

TV maker illegally tracked and sold viewing data

9th February, 2017



The television maker Vizio has agreed to pay \$2.2 million to settle claims that it collected data from 11 million people without their consent. The lawsuit against the flat-panel TV

maker was filed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the USA. The FTC discovered that Vizio had been gathering and selling data on customers without permission for years. The FTC claimed Vizio began making televisions in 2014 that automatically tracked what people were watching. They fitted tracking devices to TVs made before 2014 by using software updates. The FTC said: "Consumers didn't know that while they were watching their TVs, Vizio was watching them."

The FTC said Vizio captured second-by-second information about what people were watching. The company also recorded people's IP addresses. The FTC said this was a breach of privacy and security. It said: "The data generated when you watch television can reveal a lot about you and your household." Vizio sold information to advertisers about people's age, sex, household size and income, marital status, home ownership, and education level. However, the company did not share people's names. Vizio lawyer Jerry Huang said: "Today, the FTC has made it clear that all smart-TV makers should get people's consent before collecting and sharing television viewing information."

Sources: pcmag.com / huffingtonpost.com / androidpolice.com

Writing

When a company collects data on you without your consent, it is stealing. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

agreed / claims / data / customers / permission / tracking / devices / updates / TV / information / addresses / privacy / security / income / marital status / education level

True / False

- A TV maker had to pay \$22 million to settle claims about data collection. T / F
- The company collected data on 11 million people without their consent. T / F
- The company's TVs automatically collected data on people's viewing. T / F
- Customers knew that the TV maker was watching what they watched. T / F
- The company collected data every other second. T / F
- The TV maker also collected customers' IP addresses. T / F
- The TV maker collected and sold information on people's marital status. T / F
- A company lawyer said it wasn't clear what TV makers should do. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. agreed | a. legal action |
| 2. settle | b. violation |
| 3. lawsuit | c. gadgets |
| 4. fitted | d. position |
| 5. devices | e. resolve |
| 6. captured | f. brought about |
| 7. breach | g. recorded |
| 8. generated | h. consented |
| 9. status | i. evident |
| 10. clear | j. inserted |

Discussion – Student A

- What can bad people do with your IP address?
- How secure do you think you are online?
- What advice do you have for people to safeguard their privacy?
- How dangerous is it to give personal information online?
- Why do you think the company did not share people's names?
- What would people learn about you from the Internet sites you visit?
- What do your TV viewing habits say about you?
- What questions would you like to ask the boss of Vizio?

BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. agreed to pay \$2.2 million to settle | a. people were watching |
| 2. it collected data from 11 million people | b. status |
| 3. The lawsuit against the flat-panel TV maker | c. claims |
| 4. automatically tracked what | d. by-second information |
| 5. software | e. lot about you |
| 6. Vizio captured second- | f. was filed |
| 7. recorded people's | g. without their consent |
| 8. reveal a | h. consent |
| 9. marital | i. IP addresses |
| 10. makers should get people's | j. updates |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How much do you worry about your personal information?
- How surprised are you a TV maker can do this?
- What do companies do with the data they collect on you?
- Should the 11 million people be able to sue the TV maker?
- How legal were the TV maker's actions?
- What would you do if you were one of the 11 million?
- Will you now worry more about your personal information?

Spelling

- to eltset claims
- the aiswult
- Federal Trade mCmosinsoi
- without niesismpor
- tracking isveced
- software tasepdu
- eapdrtu second-by-second information
- a reachb of privacy
- avleer a lot about you
- aatmirl status
- Vizio yearlw
- get people's cntosen

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. a	4. j	5. c
6. g	7. b	8. f	9. d	10. i

Role Play

Role A – Date of Birth

You think your date of birth is the most confidential information. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their info isn't as confidential. Also, tell the others which is the least confidential of these (and why): weight, income or passport number.

Role B – Weight

You think your weight is the most confidential information. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their info isn't as confidential. Also, tell the others which is the least confidential of these (and why): date of birth, income or passport number.

Role C – Income

You think your income is the most confidential information. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their info isn't as confidential. Also, tell the others which is the least confidential of these (and why): weight, date of birth or passport number.

Role D – Passport Number

You think your passport number is the most confidential information. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their info isn't as confidential. Also, tell the others which is the least confidential of these (and why): weight, income or date of birth.

Speaking – Confidential

Rank these with your partner. Put the most confidential information at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| • date of birth | • ATM card PIN number |
| • weight | • passport number |
| • income | • e-mail password |
| • biggest secret | • marital status |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.