



UK class action accuses Google of unlawfully harvesting personal data

Lawsuit claims tech firm bypassed iPhone default privacy settings between June 2011 and February 2012, affecting 5.4m people

Graham Ruddick

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More than 5 million people in the UK could be entitled to compensation from Google if a class action against the internet giant for allegedly harvesting personal data is successful.

A group led by the former executive director of consumer body Which?, Richard Lloyd, and advised by City law firm Mischon de Reya claims Google unlawfully collected personal information by bypassing the default privacy settings on the iPhone between June 2011 and February 2012.

They have launched a legal action with the aim of securing compensation for those affected. The group, called Google You Owe Us, says that approximately 5.4 million people in Britain used the iPhone during this period and could be entitled to compensation.

Google is accused of breaching principles in the UK's data protection laws in a "violation of trust" against iPhone users.

The lawsuit was unprecedented and represented "one of the biggest fights of my life", said Lloyd, who has led legal actions against companies before.

"I believe that what Google did was simply against the law. Their actions have affected millions, and we'll be asking the courts to remedy this major breach of trust.

"Through this action, we will send a strong message to Google and other tech giants in Silicon Valley that we're not afraid to fight back if our laws are broken.

"In all my years speaking up for consumers, I've rarely seen such as massive abuse of trust where so many people have no way to seek redress on their own."

He added: "This is ... the first case of its kind in the UK against a major tech company for misusing our valuable personal data.

"I want to spread the world about our claim. Google owes all of those affected fairness, trust and money. By joining together, we can show Google that they can't get away with taking our data without our consent, and that no matter how large and powerful they are, nobody is above the law."

A Google spokesperson said: "This is not new. We have defended similar cases before. We don't believe it has any merit and we will contest it."

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