

**Avid Life Media Inc**

## Ashley Madison agrees \$1.6m fine for data breach

Site for marital affairs was unfaithful to users with fembots and lax security



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Hannah Kuchler in San Francisco DECEMBER 14, 2016

The company behind Ashley Madison, the marital affairs site that suffered a cyber attack last year, has agreed to pay a \$1.6m fine for failing to protect users' account information, in one of the largest settlements to date for a data breach.

Ruby Corp, formerly known as Avid Life Media, will pay the charges to settle actions by the US Federal Trade Commission and a coalition of US states, as well as implementing a plan to improve its cyber security.

The data breach, discovered in the summer of 2015, affected the account information of 36m users of the site, where people searched for partners to have an affair, across 46 different countries. The information published online even included that of people who had paid an extra fee so their data would be deleted.

Edith Ramirez, FTC chairwoman, said the case was one of the [largest data breaches](#) it has investigated to date.

“The global settlement requires AshleyMadison.com to implement a range of more robust data security practices that will better protect its users' personal information from criminal hackers

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going forward,” she said.

Ruby Corp did not respond to a request for comment. The company also faces the possibility of at least one [class-action lawsuit](#), which could cost it millions of dollars.

The Ashley Madison hack shook users across the world, who assumed their illicit activities would be kept private, with the Toronto police even investigating unconfirmed reports that some had [killed themselves](#) as a result of the publication of their details online.

It also exposed the company’s business practices, with the FTC finding it used so-called ‘[fembots](#)’, where artificial bots engaged with men searching for women online because there were not enough women on the site. [Noel Biderman](#), chief executive of what was then called Avid Life Media, stepped down in August 2015.

The FTC found that the company had misrepresented how secure its site was, causing “substantial consumer harm” by failing to take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised access by hackers. The intruders accessed the network several times between November 2014 and July 2015, evading detection, because of “lax data security practices”, the FTC said.

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