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18 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
19 **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

20 ANIBAL RODRIGUEZ and JULIEANNA  
21 MUNIZ individually and on behalf of all  
22 other similarly situated,

23 Plaintiffs,

24 v.

25 GOOGLE LLC and ALPHABET INC.,

26 Defendants.

Case No. 3:20-cv-4688

**COMPLAINT**

**CLASS ACTION FOR**  
**(1) FEDERAL WIRETAP VIOLATIONS,**  
**18 U.S.C. §§ 2510, ET. SEQ.;**  
**(2) INVASION OF PRIVACY ACT**  
**VIOLATIONS, CAL. PENAL CODE**  
**§§ 631 & 632;**  
**(3) INVASION OF PRIVACY;**  
**(4) COMPREHENSIVE COMPUTER**  
**DATA ACCESS AND FRAUD ACT,**  
**CAL. PENAL CODE § 502.**

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

**CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT**

1  
2 This action arises from the unlawful and intentional interception and collection of  
3 individuals’ confidential communications and data without their knowledge or consent, even when  
4 those individuals expressly follow the recommendations of defendants Google LLC and its parent  
5 company Alphabet Inc. (collectively, “Google” or “Defendants”) to prevent the interception or  
6 collection of their browsing and other activity on their mobile apps. Plaintiffs Anibal Rodriguez  
7 and JulieAnna Muniz, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, file this class action  
8 against Google, and in support state the following:

9 **I. INTRODUCTION**

10 1. Google promises user control and privacy. In reality, Google is a voyeur  
11 extraordinaire. Google is always watching. Even when it promises to look away, Google is  
12 watching. Every click, every website, every app—our entire virtual lives. Intercepted. Tracked.  
13 Logged. Compiled. Packaged. Sold for profit.

14 2. This case is about Google’s illegal interception of consumers’ private activity on  
15 consumer mobile applications (“apps”)—a huge and growing treasure trove of data that Google  
16 amasses by the second to sustain profits in its ever-growing share of the market for consumer  
17 advertising.

18 3. Protecting data privacy is critical in our increasingly virtual and interconnected  
19 society. People everywhere are becoming more aware and more concerned, that large corporations  
20 are intercepting, collecting, recording and exploiting for profit their personal communications and  
21 private information.

22 4. Well aware of these justified and growing concerns over privacy, Google—one of  
23 the world’s largest technology companies—has assured and continues to assure its consumers and  
24 users that when it comes to mobile app activity, they and not Google, are “in control of what  
25 information [they] share with Google.” For example, Google’s global Privacy Policy states on the  
26 first page:

27 When you use our services, you’re trusting us with your  
28 information. We understand this is a big responsibility and work  
hard to protect your information and *put you in control*.

1           ...  
2           Our services include: ... *products that are integrated into third-*  
3           *party apps* and sites, like ads and embedded Google Maps.

4           ...  
5           *[A]cross our services, you can adjust your privacy settings to*  
6           *control what we collect* and how your information is used.

7 (emphasis added).

8           5.       Google purports to offer consumers the option to “control” what app browsing and  
9 activity data Google collects by adjusting their privacy settings to “turn Web & App Activity off . .  
10 . at any time” before opening or browsing mobile apps. Google repeatedly assures its consumers  
11 that they need only “[t]urn Web & App Activity on or off” to control what app activity Google can  
12 and cannot see.

13           6.       Google’s privacy promises and assurances are blatant lies.

14           7.       Google in fact intercepts, tracks, collects and sells consumer mobile app browsing  
15 history and activity data *regardless of what* safeguards or “privacy settings” consumers undertake  
16 to protect their privacy. Even when consumers follow Google’s own instructions and turn off “Web  
17 & App Activity” tracking on their “Privacy Controls,” Google nevertheless continues to intercept  
18 consumers’ app usage and app browsing communications and personal information. Indeed, even  
19 if consumers completely avoid using Google-branded apps and devices, Google still tracks and  
20 compiles their communications by covertly integrating Google’s tracking software into the products  
21 of other companies. Google’s illegal practices extend to hundreds of thousands of smartphone apps,  
22 such as apps for The New York Times, Lyft, Alibaba, The Economist and others.

23           8.       Google accomplishes this surreptitious and unlawful interception, tracking, and data  
24 collection of users’ app activity through its Firebase SDK (software development kits). Firebase  
25 SDK is a suite of software tools that purports to provide additional functionality to an app, especially  
26 if it is to be released for Android. Third-party apps use Firebase SDK because its implementation  
27 is a prerequisite before Google allows access to its other tools such as Google Analytics, use of  
28 Google’s ad exchanges (such as AdMob, explained below), and marketing of those apps on the  
Google Play Store. Developers often have no choice but to use Firebase SDK because of Google’s  
demands and market power, including with analytics, advertisements, and the Android mobile

1 operating system. Once third-party app developers implement Firebase SDK, however, Firebase  
2 SDK allows Google to automatically and systematically intercept, track, and collect their users' app  
3 activity data—regardless of whether those users turn off “Web & App Activity” in their settings.

4 9. Google's practices infringe upon consumers' privacy; intentionally deceive  
5 consumers; give Google and its employees power to learn intimate details about individuals' lives,  
6 interests, and app usage; and make Google a potential target for “one-stop shopping” by any  
7 government, private, or criminal actor who wants to undermine individuals' privacy, security, or  
8 freedom. Through its pervasive and unlawful communication interceptions and massive data  
9 tracking and collection business, Google knows every user's friends, hobbies, political leanings,  
10 culinary preferences, cinematic tastes, shopping activity, preferred vacation destinations, romantic  
11 involvements, and even the most intimate and potentially embarrassing aspects of the user's app  
12 browsing histories and usage—regardless of whether the user accepts Google's illusory offer to  
13 keep such activities “private.” Indeed, notwithstanding consumers' best efforts, Google has made  
14 itself an unaccountable trove of information so detailed and expansive that George Orwell himself  
15 could not have imagined it.

16 10. Google must be held accountable for the harm it has caused to its consumers. And it  
17 must be prevented from continuing to engage in the covert and unauthorized data tracking and  
18 collection from virtually every American with a mobile phone. Beyond the California Constitution,  
19 federal and state privacy laws recognize individuals' reasonable expectations of privacy in  
20 confidential communications under these circumstances. Federal and California privacy laws  
21 prohibit unauthorized interception, access, and use of the contents in electronic communications.  
22 The European courts have also recently found the practices at issue illegal. Likewise, American  
23 regulators are beginning to recognize Google's abusive practices for what they are.

24 11. Plaintiffs are individuals whose mobile app usage was tracked by Google during the  
25 period after Google first offered users the ability to turn off “Web & App Activity” tracking and the  
26 present (the “Class Period”) with his or her “Web & App Activity” turned off. Google's tracking  
27 and data collection included detailed browsing history data collected by Google, whereby Google  
28 created and monetized user information without those users' consent. Plaintiffs bring federal and

1 California state law claims on behalf of other similarly-situated Google subscribers in the United  
2 States (the “Class”) arising from Google’s knowing and unauthorized interception, copying, taking,  
3 use, and tracking of consumers’ internet communications and activity, and its knowing and  
4 unauthorized invasion of consumer privacy.

## 5 **II. THE PARTIES**

6 12. Plaintiff JulieAnna Muniz is an adult domiciled in El Cerrito, California. She had  
7 an active Google account during the entire Class Period.

8 13. Plaintiff Anibal Rodriguez is an adult domiciled in Homestead, Florida. He had an  
9 active Google account during the entire Class Period.

10 14. Defendant Google LLC is a Delaware limited liability company with a principal  
11 place of business at what is officially known as The Googleplex, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway,  
12 Mountain View, California 94043. Google LLC regularly conducts business throughout California  
13 and in this judicial district. Google LLC is one of the largest technology companies in the world  
14 and conducts product development, search, and advertising operations in this district.

15 15. Defendant Alphabet Inc. is a Delaware corporation, organized and existing under  
16 the laws of the State of Delaware, with its principal place of business at what is officially known as  
17 The Googleplex, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, California 94043-1351. Alphabet  
18 is the parent holding company of Google LLC. Alphabet owns all the equity interests in Google  
19 LLC.<sup>1</sup>

## 20 **III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

21 16. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendants because their principal place  
22 of business is in California. Additionally, Defendants are subject to specific personal jurisdiction  
23 in this State because a substantial part of the events and conduct giving rise to Plaintiffs’ and the  
24 Class’ claims occurred in this State.

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25  
26 <sup>1</sup> During the 2015 reorganization, certain of Google LLC’s business segments were spun off and  
27 separated into independent entities under the ownership of Alphabet Inc. At various times during  
28 the Class Period, certain of the business segments re-merged with Google LLC under one corporate  
structure. Accordingly, Alphabet Inc. and Google LLC both have been named as defendants in  
order to ensure all corporate entities who may be found liable for any portion of the alleged  
wrongdoing are part of this lawsuit.

1 17. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over the federal claims in this action,  
2 namely the Federal Wiretap Act, 18 U.S.C. § 2511 (the “Federal Wiretap Act”) pursuant to 28  
3 U.S.C. § 1331.

4 18. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this entire action pursuant to the  
5 Class Action Fairness Act (“CAFA”), 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d), because this is a class action in which  
6 the amount in controversy exceeds \$5,000,000, and at least one member of the class is a citizen  
7 of a state other than California or Delaware.

8 19. This Court also has supplemental jurisdiction over the state law claims in this  
9 action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367 because the state law claims form part of the same case or  
10 controversy as those that give rise to the federal claims.

11 20. Venue is proper in this District because a substantial portion of the events and  
12 actions giving rise to the claims in this matter took place in this judicial District. Furthermore,  
13 Defendants Alphabet Inc. and Google LLC are headquartered in this District and subject to personal  
14 jurisdiction in this District.

15 21. Intradistrict Assignment. A substantial part of the events and conduct which give  
16 rise to the claims herein occurred in Santa Clara County.

17 **IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

18 **A. Google’s Persistent, Covert Collection of Private Consumer Data through**  
19 **Google Analytics**

20 22. Google has collected, and continues to collect, an untold amount of consumer data  
21 based on online browsing activity. Over 70% of online websites and publishers on the internet  
22 (altogether “Websites”) utilize Google’s website visitor-tracking product, “Google Analytics.”  
23 Google Analytics is a “freemium” service Google makes available to Websites that provides data  
24 analytics and attribution about the origins of a Website’s traffic, demographics, frequency,  
25 browsing habits on the Website, and other data about visitors.<sup>2</sup>

26 \_\_\_\_\_  
27 <sup>2</sup> Google Analytics is “free” to implement if Websites want general reports with pseudo-  
28 anonymous data regarding visitors. To obtain more specific and granular data about visitors,  
Websites must pay a substantial fee, such as by paying for Google’s DV360, Ad Hub, or Google  
Audience products.

1           23. To implement Google Analytics, Google requires Websites to embed Google's own  
2 custom code into their existing webpage code. When a consumer visits a Website, his or her  
3 browser communicates a request to the Website's servers to send the computer script to display  
4 the Website. This communication and request for content from the consumer is often referred to  
5 as a HTTP GET request, to which the Website's servers respond with the computer code script to  
6 display the contents of the Website. The consumer's browser then begins to read Google's custom  
7 code along with the Website's own code when loading the Website from the Website's server.  
8 Two sets of code are thus automatically run as part of the browser's attempt to load and read the  
9 Website pages—the Website's code, which loads the content of the Website requested by the  
10 consumer, and Google's embedded code, which does something altogether different.

11           24. Google's embedded code causes the user's browser to send his or her personal  
12 information to Google and its servers in California, such as the user's IP address, the URL address  
13 (which identifies the particular page of the Website that is being visited), and other information  
14 regarding the user's device and browser. Google's data collection almost always occurs without  
15 the user's knowledge, as an automatic response to the consumer's request for information from  
16 the Website's server. Google does not require that Websites disclose upfront that Google is  
17 collecting the visitors' information regardless of what they do, and as further discussed below,  
18 Google does not tell its consumers which websites implement Google Analytics. Other than  
19 staying off the internet entirely, there is no effective way for consumers to avoid Google Analytics  
20 and its surreptitious tracking.

21           25. By embedding its tracking code through Google Analytics, Google is able to  
22 intercept, track, collect, take, compile, and use more communications that reveal personal and  
23 consumer data than any company in the world. Because more than 70% of Websites use Google  
24 Analytics, Google is able to track and collect a staggering amount of personal and consumer data  
25 online in real time. With virtually every click of the mouse to initiate a consumer's internet  
26 request, Google intercepts a signal contemporaneously and sends it to its own servers. Those  
27 signals contain consumers' personal viewing information and requests, which Google collects,  
28 reads, and organizes based on consumers' prior histories. Google then advances its business



1 interests by using the personal information obtained through this routine practice of covert  
2 interception.

3 26. Contrary to Google’s representations, Google tracks consumers even when  
4 consumers select “private mode” on their browsers, including while consumers are “Incognito” on  
5 Google Chrome.<sup>3</sup> Google does this through Google Analytics because the Google Analytics  
6 tracking code continues to run each time a Website is loaded regardless of whether a user is  
7 browsing in “private mode” or not. Thus, unbeknownst to most consumers, Google constantly  
8 tracks what they request and read on the internet, click by click and page by page, in real time.

9 **B. Google’s Persistent Collection of Mobile App Communications**

10 27. In addition to its unauthorized collection of consumer web data through Google  
11 Analytics, Google also engages in the same surreptitious tracking practices with respect to  
12 consumer use of mobile apps.

13 28. Consumers’ mobile app usage has grown exponentially in recent years, and Google  
14 views this activity as the new frontier in its multi-billion dollar data tracking and collection  
15 business. Indeed, Google has already publicly announced that it is prioritizing mobile app results  
16 in its search function, and that its search results have preferred mobile app pages over webpages  
17 since July 1, 2019.

18 29. Google tracks consumers’ use of mobile apps via a software development kit  
19 (“SDK”) called Firebase, which Google purchased as part of its acquisition of Firebase, Inc., in  
20 2014. Firebase SDK is a suite of software tools that purports to provide additional functionality to  
21 an app, especially if it is to be released for Android. Google acquired Firebase SDK as part of its  
22 efforts to “index” the world’s mobile apps, which permits Google Search to present search results  
23 not just from webpages but also directly from indexed pages within mobile apps. Notably,  
24 “Google Search uses information about the actions users take on public and personal content in an  
25 app to improve ranking for Search results and suggestions.” *Log User Actions*, FIREBASE,  
26 <https://firebase.google.com/docs/app-indexing/android/log-actions> (last visited July 1, 2020).

27  
28 <sup>3</sup> This specific misconduct is detailed in a separate lawsuit pending in the Northern District of California. See *Brown et al. v. Google LLC et al.*, Case No. 20-cv-03664-LHK (N.D. Cal.).



1 Google uses Firebase SDK for its own benefit with Google Search by “log[ging] user actions  
2 through the App Indexing API.” *Id.* Through Firebase SDK, Google can “[l]og the user’s  
3 interactions with the app, including viewing content, creating new content, or sharing content.”  
4 *Id.*

5 30. For example, through Firebase SDK, Google can identify certain “actions”  
6 consumers take within an app, such as “viewing a recipe,” and then “log separate calls” for each  
7 time the consumers “view[] a recipe (start) and then clos[e] the recipe (end).” *Id.*

8 31. In other words, Google aggressively tracks what consumers browse, see, create,  
9 and share online when using the apps installed on their mobile devices.

10 32. As Search Engine Watch explained in 2015,<sup>4</sup> “Google can index the content  
11 contained within an app, either through a sitemap file or through Google’s Webmaster Tools. If  
12 someone searches for content contained within an app, and if the user has that app installed, the  
13 person then has the option to view that content within the app, as opposed to outside the app on a  
14 mobile webpage. For sites that have the same content on their main website and app, the app  
15 results will appear as deep links<sup>5</sup> within the search listing. If the user has the app installed and  
16 they tap on these deep links, the app will launch and take them directly to the content.” Firebase  
17 SDK enables a number of tracking and data collection functions, including: what the app user is  
18 looking at; how the user was guided to launching the application; how the user navigates within  
19 the application; what actions the user takes within the application; and whether the app user  
20 ultimately pays for a transaction (like booking a hotel) within the application.

21 33. Firebase SDK automatically collects information from apps, similar to how Google  
22 Analytics automatically collects information from online websites. Indeed, as Google itself  
23 explains to app developers: Firebase’s “[a]utomatically collected events are triggered by basic  
24 \_\_\_\_\_

25 <sup>4</sup> Christopher Ratcliff, *What Is App Indexing and Why Is It Important?*, SEARCH ENGINE WATCH  
26 (Nov. 19, 2015), <https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2015/11/19/what-is-app-indexing-and-why-is-it-important/>.

27 <sup>5</sup> Deep links are like hyperlinks to a specific page location within a mobile application.  
28

1 interactions with your app. As long as you use the Firebase SDK, you don't need to write any  
2 additional code to collect these events." These "[a]utomatically collected events" include:  
3 (a) "page\_location," (b) "page\_referrer," and (c) "page\_title." Google states that these three  
4 parameters are "collected by default with every event."<sup>6</sup> This means that every time the user  
5 interacts with an app, Firebase records that interaction by compiling at least those parameters into  
6 the user's history.

7 34. Firebase SDK often does this automatic collection of information in conjunction  
8 with Google's older app SDK, called AdMob SDK. Like Firebase SDK, AdMob SDK also  
9 automatically collects app-related information.<sup>7</sup> AdMob is owned by Google and is one of the  
10 largest mobile advertisement exchanges, and Google required that publishers integrate AdMob  
11 SDK in order to use AdMob.

12 35. Google's tracking of app activity occurs not only in its own apps, which utilize  
13 Firebase and AdMob, but also on third-party apps that have no formal association or affiliation  
14 with Google other than simply utilizing the Firebase SDK. Those third-party apps utilizing the  
15 Firebase SDK include, for example, The New York Times, Duolingo, Alibaba, Lyft, Venmo,  
16 Shazam, and The Economist.

17 36. All consumer requests for content from an app using Firebase SDK are accessible,  
18 collectible, trackable, and usable by Google—*regardless* of whether the user has expressly  
19 revoked permission for Google to collect and use such information.

20 37. Google uses all of this tracked data to enhance its targeted advertising algorithms.

21 38. When Google collects such information via Firebase, Google intercepts private  
22 communications between app users and the app publisher—that is, Google intercepts the app  
23 user's request for specific content from the publisher. The communications collected by Firebase  
24

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25 <sup>6</sup> See *Automatically Collected Events*, FIREBASE HELP, [https://support.google.com/firebase/  
26 answer/6317485?hl=en#:~:text=Automatically%20collected%20events%20%20%20%20Event  
27 %20name,currency%2C%20quan%20...%20%2023%20more%20rows%20](https://support.google.com/firebase/answer/6317485?hl=en#:~:text=Automatically%20collected%20events%20%20%20%20Event%20name,currency%2C%20quan%20...%20%2023%20more%20rows%20) (last visited June 29,  
2020).

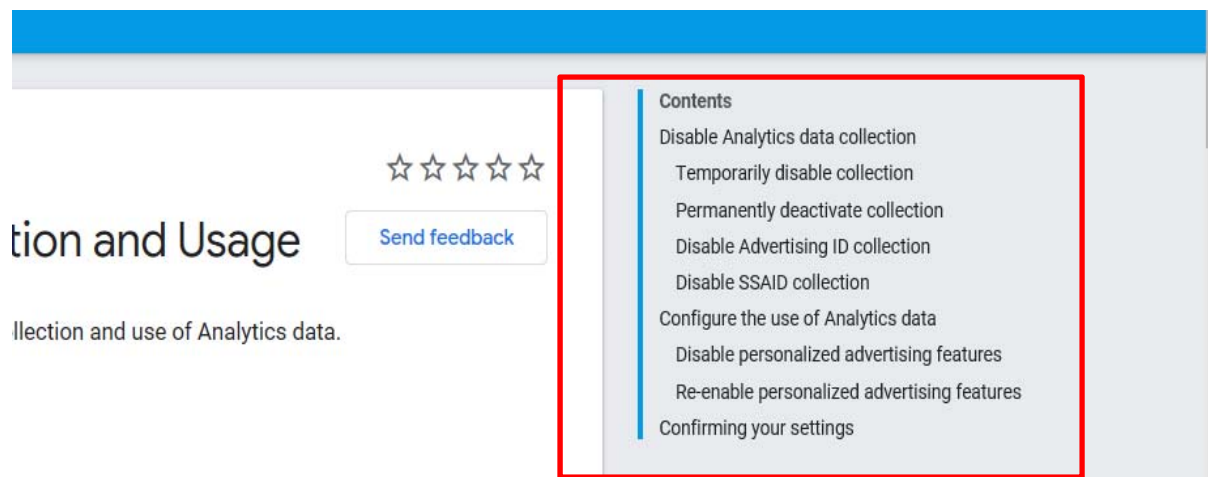
28 <sup>7</sup> See *Automatically Collected Events*, GOOGLE ADMOB HELP, [https://support.google.com/  
admob/answer/9755157?hl=en](https://support.google.com/admob/answer/9755157?hl=en) (last visited July 1, 2020).

1 are simultaneously transmitted to Google servers in California, and Google is thereby able to  
2 analyze at least what the user is viewing (i.e., the “page\_title”), if the user arrived at that page from  
3 another place where Google has a tracker (i.e., the “page\_referrer”), and the page URL (i.e., the  
4 “page\_location”). Google then uses the data to target the user with advertisements throughout  
5 Google’s advertising ecosystem—including in the very app where the communication was  
6 intercepted. All consumers’ requests for content from the app thereby become accessible,  
7 collectible, and usable by Google—regardless of whether the user has expressly revoked  
8 permission for Google to collect and use such information.

9         39. The data collected by Firebase SDK are contemporaneously and automatically sent  
10 to Google servers and compiled by Google as part of its profiles on all consumers in the world,  
11 access to which Google then sells to advertisers for billions of dollars. Google explains none of  
12 this to its users.

13         40. Publishers often have little choice in whether to use Firebase SDK, because Google  
14 requires the use of Firebase in the mobile ecosystem, particularly if publishers want access to  
15 Android operating system services, advertisement services, or analytics—all services where  
16 Google has market power. Notably, web and app publishers lack control over the information  
17 Google can collect from apps using Firebase. If online publishers want to integrate their Google  
18 web analytics with mobile app analytics—that is, those publishers that have both websites and  
19 apps and want analytics on both—Google *requires* that the publishers integrate Firebase SDK as  
20 part of their apps. Because Google Analytics is so widely used, Google’s tethering of Google  
21 Analytics with Firebase SDK makes Firebase SDK more pervasive, thereby making it even more  
22 difficult for consumers to avoid the many tentacles of Google’s data and content tracking practices.

23         41. Once app publishers integrate Firebase SDK as part of their apps, they must play  
24 by Google’s rules. Google’s entire “configuration” menu on its Firebase documentation offers the  
25 following limited choices:  
26  
27  
28



Google essentially gives app publishers an all-or-nothing proposition: app publishers must either trust Google with everything Google collects about their users through the app (and that Google will comply with all laws and legal requirements), or publishers must effectively abandon Google’s SDK altogether.<sup>8</sup> That app publishers—not to mention consumers and users—can “choose” how Google collects and uses consumer data is an illusion.

42. Since the acquisition of Firebase in 2014, Google has quietly collected what must be the largest index of mobile app pages in the world, with over 1.5 million apps being effectively forced to use Firebase SDK, including most apps on Android OS. Google has also continued to use its monopoly power with respect to web-based searching to push rapid adoption of Firebase SDK, so that it can eventually release a “more complete” Search product that includes every mobile app page in the world. As a result, nearly every Android OS user (and most iOS users) are likely to have fallen victim to Google’s deceptive acts.

### C. Google’s Misrepresentations about Data Privacy

43. Over the last few years, the public, legislators, enforcement agencies, and courts have become increasingly aware of online threats to consumer privacy—including threats posed by powerful technology companies that have become household names. Google has responded by

<sup>8</sup> See *Configure Analytics Data Collection and Usage*, FIREBASE HELP, <https://firebase.google.com/docs/analytics/configure-data-collection?platform=android>.

1 telling consumers that they can prevent Google from tracking their online history and collecting  
2 their personal data.

3 44. In Google’s Privacy Policy, Google throughout the Class Period made and  
4 continues to make numerous assurances about how consumers can “control” the information  
5 consumers share with Google, and that they can engage in online activities anonymously and  
6 without their communications being intercepted by Google.

7 45. Google’s Privacy Policy explicitly states: “you can adjust your privacy settings *to*  
8 *control what we collect and how your information is used.*” Privacy & Terms, GOOGLE,  
9 <https://policies.google.com/privacy> (emphasis added).

10 *privately using Chrome in Incognito mode. And across our services, you can adjust*  
11 *your privacy settings to control what we collect and how your information is used.*

12 46. Google included this same statement—“you can adjust your privacy settings to  
13 control what we collect and how your information is used”—in versions of its Privacy Policy dated  
14 May 25, 2018, January 22, 2019, October 15, 2019, December 19, 2019, March 31, 2020, and  
15 July 1, 2020. Earlier versions of Google’s Privacy Policy included similar representations  
16 regarding users’ ability to adjust privacy settings and control Google’s collection and use of their  
17 information.<sup>9</sup>

18 47. On the “Go to My Activity” page of the Privacy Policy, both in the current version  
19 and prior versions published by Google during the Class Period, Google reiterates that “My  
20 Activity allows you to review and *control data that’s created when you use Google services...*”  
21

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22  
23 <sup>9</sup> For example, the Google Privacy Policies effective between August 19, 2015 and May 24, 2018  
24 included a section titled “Transparency and choice.” That section states that Google’s “goal is to  
25 be clear about what information we collect, so that you can make meaningful choices about how  
26 it is used” and directs users to “[r]eview and update your Google activity controls to decide what  
27 types of data, such as videos you’ve watched on YouTube or past searches, you would like saved  
28 with your account when you use Google services.” Also included in the “Transparency and  
choice” section is the statement that users can “[c]ontrol who you share information with through  
your Google Account.” See Aug. 19, 2015 Google Privacy Policy; Mar. 25, 2016 Google Privacy  
Policy; June 28, 2016 Google Privacy Policy; Aug. 29, 2016 Google Privacy Policy; Mar. 1, 2017  
Google Privacy Policy; Apr. 17, 2017 Google Privacy Policy; Oct. 2, 2017 Google Privacy Policy;  
Dec. 18, 2017 Google Privacy Policy (this policy was effective until May 24, 2018).

1 (emphasis added).

2 **Ways to review & update your information**



5 **My Activity**

6 My Activity allows you to review and control data that's created when you use Google services, like searches you've done or your visits to Google Play. You can browse by date and by topic, and delete part or all of your activity.

7 [Go to My Activity](#)

8

9 48. When consumers click on “Go to My Activity,” they are presented with the option  
10 to “Learn more.” When consumers click on “Learn more,” they are taken to a page where they  
11 are supposed to be able to “View & control activity in your account.”<sup>10</sup>

12 49. From the “View & control activity in your account” page, a consumer can also click  
13 the link, “See & control your Web & App Activity” on the right-hand side.<sup>11</sup> On that page,  
14 currently and previously during the Class Period, Google made and makes the following critical  
15 representations:

16 **See & control your Web & App Activity**

17 If Web & App Activity is turned on, your searches and activity from *other Google*  
18 *services* are saved in your Google Account, so you may get more personalized  
19 experiences, like faster searches and more helpful app and content  
20 recommendations.

21 *You can turn Web & App Activity off or delete past activity at any time.*

22 ...

23 **What's saved as Web & App Activity**

24 ...

25 <sup>10</sup> See *View & Control Activity in Your Account*, GOOGLE ACCOUNT HELP, <https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/7028918?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en#:~:text=View%20%26%20control%20activity%20in%20your%20account%20When.can%20stop%20saving%20most%20activity%20at%20any%20time> (last visited June 29, 2020).

26  
27 <sup>11</sup> See *& Control Your Web & App Activity*, GOOGLE SEARCH HELP, [https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/54068?visit\\_id=6372555086257257422105376128&hl=en&rd=1](https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/54068?visit_id=6372555086257257422105376128&hl=en&rd=1) (last visited June 29, 2020).

Info about your browsing and other activity on sites, apps, and devices that use Google services

When Web & App Activity is on, you can include additional activity like:

- Sites and apps that partner with Google to show ads
- Sites and apps that use Google services, including data that apps share with Google
- Your Chrome browsing history
- Android usage & diagnostics, like battery level and system errors

*To let Google save this information:*

- *Web & App Activity must be on.*

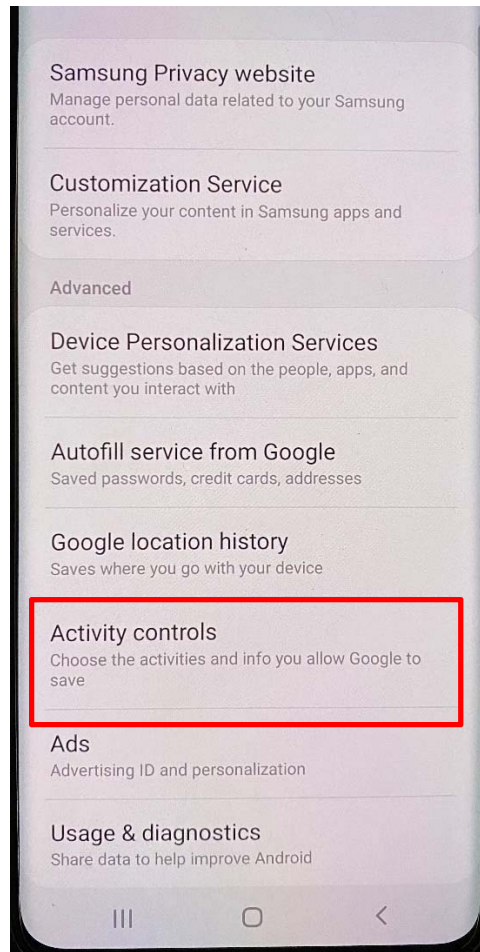
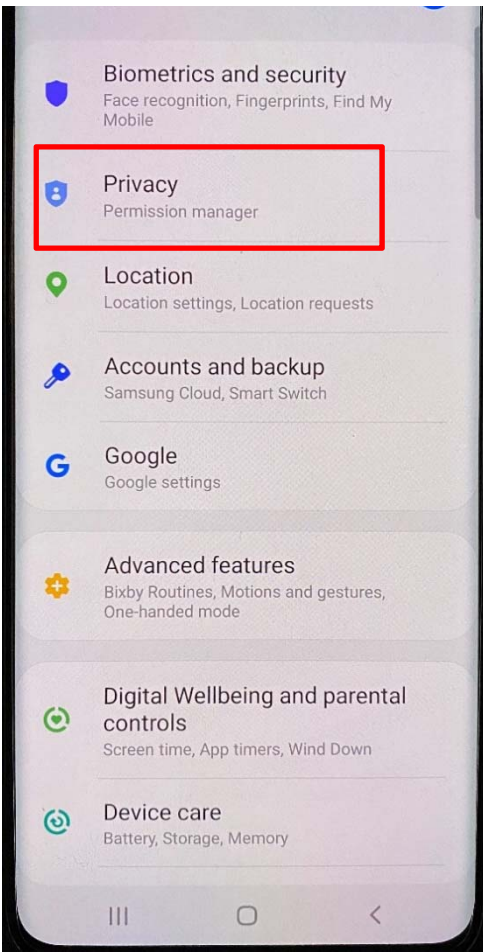
(emphasis added).

50. Google during the Class Period made and continues to make these representations in a Google Help Center webpage titled “See & control your Web & App Activity” on support.google.com. That Google webpage describes how Google collects detailed user information “When Web & App Activity is on” such as “Your location, language, IP address, referrer, and whether you use a browser or an app” and “Information on your device like recent apps or contact names you searched for.” In connection with “Info about your browsing and other activity on sites, apps, and devices that use Google services” the webpage again describes Google’s data collection “When Web & App Activity is on,” but states “To let Google save this information: Web & App Activity must be on.”

51. Based on these explicit representations, consumers reviewing Google’s Privacy Policy page and “See & control your Web & App Activity” page are left with the reasonable impression that Google will stop collecting *all* of their mobile app information or activity if the “Web & App Activity” setting is turned “off.”

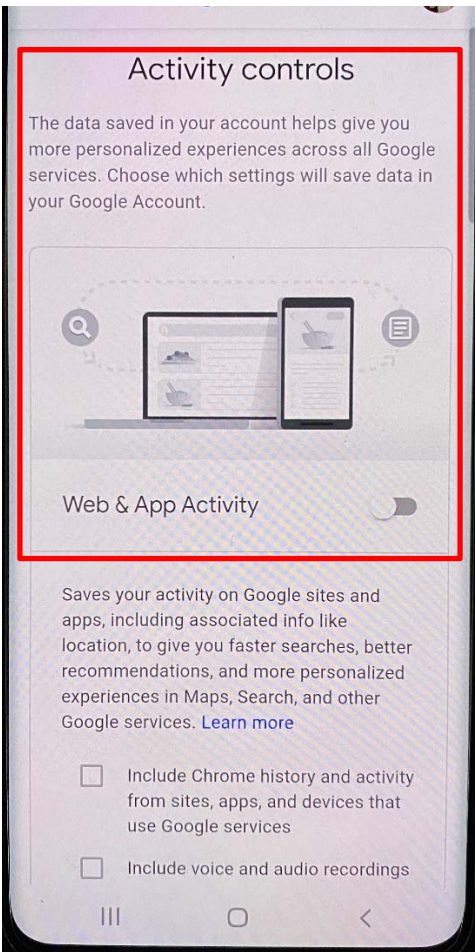
52. For consumers who use a mobile phone that employs Google’s Android Operating System, Google made and makes similar representations. For example, a Samsung S20 user would see the following screens when they go to “Settings,” which then leads the user to a “Privacy Permission Manager”:





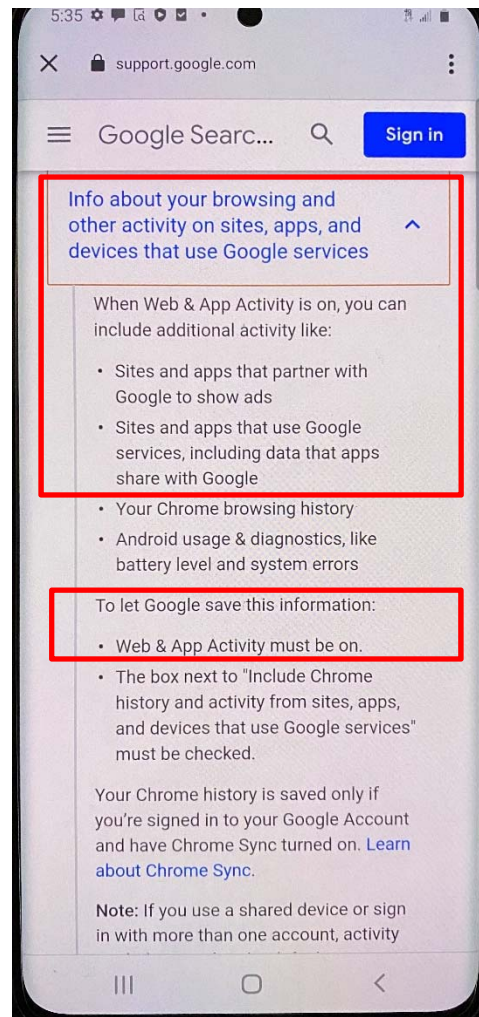
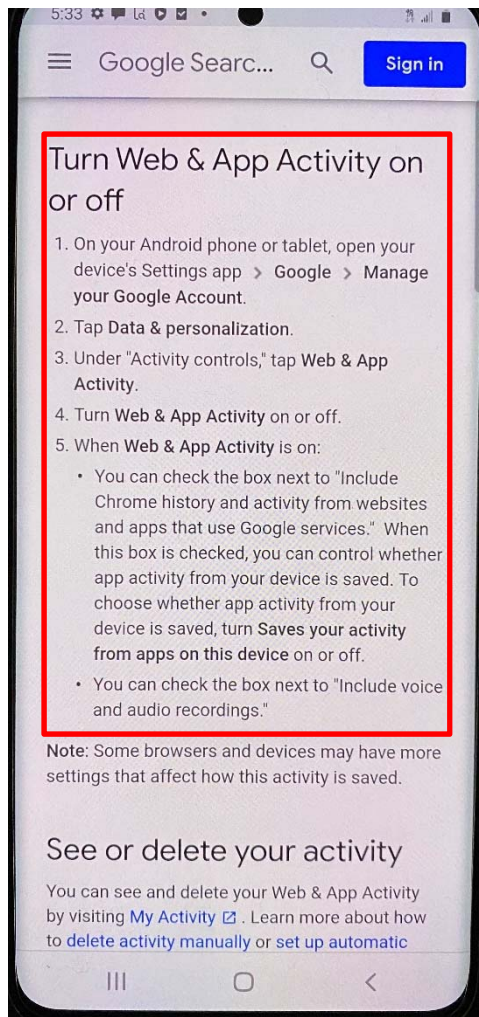
53. If the user clicks “Activity Controls,” the user can purportedly “[c]hoose the activities and info you allow Google to save,” and the user is then taken to a web version of Google’s online account control, where the user is again purportedly allowed to turn off or on “Web & App Activity”:

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54. As can be seen from the mobile version of the “See & Control Your Web & App Activity” page, Google made and makes the same representations to its mobile users as it does to web users—namely:

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55. Based on these explicit representations, consumers reviewing Google Android OS’s Activity Controls are left with the reasonable impression that Google will stop collecting *all* of their mobile app information or activity if the “Web & App Activity” setting is turned “off.”

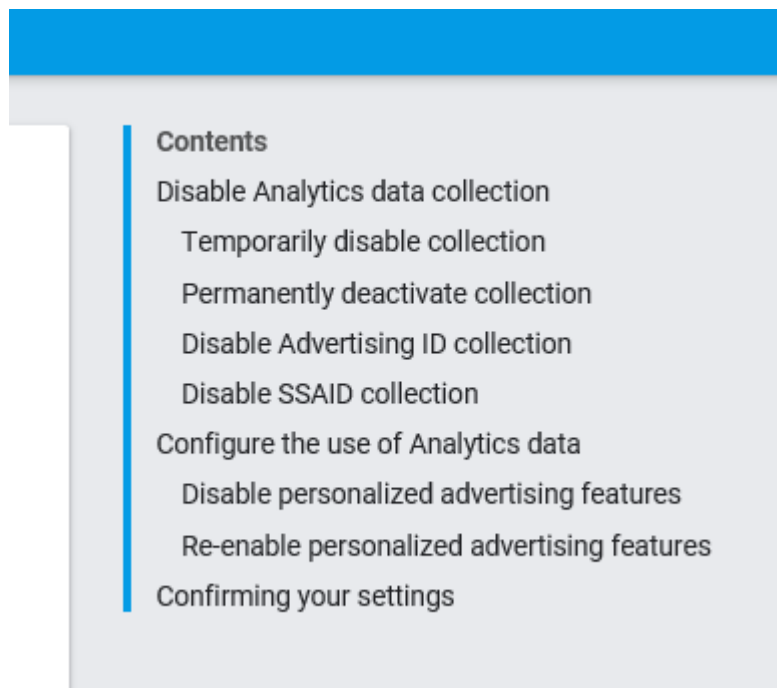
**D. Google Continues to Intercept the Communications of Consumers Even When “Web & App Activity” Is Turned Off**

56. Google’s representations about how it does not track consumers when consumers turn off “Web & App Activity” were and are completely false and misleading. Not only do consumers not know about what Google is doing to collect their private data while they are browsing apps on their devices, based on Google’s intentionally false representations, they also have no meaningful way of avoiding Google’s data-collection practices, even if they are following Google’s instructions to turn off “Web & App Activity.”



1           57. Despite Google’s representations that consumers are in control of the private  
2 information Google will track and collect, Google’s Firebase SDK is actually designed to  
3 automatically track consumers and their communications on their mobile apps—*no matter what*  
4 *settings a user chooses*. This is true even when a user browses an app with “Web & App Activity”  
5 turned off. Regardless of what a mobile user does, Google automatically collects user  
6 communications and events on any app using Firebase SDK. These communications include, at a  
7 minimum, the user’s (a) “page\_location,” (b) “page\_referrer,” and (c) “page\_title” in the mobile  
8 app, which data further reveals other user identifying information, including, at minimum, the  
9 user’s device information (which may, for example, include unique identifying information to the  
10 device, tagged by Google itself).

11           58. Again, as demonstrated by Google’s own Firebase documentation, there is no  
12 setting for app publishers (much less app users) to set Firebase SDK to adhere to user’s Google-  
13 account-level settings:



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26           59. Although Google intentionally gives its consumers the impression that they have  
27 control over whether, how, and when Google collects their personal app data, Google’s own  
28 documentation shows that Google’s privacy guarantees are completely illusory. Google’s Firebase

1 SDK collects personal information and communications content from mobile apps, originating  
2 from Google account holders, regardless of their clearly expressed directives to Google and  
3 Google’s promise to honor those directives.

4 60. The data Google surreptitiously collects through Firebase SDK is precisely the type  
5 of private, personal information consumers wish and expect to protect when they take the steps  
6 Google sets out for users to control the private information Google collects. Google knowingly  
7 and intentionally tracked, and continues to track, Plaintiffs regardless of Plaintiffs’ directives to  
8 Google and no matter how sensitive or personal their online app activities are. By accessing  
9 Plaintiffs’ mobile devices and tracking, collecting, and intercepting Plaintiffs’ personal  
10 communications—regardless of whether Plaintiffs have attempted to avoid such tracking pursuant  
11 to Google’s instructions—Google has gained a complete, cradle-to-grave profile of Plaintiffs  
12 without their knowledge and contrary to their expressed denial of consent.

13 61. There is no justification for Google’s secret, misleading, and unauthorized  
14 interception and collection of consumers’ private communications and app activity. Even to the  
15 extent Google claims it aggregates this data for later use and sale, this process would occur only  
16 *after* Google already intercepted, collected, reviewed, and analyzed individual user information.  
17 What Google does with consumers’ individual mobile app information after it has secretly  
18 intercepted it is cold comfort for those whose privacy Google has already violated, especially  
19 because Google repeatedly promises not to engage in this very behavior. By secretly breaking its  
20 privacy promises, Google breaches its consumers’ expectations of privacy—expectations that  
21 Google itself has gone to great lengths to create through its false and lofty pronouncements about  
22 its concern for user privacy.

23 62. The illusion that Google is a good corporate citizen is finally beginning to erode.  
24 France’s highest court recently affirmed a €50 million fine by the Commission Nationale de  
25 l’informatique et des Libertés (CNIL) against Google for its data collection and use practices in  
26 connection with Google’s Android OS. The CNIL found that Google used “a non-transparent  
27 consent gathering process that does not give consumers enough information to make an informed  
28 decision and—the bigger issue—the lack of a legal basis for processing personal data for

1 advertising purposes.”<sup>12</sup> In levying this fine, the CNIL stated that its “objective was to verify  
 2 compliance with IT law and freedoms and the [European Union’s General Data Privacy  
 3 Regulation] of the processing of personal data carried out by GOOGLE, by analyzing the journey  
 4 of a user and the documents to which he can have access by creating a Google account during the  
 5 configuration of its mobile equipment under Android.” The CNIL found that Google’s consent  
 6 process with Android OS violated the GDPR because there was “a breach of transparency and  
 7 information obligations” and there was also a “failure to have a legal basis for advertising  
 8 personalization processing.”<sup>13</sup>

9 63. Similarly, in May 2020, the Arizona Attorney General filed a complaint against  
 10 Google alleging that Google deceptively tracks consumers and their associated geographical  
 11 location by making consumers think that they had opted to turn off location tracking through global  
 12 user-based controls, while making every effort to circumvent such controls. *See* Complaint,  
 13 *Arizona v. Google LLC*, Arizona Sup. Ct., Case No. 2020-006219 (May 27, 2020). Indeed, the  
 14 Arizona Attorney General alleges, “Google’s deceptive and unfair conduct extends well beyond  
 15 its false Location History disclosure. Indeed, such acts and practices pervade Google’s seemingly  
 16 relentless drive to (i) collect as much user location data as possible and (ii) make it exceedingly  
 17 hard for consumers to understand what is going on with their location information.” *Id.* ¶ 9. In  
 18 addition, the Complaint alleges “though Google claims to have obtained consent to collect and  
 19 store its consumers’ data, that consent is based on misleading user interface.” *Id.* ¶ 48.

20 **E. Google Intercepts Communications for Its Own Nefarious Purposes, and Not**  
 21 **For Those of the Consumer**

22 64. Google represents on its website that “Google was founded on the belief that  
 23 everything we do should always respect the user.” It proclaims a commitment to privacy and  
 24 \_\_\_\_\_

25 <sup>12</sup> Allison Schiff, *Google Loses Its Appeal on 50 Million Euro GDPR Fine*, AD EXCHANGER  
 26 (June 12, 2020), <https://www.adexchanger.com/privacy/google-loses-its-appeal-on-50-million-euro-gdpr-fine/>.

27 <sup>13</sup> *The CNIL’s Restricted Panel Announces a Penalty of 50 Million Euros Against Google LLC*,  
 28 CNIL (Jan. 21, 2019), <https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=fr&u=https://www.cnil.fr/fr/la-formation-restreinte-de-la-cnil-prononce-une-sanction-de-50-millions-deuros-lencontre-de-la&prev=search>.

1 promotes the illusion of user control.

2         65. What Google does not publicly celebrate, however, is how the company profits  
3 from the endless amount of personal and consumer data it secretly intercepts and collects. The  
4 more consumer information Google intercepts, analyzes, and collates, the more valuable are the  
5 individual consumer profiles that Google creates and sells to third parties for advertising and other  
6 uses. This data collection and sale is the centerpiece of Google’s business model and the reason  
7 Google is pushing for the widespread adoption of Firebase.

8         66. In a *Wired* article regarding Google’s privacy practices, Professor Douglas  
9 Schmidt, who has studied Google’s user data collection and retention policies for years, stated:  
10 Google’s “business model is to collect as much data about you as possible and cross-correlate it  
11 so they can try to link your online persona with your offline persona. This tracking is just  
12 absolutely essential to Google’s business. ‘Surveillance capitalism’ is a perfect phrase for it.”<sup>14</sup>  
13 By collecting increasing amounts of user data, Google is able to leverage such data to grow its  
14 third-party advertising business and profits.

15         67. Through its spokespersons and in public-facing statements, Google continuously  
16 tries to give consumers the false impression that Google is merely acting on behalf of websites and  
17 apps as a vendor, or on behalf of consumers to help customize their browsing experience.  
18 However, Google does not just serve the interests of consumers or publishers; it also serves itself  
19 by using consumer data to generate billions in revenue through its data collection and associated  
20 advertising products.

21         68. In an *NBC News* article regarding Google’s endless trove of consumer data,  
22 Professor David Yoffie of the Harvard Business School stated, “Google is walking a very fine line.  
23 Search, plus Android gives Google amazing insight into individual behavior. Google’s stated  
24 privacy policies seem adequate, but the question that I cannot answer is whether Google’s stated  
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26 \_\_\_\_\_  
27 <sup>14</sup> Lily Hay Newman, *The Privacy Battle to Save Google from Itself*, WIRED (Nov. 1, 2018),  
28 <https://www.wired.com/story/google-privacy-data/>.



1 policy and actual behavior are one and the same.”<sup>15</sup> As explained herein, the Google’s stated  
2 privacy policy and actual behavior are *not* one and the same. Google promises user control and  
3 privacy. In practice, Google is a voyeur extraordinaire.

4 69. Plaintiffs are informed and believe that one of the most telling facts confirming  
5 Google’s “actual behavior” is that although Google often argues that it is collecting data from  
6 publishers and app publishers for their sake, and not for Google’s sake, Google often demands  
7 significant upgrades (e.g., such as to Google’s DV360, a very expensive upgrade) in order for the  
8 publishers to see specific visitor information. Otherwise, what the publishers and app publishers  
9 believe are their own visitors’ information is not available to them except at a general level. That  
10 Google possesses, and also holds hostage, such detailed information regarding visitors is proof  
11 that Google intercepts and collects consumer information primarily for its own use and financial  
12 gain.

13 70. Plaintiffs are informed and believe that Google also uses the consumer data it  
14 collects to iterate on existing Google products and develop new Google products, such as Google’s  
15 artificial intelligence technology, Google Assistant, which is often on mobile devices. This  
16 collection, usage, or monetization of user data contravenes the steps Plaintiffs and Class members  
17 have taken to try to control their information from being tracked or used by Google in any way.

18 **V. CONSUMERS REASONABLY EXPECT THAT THEIR PRIVATE**  
19 **COMMUNICATIONS WILL NOT BE INTERCEPTED,**  
20 **COLLECTED, OR MISUSED**

21 71. Plaintiffs and Class members had a reasonable expectation of privacy that when  
22 using non-Google branded apps while having opted out of “Web & App Activity” tracking, Google  
23 would not intercept, collect, record, disclose, or otherwise misuse their personal communications  
24 and data.

25 72. Plaintiffs’ and Class members’ expectation of privacy is deeply enshrined in  
26 California’s Constitution. Article I, section 1 of the California Constitution provides: “All people

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27 <sup>15</sup> Ben Popken, *Google Sells the Future, Powered by Your Personal Data*, NBC NEWS (May 10,  
28 2018), <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/google-sells-future-powered-your-personal-data-n870501>.

1 are by nature free and independent and have inalienable rights. Among these are enjoying and  
2 defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and pursuing and  
3 obtaining safety, happiness, *and privacy*.”

4 73. The phrase “*and privacy*” was added in 1972 after voters approved a proposed  
5 legislative constitutional amendment designated as Proposition 11. Critically, the argument in  
6 favor of Proposition 11 reveals that the legislative intent was to curb businesses’ control over the  
7 unauthorized collection and use of consumers’ personal information, stating:

8 The right of privacy is the right to be left alone...It prevents  
9 government *and business interests* from collecting and stockpiling  
10 unnecessary information about us and from misusing information  
11 gathered for one purpose in order to serve other purposes or to  
embarrass us. Fundamental to our privacy is the ability to control  
circulation of personal information. This is essential to social  
relationships and personal freedom.<sup>16</sup>

12 74. Consistent with the language and intent of Proposition 11, a number of studies  
13 examining the collection of consumers’ personal data confirm that the surreptitious taking of  
14 personal, confidential, and private information—as Google has done and does—violates  
15 expectations of privacy that have been established as general social norms. Privacy polls and  
16 studies uniformly show that the overwhelming majority of Americans consider one of the most  
17 important privacy rights to be the need for an individual’s affirmative consent before a company  
18 collects and shares a subscriber’s personal data. Indeed, a recent study by Consumer Reports  
19 shows that 92% of Americans believe that internet companies should be required to obtain consent  
20 before selling or sharing their data and the same percentage of Americans believe internet  
21 companies should be required to provide consumers with a complete list of the information that  
22 has been collected about them.<sup>17</sup>

23 75. Furthermore, Plaintiffs and Class members had every reason to believe that Google  
24 would abide by the representations it made in its “See & control your Web & App Activity”  
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26 <sup>16</sup> BALLOT PAMP., PROPOSED STATS. & AMENDS. TO CAL. CONST. WITH ARGUMENTS TO VOTERS,  
GEN. ELECTION \*26 (Nov. 7, 1972) (emphasis added).

27 <sup>17</sup> *Consumers Less Confident About Healthcare, Data Privacy, and Car Safety, New Survey Finds*,  
28 CONSUMER REPORTS (May 11, 2017), <https://www.consumerreports.org/consumer-reports/consumers-less-confident-about-healthcare-data-privacy-and-car-safety/>.

1 controls, and its Android OS “Activity Controls.” Again, Android states that “[y]ou can turn Web  
2 & App Activity off or delete past activity at any time,” and that “[t]o let Google save this  
3 information . . . Web & App Activity must be turned on.” Google, however, did not abide by its  
4 representations to Plaintiffs and Class members, and its conduct of secretly tracking and collecting  
5 communications from Plaintiffs’ and Class members’ private app browsing constitutes a serious  
6 invasion of their privacy.

## 7 VI. THE VALUE OF INTERCEPTED COMMUNICATIONS

8 76. Google’s continuous interception of consumers’ communications and massive  
9 consumer-data collection efforts is no accident. Google is one of the largest technology companies  
10 in the world. Google LLC and its parent Alphabet Inc. have over 1.5 billion active account  
11 consumers, and Alphabet boasts a net worth exceeding \$950 billion.

12 77. Google’s enormous financial success results from its unparalleled tracking and  
13 collection of consumer personal information and its selling and brokering of that information to  
14 optimize advertisement services and generate billions of dollars in revenue for Google.

15 78. Over the last five years, virtually all of Google’s revenue was attributable to third-  
16 party advertising, and it is continuously driven to find new and creative ways to leverage its access  
17 to consumers’ data in order to sustain its phenomenal growth.

18 79. Google profits from consumers by acquiring their sensitive and valuable personal  
19 information, which includes far more than mere demographic information and volunteered personal  
20 information like name, birth date, gender and email address. Through its various unauthorized  
21 tracking practices, Google plants numerous tracking mechanisms on consumers’ devices and apps,  
22 which allow Google to track consumers’ app browsing histories and correlate them with user,  
23 device, and browser IDs.

24 80. The information Google tracks has and had massive economic value during the  
25 Class Period. This value is well understood in the e-commerce industry, and personal information  
26 is now viewed as a form of currency.

27 81. Professor Paul M. Schwartz noted in the Harvard Law Review:

28 Personal information is an important currency in the new

1 millennium. The monetary value of personal data is large and still  
2 growing, and corporate America is moving quickly to profit from  
3 the trend. Companies view this information as a corporate asset and  
4 have invested heavily in software that facilitates the collection of  
5 consumer information.

6 Paul M. Schwartz, *Property, Privacy and Personal Data*, 117 HARV. L. REV. 2055, 2056–57  
7 (2004).

8 82. Likewise, in the *Wall Street Journal*, former fellow at the Open Society Institute  
9 (and current principal technologist at the ACLU) Christopher Soghoian noted:

10 The dirty secret of the Web is that the “free” content and services that  
11 consumers enjoy come with a hidden price: their own private data.  
12 Many of the major online advertising companies are not interested in  
13 the data that we knowingly and willingly share. Instead, these parasitic  
14 firms covertly track our web-browsing activities, search behavior and  
15 geolocation information. Once collected, this mountain of data is  
16 analyzed to build digital dossiers on millions of consumers, in some  
17 cases identifying us by name, gender, age as well as the medical  
18 conditions and political issues we have researched online.

19 Although we now regularly trade our most private information for  
20 access to social-networking sites and free content, the terms of this  
21 exchange were never clearly communicated to consumers.

22 Julia Angwin, *How Much Should People Worry About the Loss of Online Privacy?*, THE  
23 WALL STREET J. (Nov. 15, 2011), [https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB100014240529702041](https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204190704577024262567105738)  
24 [90704577024262567105738](https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204190704577024262567105738).

25 83. The cash value of consumers’ personal information provided during the Class  
26 Period to Google as a condition of membership is quantifiable. For example, in a study authored  
27 by Tim Morey, as early as 2011, researchers studied the value that 180 internet consumers placed  
28 on keeping personal data secure.<sup>18</sup> Contact information of the sort that Google requires was valued  
29 by the study participants at approximately \$4.20 per year. Demographic information was valued  
30 at approximately \$3.00 per year. But web browsing histories were valued at a much higher rate:  
31 \$52.00 per year. The chart below summarizes the findings:

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32 <sup>18</sup> Tim Morey, *What’s Your Personal Data Worth?*, DESIGN MIND (Jan. 18, 2011),  
33 [https://web.archive.org/web/20131206000037/http://designmind.frogdesign.com/blog/what039s-](https://web.archive.org/web/20131206000037/http://designmind.frogdesign.com/blog/what039s-your-personal-data-worth.html)  
34 [your-personal-data-worth.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20131206000037/http://designmind.frogdesign.com/blog/what039s-your-personal-data-worth.html).



84. Similarly, the value of user-correlated internet browsing history is quantifiable, because Google itself was willing to pay consumers for the exact type of communications that Google illegally intercepted from Plaintiffs and Class members during the Class Period. For example, Google had a panel during the Class Period (and still has one today) called “Google Screenwise Trends” which, according to the internet giant, is designed “to learn more about how everyday people use the Internet.”

85. Upon becoming a panelist, internet users would add a browser extension that shares with Google the sites they visit and how they use them. The panelists consented to Google tracking such information for three months in exchange for one of a number of “gifts,” including gift cards to retailers such as Barnes & Noble, Walmart, and Overstock.com.

86. After three months, Google also agreed to pay panelists additional gift cards “for staying with” the panel. These gift cards, mostly valued at exactly \$5, demonstrated conclusively that internet industry participants understood the enormous value in internet users’ browsing habits. Today, Google now pays Screenwise panelists up to \$3 *per week* to be tracked.

87. As demonstrated above, user-correlated mobile app-page history has monetary value. Google’s actions—its unauthorized collection and use of Plaintiffs’ and Class members’ data—directly caused Plaintiffs’ and Class members’ data to be sold without permission and to become less valuable. These actions have unjustly enriched Google. Plaintiffs and Class members retain a stake in the profits Google garnered from Plaintiffs’ and Class members’ personal data,

1 including without limitation their browsing histories, and it is unjust for Google to retain it.

2 88. User-correlated mobile app-page history also has non-monetary, privacy value.  
3 For example, in a recent study by the Pew Research Center, 93% of Americans said it was  
4 “important” for them to be “in control of who can get information” about them. Seventy-four  
5 percent said it was “very important.” Eighty-seven percent of Americans said it was “important”  
6 for them not to have someone watch or listen to them without their permission. Sixty-seven  
7 percent said it was “very important.” And ninety percent of Americans said it was “important”  
8 that they be able to “control[] what information is collected about [them].” Sixty-five percent said  
9 it was very important.

10 89. Likewise, in a 2011 Harris Poll study, seventy-six percent of Americans agreed  
11 that “online companies, such as Google...control too much of our personal information and know  
12 too much about our browsing habits.” Public opinion has only become increasingly adverse to  
13 Google’s monopoly power over consumer data.

## 14 VII. TOLLING OF THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

15 90. The applicable statutes of limitations have been tolled by Google’s knowing and  
16 active concealment and denial of the facts alleged herein.

17 91. Google has repeatedly represented that its users could prevent Google from  
18 tracking user app viewing history and activity data by turning off “Web & App Activity” from  
19 their Google accounts, or from Android OS “Account Controls.” Nowhere did Google ever  
20 represent that it would continue to track user data once these steps were performed, nor has Google  
21 ever disclosed that it will still attempt to collect, aggregate, and analyze user data so that it can  
22 continue to track individual consumers even when the user has followed Google’s instructions on  
23 how to use mobile apps privately.

24 92. Accordingly, Plaintiffs and the Class could not have reasonably discovered the  
25 truth about Google’s practices until shortly before this class litigation was commenced. Plaintiffs  
26 only learned of the truth in the weeks leading up to the filing of this Complaint.

27 //

28 //

**VIII. PLAINTIFF-SPECIFIC FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

93. Plaintiff JulieAnna Muniz is an adult domiciled in California and has an active Google account and had an active account during the entire proposed Class Period.

94. She accessed the Internet through various apps supported by Firebase SDK, including but not limited to Shazam and Lyft. She sent and received communications through these apps on mobile devices which were computing devices that were not shared devices.

95. At various times in 2020, she accessed numerous app pages (such as those in Shazam and Lyft) containing content she was interested in, on her Apple device while “Web & App Activity” was turned off. Her communications with the app were nevertheless intercepted and tracked by Google without her knowledge or consent, on applications such as Shazam and Lyft, which she uses.

96. Plaintiff Anibal Rodriguez is an adult domiciled in Florida and has an active Google account and had an active account during the entire proposed Class Period.

97. He accessed the Internet through various apps supported by Firebase SDK, including but not limited to Lyft and Alibaba. He sent and received communications through these apps on mobile devices which were computing devices that were not shared devices.

98. At various times between at least 2019 and 2020, he accessed numerous app pages (such as those in Lyft and Alibaba) containing content he was interested in on his Android device while “Web & App Activity” was turned off. His communications with the app were nevertheless intercepted and tracked by Google without his knowledge or consent.

99. None of the Plaintiffs consented to the interception of their confidential communications made while their settings are turned “off” for “Web & App Activity” tracking.

**IX. CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

100. This is a class action pursuant to Rules 23(a) and (b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure on behalf of the following Classes and Subclasses:

- Class 1 – All individuals who during the Class Period (a) turned off “Web & App Activity,” and (b) whose mobile app activity was still tracked by Google via Firebase SDK through a non-Google branded mobile app, (c) on an Android OS mobile device.



- 1 • Class 2 – All individuals who during the Class Period (a) turned off  
2 “Web & App Activity,” and (b) whose mobile app activity was still  
3 tracked by Google via Firebase SDK through a non-Google branded  
4 mobile app, (c) on any non-Android OS mobile device.

4 101. Excluded from the Class are: (1) the Court (including any Judge or Magistrate  
5 presiding over this action and any members of their families); (2) Defendants, its subsidiaries,  
6 parents, predecessors, successors and assigns, including any entity in which any of them have a  
7 controlling interest and its officers, directors, employees, affiliates, legal representatives;  
8 (3) persons who properly execute and file a timely request for exclusion from the Class;  
9 (4) persons whose claims in this matter have been finally adjudicated on the merits or otherwise  
10 released; (5) Plaintiffs’ counsel, Class counsel and Defendants’ counsel; and (6) the legal  
11 representatives, successors, and assigns of any such excluded persons.

12 102. **Ascertainability:** Membership of the Class is defined based on objective criteria  
13 and individual members will be identifiable from Defendants’ records, including from Google’s  
14 massive data storage, consumer accounts, and enterprise services. Based on information readily  
15 accessible to it, Google can identify members of the Class who own an Android device or have a  
16 non-Android device who were victims of Google’s impermissible interception, receipt, or tracking  
17 of communications as alleged herein.

18 103. **Numerosity:** The Class likely consists of millions of individuals. Accordingly,  
19 members of the Class are so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable. Class  
20 members can be identified from Defendants’ records, including from Google’s consumer accounts  
21 and enterprise services.

22 104. **Predominant Common Questions:** Common questions of law and fact exist as to  
23 all members of the Class and predominate over any questions affecting solely individual members  
24 of the Class. Common questions for the Class include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 25 a. Whether Google represented that the Class could control what  
26 communications of user information, app browsing history, and app activity  
27 data were intercepted, received, or collected by Google;
- 28 b. Whether Google gave the Class a reasonable expectation of privacy that their

1 communications of user information, app browsing history, and app activity  
2 data were not being intercepted, received, or collected by Google while “Web  
3 & App Activity” was turned off;

4 c. Whether Google in fact intercepted, received, or collected communications of  
5 user information, app browsing history, and app activity from the Class while  
6 “Web & App Activity” was turned off;

7 d. Whether Google’s practice of intercepting, receiving, or collecting  
8 communications of user information, app browsing history, and app activity  
9 violated state and federal privacy laws;

10 e. Whether Google’s practice of intercepting, receiving, or collecting  
11 communications of user information, app browsing history, and app activity  
12 violated state and federal anti-wiretapping laws;

13 f. Whether Google’s practice of intercepting, receiving, or collecting  
14 communications of user information, app browsing history, and app activity  
15 violated any other state and federal laws;

16 g. Whether Plaintiffs and the Class are entitled to declaratory and/or injunctive  
17 relief to enjoin the unlawful conduct alleged herein; and

18 h. Whether Plaintiffs and the Class have sustained damages as a result of  
19 Google’s conduct, and if so, what is the appropriate measure of damages or  
20 restitution.

21 105. **Typicality:** Plaintiffs’ claims are typical of the claims of other Class members, as  
22 all members of the Class were uniformly affected by Google’s wrongful conduct in violation of  
23 federal and state law as complained of herein.

24 106. **Adequacy:** Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the members  
25 of the Class and have retained counsel that is competent and experienced in class action litigation,  
26 including nationwide class actions and privacy violations. Plaintiffs and their counsel have no  
27 interest that is in conflict with, or otherwise antagonistic to the interests of the other Class  
28 members. Plaintiffs and their counsel are committed to vigorously prosecuting this action on

1 behalf of the members of the Class, and they have the resources to do so.

2           107. **Superiority:** A class action is superior to all other available methods for the fair and  
3 efficient adjudication of this controversy since joinder of all members is impracticable. This  
4 proposed class action presents fewer management difficulties than individual litigation, and provides  
5 the benefits of a single adjudication, economies of scale, and comprehensive supervision by a single,  
6 able court. Furthermore, as the damages individual Class members have suffered may be relatively  
7 small, the expense and burden of individual litigation make it impossible for members of the Class  
8 to individually redress the wrongs done to them. There will be no difficulty in management of this  
9 action as a class action.

10           108. **California Law Applies to the Entire Class:** California’s substantive laws apply to  
11 every member of the Class, regardless of where in the United States the Class member resides.  
12 Defendants’ own Terms of Service explicitly states “California law will govern all disputes arising  
13 out of or relating to these terms, service specific additional terms, or any related services, regardless  
14 of conflict of laws rules. These disputes will be resolved exclusively in the federal or state courts of  
15 Santa Clara County, California, USA, and you and Google consent to personal jurisdiction in those  
16 courts.” By choosing California law for the resolution of disputes covered by its Terms of Service,  
17 Google concedes that it is appropriate for this Court to apply California law to the instant dispute.  
18 Further, California’s substantive laws may be constitutionally applied to the claims of Plaintiffs and  
19 the Class under the Due Process Clause, *see* U.S. CONST. amend. XIV, § 1, and the Full Faith and  
20 Credit Clause, *see* U.S. CONST. art. IV, § 1, of the U.S. Constitution. California has significant  
21 contact, or significant aggregation of contacts, to the claims asserted by the Plaintiffs and all Class  
22 members, thereby creating state interests that ensure that the choice of California state law is not  
23 arbitrary or unfair. Defendants’ decision to reside in California and avail itself of California’s laws,  
24 and to engage in the challenged conduct from and emanating out of California, renders the application  
25 of California law to the claims herein constitutionally permissible. The application of California laws  
26 to the Class is also appropriate under California’s choice of law rules because California has  
27 significant contacts to the claims of Plaintiffs and the proposed Class, and California has a greatest  
28 interest in applying its laws here.



1 transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photooptical  
2 system that affects interstate commerce[.]” and were therefore “electronic communications”  
3 within the meaning of 18 U.S.C. § 2510(12).

4 118. The following constitute “devices” within the meaning of 18 U.S.C. § 2510(5):

- 5 a. The Firebase SDK, computer codes, and programs Google used to  
6 intercept and track Plaintiffs’ communications while “Web & App  
7 Activity” was turned off;
- 8 b. Plaintiffs’ mobile applications;
- 9 c. Plaintiffs’ mobile devices;
- 10 d. The apps from which Google tracked and intercepted Plaintiffs’  
11 communications while “Web & App Activity” was turned off;
- 12 e. The Firebase SDK, computer codes and programs used by Google to  
13 effectuate its tracking and interception of Plaintiffs’ communications  
14 while using an app while “Web & App Activity” was turned off; and
- 15 f. The plan Google carried out to effectuate its tracking and interception of  
16 Plaintiffs’ communications while using an app while “Web & App  
17 Activity” was turned off.

18 119. Google was not an authorized party to the communication because Plaintiffs were  
19 unaware of Google’s collection of page locations, page referrers, page titles, and user information,  
20 did not knowingly send any of the communication to Google, and were browsing apps while “Web  
21 & App Activity” was turned off when Google intercepted the communications between Plaintiffs  
22 and apps other than Google. Google could not manufacture its own status as a party to Plaintiffs’  
23 communications with others by surreptitiously redirecting or intercepting those communications

24 120. As illustrated herein, “the” communications between Plaintiffs and apps were  
25 simultaneous to, but *separate* from, the channel through which Google illegally acquired the  
26 contents of those communications.

27 121. Plaintiffs did not consent to Google’s continued interception of the user’s  
28 communications after turning off “Web & App Activity” and thus never consented to Google’s

1 interception of their communications. Indeed, Google represented to Plaintiffs and the public that  
2 consumers could “control . . . what information [they] share with Google” including with  
3 “[p]roducts that are integrated into third-party apps and sites by turning off “Web & App  
4 Activity.” Moreover, the communications intercepted by Google were plainly confidential, which  
5 is evidenced by the fact that Plaintiffs turned off “Web & App Activity” in a manner consistent  
6 with Google’s own recommendations to prevent sharing of information with Google prior to  
7 accessing or communicating with apps.

8 122. After intercepting the communications, Google then used the contents of the  
9 communications knowing or having reason to know that such information was obtained through  
10 the interception of electronic communications in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2511(1)(a).

11 123. As a result of the above actions and pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 2520, the Court may  
12 assess statutory damages to Plaintiffs and the Class members; injunctive and declaratory relief;  
13 punitive damages in an amount to be determined by a jury, but sufficient to prevent the same or  
14 similar conduct by Google in the future, and a reasonable attorneys’ fee and other litigation costs  
15 reasonably incurred.

16 **COUNT II**

17 **VIOLATION OF THE CALIFORNIA INVASION OF PRIVACY ACT (“CIPA”)**  
18 **CALIFORNIA PENAL CODE §§ 631 AND 632**

19 124. Plaintiffs hereby incorporate paragraphs 1 to 109 as if fully stated herein.

20 125. The California Invasion of Privacy Act is codified at Cal. Penal Code §§ 630 to  
21 638. The Act begins with its statement of purpose:

22 The Legislature hereby declares that advances in science and  
23 technology have led to the development of new devices and  
24 techniques for the purpose of eavesdropping upon private  
25 communications and that the invasion of privacy resulting from the  
26 continual and increasing use of such devices and techniques has  
created a serious threat to the free exercise of personal liberties and  
cannot be tolerated in a free and civilized society.

27 Cal. Penal Code § 630.

28 126. Cal. Penal Code § 631(a) provides, in pertinent part:

1 Any person who, by means of any machine, instrument, or  
2 contrivance, or in any other manner . . . willfully and without the  
3 consent of all parties to the communication, or in any unauthorized  
4 manner, reads, or attempts to read, or to learn the contents or meaning  
5 of any message, report, or communication while the same is in transit  
6 or passing over any wire, line, or cable, or is being sent from, or  
7 received at any place within this state; or who uses, or attempts to  
8 use, in any manner, or for any purpose, or to communicate in any  
9 way, any information so obtained, or who aids, agrees with, employs,  
10 or conspires with any person or persons to lawfully do, or permit, or  
11 cause to be done any of the acts or things mentioned above in this  
12 section, is punishable by a fine not exceeding two thousand five  
13 hundred dollars . . . .

14  
15 127. Cal. Penal Code § 632(a) provides, in pertinent part:

16 A person who, intentionally and without the consent of all parties to a  
17 confidential communication, uses an electronic amplifying or  
18 recording device to eavesdrop upon or record the confidential  
19 communication, whether the communication is carried on among the  
20 parties in the presence of one another or by means of a telegraph,  
21 telephone, or other device, except a radio, shall be punished by a fine  
22 not exceeding two thousand five hundred dollars . . . .

23  
24 128. Under either section of the CIPA, a defendant must show it had the consent of all  
25 parties to a communication.

26 129. Google has its principal place of business in California; designed, contrived and  
27 effectuated its scheme to track and intercept consumer communications while they were browsing  
28 apps from their device while “Web & App Activity” was turned off; and has adopted California  
substantive law to govern its relationship with its users.

129. At all relevant times, Google’s tracking and interceptions of Plaintiffs’  
communications while using an app with “Web & App Activity” turned off was without  
authorization and consent from the Plaintiffs.

131. Google’s non-consensual tracking of Plaintiffs’ communications while using an  
app with “Web & App Activity” turned off was designed to attempt to learn at least some meaning  
of the content in the mobile app pages.

132. The following items constitute “machine[s], instrument[s], or contrivance[s]”  
under the CIPA, and even if they do not, Google’s deliberate and admittedly purposeful scheme



1 that facilitated its interceptions falls under the broad statutory catch-all category of “any other  
2 manner”:

- 3 a. The Firebase SDK, computer codes and programs Google used to track  
4 Plaintiffs’ communications while “Web & App Activity” was turned off;
- 5 b. Plaintiffs’ mobile applications;
- 6 c. Plaintiffs’ mobile devices;
- 7 d. The apps from which Google tracked and intercepted Plaintiffs’  
8 communications while they were using an app with “Web & App Activity”  
9 turned off;
- 10 e. The Firebase SDK, computer codes and programs used by Google to  
11 effectuate its tracking and interception of Plaintiffs’ communications  
12 while using an app with “Web & App Activity” turned off; and
- 13 f. The plan Google carried out to effectuate its tracking and interception of  
14 Plaintiffs’ communications while using an app while “Web & App  
15 Activity” was turned off.

16 133. Plaintiffs have suffered loss by reason of these violations, including, but not limited  
17 to, violation of their rights to privacy and loss of value in their personally identifiable information.

18 134. Pursuant to California Penal Code § 637.2, Plaintiffs have been injured by the  
19 violations of California Penal Code §§ 631 and 632, and each seek damages for the greater of  
20 \$5,000 or three times the amount of actual damages, as well as injunctive relief.

### 21 **COUNT III**

#### 22 **INVASION OF PRIVACY**

23 135. Plaintiffs hereby incorporate paragraphs 1 to 109 as if fully stated herein.

24 136. The right to privacy in California’s constitution creates a right of action against  
25 private entities such as Google.

26 137. The principal purpose of this constitutional right was to protect against unnecessary  
27 information gathering, use, and dissemination by public and private entities, including Google.

28 138. To plead a California constitutional privacy claim, a plaintiff must show an

1 invasion of (1) a legally protected privacy interest; (2) where the plaintiff had a reasonable  
2 expectation of privacy in the circumstances; and (3) conduct by the defendant constituting a  
3 serious invasion of privacy.

4 139. As described herein, Google has intruded upon the following legally protected  
5 privacy interests:

- 6 a. The Federal Wiretap Act as alleged herein;
- 7 b. The California Wiretap Act as alleged herein;
- 8 c. A Fourth Amendment right to privacy contained on personal computing  
9 devices, including web-browsing history, as explained by the United States  
10 Supreme Court in the unanimous decision of *Riley v. California*;
- 11 d. The California Comprehensive Computer Data Access and Fraud Act, Cal  
12 Pen. Code § 502, which applies to Plaintiffs and all Class members by  
13 virtue of Google’s choice of California law to govern its relationship with  
14 Google users;
- 15 e. The California Constitution, which guarantees Californians the right to  
16 privacy;
- 17 f. Google’s Privacy Policy and policies referenced therein, and other public  
18 promises it made not to track or intercept Plaintiffs’ communications or  
19 access their computing devices and apps while “Web & App Activity” is  
20 turned off.

21 140. Plaintiffs had a reasonable expectation of privacy under the circumstances in that  
22 Plaintiffs could not reasonably expect Google would commit acts in violation of federal and state  
23 civil and criminal laws; and Google affirmatively promised consumers it would not track their  
24 communications or access their computing devices or apps while they were using an app while in  
25 “Web & App activity” was turned off.

26 141. Google’s actions constituted a serious invasion of privacy in that it:

- 27 a. Invaded a zone of privacy protected by the Fourth Amendment, namely the  
28 right to privacy in data contained on personal computing devices, including

1 user data, app activity and app browsing histories;

2 b. Violated several federal criminal laws, including the Federal Wiretap Act;

3 c. Violated dozens of state criminal laws on wiretapping and invasion of  
4 privacy, including the California Invasion of Privacy Act;

5 d. Invaded the privacy rights of millions of Americans without their consent;  
6 and

7 e. Constituted the unauthorized taking of valuable information from millions  
8 of Americans through deceit.

9 142. Committing criminal acts against millions of Americans constitutes an egregious  
10 breach of social norms that is highly offensive.

11 143. The surreptitious and unauthorized tracking of the internet communications of  
12 millions of Americans, particularly where, as here, they have taken active (and recommended)  
13 measures to ensure their privacy, constitutes an egregious breach of social norms that is highly  
14 offensive.

15 144. Google's intentional intrusion into Plaintiffs' internet communications and their  
16 computing devices and apps was highly offensive to a reasonable person in that Google violated  
17 federal and state criminal and civil laws designed to protect individual privacy and against theft.

18 145. The taking of personally identifiable information from millions of Americans  
19 through deceit is highly offensive behavior.

20 146. Secret monitoring of private app browsing is highly offensive behavior.

21 147. Wiretapping and surreptitious recording of communications is highly offensive  
22 behavior.

23 148. Google lacked a legitimate business interest in tracking consumers while use an  
24 app while "Web & App Activity" was turned off, without their consent.

25 149. Plaintiffs and the Class members have been damaged by Google's invasion  
26 of their privacy and are entitled to just compensation and injunctive relief.

27  
28

COUNT IV

**VIOLATIONS OF CALIFORNIA PENAL CODE § 502  
THE COMPREHENSIVE COMPUTER DATA ACCESS AND FRAUD ACT (“CDAFA”)**

150. Plaintiffs incorporate paragraphs 1 to 109 as though set forth herein.

151. Cal. Penal Code § 502 provides: “For purposes of bringing a civil or a criminal action under this section, a person who causes, by any means, the access of a computer, computer system, or computer network in one jurisdiction from another jurisdiction is deemed to have personally accessed the computer, computer system, or computer network in each jurisdiction.” Smart phone devices with the capability of downloading and using apps are “computers” within the meaning of the statute.

152. Google violated Cal. Penal Code § 502(c)(2) by knowingly accessing and without permission taking, copying, and using data concerning Plaintiffs’ app usage and other personally identifiable information. When Plaintiffs browsed apps with “Web & App Activity” turned off, Google nevertheless knowingly accessed their computing devices. Google then took, copied, and thereafter used personal data from the computing devices without permission, such as user data, app activity, and app browsing history. In fact, Plaintiffs had expressly communicated to Google that Google did not have permission to take, copy, or make use of such data.

153. Accordingly, despite Google’s false guarantees to the contrary, Google effectively charged Plaintiffs and other consumers, and profited from them, by acquiring their sensitive and valuable personal information without their permission and using it for Google’s own financial benefit to advance its advertising business. Google was thereby unjustly enriched.

154. Google accessed, copied, took, and used data from Plaintiffs’ computers in and from the State of California, where Google (1) has its principal place of business and (2) used servers that provided services and communication links between Plaintiffs and Google and other apps, which allowed Google to access user data. Accordingly, Google caused the access of Plaintiffs’ computers from California, and is therefore deemed to have accessed the computer in California.



**XI. JURY TRIAL DEMAND**

Plaintiffs demand a trial by jury of all issues so triable.

Dated: July 14, 2020

BOIES SCHILLER FLEXNER LLP

/s/ Mark C. Mao

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# ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [‘Always Watching’: Class Action Against Google Alleges User Privacy Doesn’t Exist](#)

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