Critics say new Google rules put profits over privacy



Finger print sensor

Privacy campaigners have called Google's new rules on tracking people online "a blatant disregard for user privacy."

Changes which come in on Sunday permit so-called "fingerprinting", which allows online advertisers to collect more data about users including their IP addresses and information about their devices.Google says this data is already widely used by other companies, and it continues to encourage responsible data use.

However the company had previously come out strongly against this kind of data collection, saying in a 2019 blog that fingerprinting "subverts user choice and is wrong." But in a post announcing the new rule changes, Google said the way people used the internet - such as devices like smart TVs and consoles - meant it was harder to target ads to users using conventional data collection, which users control with cookie consent.

It also says more privacy options provide safety to users. But opponents to the change say fingerprinting and IP address collection are a blow to privacy because it is harder for users to control what data is collected about them.

"By allowing fingerprinting, Google has given itself - and the advertising industry it dominates - permission to use a form of tracking that people can't do much to stop," said Martin Thomson, distinguished engineer at Mozilla, a rival to Google.