

# Retailers face backlash for unchecked facial recognition use leading to false arrests

Article

**The news:** A coalition of civil rights organizations is demanding that **retailers stop using facial recognition** because the technology leads to abuses and wrongful arrests, [per](#)

Bloomberg. More than [35 organizations](#) joined the campaign and singled out various [large retailers](#).

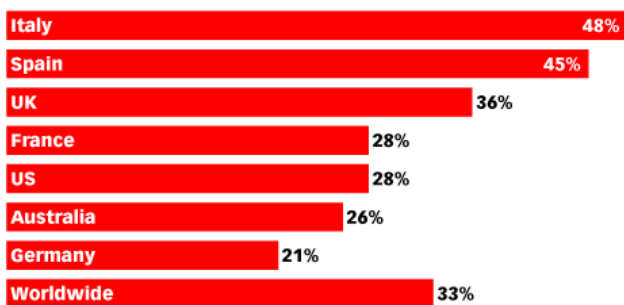
**How we got here:** Retailers use facial recognition to identify known [shoplifters](#) as well as to give [preferential treatment](#) to big spenders.

- Activists argue that the technology facilitates the exclusion of low-income shoppers as well as worker exploitation and reporting of undocumented workers to immigration. Various [cities](#) and [states](#) continue to [push back](#) against the use of facial recognition
- **Facial recognition has drawn increasing global criticism from privacy and civil rights groups.** The technology has disproportionately [misidentified minorities](#) and people of color.
- **Detroit** has implemented [Project Green Light](#), which places surveillance cameras with facial recognition in more than 700 businesses. **Robert Williams** was arrested last year in Detroit after a facial recognition system [misidentified](#) him as a suspect. It's the second recent [case](#) of Detroit Police's facial recognition leading to a false arrest.

**The takeaway:** Since retailers are on private property, they are not bound by state or local regulations banning facial recognition. To date, only **Portland, Oregon** has included [private businesses](#) in its facial recognition ban. At most, the continuing backlash can increase awareness of the use of this technology and its consequences.

**Internet Users in Select Countries Who Would Be Comfortable with Retail Stores Using Facial Recognition for Personalized Offers, Dec 2019**

% of respondents



Note: n=4,815 ages 18+  
Source: Toluna and Harris Interactive, "Global Consumer New Technology Adoption," Feb 5, 2020

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