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BUSINESS

# Google facing \$425.7 million in damages for nearly a decade of improper smartphone snooping



More [A sign is displayed on a Google building at their campus in Mountain View, Calif., Sept. 24, 2019. \(AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File\)](#)

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**SAN FRANCISCO (AP)** — A federal jury has ordered Google to pay \$425.7 million for improperly snooping on people's smartphones during a nearly decade-long period of intrusions.

The verdict reached Wednesday in San Francisco federal court followed a more than two-week trial in a class-action case covering about 98 million smartphones operating in the United States between July 1, 2016, through Sept. 23, 2024. That means the total damages awarded in the five-year-old case works out to about \$4 per device.

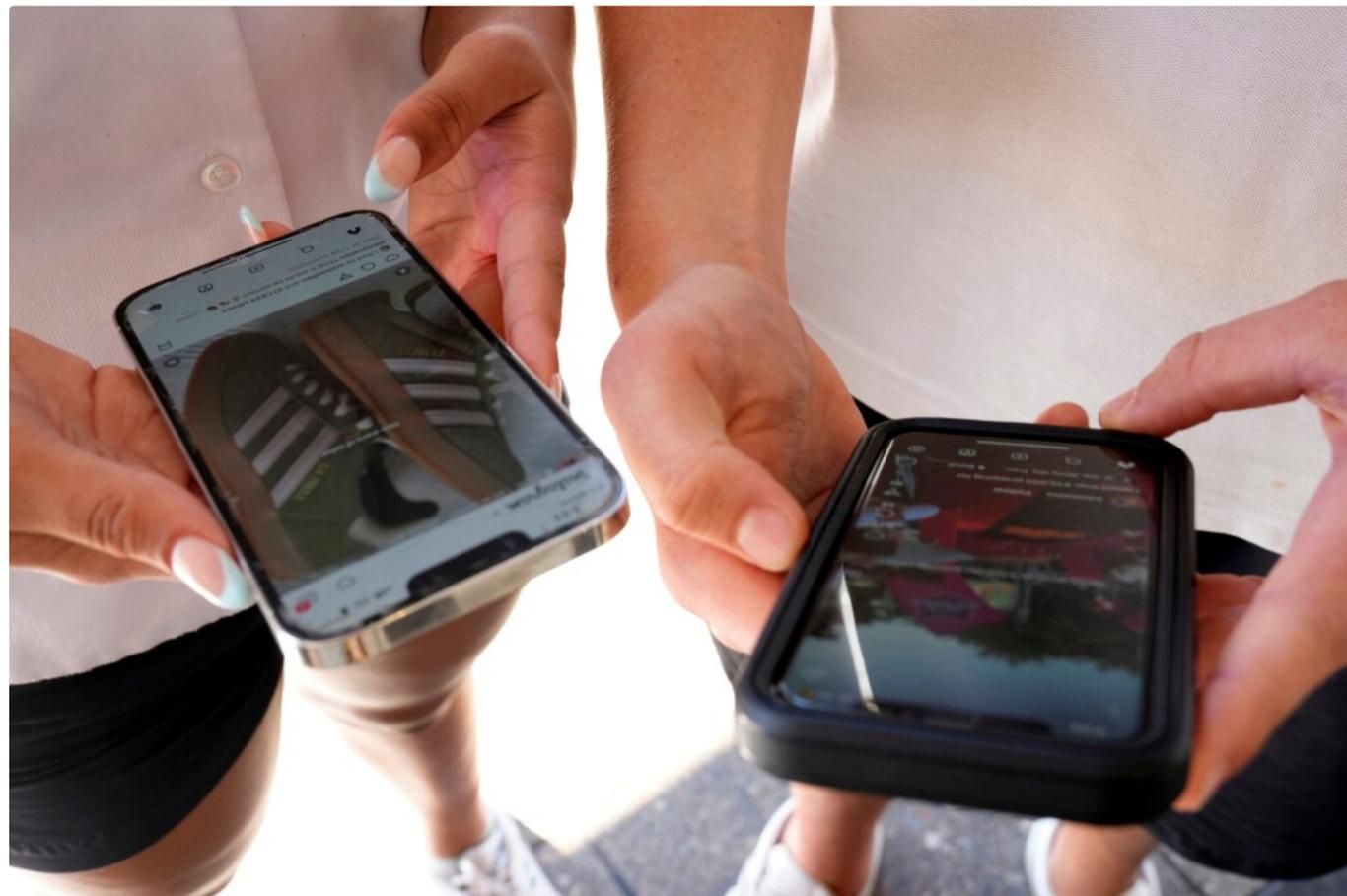
Google had denied that it was improperly tracking the online activity of people who thought they had shielded themselves with privacy controls. The company maintained its stance even though the eight-person jury concluded Google had been spying in violation of California privacy laws.

“This decision misunderstands how our products work, and we will appeal it,” Google spokesman Jose Castaneda said Thursday. “Our privacy tools give people control over their data, and when they turn off personalization, we honor that choice.”

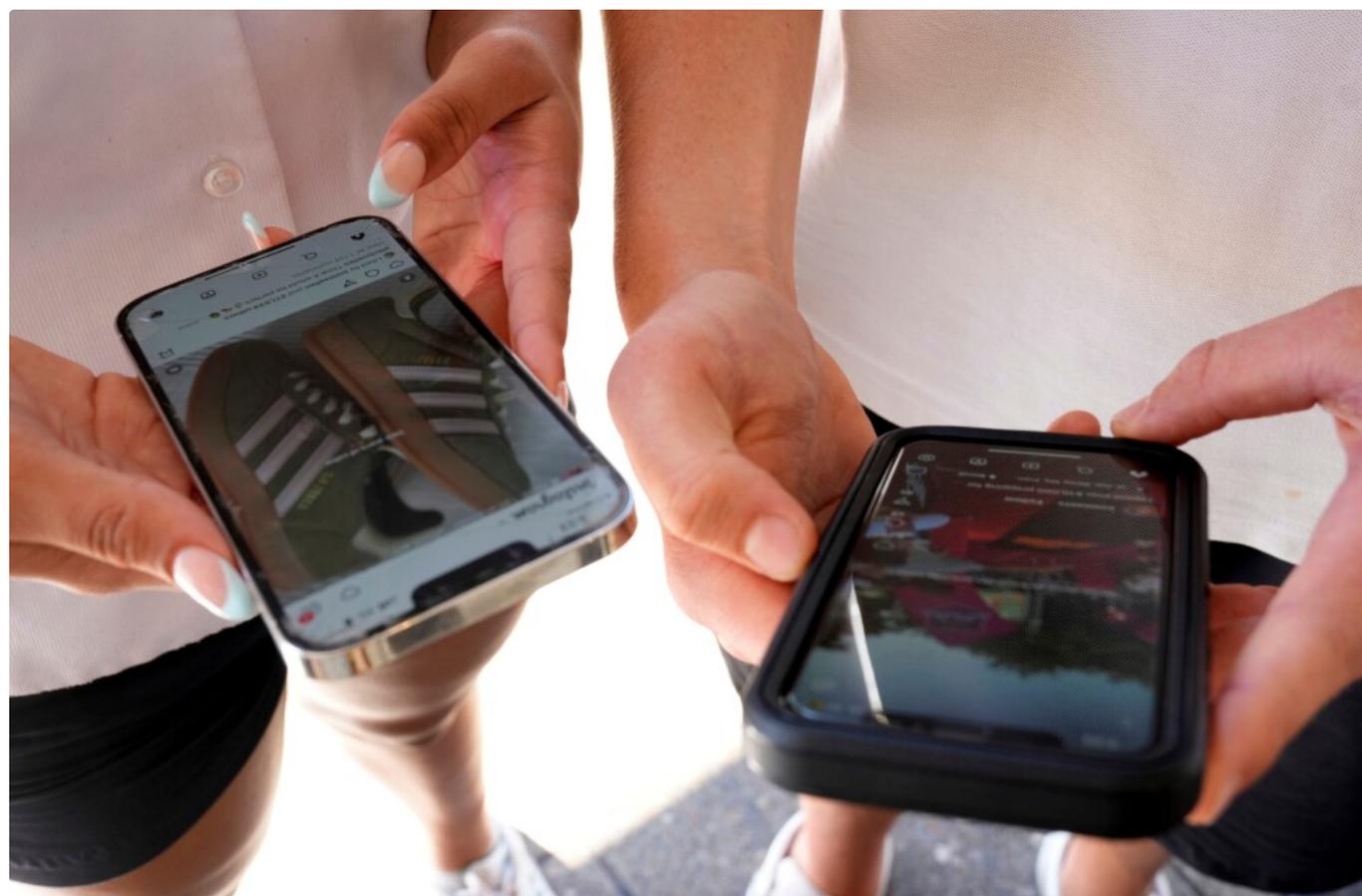
The lawyers who filed the case had argued Google had used the data they collected off smartphones without users' permission to help sell ads tailored to users' individual interests — a strategy that resulted in the company reaping billions in additional revenue. The lawyers framed those ad sales as illegal profiteering that merited damages of more than \$30 billion.

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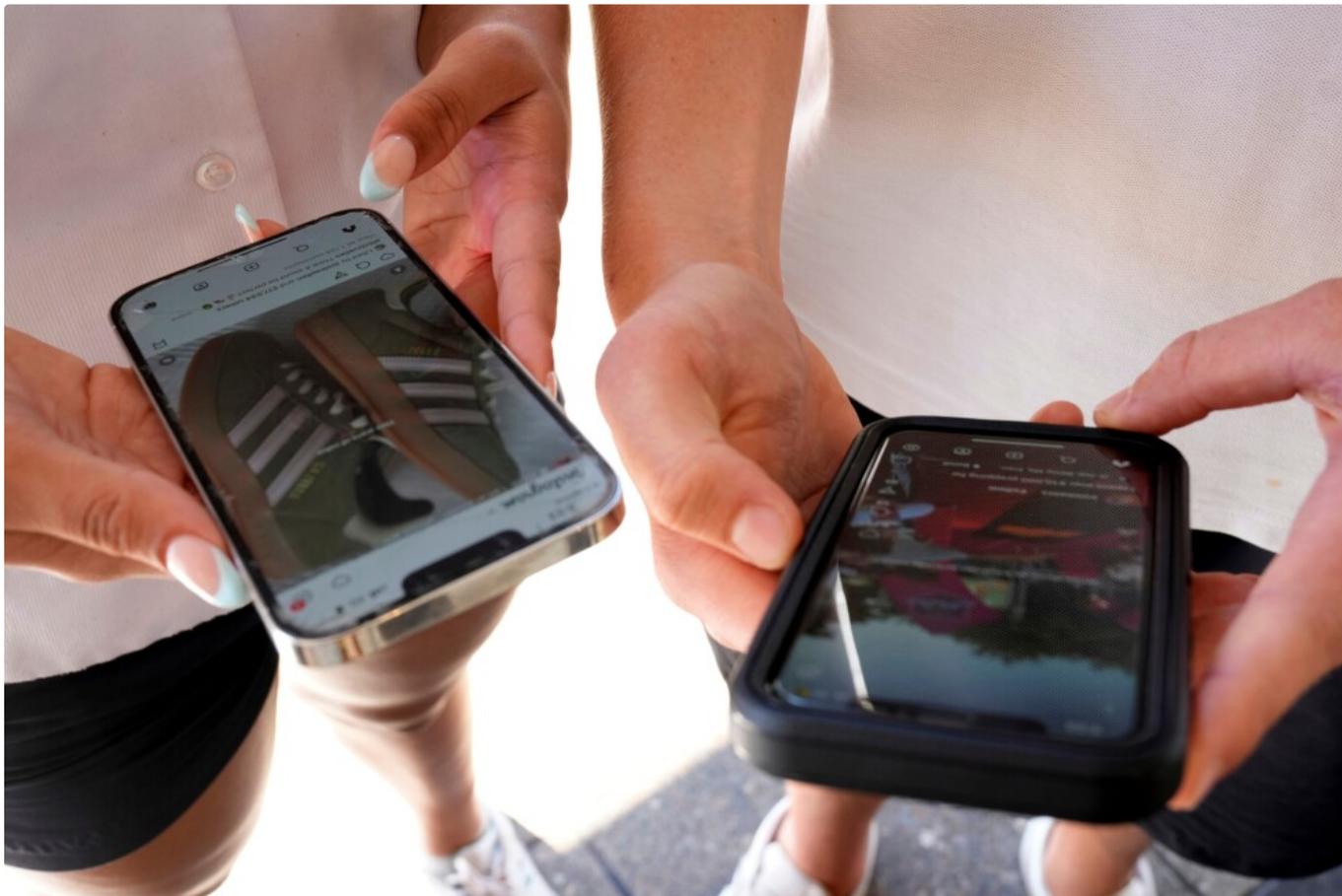
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Even though the jury came up with a far lower calculation for the damages, one of the lawyers who brought the case against Google hailed the outcome as a victory for privacy protection.

“We hope this result sends a message to the tech industry that Americans will not sit idly by as their information is collected and monetized against their will,” said attorney John Yanchunis of law firm Morgan & Morgan.

The San Francisco jury verdict came [a day after Google avoided](#) the U.S. Department of Justice’s attempt to break up the company in a landmark antitrust case in Washington, D.C., targeting its dominant search engine. A federal judge who had declared Google’s search engine [to be an illegal monopoly](#) ordered less radical changes, including requiring the company to share some of its search data with rivals.

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