

PUBLIC POLL FINDINGS AND METHODOLOGY

Most Americans say it is increasingly difficult to control who can access their online data

However, few are taking many steps to protect their personal information online

Topline Findings

Washington, DC, January 7, 2022- A new Ipsos poll finds that the majority of Americans think that having control over who can access their personal information online has become increasingly difficult. Despite this concern, few do much to protect their online data and privacy. Even those who take many steps to protect their own personal information online feel that it is becoming harder to control who can access it.

Americans are generally hesitant about giving companies access to their personal data or online activity for free access to social media apps and online search engines, or seeing personalized ads. But those who take more steps to protect their data are more willing to make this trade off. Americans, despite reporting high levels of familiarity with the concept of data privacy, do not differentiate between data privacy and data security, indicating that they think of these concepts as the same thing.

Detailed Findings

1. Most Americans say it has become increasingly difficult to control who can access their personal information online, and few think companies adequately protect their users' online data.
 - Seven in ten (70%) Americans agree that controlling who can access their online personal information has become more challenging.
 - Only a third (34%) think that companies generally do a good job of keeping their users' personal information secure.
2. Despite concern over who can access their personal information online, most Americans are not doing much to secure their own data.
 - While most say they frequently take basic precautions, such as keeping the software on their device(s) up to date (84%) and using different passwords for different online accounts (79%), fewer report taking further steps, such as using a VPN when using public Wi-Fi networks (36%) or using encrypted messaging platforms (36%).
 - Just 16% say they often or sometimes take all six steps asked about in the survey to keep their data secure and protect their online privacy, while a third (31%) take four or five out of six steps, and almost half (49%) take three or fewer.
 - Regardless of how many steps are taken to keep personal information secure, those who take all six (74%), four or five (73%), or three or fewer steps (71%) believe that it has become increasingly difficult to control who has access to their personal information online.
 - Half (51%) of Americans have never stopped using a company's products or services due to data privacy concerns. However, a sizeable minority (36%) say they have done so.
3. Americans are generally hesitant about giving up their online personal data for free access to social media and online search engines.
 - Only about a quarter of Americans agree that allowing companies to collect and share their online data is worth having free access to online search engines (27%) and social media apps (26%), or seeing personalized advertisements (23%).

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- Those who take all six steps to protect their own online data and privacy are more willing to grant companies access to it in order to use social media apps (41%) and online search engines (39%) for free and to see personalized ads (38%).
 - Comparatively, only about one in five who take three or fewer steps to protect their data agree that using social media and online search engines for free or seeing personalized ads (19%, 20%, and 16%, respectively) is worth the tradeoff.
4. While most Americans claim to be familiar with data privacy, few make the distinction between data privacy and data security, suggesting that Americans generally think of these concepts as the same thing.
- Three in four (76%) Americans report familiarity with the concept of data privacy, but just three in ten (31%) say they are very familiar.
 - Over half (58%) of those who take all six steps to protect their own personal data say they are very familiar with data privacy, compared to 38% of those who take four or five steps and 19% who take three or fewer steps.
 - When thinking of the term “data privacy,” Americans most often think of taking steps to protect their own personal data (88%), and three quarters (75%) often or sometimes think of companies protecting personal data from unauthorized access. However, both of these items describe data security rather than data privacy.
 - About eight in ten (78%) say they often or sometimes think of requiring companies to have user consent to collect and share their data, and about seven in ten say the same about being able to remain anonymous online (71%) and being able to remove personal data about themselves from the internet (70%).

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between December 2-3, 2021. For this survey, a sample of 1,005 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents.

For full results, please refer to the following annotated questionnaire:

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Full Annotated Questionnaire

1. How familiar, if at all, are you with the concept of data privacy?

	Total (N=1,005)
Very familiar	31%
Somewhat familiar	45%
Not very familiar	15%
Not at all familiar	4%
Don't know	5%
<i>Familiar (Net)</i>	<i>76%</i>
<i>Not familiar (Net)</i>	<i>19%</i>

2. When you think of the term “data privacy” how frequently do you think of the following?

Total Often/Sometimes Summary

	Total
Taking steps to protect your own personal data (i.e., strong passwords, two-factor authentication, etc.).	88%
Requiring companies to have consent from users to collect their personal data and share it with third parties.	78%
Companies protecting your personal data they have collected from unauthorized access.	75%
The ability to remain anonymous online.	71%
The ability to remove personal data about yourself from the internet.	70%

- a. Requiring companies to have consent from users to collect their personal data and share it with third parties.

	Total
Often	44%
Sometimes	34%
Rarely	11%
Never	6%
Don't know	5%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>78%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>17%</i>

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- b. Companies protecting your personal data they have collected from unauthorized access.

	Total
Often	42%
Sometimes	33%
Rarely	14%
Never	5%
Don't know	6%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>75%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>19%</i>

- c. The ability to remove personal data about yourself from the internet.

	Total
Often	30%
Sometimes	39%
Rarely	17%
Never	6%
Don't know	6%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>70%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>24%</i>

- d. The ability to remain anonymous online.

	Total
Often	33%
Sometimes	38%
Rarely	17%
Never	5%
Don't know	7%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>71%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>22%</i>

- e. Taking steps to protect your own personal data (i.e., strong passwords, two-factor authentication, etc.).

	Total
Often	55%
Sometimes	32%
Rarely	7%
Never	2%
Don't know	4%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>88%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>9%</i>

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3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Total Agree Summary

	Total
It has become more difficult to control who has access to my personal information online.	70%
Companies generally do a good job of protecting their users' personal information.	34%
Having free access to <u>online search engines</u> is worth allowing tech companies to collect and share my personal data.	27%
Having free access to <u>social media apps</u> is worth allowing tech companies to collect and share my personal data.	26%
Current data privacy laws do a good enough job ensuring citizens' data privacy rights.	26%
Seeing personalized advertisements is worth allowing companies to collect and share my online activity.	23%

- a. Having free access to social media apps is worth allowing tech companies to collect and share my personal data.

	Total
Strongly agree	8%
Somewhat agree	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	20%
Somewhat disagree	23%
Strongly disagree	28%
Don't know	4%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>51%</i>

- b. Having free access to online search engines is worth allowing tech companies to collect and share my personal data.

	Total
Strongly agree	9%
Somewhat agree	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%
Somewhat disagree	21%
Strongly disagree	22%
Don't know	4%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>27%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>43%</i>

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- c. Seeing personalized advertisements is worth allowing companies to collect and share my online activity.

	Total
Strongly agree	6%
Somewhat agree	16%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%
Somewhat disagree	22%
Strongly disagree	31%
Don't know	4%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>23%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>52%</i>

- d. Companies generally do a good job of protecting their users' personal information.

	Total
Strongly agree	8%
Somewhat agree	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	27%
Somewhat disagree	22%
Strongly disagree	13%
Don't know	4%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>34%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>35%</i>

- e. It has become more difficult to control who has access to my personal information online.

	Total
Strongly agree	36%
Somewhat agree	35%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Somewhat disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	4%
Don't know	4%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>70%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>12%</i>

- f. Current data privacy laws do a good enough job ensuring citizens' data privacy rights.

	Total
Strongly agree	7%
Somewhat agree	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%
Somewhat disagree	27%
Strongly disagree	20%
Don't know	5%
<i>Agree (Net)</i>	<i>26%</i>
<i>Disagree (Net)</i>	<i>47%</i>

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4. How frequently do you do or use each of the following?

Total Often/Sometimes Summary

	Total
Keep the software on your phone/computer up to date	84%
Use different passwords for each of your different online accounts	79%
Clear your browser history and/or cookies	70%
Use an incognito/private browser	43%
Use a VPN when using public Wi-Fi	36%
Use encrypted messaging platforms	36%

a. Keep the software on your phone/computer up to date

	Total
Often	59%
Sometimes	25%
Rarely	8%
Never	4%
Don't know	4%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>84%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>12%</i>

b. Use different passwords for each of your different online accounts

	Total
Often	44%
Sometimes	35%
Rarely	12%
Never	6%
Don't know	3%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>79%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>18%</i>

c. Use a VPN when using public Wi-Fi

	Total
Often	17%
Sometimes	19%
Rarely	17%
Never	31%
Don't know	16%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>36%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>48%</i>

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d. Use encrypted messaging platforms

	Total
Often	14%
Sometimes	22%
Rarely	20%
Never	30%
Don't know	14%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>36%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>50%</i>

e. Use an incognito/private browser

	Total
Often	17%
Sometimes	26%
Rarely	22%
Never	25%
Don't know	10%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>43%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>47%</i>

f. Clear your browser history and/or cookies

	Total
Often	35%
Sometimes	35%
Rarely	22%
Never	6%
Don't know	3%
<i>Often/sometimes (Net)</i>	<i>70%</i>
<i>Rarely/never (Net)</i>	<i>28%</i>

5. Have you ever stopped using a company's products or services because you were not confident they were respecting your data privacy?

	Total
Yes	36%
No	51%
Don't know	14%



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About the Study

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between December 2 – 3. For this survey, a sample of 1,005 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English.

The sample was randomly drawn from [Ipsos' online panel](#), partner online panel sources, and ["river" sampling](#) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Posthoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=1,005, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=+/- 5.0 percentage points).

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Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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