

Google is limiting which apps can see everything else you have installed



Google will soon be more selective about which apps on the Play Store can see all of the other apps you have installed (via *XDA-Developers*). As *Ars Technica* points out, your list of installed apps, innocent as it seems, can communicate to developers personal traits like dating preferences and political affiliations. So starting on May 5th, 2021, developers will have to provide a very good reason for why Google should let you access info like that.

Android 11 apps that currently request the "QUERY_ALL_PACKAGES" permission can see the full list of apps you have stored on your device. But Google recently updated its Developer Program Policy and now considers that info to be "personal and sensitive user data," restricting which apps are allowed to use it.

Once the change goes into effect in May, apps can only use the permission if their "core user facing functionality or

purpose, requires broad visibility into installed apps on the user's device." Examples of apps that will be permitted to continue using this permission include file managers, browsers, and antivirus apps that need the data "for awareness or interoperability purposes." Banking apps, digital wallet apps, and any other app that involves "financial transaction functionality" will get a pass "for security based purposes."

Apps that don't have a justifiable use case for the permission risk being removed from the Google Play Store. All developers who want to keep the permission in their apps need to complete a declaration form justifying their use of it.

In case you're worried that developers could *still* misuse the permission, Google's documentation clearly states it will come down hard on offending apps, whether they're new to the Play Store or just updates to existing apps. Google could suspend apps and possibly terminate developer accounts.

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/4/2/22364632/google-play-store-apps-see-other-installed-may-5-query-all-packages>