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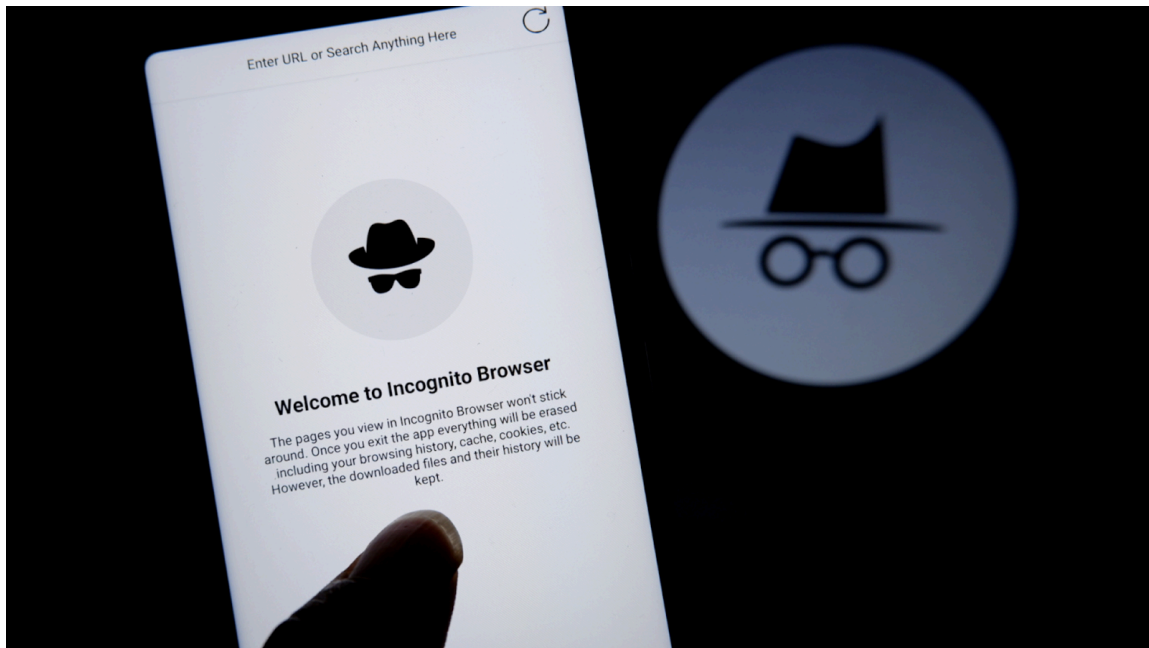
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Google Will Delete Tons of Data on Chrome's Incognito Mode Users

As a part of a class-action settlement, Google is making tweaks to its Chrome web browser's Incognito mode and will purge 'billions of data records.'

By [Kate Irwin](#)

April 2, 2024



(Credit: SOPA Images/Getty Images)

Google is expected to delete billions of data records on past [Incognito mode](#) users to settle a [class-action lawsuit](#) that launched four years ago over its private browsing mode and broader tracking tools, according to the [settlement](#) filed Monday.

The tech giant will also block third-party cookies on its [Chrome](#) browser's Incognito mode by default for the next five years, delete data that noted which users opted to browse with Incognito, and partially redact past Incognito users' IP addresses. Google has already added more transparent messaging to Incognito's splash



page as a result of the lawsuit to clarify what it does and doesn't do for users' privacy every time a new Incognito window is opened.

To make amends, Google will also generalize user agent strings and purge X-Client Data Header information, which details specific Chrome profiles, as part of the data-deletion plan. The company will also purge specific

URL tails so that it won't be possible to determine which specific pages on a web domain a past Incognito user visited.

The class-action lawsuit was first launched in 2020 by Chrome Incognito users who alleged that Google was violating US users' privacy by conducting "surreptitious" user tracking. As Ars Technica notes, Google had previously claimed it was "impossible" to identify and delete users' Incognito browsing data and argued that it was minimal anyway, with Incognito browsers making up about 3% of all the data Google collects.

The attorneys behind the case call the resolution a "historic step in requiring dominant technology companies to be honest in their representations to users." While this settlement doesn't offer direct cash payments, the plaintiffs' lawyers claim that the value of what the suit secured is worth over \$5 billion. Individuals are still eligible to sue Google individually for any alleged Incognito-related privacy damages, however, even after participating in the class-action. Damages may be determined through arbitration at a later date.

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But Google Policy Communications Manager Jose Castaneda tells Ars Technica that the lawsuit was always "meritless" and that the information being deleted "isn't as significant" as the plaintiffs' lawyers believe.

"The plaintiffs originally wanted \$5 billion and are receiving zero," Castanada told the outlet. "We never associate data with users when they use Incognito mode. We are happy to delete old technical data that was never associated with an individual and was never used for any form of personalization."

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Anyone in the US with a Google account who used Chrome's Incognito mode to browse the internet since June 2016 without being logged into said Google account on that browser is generally considered part of the class-action. Safari, Edge, and Internet Explorer users with Google accounts who had some kind of "private" browsing mode enabled and visited websites that used Google tracking or advertising tools are also broadly covered under the settlement, according to court [documents](#).

While Google has already rolled out some Incognito messaging changes, it's possible the other resolutions from the suit won't be fully implemented until the settlement is officially signed into effect on July 30 this year.

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About Kate Irwin

Reporter



I'm a reporter covering early morning news. Prior to joining PCMag in 2024, I was a reporter and producer at Decrypt and launched its gaming vertical, GG. I have previous bylines with Input, Game Rant, and Dot Esports. I've been a PC gamer since The Sims (yes, the original). In 2020, I finally built my first PC with a 3090 graphics card, but also regularly use Mac and iOS devices as well. As a reporter, I'm passionate about uncovering scoops and documenting the wide world of tech and how it affects our daily lives.

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