

# WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM FOR PRIVACY?

WhatsApp locked in many users, who became dependent on it, with the promise to protect their privacy and data. When these millions of users signed up to WhatsApp before 2014, they were promised repeatedly that the company did not want to gather and commercialize their data.

"WhatsApp does not collect names, emails, addresses or other contact information from its users' mobile address book or contact lists other than mobile phone numbers... We do not collect location data... We do not sell or share your Personally Identifiable Information (such as mobile phone number) with other third-party companies for their commercial or marketing use without your consent." – [WhatsApp Privacy Policy](#), 2012.

**2014:** Facebook acquires WhatsApp.

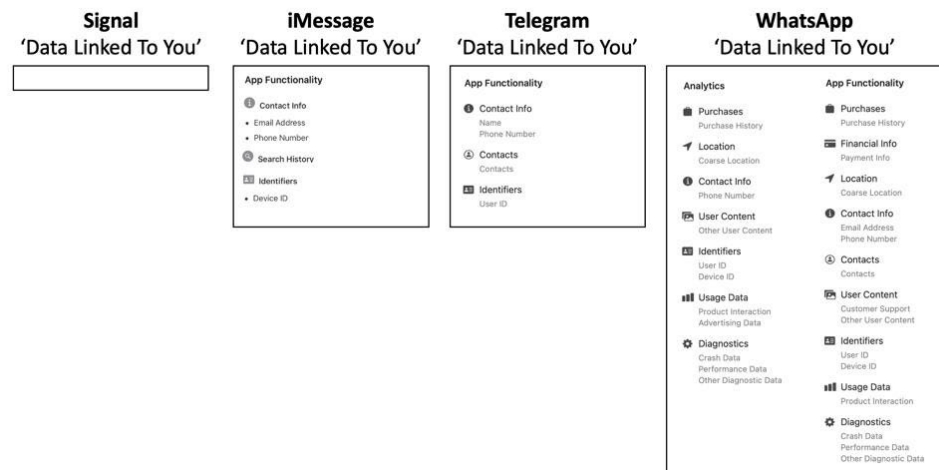
- "We are absolutely not going to change plans around WhatsApp and the way it uses user data. WhatsApp is going to operate completely autonomously." – [Mark Zuckerberg](#)
- "You can still count on absolutely no ads interrupting your communication. There would have been no partnership between our two companies if we had to compromise on the core principles that will always define our company, our vision, and our product." ([Now former](#)) [WhatsApp CEO Jan Koum](#)

**2016:** WhatsApp changed its privacy terms to share 1 billion users' personal information with Facebook, giving its one billion users 30 days to opt out.

- "By coordinating more with Facebook, we'll be able to do things like track basic metrics about how often people use our services and better fight spam on WhatsApp. And by connecting your phone number with Facebook's systems, Facebook can offer better friend suggestions and show you more relevant ads if you have an account with them." – [Looking ahead for WhatsApp](#)
- "These changes have been introduced in contradiction with previous public statements of the two companies ensuring that no sharing of data would ever take place." EU's [ARTICLE 29 Data Protection Working Party](#)

Since 2016, WhatsApp has become a leading means of communication for 2 billion people across the globe. It now shares a great deal of information with Facebook it promised it never would, including account information, phone numbers, logging how often and how long someone uses WhatsApp, information about how they interact with other users, IP addresses, browser details, languages, time zones, etc. This latest incursion has highlighted just how much data sharing has been going on for years without most users' knowledge.

## WHATSAPP IS NOW A GLOBAL METADATA HARVESTING OPERATION



**2021:** WhatsApp announced an update to its terms of service and privacy policy to expand its data sharing practices with businesses for marketing purposes. [Users were notified](#) that WhatsApp shares a wide range of their information with other Facebook companies, including:

- phone number and other information provided on registration (such as your name)
- information about your phone, including make, model, and mobile company
- your IP address, which indicates location of your internet connection
- any payments and financial transactions made over WhatsApp

WhatsApp also said it may share any data covered by its privacy policy - which could include contacts, status updates, when people use WhatsApp and for how long, and unique identifying numbers for users' phones.

**Not all consumers are treated equally.** WhatsApp refuses to protect the privacy and data of all its users with the highest possible standards, namely the GDPR. The gold standard of privacy, the GDPR, has forbidden this type of harvesting for EU citizens, but Facebook continues to surveil the rest of the world. Details of the kind of data collected from non-Europeans by WhatsApp and shared with Facebook is buried in formal

documents making up the terms and privacy policy. The new privacy policy creates a two-tier system as it does not affect users located in 27 European Union countries and the UK, though it will compromise the interests of people in most other countries.

- “There are no changes to WhatsApp’s data sharing practices in the European region arising from the updated terms of service and privacy policy. For the avoidance of any doubt, it is still the case that WhatsApp does not share European region WhatsApp user data with Facebook for the purpose of Facebook using this data to improve its products or advertisements,” – [Facebook, January 2021](#)
- “The change in the terms of service, and the requirement of users to share information with Facebook, does not apply to UK users or to users in the EU and that’s because in 2017 my office negotiated with WhatsApp so that they agreed not to share user information and contact information until they could show that they complied with the [GDPR](#).” – [Elizabeth Denham, UK Information Commissioner](#)

*If you live in the [European Region](#), WhatsApp Ireland Limited provides the services to you under this [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).*

#### WhatsApp Legal Info

*If you live outside the [European Region](#), WhatsApp LLC (“WhatsApp,” “our,” “we,” or “us,”) provides our Services to you under this [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).*

**We must prevent this privacy discrimination by calling our regulators to rapidly take a stand** and oppose and stop the data flows between WhatsApp and Facebook. Those who can are leaving WhatsApp in large numbers because of concerns of increasing abusive tactics. But many cannot.