Flash Eurobarometer 443

Briefing note

e-Privacy

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July 2016
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Survey requested by the European Commission,
Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology
(DG CONNECT)
and co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication

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Flash Eurobarometer 443 – TNS Political & Social

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Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology (DG CONNECT)

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(DG COMM "Strategy, Corporate Communication Actions and Eurobarometer" Unit)

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In the continually evolving digital era, protecting the privacy of citizens when online, maintaining the confidentiality of their communications and protecting them against invasive unsolicited communications is both important, and challenging. Since 2002, the ePrivacy Directive has been providing this protection to European Union citizens. The ePrivacy Directive specifically covers confidentiality of communications and their related data, rules regulating unsolicited communications (e.g. spam), and other obligations to protect the privacy of users of electronic communications services including rules on public directories, itemised bills, and so on.[1]

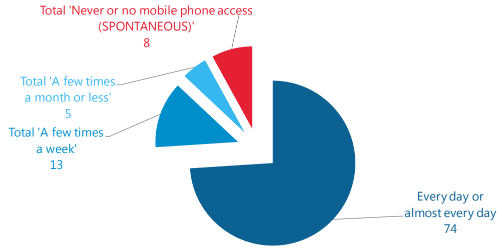
Although the Directive was updated in 2009 to provide clearer rules covering online communications, the intervening years have seen the e-communications sector continue to develop rapidly, including the proliferation of Internet-based messaging and communications services such as Voice over IP and instant messaging. As a result of these changes, as well as the upcoming implementation of the new General Data Protection Regulation, the ePrivacy Directive needs further updating to ensure it is fit for the challenges of the new digital age.[2] The ongoing review of this legislation is one of the key initiatives aimed at reinforcing trust and security in digital services in the European Union.

In the context of this review, the European Commission is interested in citizens' views on online privacy and the relevance of existing provisions, as well as their opinions about possible changes to e-privacy protections. Between the 7th and 8th July 2016, 26,526 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed via telephone (mobile and fixed line) in their mother tongue on behalf of the European Commission.

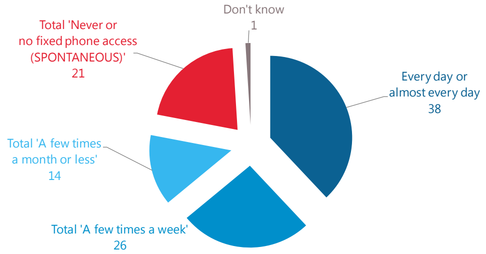
- Almost three quarters use mobile phones daily or almost daily for calls and text messages, while six in ten browse online with the same frequency -

Mobiles are by far the most frequently used communication device or service, with **74% of respondents** using them daily or almost every day to **make calls or send text messages**. In contrast, only 38% use a fixed phone line with the same frequency, and just 8% make daily or almost daily Internet phone or video calls. **Six in ten (60%) use the Internet daily or almost daily to browse online,** while 46% use e-mail with this frequency, and 41% use the Internet for instant messaging on a daily or almost daily basis.

D8 Could you tell me if...?
You use a mobile phone to make calls or send text messages (% - EU)



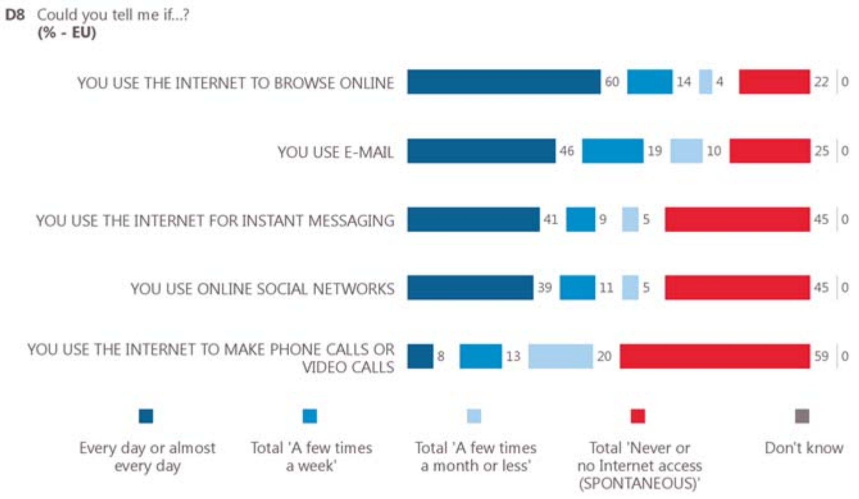
D8 Could you tell me if...?
You use a fixed phone line (% - EU)



Base: All respondents (N=26,526)

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/news/eprivacy-directive.

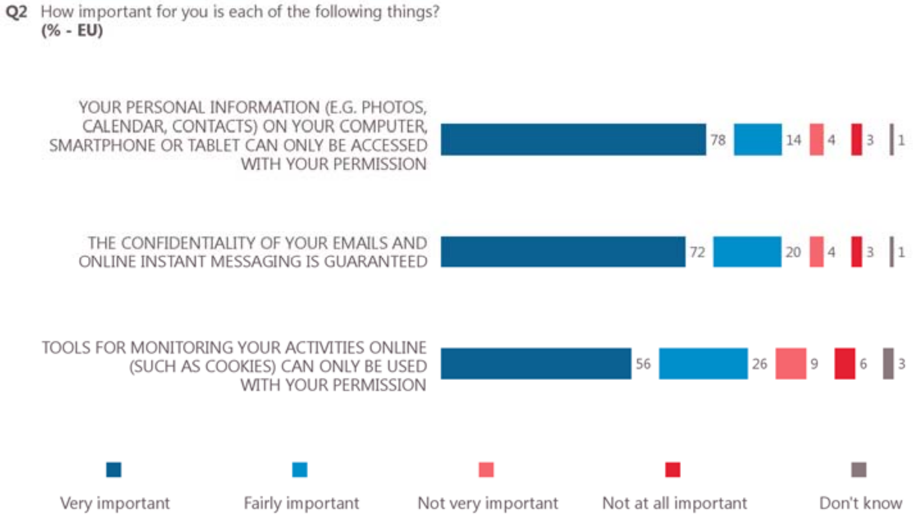
[2] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/public-consultation-evaluation-and-review-eprivacy-directive.



Base: All respondents (N=26,526)

- The privacy of their personal information, online communications and online behaviour is very important to the majority of respondents -

More than **nine in ten** respondents say **it is important that personal information** (such as their pictures, contact lists, etc.) on their computer, smartphone or tablet **can only be accessed with their permission**, and that it is important that the **confidentiality of their e-mails and online instant messaging is guaranteed** (both 92%). In fact, more than seven in ten think both of these aspects are very important. More than eight in ten (82%) also say it is important that **tools for monitoring their activities** online (such as cookies) can **only be used with their permission** (82%), with 56% of the opinion this is very important.

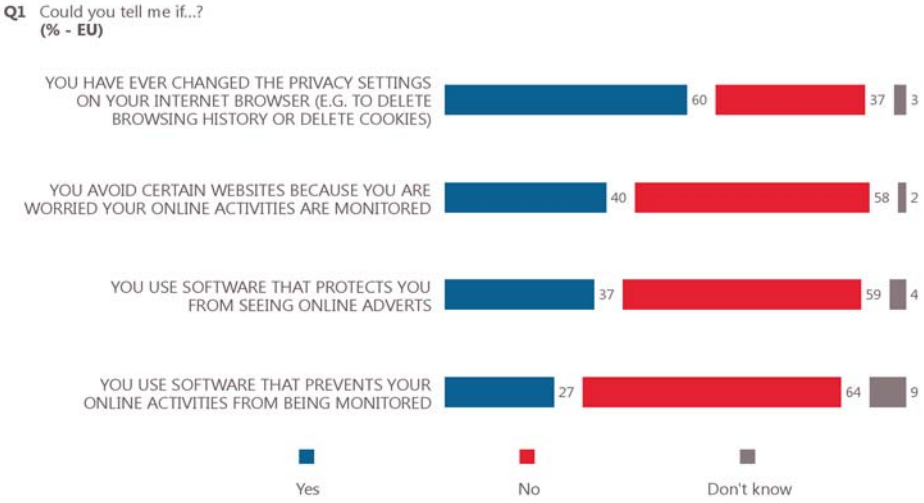


Bases:
First item: Respondents who use online social networks or use the Internet for instant messaging or to browse online (N=21,510)
Second item: : Respondents who use online social networks, e-mail or use the the Internet to make phone or video calls or for instant messaging (N=21,487)
Third item: Respondents who use online social networks, e-mail or use the Internet for instant messaging or to browse online (N=21,864)

The country level results follow a similar pattern, although respondents in the Baltic countries - particularly Latvia - are the least likely to consider these issues to be very important.

- Changing the privacy settings of their internet browser is the action respondents are most likely to have taken to protect their personal information online –

Six in ten respondents have already **changed the privacy settings** on their Internet browser (e.g. to delete browsing history or cookies) **(60%)**. Significant proportions of respondents **avoid certain websites** because they are worried their online activities are monitored (40%), or **use software** that protects them from seeing **online adverts** (37%) or from **being monitored** (27%).

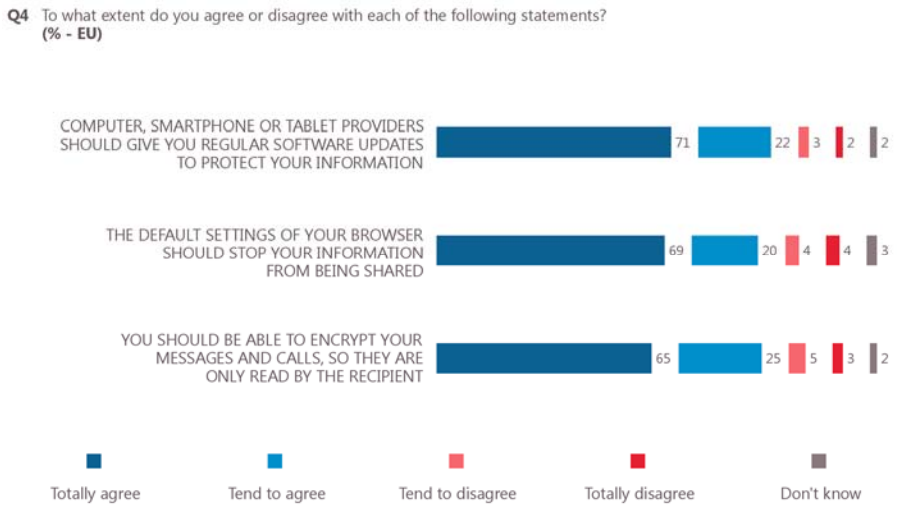


Bases:
First item: Respondents who use online social networks, e-mail or use the Internet to browse online (N=21,688)
Second and third items: Respondents who use online social networks or use the Internet to browse online (N=21,210)
Fourth item: Respondents who use online social networks, e-mail or use the Internet for instant messaging or to browse online (N=21,864)

- A large majority of respondents agree that a range of measures should be available to protect their privacy when online –

In a large majority of European countries, respondents totally agree **there should be a range of measures available to protect their privacy**.

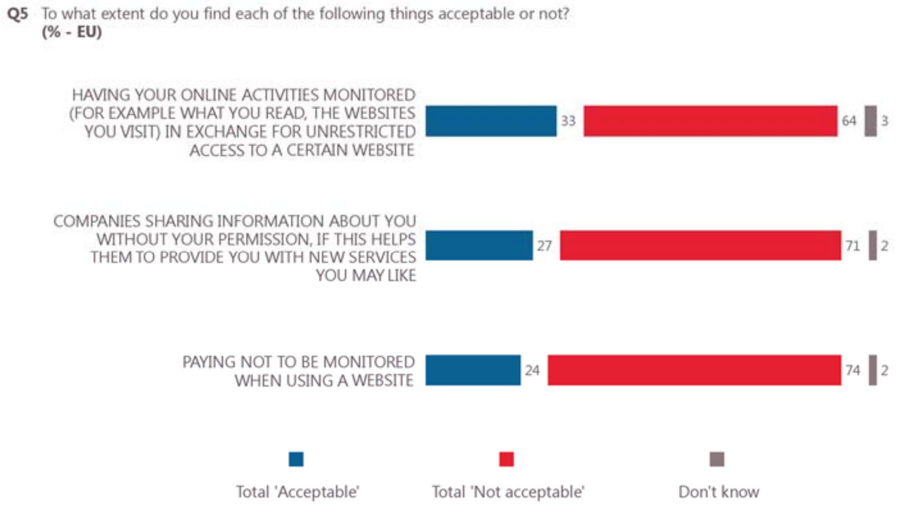
More than nine in ten respondents agree computer, smartphone or tablet **providers should give them regular software updates** to protect their information **(93%)** or that they should **be able to encrypt their messages and calls**, so they can only be read by the recipient **(90%).** Almost as many **(89%)** agree the default settings of their browser should stop their information from being shared.



Base: Respondents who use online social networks, e-mail or use the Internet to make phone or video calls, for instant messaging or to browse online (N=21,932)

– A large majority of respondents find it unacceptable to have their online activities monitored, to have companies share information about them or to have to pay not to be monitored –

Respondents think it is unacceptable to have their **online activities monitored in exchange for unrestricted access to a certain website (64%)**, or to **pay in order not to be monitored when using a website (74%)**. Almost as many (71%) say it is unacceptable for **companies to share information about them without their permission (71%),** even if it helps companies provide new services they may like**.**

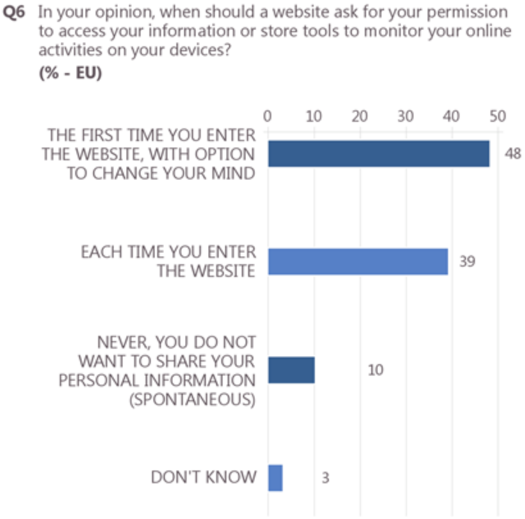


Bases:
First and third items: Respondents who use online social networks or use the Internet to browse online (N=21,210)
Second item: Respondents who use a fixed phone, a mobile phone or the Internet (N=26,293)

- Almost all respondents think websites should ask permission to access their information, either the first time or each time they visit the website –

Respondents in Croatia (23%) Cyprus (19%) and Germany (19%) are the most likely to say they **never want a website to ask permission because they do not want to share their personal information**.

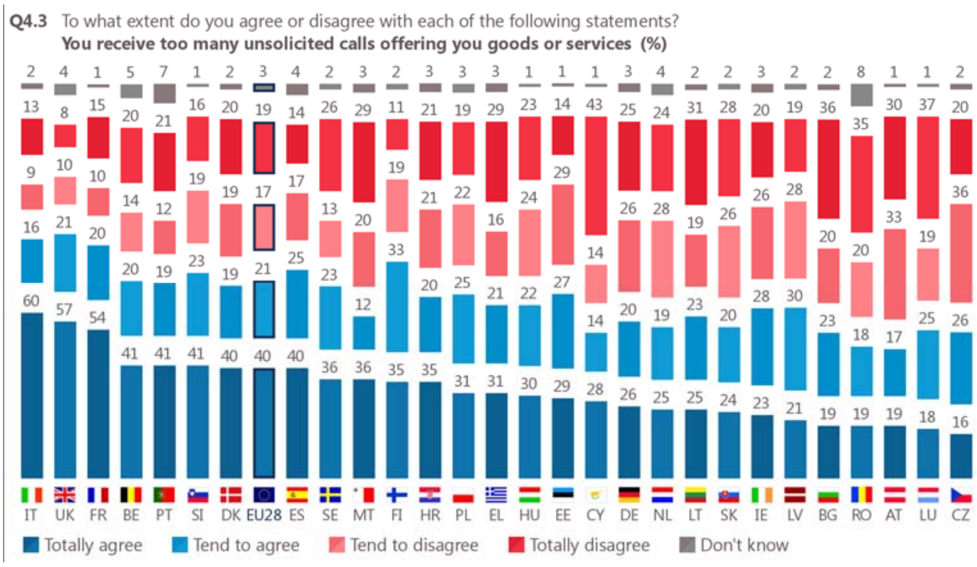
Across the EU, respondents are most likely to think a website should **ask for their permission** to access their information or store tools on their devices **the first time they enter the website**, with option to change their mind **(48%)**. One in ten (10%), however, say this should never happen, as they do not want to share their personal information.



Base: Respondents who use online social networks or use the Internet to browse online (N=21,210)

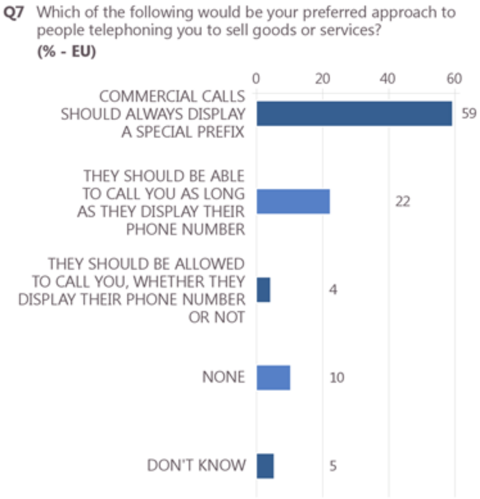
- The majority say they receive too many unsolicited commercial calls, and that such calls should always display a special prefix to identify them –

More than six in ten (61%) respondents agree they receive too many unsolicited calls offering them goods or services, although there are large variations in opinions across the EU. Respondents in **Italy (60%), the UK (57%)** and **France (54%)** are the most likely to totally agree they receive too many unsolicited calls offering them goods or services, where the regime of these calls is under opt-out. This compares to 16% of respondents in the Czech Republic, and 18% in Luxembourg.



Base: Respondents who use a fixed phone line or a mobile phone (N=26,241)

The majority of respondents think **commercial calls should always display a special prefix** (59%), while just over one in five (22%) think these calls should be allowed as long as they display their phone number. Very few (4%) think these calls should be allowed whether they display their phone number or not, indicating respondents generally perceive unsolicited commercial calls to be invasive.



Base: Respondents who use a fixed phone line or a mobile phone (N=26,241)

Finally, throughout the study, the **socio-demographic analyses** show respondents with the highest education levels, as well as those who regularly user the Internet are the most likely to be concerned about protecting their privacy online.