

Investigation into cloud gaming and browsers to support UK tech and consumers

The Competition and Markets Authority consulted on launching a market investigation alongside its [Mobile Ecosystem Market Study](#) report, which found that Apple and Google have an effective duopoly on mobile ecosystems that allows them to exercise a stranglehold over operating systems, app stores and web browsers on mobile devices.

Browsers are one of the most important and widely used apps on mobile devices. Most people use their browser at least daily to access online content such as information, news, videos and shopping. 97% of all mobile web browsing in the UK in 2021 happens on browsers powered by either Apple's or Google's browser engine, so any restrictions on these engines can have a major impact on users' experiences.

Computer games are a multi-billion pound industry in the UK, played by millions of people. There are already more than 800,000 users of cloud gaming services in the UK but restrictions on their distribution on mobile devices could hamper growth in this sector, meaning UK gamers miss out.

Responses to the consultation, which have been published today, reveal substantial support for a fuller investigation into the way that Apple and Google dominate the mobile browser market and how Apple restricts cloud gaming through its App Store. Many of those came from browser vendors, web developers, and cloud gaming service providers who say that the status quo is harming their businesses, holding back innovation, and adding unnecessary costs.

Web developers have complained that Apple's restrictions, combined with suggested underinvestment in its browser technology, lead to added costs and frustration as they have to deal with bugs and glitches when building web pages, and have no choice but to create bespoke mobile apps when a website might be sufficient.

Ultimately, these restrictions limit choice and may make it more difficult to bring innovative new apps to the hands of UK consumers. At the same time, Apple and Google have argued that restrictions are needed to protect users. The CMA's market investigation will consider these concerns and consider whether new rules are needed to drive better outcomes.

Market investigations can result in changes to companies' behaviour and restrictions, which improve competition and lead to greater choice for consumers and better-quality products.

Sarah Cardell, interim Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

We want to make sure that UK consumers get the best new mobile data services, and that UK developers can invest in innovative new apps.

Many UK businesses and web developers tell us they feel that they are being held back by restrictions set by Apple and Google. When the new Digital Markets regime is in place, it's likely to address these sorts of issues. In the meantime, we are using our existing powers to tackle problems where we can. We plan to investigate whether the concerns we have heard are justified and, if so, identify steps to improve competition and innovation in these sectors.

For more information, visit the [mobile browsers and cloud gaming market investigation](#) page.

1. A market investigation by the CMA is an in-depth investigation led by CMA panel members. The CMA must generally conclude a market investigation within 18 months from the date that the reference is made. Market investigations consider whether there are features of a market that have an adverse effect on competition (AEC). If there is an AEC, the CMA has the power to impose its own remedies on businesses and it can also make recommendations to other bodies such as sectoral regulators or the government – when legislation might be required for example. The CMA has wide powers to change the behaviour of firms, such as governing the way a product is sold in a particular market and the information that is available to customers buying that product. The CMA also has the power to impose structural remedies which can require companies to sell parts of their business to improve competition.
2. The CMA's work to date has identified widespread concerns in relation to digital advertising and mobile ecosystems. It has concluded that it can tackle these issues most effectively with its anticipated new powers via the Digital Markets Unit, which will allow the CMA to actively monitor, enforce and update remedies. The CMA continues to support the government to bring forward the necessary legislation, which it committed to in the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022. In the meantime, the CMA is committed to using its existing powers to deliver one-off interventions in digital markets, where these are found to be necessary to improve outcomes for UK consumers and businesses. In particular, should the market investigation find problems with cloud gaming and mobile browsers, it may be able to tackle these via a one-off removal of restrictions.
3. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.