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More Than Half of Android Apps for Kids Are Violating US Privacy Laws

Privacy experts have analyzed 5,855 child-directed Android apps and have found that more than half —57%— are potentially violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), a US law protecting children's private data online. "We identified several concerning violations and trends: clear violations when apps share location or contact information without consent (4.8%), sharing of personal information without applying reasonable security measures (40.0%), potential non-compliance by sharing persistent identifiers with third parties for prohibited purposes (18.8%), and ignorance or disregard for contractual obligations aimed at protecting children's privacy (39.0%)," the team said. Researchers also found that 28% of the tested apps accessed sensitive data protected by Android permissions and 73% transmitted sensitive data over the Internet. "Overall, roughly 57% of the 5,855 child-directed apps that we analyzed are potentially violating COPPA," privacy experts from multiple US universities wrote in a research paper they plan to present this summer at the Privacy Enhancing Technologies Symposium (PETS) in Barcelona, Spain.