

# Privacy: An Overview



## Key Points

- Consumers expect strong privacy protection to be built into their products and services, and have high expectations about how companies collect, use, and store their information. Public trust depends on people knowing that their privacy will be protected and that their personal information will be used appropriately.
- Microsoft has a longstanding commitment to privacy. The company takes steps to responsibly manage customer information, promote transparency, and offer meaningful privacy choices. Microsoft employs more than 40 people who work full-time on privacy, and several hundred other employees worldwide focus on privacy as part of their jobs.
- Microsoft supports privacy legislation that facilitates the free flow of information, builds trust, and encourages innovation. Because data increasingly flows across geopolitical borders, the company favors greater standardization and better worldwide alignment of privacy regulations, policies, and standards.

## BACKGROUND

The digital economy has changed the world in profound and exciting ways. At the same time, public concern about privacy, including the collection and use of personal information and widely publicized data breaches, threatens to erode public confidence in digital commerce and the Internet.

Consumers expect strong privacy protection to be built into their products and services, and have high expectations about how companies collect, use, and store their information. Public trust depends on people knowing that their privacy will be protected and that their personal information will be used appropriately. If companies fail to meet these standards, people may be less inclined to use online technologies, and both industry and people will suffer.

## MICROSOFT APPROACH

Microsoft has a longstanding commitment to privacy. The company takes steps to responsibly manage customer information, promote transparency, and offer meaningful privacy choices:

- **Privacy fundamentals.** Microsoft understands that respect for privacy is essential to a computing environment that is trustworthy. Microsoft employs more than 40 full-time privacy professionals and several hundred more employees worldwide who are responsible for ensuring that privacy policies, procedures, and technologies are applied company-wide.
- **Protection of user information.** Microsoft believes that people should have control over their personal information and that organizations should be responsible and accountable for how they collect, use, and protect this information. Microsoft's privacy principles and privacy statements provide clearly worded explanations of what information Microsoft collects (and why), and how Microsoft uses it. They also offer guidance on how individuals can manage some of the information they provide to Microsoft.

- **Policy leadership and collaboration.** Microsoft works with governments, businesses, and technology industry leaders to advise on legislative proposals, help align laws across jurisdictions, develop responsible privacy practices, and strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms that support greater protections for individuals and their personal information.

The company's public policy efforts include advocating for new and updated regulatory approaches to promoting a safer, more open cloud computing environment, and baseline federal policy legislation. Microsoft also works with law enforcement agencies as well as consumer and advocacy organizations around the world to combat fraud, spam, spyware, and other threats to privacy online.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Microsoft supports privacy legislation that facilitates the free flow of information, builds trust, and encourages innovation. Because data exchanges are increasingly global, the company favors greater alignment of privacy regulations, policies, and standards worldwide.
- As governments act to address issues associated with emerging technologies and online services, they should not stifle innovation and the adoption of technology in the process. Government and industry can work together to establish appropriate and balanced principles that can be standardized and applied globally.
- Microsoft believes that the way data is used, rather than how it is collected, could be a more effective premise for protecting data and meeting privacy obligations related to that data. Rather than relying on notice and consent, Microsoft supports a model based on use.



## Helpful Resources

An overview of Microsoft privacy policies and initiatives  
[www.microsoft.com/privacy](http://www.microsoft.com/privacy)

Microsoft's Privacy Principles  
[www.microsoft.com/privacy/principles.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/privacy/principles.aspx)

Microsoft privacy statement  
[aka.ms/privacy-statement](http://aka.ms/privacy-statement)

Privacy Guidelines for Developing Software Products and Services  
[aka.ms/privacy-guidelines](http://aka.ms/privacy-guidelines)

Privacy and cloud computing at Microsoft  
[www.microsoft.com/privacy/cloudcomputing.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/privacy/cloudcomputing.aspx)

Privacy in Microsoft advertising  
[choice.microsoft.com](http://choice.microsoft.com)