

## The Cookie Flip That Puts Privacy Sandbox In Limbo

Issued April 22, 2025

### What Happened?

#### Google announces a stance change in cookie preferences within Chrome

Google's long-standing plans to eliminate web tracking cookies came to an abrupt halt in July of 2024 but still left the door open in forging ahead with the development of their Privacy Sandbox and providing users with cookie tracking preferences. Now, Google is changing direction again by announcing on April 22 that they will no longer implement a standalone "anti-cookie" prompt for users to manage third-party cookies. Instead, management will remain within Chrome's existing privacy and security settings.

As a refresher, Google's Privacy Sandbox was technology created to replace third-party cookies with more privacy friendly alternatives while not disrupting how digital advertising works. It would still allow for showing relevant ads, measuring performance and preventing fraud by tracking not individuals but groups of people anonymously. The proposed "anti-cookie" prompt, would be a pop up in Chrome asking users to allow or deny third-party cookies thus complying with privacy regulations.

The latest announcement reflects Google's effort to navigate complex regulatory environments while sticking with their endeavors to move beyond the cookie. However, Google faced not only regulatory hurdles particularly in the UK but also huge concerns with eliminating cookies and the impact it would have on advertising as well as two damaging antitrust rulings.

### Why We Care

Despite Google's about face on cookie deprecation last year, we were still advised to continue prepping for the massive impact particularly on remarketing efforts. This latest announcement is still not the end of the cookie saga but provides more breathing room to figure it all out. Privacy concerns are still at the forefront for consumers and advertisers, especially with AI adoption and other platforms still looking to have some level of phasing out of cookies (e.g. Safari, DuckDuckGo). There is still a huge shift towards privacy which is evident in opt-out and opt-in preferences (*17% of US consumers always accept cookies- EMARKETER Aug 2024*). Therefore, it is still important for advertisers to continue investigating and testing ways to leverage first-party data and other targeting options to future proof their media and measurement strategies.

# The Cookie Flip That Puts Privacy Sandbox In Limbo

Issued April 22, 2025

## What We're Keeping An Eye On

### Google's broader efforts to position Chrome as a secure browser

Google is continuing to strengthen tracking protections in Chrome, with a particular focus on Incognito mode, where third-party cookies are already blocked by default. By Q3 2025, a new IP Protection feature is expected to launch in Incognito, routing traffic through a proxy to hide users' IP addresses from advertisers and publishers. This update is part of a larger initiative that includes enhancements like Safe Browsing, Safety Check, and AI-powered security tools. This is all designed to reinforce Chrome's reputation as a trusted, secure browser globally.

## What To Do Now

**Cookie deprecation has not crumbled but may be getting a new recipe and brands should still plan accordingly to mitigate potential loss of inventory from more widespread opt-in and opt-out user choices**

1. Still ensure you have up-to-date tracking in place across your digital channels: Google Tag, GA4, Conversions API, Pixels, Global Site Tag as well
2. Watch out for announcements on new feature adoption and if Google will change direction regarding targeting and measurement across their browser
3. Leverage first party data to fill in some of the gaps in tracking or drop in inventory that may come up
4. Continue to test audience expansion capabilities like Google's Optimized Targeting, Paid Social Lookalike Audiences, or Meta's Advantage+ Audiences, which models out people likely to be interested in your product or service