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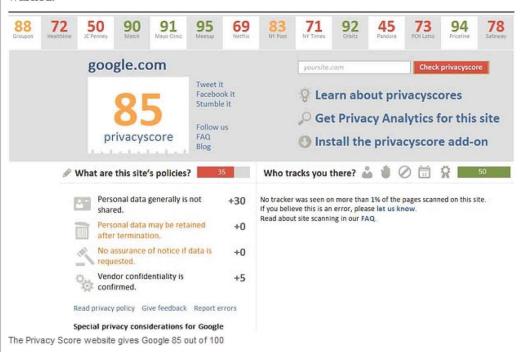
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### Google privacy changes prompt 'Big Brother' warning

Changes to Google's privacy policy "mean 'Big Brother is just a click away", lawyers have warned.





By Donna Bowater 3:44PM GMT 01 Mar 2012

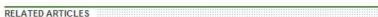
Under changes to the way Google handles users' personal data, the company will collate information about each user across 60 of its services, to create one profile. This means that Google could deliver an advert on a YouTube page based on activity from a user's Gmail account.

But concerns have been raised over the privacy implications of the move, with the French regulator claiming it may not be lawful.

Guy Wilmot, a solicitor at Russell-Cooke, said: "EU data protection laws generally require consent from an internet user for a service to transfer personal data. Consent must be 'freely given, specific and informed'. Google might argue that by continuing to use their services users have 'consented' to the sharing but privacy regulators will ask whether you can really give 'specific, informed' consent by doing nothing?"

Chris Watson, head of Telecoms at law firm CMS Cameron McKenna, said: "Google's new privacy settings mean 'Big Brother' is just a click away. Simplifying privacy settings in its browsers makes sense for Google and advertisers.

"But most internet users would be deeply concerned that when they click to close the privacy icon on their Google account, they are signing away more personal information than they might bargain for."





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#### Are you worried about Google's new privacy policy?

Peter Barron, head of communications at Google, said the firm was happy to meet with the French authorities to discuss their concerns.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, he said users could "control and manage" their search histories by opting out or switching them off.

"We have something called Google dashboard and you can go into that and you can change your settings," Mr Barron said.

"If you don't want to receive adverts for recipes, for example, you can opt out of that."

His comments came after a privacy campaigner filed a case at the small claims court for £400 to replace his Android smartphone, which is affected by the changes.

Alex Hanff, who was involved in a campaign against advertising company Phorm, said: "They've been asked to suspend the changes several times, and Google keeps telling the regulators where to go.

"They've basically stuck two fingers up."

A Google spokesman said: "This updated privacy policy, like the old privacy policy, affects users signed into their Google Accounts on Android phones, the same way as users signed into their Google Accounts from a desktop computer."

The new privacy policy does not mean Google will collect more information about users, but information it gathers via its different web services will be combined for the first time, allowing it to build a more detailed profile of each user.

For instance, data on which YouTube videos a user has watched could be combined with their web search history and Google Maps searches to infer their interests and movements for targeted advertising. The new pools of data will be created for all users with a consumer Google account; companies that use Google Apps will retain control over employees' privacy settings.

Google has emphasised that users can increase their privacy settings before the new policy comes into force. The Electronic Frontier Foundation, a US civil rights group, has published a guide.

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