

23058 Canada bans TikTok on government devices over security risks

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Canada has announced it is banning TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices, reflecting widening worries from western officials over the Chinese-owned video sharing app. Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister, said there may or may not be further steps. “I suspect that as government takes the significant step of telling all federal employees that they can no longer use TikTok on their work phones, many Canadians from business to private individuals will reflect on the security of their own data and perhaps make choices,” Trudeau said.

“I’m always a fan of giving Canadians the information for them to make the right decisions for them.”

The European Union’s executive branch said last week it had temporarily banned TikTok from phones used by employees as a cybersecurity measure. The EU’s action follows similar moves in the US, where more than half of the states and Congress have banned TikTok from official government devices.

TikTok is wildly popular with young people, but its Chinese ownership has raised fears that Beijing could be collecting data on western users or pushing pro-China narratives and misinformation.

TikTok faces intensifying scrutiny from Europe and America over security and data privacy amid worries that the app could be used to promote pro-Beijing views or sweep up users’ information. It comes as China and the west are locked in a wider tug of war over technology ranging from spy balloons to computer chips.

The app will be removed from Canadian government-issued phones on Tuesday. “On a mobile device, TikTok’s data collection methods provide considerable access to the contents of the phone,” a government representative said. “While the risks of using this application are clear, we have no evidence at this point that government information has been compromised.”

Media reports have raised concerns about possible Chinese interference in recent Canadian elections, prompting opposition parties to call for a public inquiry into alleged foreign election interference.

A TikTok spokesperson said in an email: “It’s curious that the government of Canada has moved to block TikTok on government-issued devices without citing any specific security concern or contacting us with questions only after similar bans were introduced in the EU and the US.”

The company said it was always available to discuss the privacy and security of Canadians. “Singling out TikTok in this way does nothing to achieve that shared goal,” the email said. “All it does is prevent officials from reaching the public on a platform loved by millions of Canadians.”

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