

Data Brokers

Learn how data brokers operate and how you can protect your data and opt-out of data broker sites.

1. What Are Data Brokers? How Do They Get Their Info?

Data brokers are businesses that collect, store, and sell data to other companies. Generally, data brokers obtain and store data, create lists and categories, and then sell it to other places, such as marketing firms.

Data brokers obtain their information using a few different tactics:

- They buy it from a third-party (such as an app, a credit card company, or a website)
- They look for it online using searching and public records
- They track you using cookies

Data brokers obtain their data through some of the following sources:

- Public records
- Your social media posts
- Your browsing history
- Your online purchases
- Smart home devices

Websites noting that they might make your information available to third-parties are often saying that they're selling your data to a data broker.

While data brokers are technically legal, many are growing increasingly concerned with how they operate and the issues they pose for individual privacy.

2. What Risks Are Associated With Data Brokers?

Data brokers track you and make your data available to groups like marketing firms that use targeted ads, which raises many privacy concerns.

Data brokers are also at risk for hacks and there have been cases where data brokers have had their data sets breached by hackers.

3. How Can You Remove Your Information From a Data Broker Site?

This can be a time consuming process, unfortunately. However, there are guides out there that walk you through the process for different data brokers. One thing to keep in mind: you might need to repeat this process since data brokers might start collecting your data again after time has passed. Plan to check on these data brokers at least annually!

The Big Ass Data Broker Opt-Out List is an open source list compiled by a journalist. It has directions on how to contact and remove your data from individual data brokers. Run a search to find this resource, staying sharp about clicking safe links

DeleteMe Opt-Out Guides are a collection of free opt-out guides for different data brokers sites. Run a search to find this resource, staying sharp about clicking safe links

There are also sites and paid services that will remove your information from data brokers for you. Be sure you check out these sites and understand how they work and what you are signing up for though. And note that they aren't cheap! Albine's **DeleteMe** and **Kanary** are two options. Run a search to find these resources, staying sharp about clicking safe links.

4. How Can You Avoid Falling Prey to Data Brokers?

There are some steps you can take to make your personal information less accessible to data brokers. Links to these resources can be found below:

NYC Digital Safety

Privacy & Security

- Sign up for the **National Do Not Call Registry** to remove yourself from telemarketer databases and stop telemarketing calls
- Sign up for **DMACHoice** to remove yourself from direct marketing lists
- Sign up at **OptOutPreScreen** to get yourself off of lists for things like credit card or loan offers
- Consider using a **Virtual Private Network (VPN)** to browse more privately and securely
- Practice data minimization and be mindful of what information you are posting and sharing online
- Use a browser dedicated to privacy (and one that doesn't store cookies or history) such as Brave or a private mobile device browser like **Firefox Focus** or **DuckDuckGo**
- Manage your social media settings, browser history and settings, and ad settings to keep your information more secure
- Have a digital security plan where you maintain your account settings, update passwords, delete browser history, and other tasks. Resources like the **Consumer Reports Security Planner** can help with this

5. How can you learn more and get involved with combating data brokers?

Data brokers are a growing concern and many organizations dedicated to privacy rights are doing work to push back against the troubling practices of data brokers. A great place to get started and learn more is the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

6. Check out These Resources

The Big Ass Data Broker Opt-Out List

<https://github.com/yaelwrites/Big-Ass-Data-Broker-Opt-Out-List>

DeleteMe Opt-Out Guides

<https://joindeleteme.com/help/deleteme-help-topics/opt-out-guide/>

NYC Digital Safety

Privacy & Security

DeleteMe

<https://joindeleteme.com/>

Kanary

<https://www.thekanary.com/>

National Do Not Call Registry

<https://www.donotcall.gov/register.html>

DMACHoice

<https://dmachoice.thedma.org/register.php>

OptOutPreScreen

<https://www.optoutprescreen.com/>

Brave

<https://brave.com/>

Firefox Focus

<https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/browsers/mobile/focus/>

DuckDuckGo

<https://duckduckgo.com/>

Consumer Reports Security Planner

<https://digital-lab.consumerreports.org/security-planner/>