

New Zealand lawmakers banned from TikTok amid data use fears

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The icon for the video sharing TikTok app is seen on a smartphone, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, in Marple Township, Pa. New Zealand lawmakers and other workers inside the nation's Parliament will be banned from having the TikTok app on their government phones, officials said Friday, March 17 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Slocum, File

New Zealand lawmakers and other workers inside the nation's Parliament will be banned from having the TikTok app on their government phones, officials said Friday.

The ban, which takes effect at the end of the month, follows similar moves in many other countries.

However, New Zealand's ban will apply only to about 500 people in the parliamentary complex, not to all [government workers](#) like bans in the U.S. and Britain. Other New Zealand agencies could decide later to impose their own bans.

Global concern about the app comes after warnings by the FBI and other agencies that TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance could share TikTok user data—such as browsing history, location and biometric identifiers—with China's authoritarian government.

New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said he didn't have TikTok on his phone.

"I'm not that hip and trendy," he told reporters.

The New Zealand move came on the advice of government cybersecurity experts, said Parliamentary Service Chief Executive Rafael Gonzalez-Montero.

He said the app would be removed from all devices with access to the parliamentary network, although officials could make special arrangements for anybody who needed TikTok to perform their democratic duties.

"This decision has been made based on our own experts' analysis and following discussion with our colleagues across government and

internationally," Gonzalez-Montero said in a statement. "Based on this [information](#), the service has determined that the risks are not acceptable in the current New Zealand parliamentary environment."

Hipkins said cybersecurity advice came from New Zealand's intelligence agency, the Government Communications Security Bureau. He said New Zealand didn't take a blanket approach to all [government workers](#), and it would be up to each department or agency to make cybersecurity decisions.

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