Now's Digital Security Helpline, Open Rights Group, Cybercrime Support Network, and others.

## Internet freedom and human rights

Back in April, NordVPN participated in the Internet Freedom Festival (IFF) as one of the Diversity & Inclusion Fund donors. IFF is one of the largest, diverse, and inclusive conferences in the internet freedom community. It brings together activist groups, media, NGOs, and others working toward freedom of expression online..

We have partnered with Access Now, a nonprofit dedicated to free and open internet. We became a sponsor of their Digital Security Helpline and joined RightsCon in Tunis as an event sponsor. The summit brought together businesses, governments, human rights defenders, and tech experts to learn and share insights about technology's impact on society.

In July, NordVPN supported another human and digital rights conference — OrgCon. It's organized by the Open Rights Group, which protects UK citizens' rights online. The event focused on democracy, digital privacy, and freedom of expression.

NordVPN also was one of the first corporate supporters of [Contract for the Web](#). It's a global plan of action that unifies companies, governments, and citizens in an effort to create a safe and secure internet that empowers rather than subdues.

## Supporting social causes

In 2019, we teamed up with the [Cyber Support Network](#). This organization helps individuals and small businesses that were affected by cybercrime in the US. CSN's current project, [Fraudsupport.org](#), gives guidance on how to protect yourself or your business, and what to do after suffering an attack.

For the first time last year, we partnered with TED and joined their independently organized TEDxLiverpool event as one of the sponsors. This partnership enabled us to reach a more diverse audience and promote cybersecurity awareness.

## Testimonials by NGOs and activists

- ” Access to information is crucial for journalists to fulfill their roles in society. We commend NordVPN for providing a reliable, efficient, and safe tool that allows our journalists to be protected, innovative, and to keep serving our audiences globally. ”  
(Deutsche Welle)
- ” I was active on Twitter and other social media to oppose our totalitarian government. Back then, I never felt safe when I was online, but I had to do what I had to do <...> I trusted your service in hiding my footprint and not letting anyone find out my true identity. You gave me more courage to express my voice freely. I wanted you to know that what I did might have been a small step towards freedom, but you helped me and what you did matter. ”  
(Muhammad, a political activist in Iran)
- ” Cybercrime Support Network (CSN) is grateful for NordVPN’s support of our mission to help consumers and SMBs affected by cybercrime. Their commitment to causes like ours is a true testament to their values on making the internet free from crime. ”  
(Cybercrime Support Network)





## Service Improvements

Last year NordVPN was busy working on new products and features.

### Faster VPN with NordLynx

NordVPN introduced the [NordLynx technology](#) built around the WireGuard<sup>1</sup> VPN protocol. NordLynx combines WireGuard's high-speed connection and NordVPN's custom double Network Address Translation (NAT) system, which safeguards users' privacy.



Although WireGuard is easy to implement and is considered to be faster than the current leading protocols, its ability to secure users' privacy is often debated. That's why we added our own double NAT system, which doesn't require storing identifiable user data on the server. At the moment, only Linux users can try NordLynx, but it will be available on other platforms in 2020.

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<sup>1</sup>WireGuard® is a registered trademark of Jason A. Donenfeld.



## Windows and Android app tweaks

We introduced smart security on Wi-Fi to the Windows app. If you join an unsecured Wi-Fi network, the app will connect to a VPN server automatically. We also implemented in-app payments to make the whole process more user-friendly.

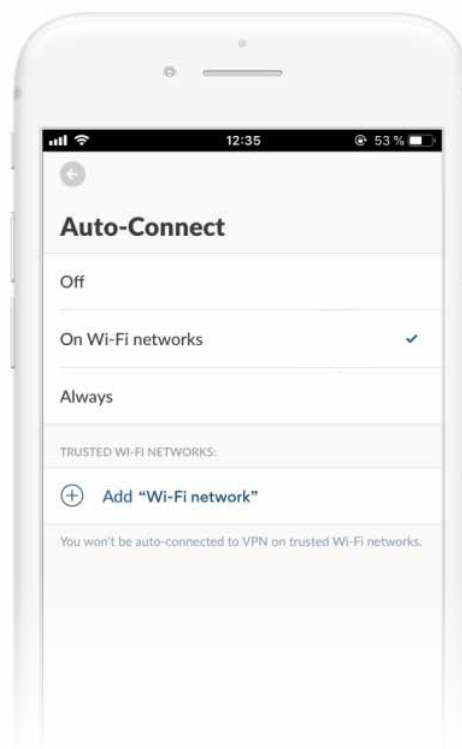
It was an exciting year for Android as well. Split tunneling is now available on the Android app. Users can select apps they don't want to run through the encrypted VPN connection. We've also added a custom DNS feature allowing users to set a DNS server address of their choice.

## macOS and iOS app improvements

This spring, we introduced new features in our iOS app. We have integrated Shortcuts — Apple's dedicated app for Siri. Now you can ask Siri: "Hey Siri, where's my online security?" or "Hey Siri, connect to NordVPN," and your internet traffic will be encrypted in seconds.

Auto-Connect and CyberSec were also added to our iOS app last year. With Auto-Connect on, the app will automatically connect to a VPN server when you are using unsecured Wi-Fi. CyberSec will protect your iPhone from malware, spyware, stealthy trackers, and becoming a bot in DDoS attacks.

We have also introduced a brand new NordVPN app for macOS featuring OpenVPN over UDP, OpenVPN over TCP, and IKEv2 protocols — the choice is yours. The app still runs on IKEv2 as a default.



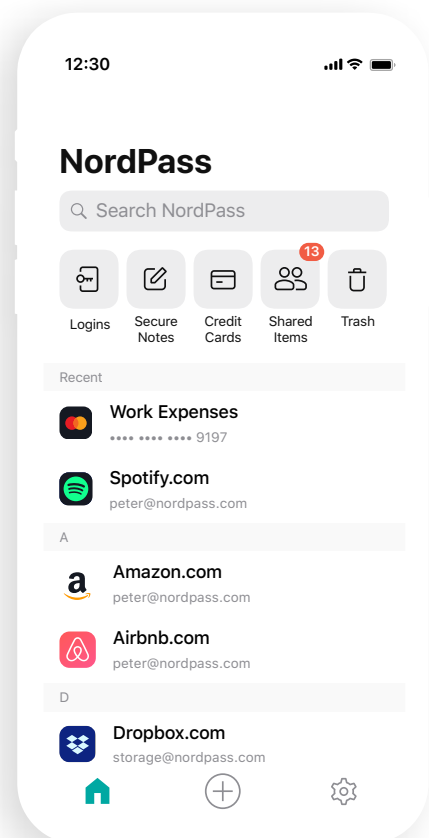


## New Product Launches

Last year NordVPN was busy working on new products and features.

### Password management tool

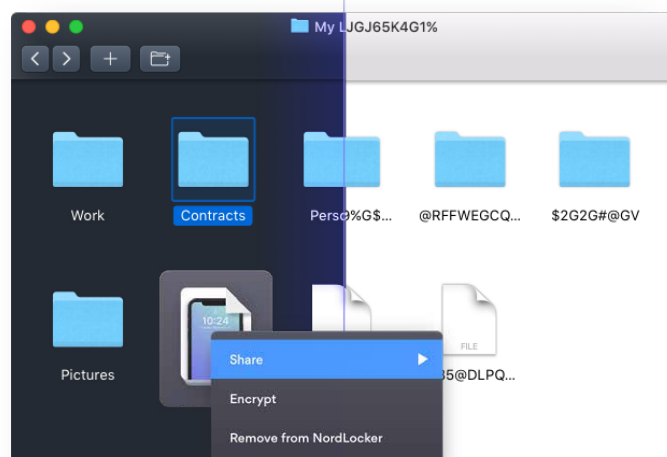
Our aim is to become an all-around cybersecurity solution. Last year, we introduced [NordPass](#) — a new generation password manager. It uses powerful 256-bit XChaCha20 encryption together with Argon2 for key derivation and has a zero-knowledge encryption process to ensure ultimate security. NordPass remembers all passwords, auto-fills online forms, and allows you to save private notes. Additionally, it can generate strong passwords on the spot. NordPass offers browser extensions as well as native mobile and desktop apps for all major OSs.



## New product launches

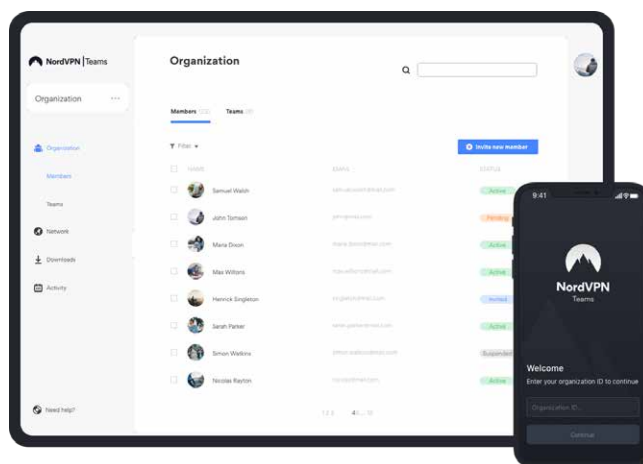
### File encryption tool

We were busy in 2019. [NordLocker](#) launched in November, offering end-to-end encryption for your files. It has dedicated apps for macOS and Windows that you can use to encrypt files stored on your computer or in the cloud. NordLocker uses the two most secure encryption algorithms known today — Advanced Encryption Standard with 256-bit keys and 4096-bit RSA. The new tool has NordVPN's own zero-knowledge encryption process as well. Users can not only encrypt their files but also share them securely by managing access permissions.



### NordVPN Teams

In December, we introduced a new product for teams, freelancers, and businesses — [NordVPN Teams](#). With this new business VPN solution, NordVPN keeps its easy-to-use approach. One of the key benefits of NordVPN Teams is effective access management. By using a convenient control panel, business clients can add team members, create user groups, manage team permissions, select default servers for teams, assign dedicated gateways, and more.



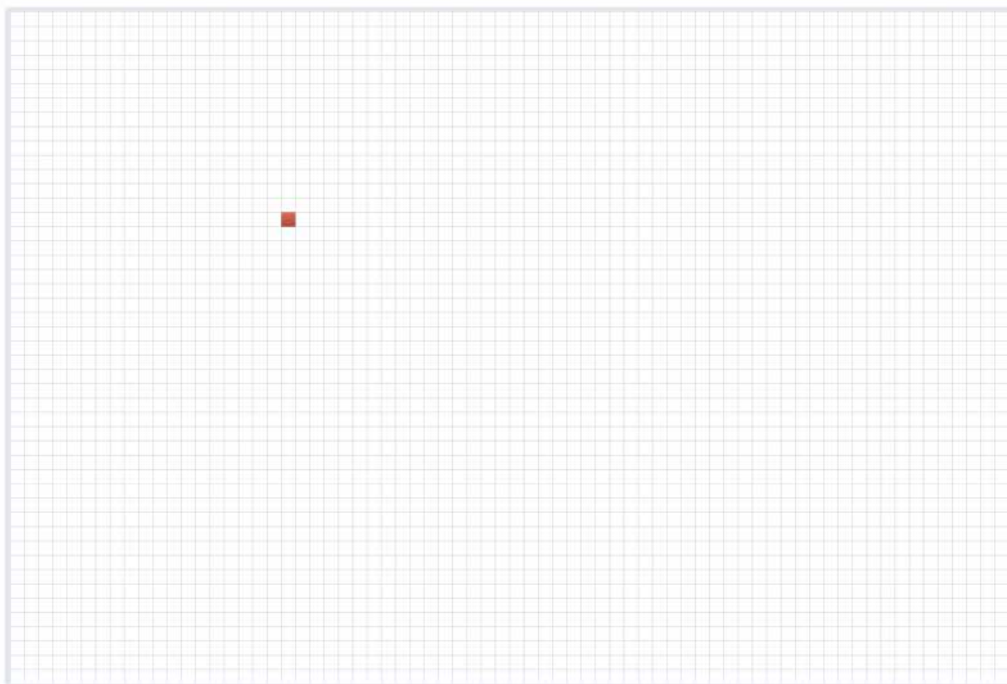
NordVPN Teams keeps some of the best NordVPN's features, including 256-bit AES encryption protocol, Kill Switch, CyberSec, automatic connection, and award-winning 24/7 customer support with a dedicated manager. NordVPN Teams is available on all major platforms.

## The Incident

Last year, an unauthorized third party accessed one of NordVPN's servers. The hacker managed to access a single server located in Finland because of mistakes made by the data center owner, of which we were not aware.

However no customer data was affected or accessed by the malicious actor, as the server did not contain any user activity logs, usernames, or passwords. NordVPN's service as a whole was not hacked, the code was not hacked, the VPN tunnel was not breached, and our apps were unaffected.

### Incident Scope - March 2018



Affected servers (1)



Secure servers  
(over 3,300)



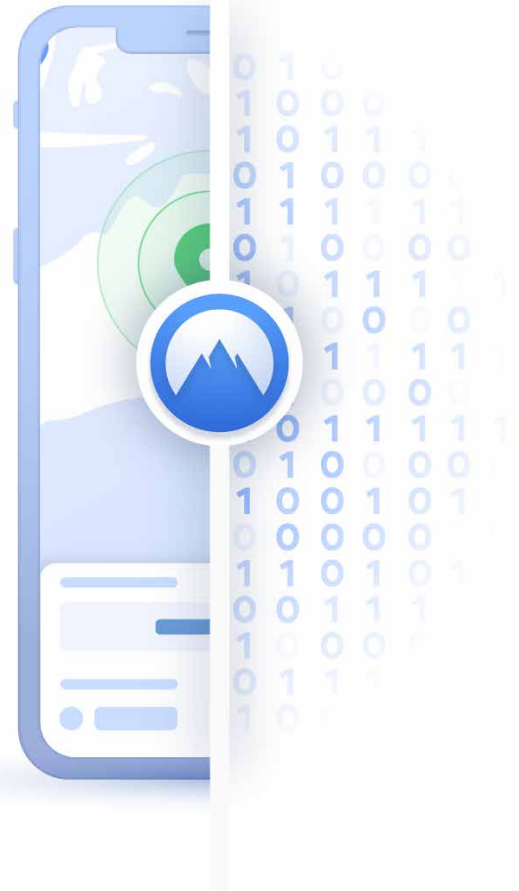
## Security measures we promised last year

In the aftermath of this incident, we took action to enhance NordVPN's security.

### The Plan

Starting a long-term strategic partnership with VerSprite was one of the first things we did. Penetration testers play a key role in NordVPN's security efforts. Their job is to prod the infrastructure for weaknesses and mitigate the vulnerabilities. VerSprite will work with NordVPN's in-house team of penetration testers to challenge the infrastructure and ensure the security of our customers.

The partnership also includes threat and vulnerability management, compliance management, and assessment services. VerSprite will also help form an independent cybersecurity advisory committee, which will consist of selected experts and oversee NordVPN's security practices.



## **We also took action in five different fields to become more secure than ever:**

### **1. Bug bounty program.**

In December, NordVPN introduced a bug bounty program. It rewards cybersecurity experts for catching potential vulnerabilities and reporting them to our developers. Bounty hunters will receive a well-earned pay, and NordVPN users will get a secure service they know is scoured for bugs by thousands of people every day.

### **2. Infrastructure security audit.**

NordVPN is planning to complete a full-scale third-party independent security audit in 2020. It will cover the infrastructure hardware, VPN software, backend architecture, backend source code, and internal procedures.

### **3. Vendor security assessment and higher security standards.**

We are currently building a network of collocated servers. While still located in a data center, they are wholly owned exclusively by NordVPN. This way, we can ensure that our data centers meet the highest security standards.

### **4. Diskless servers.**

We will upgrade our entire infrastructure (currently featuring over 5400 servers) to RAM servers. This will create a centrally controlled network where nothing is stored locally — not even an operating system.

### **5. VPN Trust Initiative (VTI).**

Together with other major VPN providers, we have joined a member-driven consortium of VPN business leaders. It will focus on improving digital security for consumers by strengthening trust, building understanding, and mitigating risks for VPN users. The initiative is led by the Internet Infrastructure Coalition (i2Coalition).

# Thank You!

We are going to keep on innovating in 2020. NordVPN will continue to support free speech and digital security around the world by providing cybersecurity tools to everyone who needs them.

We wish you all a successful and secure year!

Follow our journey:



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