



ACXIOM

# Google, Cookies, & Courts

What the latest developments  
mean for advertisers

APRIL 2025

# An update from Google

Anthony Chavez, Google's VP for Privacy Sandbox, on April 22 [announced](#) that the company will continue with its current approach of offering third-party cookie choices in Chrome and will not be rolling out a new standalone prompt for third-party cookies. A summary of Chavez's announcement included:

- Google will not introduce a standalone prompt for third-party cookie consent in Chrome
- Users can still manage their cookie preferences via Chrome's privacy and security settings
- Chrome's **Incognito mode** will maintain default third-party cookie blocking
- **IP Protection** will launch in **Q3 2025**
- Ongoing investment will continue in security features like **safe browsing, AI-driven protection, and password security**
- There has been a positive uptake of **Privacy Sandbox APIs** and ongoing engagement with publishers, advertisers, developers, and regulators

In this POV, we will explore the recent legal and industry developments driving these latest updates from Google.

## Legal rulings, scrutiny and pressure

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema in Alexandria, Virginia, on April 18 ruled that Google violated antitrust laws by unlawfully monopolizing the publisher ad server and ad exchange markets.

The court found that Google engaged in illegal tying practices between its publisher ad server (DFP) and ad exchange (AdX), harming competition and consumers. However, the judge did not find Google's acquisitions of DoubleClick and Admeld to be anti-competitive. This significant legal ruling adds to the growing antitrust scrutiny currently faced by the tech giant.



Adding to this pressure, in a separate case concerning Google's search engine dominance, on the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) presented arguments April 25 before a federal judge in Washington, D.C., advocating for "structural remedies." The DOJ proposed that Google should divest its Chrome web browser and potentially its Android operating system to dismantle its search monopoly.

This argument is part of a broader effort to address what a court had previously determined to be Google's "monopolistic control" over internet search. The DOJ contends that separating Chrome from Google's other operations would foster greater competition in both the browser and search markets.

The proposed divestitures could significantly alter the digital advertising and search landscapes, affecting how users access information online. Naturally, Google opposes these measures, labelling them as "extreme" and unwarranted in a [blog post](#).

## Google's strategic response

Given this intense regulatory scrutiny and the legal landscape, Google's announcement just a day later regarding its approach to third-party cookies in Chrome, is not too surprising.

Anthony Chavez, Google's VP of Privacy Sandbox, stated in a blog post that the company would "*maintain our current approach to offering users third-party*

*cookie choice in Chrome and will not be rolling out a new standalone prompt for third-party cookies. Users can continue to choose the best option for themselves in Chrome's privacy and security settings."*

The decision means Chrome users won't get a prompt to opt out of cookie tracking (like iOS users got three years ago), so publishers and marketers will continue to be able to use cookies on Chrome unless users revise their privacy settings on their own.

While Safari and Firefox block third-party cookies by default, and Edge limits third-party tracking, Google's decision is significant because Chrome dominates the competition with 67% of the browser traffic globally.

It is indeed plausible that the increasing antitrust pressure is influencing Google's strategic decisions, including its approach to privacy features in Chrome. Navigating these legal challenges while trying to maintain its market position requires a delicate balancing act for Google.



## Complexities in phasing out third-party cookies

Anthony Chavez also elaborated on the rationale behind Google's *Privacy Sandbox initiative*, emphasizing its goal *"to develop new ways to strengthen online privacy while ensuring a sustainable, ad-supported internet."*

He further noted that through engagement with various stakeholders, including *"publishers, developers, regulators, and the ads industry, it remains clear that there are divergent perspectives on making changes that could impact the availability of third-party cookies."*

This statement highlights the complexity of phasing out third-party cookies, as different players in the online advertising ecosystem have varying interests and concerns.

Google's decision to maintain the current user choice reflects these diverse viewpoints and the potential disruption that a swift removal of third-party cookies could cause. This stance appears to be a shift, or at least a continuation of the status quo, suggesting a cautious approach amid the surrounding turbulence.

## Regulatory fines and data concerns

These past enforcement actions add weight to why regulators are paying close attention to Google's strategy. Google has faced significant regulatory action in the past related to user privacy and data handling.

For instance, in recent years, the French data protection authority CNIL has issued significant fines to Google under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

One notable example is a €50 million fine issued in October 2023 (approximately £44 million based on the exchange rate at the time) for issues including a lack of transparency, inadequate information, and invalid consent regarding personalized advertising.

Additionally, in 2022, Google reached a \$391.5 million settlement with 40 U.S. states following allegations that the company misled users about its location tracking practices, specifically concerning the "location history" setting.

These prior regulatory actions underscore the intense scrutiny Google faces regarding its data handling and privacy practices, further emphasizing the context in which its recent decision on third-party cookies is being made.

The convergence of anti-trust challenges and ongoing privacy concerns have created a complex environment for Google as it navigates the future of online advertising and user privacy in its Chrome browser.

Chavez said in his blog post: “We’re encouraged that the industry is innovating with privacy-enhancing approaches and companies are embracing new solutions, including those built using the Privacy Sandbox APIs. We’ll continue to work with the ecosystem on determining how these technologies can best serve the industry and consumers.”

## Industry push backs

Given the mounting regulatory pressure, this shift in tone may represent an effort to reassure the online ad industry.

Major players, including Criteo and Index Exchange, while testing partners of Google’s Privacy Sandbox, have openly been critical, citing many technical challenges and potential revenue impacts associated with its implementation. These concerns highlight the delicate balance Google must strike between user privacy demands and the economic interests of the advertising ecosystem.

The implementation of the Privacy Sandbox poses significant technical hurdles and risks impacting revenue. Considering Google’s evolving list of changes, the industry must remain observant and proactive.

## Final thoughts for advertisers

The marketing and advertising landscape is continually adapting with advancements like data clean rooms, customer data platforms (CDPs), artificial intelligence (AI) and application programming interfaces (APIs) to enhance speed, efficiency, and intelligence. However, at the core of every business must lie robust data stewardship, strong data governance, respect for user’s privacy, and unwavering trust.

The long-term implications of Google’s latest decisions will likely continue to unfold, impacting how businesses reach consumers and how individuals experience the digital world.

As regulatory pressure mounts and third-party cookies edge closer to obsolescence, advertisers face a critical decision point: wait and react or lead and adapt. At Acxiom and KINESSO, we believe the future belongs to brands that take control by activating first-party data, investing in secure data clean room infrastructure, and building identity-resilient strategies that honor consumer trust. This isn’t just about compliance – it’s about creating smarter, more sustainable marketing ecosystems. Those who act now will be best positioned to personalize at scale, measure with confidence, and win in a privacy-first world.

If you have questions or concerns about the latest changes announced by Google, reach out to [info@acxiom.com](mailto:info@acxiom.com).

## Further reading:

[Next steps for Privacy Sandbox and tracking protections in Chrome](#)

[DOJ’s staggering proposal would hurt consumers and America’s global technological leadership](#)

# ACXIOM

For more information, please  
contact Acxiom at [acxiom.com](https://www.acxiom.com)  
or email [info@acxiom.com](mailto:info@acxiom.com).