Twitter Thread by Matt Burgess

Matt Burgess
@mattburgess1

New from me: Co-op is quietly using facial recognition cameras to scan everyone entering shops. The tech is being in 18 stores and has been used for about 18 months. It's using tech from Facewatch, which says Co-op has the "best" watchlist in the UK

Adding some more details since this is getting some attention.

Here's how it works:

– CCTV captures people's faces as they enter shops. These images are converted to a faceprint. This is basically a string of data, which is compared against a watchlist. Matches are flagged

– All the stores have signage about the tech, the company says
– The system doesn't retain everyone's data, it only keeps info about people who are added to watchlists

– The Co-ops in question are all part of the Southern Co-op franchise. It says the ones using FR are inner-city stores, with high crime levels
– The justification is crime against staff has risen. Since the tech has been used it says 3,000 incidents of theft have been diverted

– The watchlists used are created by Co-op and include images of people "known to have offended within our premises, including those who have been banned/excluded". Co-op decides who is put on the watchlist. Data on watchlists is stored for two years

– The way Facewatch, the FR supplier, works is: it stores a national watchlist of 'Subjects of Interest' that's compiled from individual customer watchlists. This data is kept for two years and when an individual system is checking for matches it can look at the wider data pool

The use of the tech has @privacyint and others worried. It has written to Co-op and regulators about how the system works and a lack of transparency. It also has concerns about future police access to the type of setup (Facewatch has talked about police partnerships previously)

As @Edin_O says, this private networked model may be the future of FR. “If police are having access to any of them... it will essentially obliterate the ability to walk down the street or enter any retail centre or any cafe without somehow being subject to surveillance networks”

Anyway, here's the full story again: https://t.co/s71JmU62dq