

Apple IDFA consent: Roughly 60% of consumers open to allowing tracking

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With the right incentives, iOS users might be willing to share data.

Greg Sterling on September 11, 2020 at 4:39 pm | Reading time: 4 minutes

Apple delayed one of iOS 14's most controversial new privacy features: consumer opt-in permission to track. The rule requires apps to get consent from users to access the device's Identifier for Advertisers (IDFA) and transmit data to third parties.

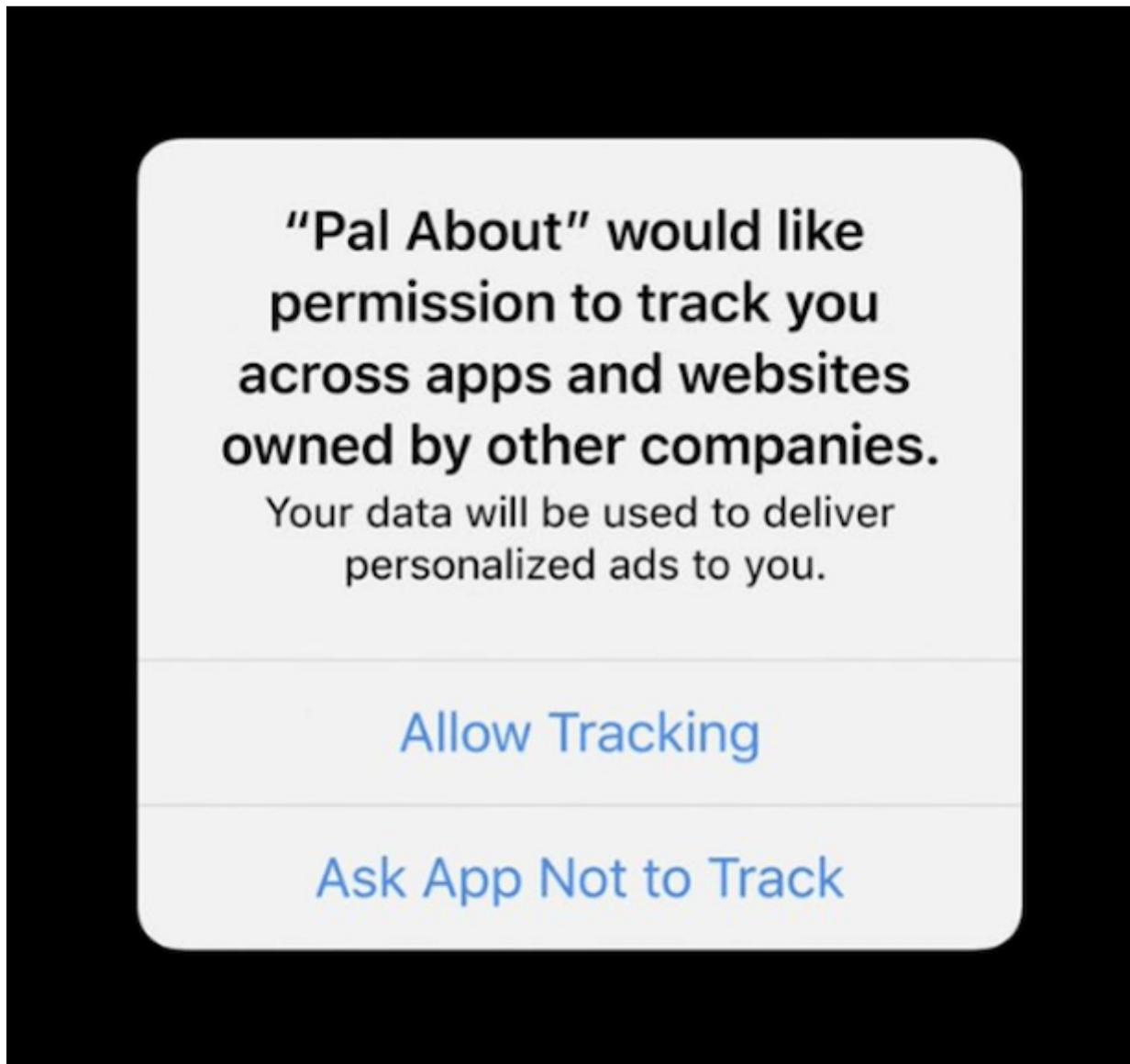
Publishers bracing for impact, sigh with relief — for now

The announcement of Apple's quasi-deprecation of IDFA came during the company's developer conference earlier this year. It immediately set off alarms among mobile marketers. Facebook said the change could "severely" impact its Audience Network revenue on iPhones. Sister company Instagram is complaining very publicly about the damage the change will do to mobile advertisers and publishers.

That complaints were apparently heard. So, in recognition of the potential financial hardship it would inflict on mobile publishers and developers, Apple announced in a blog post that it was delaying enforcement of opt-in tracking consent until next year "to give developers time to make necessary changes."

What those will be exactly remains a bit unclear at this time — contextual advertising, incentives to opt-in, some form of alternative ID resolution?

Mock-up of iOS 14 tracking permission dialog



While some mobile marketers breathed an audible sigh of relief with the delay, the reprieve is probably temporary. The most challenging aspect of the opt-in consent feature is Apple-mandated language that could scare many iPhone owners away.

While there is some customization and contextual information publishers can insert, the dialog explicitly asks for “permission to track you across apps and websites owned by other companies.”

We asked: How will consumers react to iOS 14’s “permission to track”?

There’s been considerable speculation about hypothetical consumer reaction to this mandatory screen. We decided to test the main hypothesis, which assumes most consumers will have a negative reaction. Accordingly Search Engine Land fielded a short survey through [Suzy](#) of 520 U.S. adult mobile users.

The survey sample consisted of 52% Android users and 43% iPhone owners, with the rest uncertain or choosing “other.” That’s pretty close to third party estimates of comparative market share in the U.S.

Apple has sought to market privacy as a feature of the iPhone to differentiate it from Google’s Android. That tactic appears to be working: 33% responded that Apple does a better job of safeguarding privacy than Android (28%), while 22% thought both were roughly equivalent; 3% said neither did a good job.

\When asked if people were aware of new privacy features in iOS 14 (specifically regarding location and personal data privacy), 56% said no, 20% said “not sure” and only 24% said yes. We then asked, “If a mobile app asks to share your data with advertisers, such as location or device ID, would you agree?” Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) said yes; 39% said no and 38% said “I would need more information.”

What could get iOS users to opt-in to tracking?

What this means, at least in the abstract, is that marketers still might be able to reach or access the data of roughly 60% of iPhone owners if their opt-in pitches are compelling. To that end, we asked about a range of incentives and scenarios that might cause people to opt-in.

Interestingly, 42% said they wouldn’t share their information — more than the 39% who answered in the negative to the more general data-sharing question. But 56% said they were open to persuasion with an incentive:

- A coupon or discount on products I’m interested in — 23%
- Reward points that could be redeemed for products or travel — 21%
- A direct cash payment (\$1 or less) — 12%
- Other — 2%

We didn’t ask if “personalized ads” would be incentive enough, however.

The data above are consistent with previous surveys about location and personal data sharing among smartphone owners. There’s something of a bell curve of responses: those who always say “yes,” those who always say “no” and the “it depends” or “what’ll you give me” crowd.

The results suggests that with the right messaging and/or incentives iPhone owners might be persuaded to opt-in to data sharing. However, it will be challenging for publishers and developers to craft the right messaging and pack it into the dialog shown above. There will need to be a lot of A/B testing.

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