

# Facebook Link History is Meta taking one step forward and two steps back

Article

**The news:** Facebook users will now have the ability to opt out of allowing **Meta** to store their browsing history within the app as part of a new feature dubbed **Link History**, the company

announced Tuesday.

- Link History will be turned on by default, and users will receive a prompt encouraging them to keep the feature active to improve their ad experience. Users will be able to turn off the feature at any time.

**Yes, but:** Link History is the latest step Meta has taken toward compliance with increasingly stringent data privacy regulations in the US and abroad, but critics have highlighted that the new feature only provides the illusion of privacy.

- Combing browsing history for advertising data isn't a new practice: Meta has been doing it for years. Link History simply allows users to interact with the process for the first time, but only in certain cases.
- According to a [Gizmodo](#) analysis, opting out of Link History only prevents Meta from storing a record of an initial visit to a page; once Facebook's in-app browser loads, Meta is still able to track user activity. Facebook's in-app browser is controversial: In 2022, Meta was sued for [allegedly injecting tracking code](#) into its browser to circumvent **Apple's AppTrackingTransparency** changes.
- What's more, Link History seems only to apply to the mobile version of Facebook. Browser users are not given the prompt to opt out and cannot even access the Link History page at the time of this writing, further creating confusion around Meta's attempt to introduce new privacy standards.

**The big picture:** The **Online Safety Act** and **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** have forced social media companies to make major changes in Europe, and similar changes are coming to the US. But Link History in its current state signals that, for Meta, compliance is more about providing the appearance of privacy.

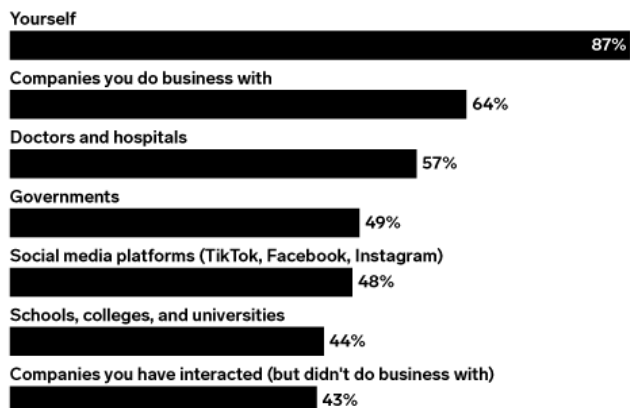
- Meta has provided ad-free subscriptions to Facebook in the EU in response to the GDPR, but even that compliance has been called into question. Europe's largest consumer rights group [filed a complaint](#) against the company for high costs and misleading consumers about its ad-free tier.
- In Meta's defense, early failures could be stepping stones toward establishing practices that meet the heightening standards around data privacy—that's why the UK is rolling out the Online Safety Act [over the course of several years](#) and with input from corporations.

- Still, skirting around the rules has not served Meta well in the past several years and has resulted in hefty fines. But its difficulty in meeting new standards shows how hard it is for social media companies to fundamentally change their advertising businesses.

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### Source That Should Be Responsible for Your Data According to US Adults, Q2 2023

% of respondents



Note: ages 25+

Source: Publishers Clearing House (PCH), "It's All Personal," Dec 3, 2023

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