# UK renews push for access to Apple’s encrypted iCloud data amid growing encryption battle



The UK government has revived its push for access to Apple users' encrypted cloud data, focusing exclusively on the records of British citizens. This renewed demand, reported by the Financial Times, marks a more targeted but nonetheless contentious continuation of earlier efforts that had sought a broader reach, including American data users. The move is expected to aggravate tensions in the transatlantic relationship, as Washington remains highly critical of foreign governments attempting to impose regulations on Silicon Valley firms.

The current request from the UK Home Office seeks to compel Apple to provide a “back door” for law enforcement to access encrypted iCloud data of UK users when legally required. The concept of a back door — which would bypass Apple’s end-to-end encryption — had prompted significant resistance from the tech giant, which prioritises strong privacy protections and has consistently opposed any form of surreptitious access to user data. Earlier this year, after reports that such a demand had been issued under the UK’s Investigatory Powers Act (commonly known as the “snoopers’ charter”), Apple ceased offering its Advanced Data Protection (ADP) encryption feature in the UK altogether. ADP was the company's most sophisticated form of end-to-end encryption for iCloud data, designed to prevent even Apple from accessing users' information.

While Apple has publicly stated that it has “never built a backdoor or master key to any of our products or services and never will,” the UK government’s renewed approach comes after months of high-level diplomatic discussions. Previously, US intelligence officials, including Director Tulsi Gabbard, revealed that the UK had dropped an earlier broad demand after intervention from US leadership, including former President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance. Gabbard had criticised the UK’s initial request on civil liberties grounds, particularly its impact on Americans' data privacy rights. However, it seems the UK has since refined its request to concentrate solely on British users, a move that Apple views as directly affecting its commitment to privacy.

Industry observers note that Apple’s decision to disable ADP in the UK represents a significant compromise forced by regulatory pressure. While some sensitive data like iCloud Keychain passwords, Health app data, and iMessage communications remain encrypted by default, the removal of ADP leaves other categories of user data potentially more vulnerable to government access. Critics argue that this sets a dangerous precedent, undermining encryption's role in protecting user privacy and security more broadly. Conversely, UK officials maintain that their requests are grounded in national security needs and law enforcement capabilities.

Apple’s stance reflects broader tensions between technology providers championing strong encryption as a fundamental right and governments seeking tools to counter criminal and security threats. The latest UK demand underscores ongoing international debates about balancing privacy, technological innovation, and regulatory oversight. Despite the heightened disputes, neither the UK Home Office nor Apple has fully commented on the operational specifics of the new request, emphasizing the sensitivity of the issue.

As this situation develops, it highlights the delicate position technology companies occupy in the governance of digital privacy and state security. The balance between enabling lawful access and safeguarding robust encryption frameworks remains a highly contested domain, central to the future of internet privacy.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://guardian.ng/news/world/uk-renews-demand-for-access-to-apple-user-data-report/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-makes-new-attempt-access-apple-cloud-data-ft-reports-2025-10-01/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://guardian.ng/news/world/uk-renews-demand-for-access-to-apple-user-data-report/), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20g288yldko), [[6]](https://www.apnews.com/article/bd1114c2f8ef5bcbfa7b870c32505e4f)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/technology/apple-removing-end-to-end-cloud-encryption-feature-uk-bloomberg-news-reports-2025-02-21/), [[5]](https://www.apnews.com/article/c5c37e99b3b9161dbed24231fbd94746), [[7]](https://www.macrumors.com/2025/02/26/advanced-data-protection-uk-need-to-know/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.apnews.com/article/bd1114c2f8ef5bcbfa7b870c32505e4f), [[1]](https://guardian.ng/news/world/uk-renews-demand-for-access-to-apple-user-data-report/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-makes-new-attempt-access-apple-cloud-data-ft-reports-2025-10-01/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://guardian.ng/news/world/uk-renews-demand-for-access-to-apple-user-data-report/), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20g288yldko), [[5]](https://www.apnews.com/article/c5c37e99b3b9161dbed24231fbd94746)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://guardian.ng/news/world/uk-renews-demand-for-access-to-apple-user-data-report/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-makes-new-attempt-access-apple-cloud-data-ft-reports-2025-10-01/), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20g288yldko)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://guardian.ng/news/world/uk-renews-demand-for-access-to-apple-user-data-report/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-makes-new-attempt-access-apple-cloud-data-ft-reports-2025-10-01/> - The UK government has renewed efforts to obtain access to Apple’s encrypted iCloud data, focusing specifically on data belonging to UK users. This follows a previous broader mandate, including American data, which was dropped in August 2025. Apple has consistently refused to create any 'back door' access into its devices or services, citing privacy and security concerns. The UK government maintains discretion on operational matters but reiterates its commitment to safeguarding national security. Apple has not yet issued a response to the renewed order.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20g288yldko> - The UK government has demanded access to encrypted data stored by Apple users worldwide in its cloud service. Currently, only the Apple account holder can access data stored in this way; the tech giant itself cannot view it. The demand has been served by the Home Office under the Investigatory Powers Act (IPA), which compels firms to provide information to law enforcement agencies. Apple declined to comment but views privacy as a 'fundamental human right'. The Home Office stated it does not comment on operational matters, including confirming or denying the existence of such notices.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/apple-removing-end-to-end-cloud-encryption-feature-uk-bloomberg-news-reports-2025-02-21/> - Apple has decided to disable its most advanced end-to-end encryption feature, 'Advanced Data Protection (ADP)', for cloud data in the UK. This unprecedented move comes after reports that the UK government demanded access to user data. ADP extends end-to-end encryption to various user data, ensuring privacy by preventing Apple from accessing the data. Without this feature, Apple may be compelled to provide user data, like iMessages, to authorities if requested. Data encrypted before December 2022, such as health data and messaging services, remains protected. Apple cannot disable ADP for existing users but will offer them the option to turn it off. The UK Home Office did not comment on the matter. Apple expresses disappointment over this decision, highlighting the importance of encryption in customer privacy amid increasing data breaches. Apple shares remained stable following the announcement. This situation echoes previous instances where tech firms resisted weakening encryption, underscoring ongoing tensions between governments and technology companies regarding user privacy.
5. <https://www.apnews.com/article/c5c37e99b3b9161dbed24231fbd94746> - Apple has decided to discontinue its Advanced Data Protection encryption feature for British users following a reported demand from the UK government for backdoor access to encrypted data. The feature, introduced in 2022, offers end-to-end encryption for iCloud content but will be phased out for existing users in the UK and no longer available for new users. The decision comes after British security officials allegedly issued a 'technical capability notice' under the Investigatory Powers Act of 2016, compelling Apple to disable strong encryption features to allow government access. Apple expressed disappointment at not being able to provide this protection amid rising data breaches and privacy threats. While the feature remains available globally, certain default encrypted data types, such as iCloud Keychain passwords, Health app data, and iMessage communications, will still be protected in the UK. Critics argue that this move undermines overall security and could set a precedent for other governments to follow, potentially outlawing strong encryption altogether.
6. <https://www.apnews.com/article/bd1114c2f8ef5bcbfa7b870c32505e4f> - The UK has withdrawn its demand for Apple to create a 'backdoor' into encrypted user data stored on the cloud, according to U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Gabbard announced the decision following months of discussions involving her, President Donald Trump, and Vice President JD Vance with the UK government. The mandate had raised significant privacy concerns, as it would have allowed UK authorities access to encrypted data, potentially infringing on the civil liberties of American citizens. The issue emerged after reports that British officials had issued Apple a 'technical capability notice' under the Investigatory Powers Act of 2016, also known as the 'snoopers' charter.' Apple had challenged the order and responded by withdrawing its Advanced Data Protection encryption feature for UK users. The UK Home Office did not confirm or deny the existence of the notice but emphasized its commitment to national security. Gabbard had previously criticized the backdoor requirement as a rights violation. Apple did not comment immediately on the situation.
7. <https://www.macrumors.com/2025/02/26/advanced-data-protection-uk-need-to-know/> - Apple has announced that it is withdrawing its Advanced Data Protection (ADP) feature from the UK. The decision comes after the UK government requested an encryption backdoor under the Investigatory Powers Act (IPA). New users will be unable to access the feature, with existing users losing functionality in the future. Apple stated, 'As we have said many times before, we have never built a backdoor or master key to any of our products or services and we never will.'