

# GOOGLE SETTLES \$5 BILLION CONSUMER PRIVACY LAWSUIT

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The case is Brown et al v Google LLC et al, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California, No. 20-03664 [File] | Photo Credit: REUTERS

Alphabet's Google has agreed to settle a lawsuit claiming it secretly tracked the internet use of [millions of people who thought they were doing their browsing privately](#).

U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers in Oakland, California, put a scheduled February 5, 2024 trial in the proposed class action on hold on Thursday, after lawyers for Google and for consumers said they had reached a preliminary settlement.

The lawsuit had sought at least \$5 billion. Settlement terms were not disclosed, but the lawyers said they have agreed to a binding term sheet through mediation, and expected to present a formal settlement for court approval by February 24, 2024.

Neither Google nor lawyers for the plaintiff consumers immediately responded to requests for comment.

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The plaintiffs alleged that Google's analytics, cookies and apps let the Alphabet unit track their activity even when they set Google's Chrome browser to "Incognito" mode and other browsers to "private" browsing mode.

They said this turned Google into an "unaccountable trove of information" by letting the company learn about their friends, hobbies, favourite foods, shopping habits, and "potentially embarrassing things" they seek out online.

In August, Rogers rejected Google's bid to dismiss the lawsuit.

She said it was an open question whether Google had made a legally binding promise not to collect users' data when they browsed in private mode. The judge cited Google's privacy policy and other statements by the company that suggested limits on what information it might collect.

Filed in 2020, the lawsuit covered "millions" of Google users since June 1, 2016, and sought at least \$5,000 in damages per user for violations of federal wire-tapping and California privacy laws.

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