

KIDS APPS COLLECTING PERSONAL DATA



There are plenty of apps available for different smartphones. However, there are certain apps that are ranked highly amongst children, and many of these apps are actually collecting personal data of the users, the children, and sharing it with different advertisers, according to The Mercury News. Most parents are unaware that this type of situation is even occurring, and that the personal information of their children could be shared with several third-parties without their permission. The Federal Trade Commission, commonly referred to as the FTC, made the issue clear in a recent report during the week. It is believed that some of these different applications are actually in violation of being deceptive to obtain information about children who are under the age of 13 years old. The FTC is currently performing an investigation to further look into the situation. An associate director for the FTC, Jessica Rich, has said, "These findings are troubling in a number of ways." She also said, "Parents should be able to learn what data an app collects, how it will be used and who collects it." Rich also said that the app developers need to be more responsible for the disclosure of private information for their users. Advertising agencies can also be held responsible. In the meantime, the FTC is taking it all into consideration to determine whether they should add onto the rules for these applications that children are using. By expanding the rules, the FTC believes it would be able to provide more protection for the children and for their own privacy. The FTC figures that adding certain information onto the list of things that cannot be collected from children may help to further protect their privacy. It is believed that a final decision will be made by the end of this month. The FTC claims to have reviewed over 200 different games and application that are considered popular amongst younger children. A large portion of these apps, more than half, have been providing information on users to different advertising networks. With this information, it is easy for advertiser to build a profile based on what the user does online, even if they are not even aware of the name of the user. There are some applications that are even providing advertisers with more personal information about the children, including their phone number and their location. At this point in time, the FTC did not name any of the apps that could be under investigation due to the violations. Rich said, "We think this is a systematic problem and it would be misleading to parents to name the apps we looked at."