

How to Stop Meta from Tracking Your Android Phone

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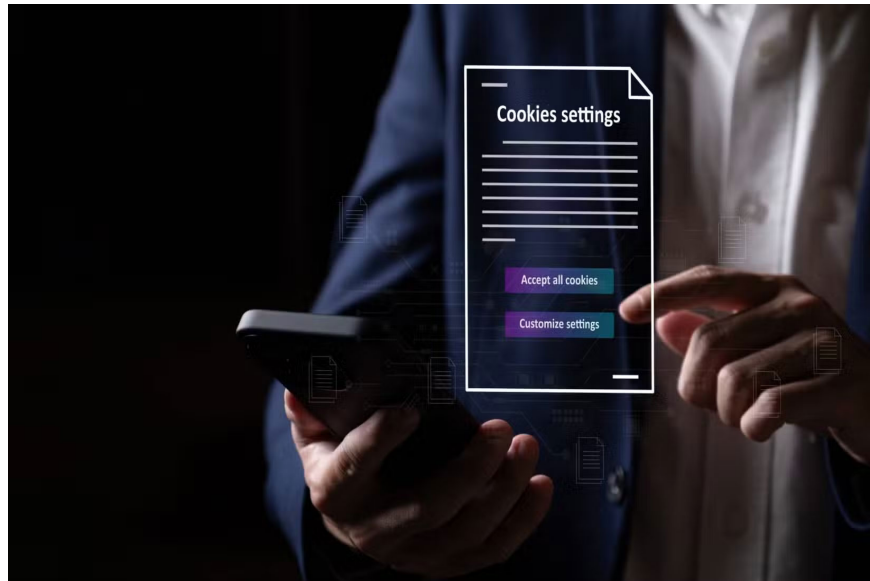
1. Can you stop Google from tracking your smartphone?

Meta is inserting trackers into millions of websites

Meta is using a newly discovered tracking method that uses its native apps, like Instagram and Facebook , to track you online. The technique, discovered by an international team of researchers from Radboud University and IMDEA Networks, is effective even if you:

1. Don't log into Facebook or Instagram on your mobile browser.
2. Use incognito or private browsing mode.
3. Clear your cookies and other browsing data.

A technical report on this practice states that *'these practices may be implemented on websites that do not have clear and appropriate cookie consent forms.'* This means that if the website you are visiting loads a tracking script before you have consented to the appropriate cookies, the tracking will still occur.



This tracking method works through a script called a Meta Pixel that is embedded in millions of web pages that communicate with apps on your phone. To link your mobile browsing sessions and web cookies to your device identifier, the script passes them on to installed apps.

They can then link the received data to your logged-in Facebook or Instagram account to track you across the internet. Android apps have been tracking you for a while, but this type of native app tracking has never been seen before.

The purpose of the tracking is to give advertisers an idea of how effective their ad campaigns are. Meta has been doing this since at least September 2024, but Russian search giant Yandex has been using a similar tactic with its own apps and scripts (called Yandex Metrica) since 2017. However, the Meta Pixel script has been discontinued since June 3, with most of its underlying code removed.

The Meta Pixel and Yandex Metrica scripts are estimated to have been installed on 5.8 million and 3 million websites, respectively. The scripts appear to target Android users exclusively by misusing a variety of legitimate Internet protocols and the ability for websites to communicate with installed Android apps. While the attack has not yet been observed on iOS, the researchers note that similar data sharing between iOS browsers and native apps is 'technically possible.'

How to prevent being tracked

This issue affects Chrome and, by extension, Chromium-based browsers, so the easiest way to avoid being tracked is to simply switch to a more privacy-focused browser like DuckDuckGo or Brave . However, once the Meta script is offline, you're safe — unless you have any Yandex apps installed on your phone and use their services.

Another solution is to uninstall the apps from your phone. However, with Facebook and Instagram being two of the most popular social media platforms, not having native apps greatly limits the user experience.

Google is aware of this issue and would ideally like to improve the way Android handles local port access and data exchange between the web browser and native apps. However, there is no word from Google on whether or not they will change this behavior or Android, so uninstalling the Meta and Yandex apps from your phone is still the safest solution.

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