How Tech Companies & Policymakers Can Fight AI Harms & Safeguard Digital Civil Rights

A Free Press Action Guide

This guide outlines methods to limit harmful AI, curb extractive data practices and safeguard privacy and civil rights — and explains what each of us can do to make an impact.

Our data should be ours. We should have rights to easily access, correct, delete or download the personal information companies gather about and by us. We should have rights to take this information with us when we leave an online service. Making data portable by law would let us free ourselves from a corporate walled garden and easily use other services. These rights should be clearly communicated and equitably enforced in all languages in which the service is used. And we should be able to easily opt out of companies' collection and retention of our data.

Less is more: prioritizing data minimization. We may want to share our data to receive services we sign up for, but companies shouldn't be allowed to collect more information than they need from us or retain it for longer than they need it to provide the requested good or service. Everything we do online generates data and every bit of that data can be tracked and used — no matter how innocuous it may appear in isolation — to create dangerous and invasive online profiles. But companies and governments can't misuse information that isn't collected in the first place.

Transparency for all. We deserve to know what kinds of information companies and data brokers are collecting about us. Companies need to disclose not just what information they collect, but where they get the information: which companies share data with them, and who they share data with. They must also be transparent about how our information is used, how they make decisions about what content to show us and how they secure our data. Companies should be required to provide transparency and data access to external stakeholders, including independent researchers, for the public good.

Eliminate algorithmic discrimination. Algorithms make inferences about us based on our actual or perceived identities and preferences. These algorithms are built on decades of institutionalized discrimination and segregation. Trained by humans and human language, algorithms perpetuate certain biases that create inequitable experiences for users.

Companies must eliminate algorithmic discrimination or face enforcement actions for liability. Congress should investigate voter suppression and other civil-rights violations flowing from algorithmic discrimination and other abusive data practices.

Robust agency enforcement. The Federal Trade Commission should effectively enforce against and prevent data abuses and other unfair or deceptive practices through its rulemaking authority. Other federal agencies like the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Department of Education, Department of Justice and Department of Labor should study how personal information is used in their fields, identify disparities and risks for discrimination, and issue public reports to Congress on a regular basis, with special focus on the potentially discriminatory effects on people of color and non-English-speaking communities.

How you can get involved:

1. Tell us your story of online harm: We're uplifting activists' voices to fight for the policy change that is desperately needed. Through our story-collection process, we're gathering real-life accounts of online harms, showcasing the urgency and gravity of the problem to the Federal Trade Commission as it contemplates reforms.

2. Call your lawmakers and tell them to limit government surveillance and protect your right to privacy:

Tell your senator to:
- Support the **Fourth Amendment Is Not for Sale Act**
- Support the **Algorithmic Justice and Online Platform Transparency Act**
- Support the **Platform Accountability and Transparency Act**
- Support comprehensive federal privacy and civil-rights legislation like the **American Data Privacy and Protection Act**
- Ban algorithms that profile users and target content to them in ways that constitute age, racial and sex discrimination in employment, housing, lending, and e-commerce.

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