



## THOMSON REUTERS® DATA PRIVACY ADVISOR

### COVID-19 Data Privacy Global News Coverage August 29, 2020 – September 11, 2020

The following is a selection of global COVID-19 developments compiled by the Thomson Reuters Data Privacy news team. This news bulletin covers technology developments, cybersecurity, proposed legislation, and other key data privacy updates relating to COVID-19.

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#### Technology Developments

[QR Codes Making Life Easier for Cafe Owners and Customers, But What About Privacy?](#), United States (September 10, 2020)

QR codes are not a new concept but paired with phones they could help venues comply with their COVID-19 safe industry plans by assisting in the collection of personal information.

[Thrive Health: Canadian Healthtech Company Launches COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool at University of Toronto for Fall 2020](#), Canada (September 8, 2020)

The University of Toronto has launched an online COVID-19 self-assessment tool called UCheck for the start of the 2020-2021 academic year. Thrive Health is also the creator of Health Canada's official COVID-19 support app, which has already provided over 10 million COVID-19 risk assessments.

[Face Masks And Facial Recognition Will Both be Common in The Future. How Will They Co-Exist?](#), Australia (September 6, 2020)

Face masks are now compulsory or recommended in various parts of the country, however, this may prevent facial recognition systems from fulfilling their crime prevention purposes. A major research project found some algorithms struggled to correctly identify mask-wearing individuals up to 50% of the time.

[Philippines: Govt Launches Game Changer 'StaySafe.PH' as Official COVID-19 Contact Tracing App](#), Philippines (September 5, 2020)

The Philippines government launched its official contact-tracing app for COVID-19, known as StaySafe.PH. Presidential Spokesperson, Secretary Harry Roque, made the announcement during the Malacaang media briefing and said the Department of Health (DOH) has officially taken over the web-based app earlier developed by the Multisys Technology Corporation.

[Saskatchewan to Launch COVID Alert in September](#), Canada (September 3, 2020)

Saskatchewan is soon set to launch "COVID Alert" according to Premier Scott Moe. COVID Alert for iOS and Android runs on the Exposure Notification framework from Apple and Google. It allows smartphones to have digital "handshakes" in the background using Bluetooth. Exposure is considered contact within two meters for 15 minutes or more with another individual.

[HKBU Launches COVID-19 Alert System](#), Hong Kong (August 31, 2020)

Researchers from Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) have developed a COVID-19 alert system which will send a message to users through a mobile app if they and an infected person have visited the same place within a time period that gives rise to risks of exposure. The system will not collect users' personal information and location data, thereby protecting individuals' privacy while alerting them on disease transmission risks associated with confirmed infection cases.

## **Cybersecurity**

['Cyberpandemic' Will Force Companies to Monitor Home Office](#) U.S. (September 8, 2020)

Many companies chose to have their employees work 100% from home to help contain the physical expansion of COVID-19, however, this opened the door to cyberpandemics. In a hyper-connected work environment, for which neither companies nor users were fully ready, Gil Schwed, CEO of cybersecurity firm Checkpoint, warns that it faces a "cyber-pandemic," as cybercriminals take advantage of the home office's security gaps to breach business systems. It is now more pressing than ever that companies be proactive and vigilant about the networks through which they pass their data.

[New Cyber Security Law Requires Firms to Use Information Sharing Platform](#) Nepal (September 5, 2020)

The Nepal Telecommunications Authority has passed the Cyber Security Bylaw 2020, which aims to protect information and communication systems from cyberattacks and other associated risks. It requires telecommunication and internet service providers to make use of national and international cyber risk information sharing platforms to receive and share information regarding security issues, vulnerabilities, and cyber threat intelligence.

[COVID Cyber Breach 'Traced to China'](#) Australia (September 4, 2020)

Suspected Chinese state-sponsored hackers have been accused of using World Health Organisation and Australian Medical Association branding to launch fake global COVID-19 campaigns to gather intelligence covertly.

[Data Privacy Issues in COVID-19 Contact Tracing Apps](#) U.S. (September 4, 2020)

In response to COVID-19, technology companies and public health authorities around the world have been developing contact tracing apps to track and thus slow the spread of the virus. Implementation of those apps, however, can raise privacy and cybersecurity concerns.

## **Proposed Legislation**

[Genetic and COVID-19 Testing Companies Set to be Regulated in California](#) U.S. (September 4, 2020)

The California State Legislature has been passing several privacy bills set to impact businesses. The most recent, the Genetic Information Privacy Act, would require companies that sell and market consumer-focused genetic testing products directly to consumers (including COVID-19 testing companies) to comply with certain privacy requirements.

### **Other Key Data Privacy Updates**

[State to Report Virus Cases in Schools](#) United States (September 8, 2020)

The Tennessee Department of Education is aiming to launch a new dashboard that will include the total number of active cases among students and staff broken down by school across the state. This follows discussion on whether releasing such data violates federal privacy laws. The department will update the dashboard every Monday with the previous week's number of new cases and will include classroom or school closures and whether students are learning in-person, remotely, or a hybrid of both for each district.

[Police Cautioned Against Social Media Monitoring of Netizens](#) Philippines (September 7, 2020)

Human rights advocates have criticized the plan of the Philippine National Police to monitor social media posts and pursue quarantine violators, warning that this would violate constitutional and privacy rights, especially without legal authority given by the courts.

[Contact Tracing App is a Double-Edged Sword](#) South Africa (September 4, 2020)

South Africa became one of the first African countries to implement the COVID-19 contact tracing app. Contact tracing apps, if adopted by citizens, will make a difference in the fight against COVID-19. However, they are also raising important ethical concerns. The introduction of contact tracing apps has led to a debate regarding their architecture, data management, efficacy, privacy, and security.

[Chief of Defence Staff Asks Troops to Use COVID-19 App](#) Canada (September 4, 2020)

The commander of the Canadian Armed Forces is encouraging his troops to download the federal government's smartphone application for tracking potential exposure to COVID-19, saying he has no privacy or security concerns about the program.

[New Zealand: Government Must Explain Privacy Breaches](#) New Zealand (September 4, 2020)

Patients who have undergone a COVID-19 swab have been receiving the results for other patients via text message. The problem is so widespread that when you call the Health Ministry, the first option on the automated system is to report receiving someone else's results.

[Department of Health: Privacy of COVID-19 Patients Paramount](#) Philippines (August 31, 2020)

The Department of Health has given assurances that patient privacy remains paramount in the country's COVID-19 response. The assurance is provided after a supposed list of positive patients made the rounds of social media sites.