

# Grindr, HIV, and the Queer Struggle for Digital Self-Determination

A 5-min case study for you to use



“(…) Two companies—Apptimize and Localytics, which help optimize apps—receive some of the information that Grindr users choose to include in their profiles, including their HIV status and ‘last tested date.’ Because the HIV information is sent together with users’ GPS data, phone ID, and email, it could identify specific users and their HIV status, according to Antoine Pultier, a researcher at the Norwegian nonprofit SINTEF”  
([Grindr Is Letting Other Companies See User HIV Status And Location Data](#), *BuzzFeed*, April 2, 2018).

“To (...) have that data shared with third parties that you weren't explicitly notified about, and having that possibly threaten your health or safety—that is an extremely, extremely egregious breach of basic standards that we wouldn't expect from a company that likes to brand itself as a supporter of the queer community” (James Krellenstein, [ACT UP New York](#))

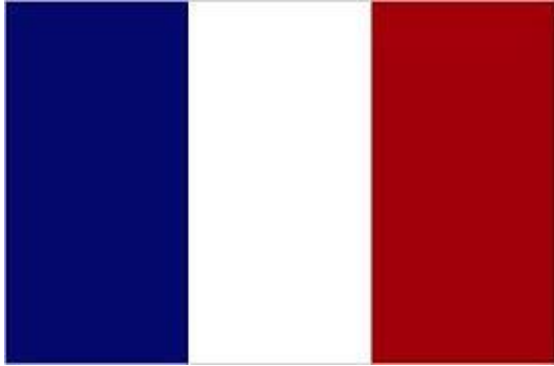
“We want to assure you that:

1. Grindr has never sold, nor will we ever sell, personal user information—especially information regarding HIV status or last test date—to third parties or advertisers.
2. No advertisers have ever had access to HIV status or last test date, unless they viewed it in your public profile.
3. The HIV status and last test date information was used by Apptimize and Localytics only to provide services to Grindr.
4. When working with these vendors, we restricted data shared to that which was appropriate for the services they are providing and encrypted it when providing it to the contractors. This data from HIV status fields was used to test and support development of a new features, like our recently released HIV Test Reminders.
5. Users remain in control of any and all information they choose to share on their public Grindr profile.
6. We have no reason to believe there has been a malicious hack or a privacy breach at Grindr.”

(Grindr, [Here's What You Should Know Regarding Your HIV Status Data](#))

# What is currently done?

## Boycotting



“AIDES, a French HIV-advocacy organization, called for boycotting Grindr in light of the news—but emphasized that sharing HIV status on a dating app before meeting can ‘allow HIV-positive people to avoid a possible rejection when they announce it verbally,’ helping to ‘normalize the perception and image of HIV-positive people.’”

(France 24, [Dating App Grindr Faces Fury for Sharing HIV Data](#), April 4, 2018)

## Complaints and Lawsuits



The Norwegian Consumer Council “took action against some of the companies it examined, filing formal complaints with Norway’s data protection authority against Grindr, Twitter-owned mobile app advertising platform MoPub and four ad tech companies. Grindr sent data including users’ GPS location, age and gender to the other companies, the council said” in its report [Out of Control: How Consumers are Exploited by the Online Advertising Industry](#).

(EuroNews with Ap, [Grindr, OKCupid and Tinder dating apps ‘leak personal data’](#), January 4, 2020)

## Calls for Legal Change



In 2020, after the publication of the Norwegian Consumer Council’s report, the Brazilian Ministry of Justice [notified](#) Tinder and Grindr for breaching Brazilian consumer laws.

[#VoteLGBT](#), a collective of LGBT+ lawmakers and candidates for legislative officers in Brazil, has called for more incisive privacy laws to protect the privacy of LGBT+ people.

But what can still be done?

...what can *you* do?