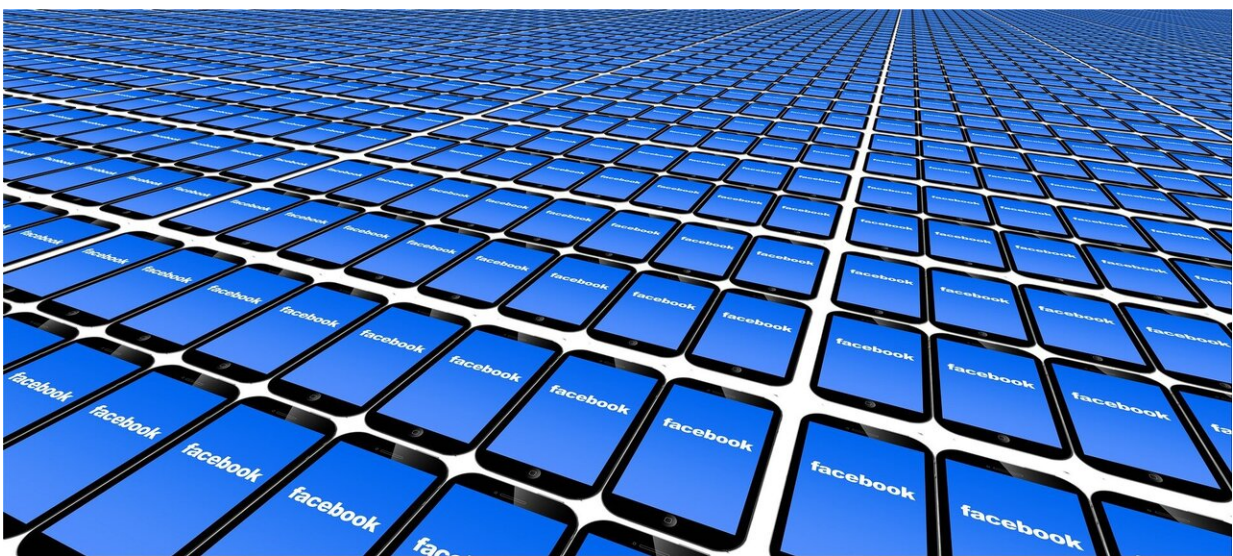


Facebook sued over allegations it sidestepped Apple's privacy protections to collect user data

September 23 2022, by Bailey Schulz



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Two Facebook users are suing the social media platform's parent company, Meta Platforms Inc., for allegedly skirting around Apple's privacy protections and collecting user data through in-app browsers.

The proposed class-action complaint filed Wednesday in San Francisco [federal court](#) comes after an Apple iOS update in April 2021 forced Meta to obtain users' consent before tracking their [internet activity](#) on

apps and third-party websites.

The lawsuits accuse Meta of working around the update by tracking users' online activity through Facebook's in-app browser.

By directing users who click a link in the Facebook app to an in-app browser instead of their smartphone's default browser, Facebook can track their internet activity and collect personally identifiable information, private health details, text entries and other sensitive confidential facts, the lawsuits say.

Users "are unaware of the tracking; most do not even realize they are browsing the third-party website from within Facebook's in-app browser," one lawsuit says. "Therefore users freely engage with these sites, sharing all manner of personal facts and preferences, without having reason to know they are being tracked."

Meta spokesperson Tom Channick said the allegations are without merit and the company plans to defend itself "vigorously."

"We have carefully designed our in-app [browser](#) to respect users' privacy choices, including how data may be used for ads," Channick said in an emailed statement.

With about 94% of Apple users in the U.S. not consenting to tracking apps on their iPhones as of May 2021, Apple's update curbed a major source of revenue for Facebook.

Meta CFO Dave Wehner said earlier this year the iOS update would cost the company roughly \$10 billion in 2022.

The [lawsuits](#) claim Meta is violating federal and state privacy laws and seek to put a stop to this tracking.

The findings are based on a recent report by data privacy researcher Felix Krause, who found Mata has been injecting JavaScript code into third-party websites to track users and intercept data.

"This causes various risks for the user, with the host app being able to track every single interaction with external websites, from all form inputs like passwords and addresses, to every single tap," Krause's report reads.

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Citation: Facebook sued over allegations it sidestepped Apple's privacy protections to collect user data (2022, September 23) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2022-09-facebook-sued-allegations-sidestepped-apple.html>

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