Does opting out of smart TV tracking work? Research finds “suspicious” traffic.

Smart TVs running operating systems from Samsung, Vizio, and Roku continue sending data to automatic content recognition (ACR) endpoints after users opt out of tracking in the devices’ settings, according to research published on Monday. The paper from Northeastern University researchers points to potential privacy violations from some of the biggest TV brands.

ACR captures video screenshots or audio clips from smart TVs and sends the data to remote servers, where it’s used for things like measuring content viewership and serving targeted ads.

The paper, “Watching the Watchers: Privacy Analysis of US Smart TV Automatic Content Recognition,” examined eight smart TV OSes across 12 smart TVs from 10 manufacturers (Amazon, Hisense, LG, Roku, Samsung, Sony, Supersonic, TCL, Vizio, and Westinghouse) to examine when smart TVs use ACR and how effective opting out of user tracking is.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/does-opting-out-of-smart-tv-tracking-work-research-finds-suspicious-traffic/

JustWatch, which tackles streaming fragmentation, launches own streaming service

Since launching in 2015, JustWatch has helped people navigate the growing number of streaming services by providing a guide on where to find movies they want to stream. Now JustWatch has its own streaming service and wants people to subscribe.

Launched today, JustWatch TV offers some movies available for free with ads that aren't free on any other streaming service, including *Green Room* (2015), *Locke* (2013), and *Sing Sing* (2023). Other free movies include *Fiddlin'* (2018*), Friday the 13th* (1980), and *Hotel Mumbai* (2018). I could play movies available for free on JustWatch TV without creating an account.

JustWatch TV also has movies you can rent.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/justwatch-which-tackles-streaming-fragmentation-launches-own-streaming-service/

OpenBSD 8.0 arrives with

security record still intact

OpenBSD 8.0 is here, marking the project’s 61st release and continuing its schedule of semiannual releases dating back to 1996. What started more than 30 years ago as a fork of NetBSD has grown into one of the most security-conscious operating systems in active development. In a post to the project’s announcements mailing list, OpenBSD founder Theo de Raadt highlights a host of improvements included with the latest version and writes that the project remains “proud of OpenBSD’s record of more than thirty years with only two remote holes in the default install.”

The latest OpenBSD version brings new features and improvements across the board. These changes, particularly the new Intel Arc support and expanded virtual address space, should improve compatibility with modern graphics cards and allow the system to map more than 4GB of VRAM. Some of the major updates noted in the release newsletter are as follows:

- Added support for Intel Arc A-Series (DG2/Alchemist) graphics cards.
- 512GB kernel virtual address space on AMD64, up from 4GB, allowing VRAM mapping above 4GB.
- Added hibernation support for ARM64 systems.
- A new RPKI-to-router daemon: rtrd(8).
- RISC-V improvements including kernel support for the ‘V’ vector extension and support for Advanced Interrupt Architecture.
- Wireless network driver additions and improvements, including 802.11n and 40 MHz channels for the qwx(4) wireless driver.
- Added support for up to 64 virtual CPUs per guest virtual machine.
- Security and internal improvements for LibreSSL 4.4.0 and OpenSSH 10.6.
- Improvements to the vmm/vmd virtualization stack.

The new OpenBSD also retires support for Loongson architecture after the port stopped working with the Clang 22 compiler. If you’re interested in reading over all the changes that come with the new OpenBSD 8.0, you can take a look at the release announcement.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/openbsd-8-0-lands-with-intel-arc-graphics-support/

Bug turns one of the biggest fears about Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses into reality

Meta has previously tried to assuage concerns by pointing to the fact that its glasses light up when recording audio or video. But the bug this week shows that even with this light activated, it’s possible for the smart glasses to record inadvertently.

Meta’s brief statement does little to alleviate those worries. Meanwhile, the bug lends some credence to reports and trepidation that Ray-Ban Metas are creating recordings without subjects’ knowledge.

Fears brought to life

Meta has been steadfast in its push for gadgets that put microphones and cameras in people's homes and on their faces, while battling fears that the devices could be used for nonconsensual recordings.

Contractors for Sama, a data annotation company headquartered in Kenya, say they have viewed footage that was shot by Ray-Ban Metas, seemingly without the wearer or other people in the video knowing. A report by Swedish journalists earlier this year interviewed over 30 Sama workers and pointed to a "stream of privacy-sensitive data that is fed straight into the tech giant's systems," per a machine translation, resulting in workers viewing private activities, like a glasses owner's partner coming out of a bathroom naked.

"Meta has that type of content in its databases. People can record themselves in the wrong way and not even know what they are recording," the report quoted an anonymous Sama employee as saying.

In the US, the report led to a lawsuit seeking class action certification [PDF] and an investigation from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

In August, Meta updated its smart glasses so that they won't record if the glasses' indicator light is covered up. Some potential privacy violations using Ray-Ban Metas, however, hinge on a bad human actor. But this most recent glitch, as well as the reports from the Sama workers, highlights the possibility for well-meaning users to inadvertently record stuff, too.

The privacy shortcomings of Ray-Ban Meta and other smart glasses have raised concerns about being clandestinely recorded in public and about the creation of apps for detecting the smart glasses. The privacy concerns have also

led to proposed legislation, including in Norway, which is considering a temporary ban.

Glasses like Ray-Ban Metas have the potential to intentionally or unintentionally violate people’s privacy, whether through technical problems, sharing data without user consent, or poor design. Without further constraints, one of the biggest drawbacks to devices like Ray-Ban Metas will continue to be the fear of nonconsensual recording, a fear that this week’s bug turned into a reality.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/ray-ban-meta-smart-glasses-found-recording-audio-without-wearers-consent/

The Surface Laptop Ultra delivers on most of Microsoft’s promises

Over the past week, the laptop Microsoft sent me has been summarizing books and movies, generating images from my imagination, and running a 70-billion-parameter AI model that would be a stretch to fit on most laptops. It also played AAA games at a speed and fidelity I would have thought impossible on an ARM system just a year ago. Microsoft wants to sell you one computer for all of your needs, and for once that doesn’t feel like total marketing fluff. Mostly.

Microsoft is throwing both arms around the new Nvidia RTX Spark platform with the Surface Laptop Ultra—and setting its sights on the would-be MacBook Pro buyer, or as the company called it, “a high performance audience.” The bet is that rather than a gaming desktop for fun and a development laptop

for work, buyers will pay more for one machine that does both.

The Surface Laptop Ultra arrives at a strange time in personal computing. Recent industry numbers showed a 20 percent drop in total PC shipments year over year in the third quarter of 2026. That’s not just consumer purchasing either—that’s across the board. Between the RAMpocalypse that has exploded consumer prices and an industry fixated on enterprise money, there hasn’t been much new hardware to excite PC enthusiasts.

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https://arstechnica.com/reviews/2026/10/the-surface-laptop-ultra-delivers-on-most-of-microsofts-promises/

Googlebook review: Android on a laptop is still Android

Android was designed for phones, but that hasn’t stopped Google from trying to adapt the OS and its apps to larger machines over the years. Googlebooks are just the latest attempt after tablets, Chromebooks, and foldables induced little change in how people interact with Android software. These new Android-powered laptops are designed to pick up where the web-focused ChromeOS left off, offering premium hardware and native support for Android apps.

Google sees Googlebooks as an alternative to Windows and macOS, but these platforms are entrenched with decades of software and UI conventions that keep users locked in. Googlebooks have to offer something very special to steal

users away from either of the dominant operating systems.

For devoted Android phone users, there are some cool things in Googlebook OS, but the Android roots of these machines are impossible to miss. Sometimes it feels like using a Chromebook, and sometimes it feels like using a giant phone. It almost never feels like using a premium laptop, and that’s the problem.

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https://arstechnica.com/reviews/2026/10/googlebook-review-android-on-a-laptop-is-still-android/

KDE turns 30 with Plasma 6.8, remote upgrades, and an X11 farewell

Marking the 30th anniversary of software developer KDE on October 14, the company released Plasma 6.8, debuted a movie, and retired Plasma’s native X11 session support. The announcement from KDE dubs the new Plasma 6.8 as the “30th Anniversary Edition” and describes the update as preparing Plasma for the future. Legacy X11 applications will still function via the XWayland compatibility layer, and KDE applications will also continue supporting X11 under other desktop environments.

After 42 years in service, the X11 protocol is losing another major desktop environment. Plasma will fully adopt the Wayland system and put support for starting new X11 sessions in Plasma

to bed. Users opting to stay on Plasma 6.7 will keep their existing sessions for now. The move was expected, with GNOME officially dropping X11 sessions by default in 2025.

The new Plasma 6.8 brings many improvements, including increased support for adding window decorations (like shadows and rounded corners) to third-party apps, and a more streamlined Union theming system. Other notable additions include Nvidia triple buffering being enabled by default, Kup backup integration (KDE's backup utility—now integrated into Plasma), and kscreenctl, a command-line utility that allows power users to adjust display configurations.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/kde-turns-30-with-plasma-6-8-remote-upgrades-and-an-x11-farewell/

Plex now helps sell movie theater tickets

Plex, which made a name for itself by letting users share movies they own, is now helping sell movie theater tickets. The company is looking to monetize its content-discovery capabilities and expand its business beyond its media server software.

Plex partnered with Fandango, which has sold movie tickets since 2000, to drive ticket sales from people searching for movies to stream. Per the announcement:

> *Starting today, Plex users in the US will see a Fandango*

> *ticketing option on title pages for movies currently playing in theaters, allowing them to click through to Fandango to find showtimes and purchase tickets. The integration also enables direct attribution through Kochava, giving studios and advertisers greater visibility into how campaigns and audience engagement translate into ticket sales.*

Fandango says it sells tickets for 31,000 movie theater screens in the US. The Plex deal allows it to leverage data from Plex's streaming service (Plex claims users of the service "make more than 100 million streaming decisions each month"), including "ratings and cross-platform viewing" to gain "insight into audience intent," the announcement said.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/plex-now-helps-sell-movie-theater-tickets/

Black Sea drone attacks enter NATO country's territorial waters for first time

Russian drones are suspected of sinking a cargo ship and leaving chemical tankers ablaze near the Black Sea coasts of Bulgaria and Romania, respectively. The latest attacks mean that at least seven ships have been attacked in the exclusive economic zones of NATO member countries—and even within Romania's territorial waters if Russian involvement is confirmed in the case of the chemical tankers.

Such attacks have spurred requests for NATO to redeploy counter-drone systems to provide more protection. In a social media post on October 15, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte stated that NATO had increased “counter-drone capabilities” along the alliance’s eastern flank after meeting with the leaders of Bulgaria and Romania.

The latest attacks this week occurred within 24 hours between October 14 and October 15, when the two chemical tankers were set afire after Russian drones were detected in Romanian airspace, according to Deutsche Welle. Both ships were sitting at anchor near the mouth of the Sulina canal that connects the Black Sea to the Danube River, which has become a crucial shipping export route for Ukraine, Reuters reported.

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https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/10/black-sea-drone-attacks-enter-nato-countrys-territorial-waters-for-first-time/

Skydance’s Discovery+ prices increase by up to 20 percent

Discovery+ subscription prices went up today.

Ad-free plans for new subscribers went from $10 per month to $12/month. Ad-based plans went from $6 to $7.

The new prices take effect for new subscribers immediately. Current subscribers to the streaming service, which primarily features unscripted content, like reality shows and documentaries, will receive 30 days’ notice before the new

prices take effect, starting with bills issued as of November 12.

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