

Incognito mode? Google tracked you anyway

Google agreed to destroy billions of records as part of a lawsuit in which it is accused of tracking and documenting user data who activated the "Incognito Mode" feature on its popular Google chrome browser.

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The heads of the tech giant Google announced that the company will destroy billions of data and records it collected as part of tracking users who used the incognito mode option and were confident they were protected from tracking.

Incognito mode on Chrome claims to prevent the computer, or the user's Chrome account, from tracking browsing history, cookies and site data, or information entered in forms. A disclaimer displayed when the option is selected specifically warns "This won't change how data is collected by websites you visit and the services they use, including Google."

In 2020, a class action lawsuit was filed against Google alleging that it continued to follow and collect data from users who used the incognito option since June 1, 2016. The plaintiffs demanded compensation in the amount of 5 to 7.8 billion dollars for violating their privacy.

As part of a settlement agreement submitted to the court in Oakland, Google agreed to completely erase billions of records and data documented from users' incognito browsing, and it will not face monetary compensation. However, the plaintiffs still have the right to seek monetary compensation in separate lawsuits.

As part of the agreement, Google also committed to report to users which data will be saved and stored on the company's servers, even if the browser is in incognito mode in Chrome or other company browsers. Another clause in the settlement agreement stipulates that for the next five years, Google will allow users in private browsing modes to block third-party cookies.

"The result is that Google will collect less data from users' private browsing, and Google will earn less money from the data it collected", said the plaintiffs' lawyers.

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