

WHATSAPP'S UPDATED PRIVACY POLICY

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Status, group names and icons, frequency and duration of activities, and whether a user is online information will all continue to be held by WhatsApp. | Photo Credit: [Reuters](#)

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WhatsApp updated its privacy policy and terms of service on Monday, expanding how the messaging platform will share user data with other Facebook-owned and third-party apps.

The update comes with a condition that if the user refuses to share data with Facebook, they will have to quit WhatsApp. The new terms of service are set to take effect a month from now, on February 8.

What's at stake?

Status, group names and icons, frequency and duration of activities, and whether a user is online information will all continue to be held by WhatsApp.

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Beyond this, the platform will collect data from the new payment feature, including processing method, transactions and shipment data. It will also collect and share location, device model, operating system, battery level and browser details.

A privacy label U-turn

Even back in July, WhatsApp gave its users an 'opt out' choice on sharing usage data. "If you are an existing user, you can choose not to have your WhatsApp account information shared with Facebook to improve Facebook ads and products experiences," the company said in the earlier version of its privacy policy.

Users who accept the Terms and Privacy Policy will have an additional 30 days to make this choice, it added.

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This clause has been removed in the updated policy, which makes it mandatory for users to give consent to WhatsApp to collect and share data.

How does this impact users?

WhatsApp was founded as a free, cross-platform messaging app in 2009. It gained over 400 million monthly active users four years later. Facebook bought the platform in 2014, and gradually changed the way it accessed user data from WhatsApp. The social networking company is now showing WhatsApp users a 'take it or leave it' attitude with the latest policy update.

The updated WhatsApp terms will help Facebook and connected third-party apps to exploit user

data for commercial gain, including personal data, breaching user's privacy, according to Apar Gupta, executive director of Internet Freedom Foundation, a digital liberties organisation.

"There is a lack of independent third-party assessment with regard to what and how much data is being used," Gupta said.

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The personal data could also result in the micro-targeting of propaganda and hate messages through Facebook, he added.

The privacy policy lacks clarity and fails to shed light on how data from Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram is being combined, and who it is being made available to, he stated.

The implication

A judicial enquiry is likely to help users find answers to questions regarding Facebook's data collection practice, Gupta noted. Facebook has not yet responded to [the joint parliamentary committee's questions regarding its practice](#), making it harder to ascertain where the problem of data sharing stands.

The lack of a data protection committee in India also further deepens the issue.

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The Lava Z1 is targeted at consumers looking to upgrade from a feature phone, and offers them a chance to customise storage and other specs

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