

# Special Eurobarometer 487a

## Summary

### The General Data Protection Regulation

March 2019

Survey conducted by Kantar on behalf of Kantar Belgium at the request of the European Commission,  
Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers

Survey co-ordinated by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication  
(DG COMM "Media Monitoring and Eurobarometer" Unit)

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## INTRODUCTION

On 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)<sup>1</sup> entered into application in the European Union, representing one of the most important and significant changes in the data protection legal framework in the EU in twenty years. GDPR builds on previous data protection legislation and guarantees the protection of individuals' personal data irrespective of the format used (online, paper etc). GDPR applies not only to companies and organisations in the EU, but also to those based outside the EU that offer goods or services within the Member States of the European Union or monitor the behaviour of individuals in the European Union.

GDPR guarantees individuals a number of rights relating to their personal data, including:

- The right to access personal data collected by companies or organisations, and to correct or update that data;
- The transmission of personal data to another entity;
- The right to be forgotten, and have personal data deleted;
- The right to be informed of data breaches that may pose a high risk to the rights and freedoms of natural persons<sup>2</sup>.

This Special Eurobarometer survey was commissioned by European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers to explore awareness of GDPR in particular, as well as more general opinions and behaviours relating to data sharing and data protection.

Where possible, comparisons will be made with Special Eurobarometer 431 on Data Protection conducted in 2015<sup>3</sup>.

This summary gives the main findings of this Special Eurobarometer survey. Detailed results can be found in the full Report.

*We wish to thank the people throughout the European Union  
who have given their time to take part in this survey.*

*Without their active participation, this study would not have been possible.*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2016.119.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2016:119:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.119.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2016:119:TOC)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rights-citizens/how-my-personal-data-protected/what-happens-if-data-i-have-shared-leaked\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rights-citizens/how-my-personal-data-protected/what-happens-if-data-i-have-shared-leaked_en)

<sup>3</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/yearFrom/2013/yearTo/2015/surveyKy/2075>

## MAIN FINDINGS

### **More than two thirds of Europeans have heard of GDPR. A clear majority have heard of most of the rights guaranteed by GDPR, and almost six in ten have heard of a national authority protecting their data**

- The majority (67%) of respondents have heard of GDPR: 36% have heard of it and know what it is, and 31% have heard of it but don't know exactly what it is.
- Overall almost three quarters (73%) have heard of at least one right guaranteed by GDPR. Three in ten respondents (31%) have heard of all the rights asked about in the survey, while just over one quarter (27%) have not heard of any of them.
- Almost two thirds (65%) have heard of the right to access their data, 61% have heard of the right to correct their data if it is wrong, 59% about the right to object to receiving direct marketing and 57% about the right to have their data deleted and forgotten.
- Half of the respondents have heard about the right to move their data from one provider to another and 41% have heard about the right to have a say when decisions are automated.
- The three most exercised rights are the right to object to receiving direct marketing (24%), the right to access personal data (18%), and the right to correct personal data if it is wrong (16%).
- A clear majority (57%) say they have heard about the existence of a public authority in their country responsible for protecting their rights regarding their personal data – an increase of 20 percentage points since 2015.
- A fifth of respondents know which public authority is responsible for protecting their data.

### **The majority of respondents feel they have at least partial control over the information they provide online**

- Almost two thirds of respondents (65%) who provide personal information online feel they have at least some control over this information: 14% feel they have complete control and 51% that they have partial control.
- In all but one country, the majority of respondents who use the Internet feel they have at least some control over the information they provide online.
- 62% of respondents who feel they have partial or no control over the information they provide say they are concerned about this. This represents a decrease of five percentage points since 2015.

### **Just over one in five say they are always informed about the conditions attached to the collection and use of their personal data online, and only a minority (13%) fully read privacy statements online**

- Amongst respondents who use the Internet, 57% say that they are at least sometimes informed about the conditions under which their data is collected and may be used further: 22% say they are always informed, while 35% say they are sometimes informed.
- Amongst respondents who use the Internet, the majority (60%) read privacy statements on the Internet – although they are more likely to do so partially (47%) than fully (13%).
- Respondents are less likely to read privacy statements than they were in 2015 (-7 percentage points).
- For respondents that only partially read privacy statement on the Internet, or who don't read them at all, by far the most common reason is that they are too long to read (66%). Almost one third (31%) say they find these statements unclear or difficult to understand, while 17% say it is enough for them to see the website has a privacy policy.

**The majority of social network users (56%) have tried to change the default privacy settings of their profile. The most common reason for not doing it are that users trust sites to set appropriate privacy settings (29%) or that they do not know how to do it**

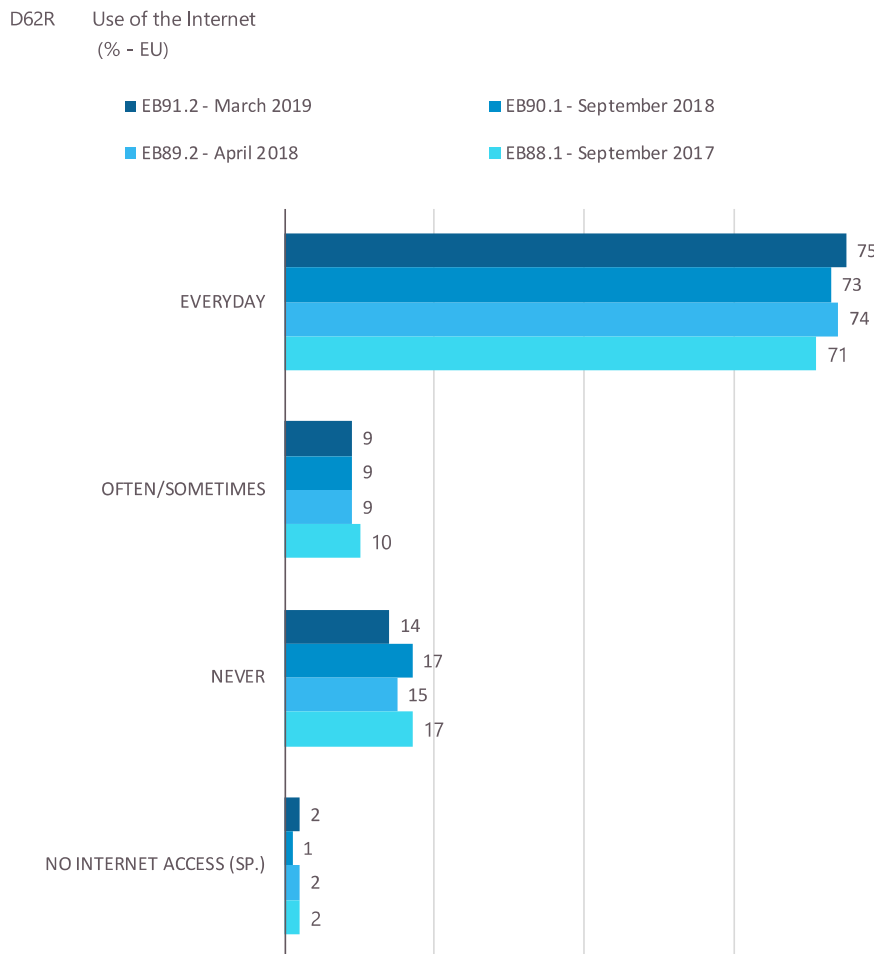
- More than half (56%) of all social network users have tried to change the privacy settings of their personal profile from the default settings on an online social network – a decrease of four points since 2015.
- The three most common reasons social network users give for not trying to change their personal profile's default settings are that they trust the sites to set appropriate privacy settings (29%), that they do not know how to (27%), or that they are not worried about sharing their personal data (20%).

## I. DIFFERENT USES OF THE INTERNET

### More than eight in ten respondents use the Internet, with three quarters using it daily






Overall, 84% of respondents use the Internet. Three quarters do so daily, while 9% use it often or sometimes. Just over one in ten (14%) say they never use the Internet, while just 2% spontaneously say they have no Internet access.

Internet use has remained relatively stable since 2017.



Base: all respondents (N=27,524)

Socio-demographic segments presenting the highest share of use the Internet “everyday”:

-  • Men (77%);
-  • Aged 15-24 (98%);
-  • Students (99%);
-  • Those living in a household of 4 or more (90%);
-  • Those living in large town (80%).

### The majority of Internet users use online social networks daily or almost daily

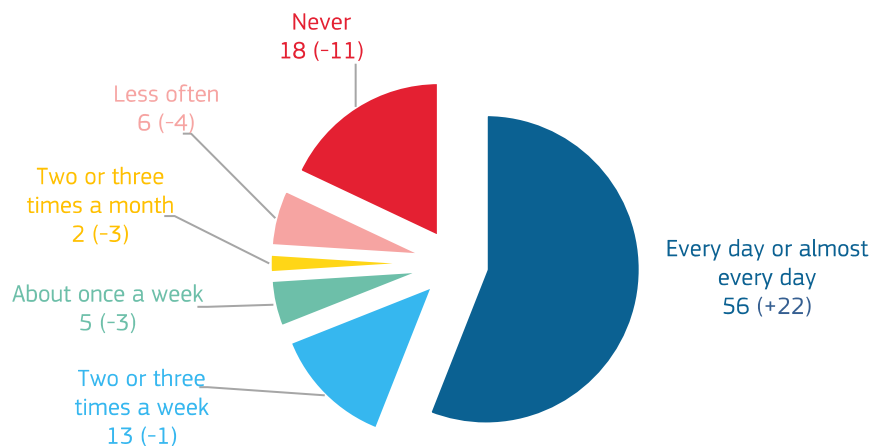
Just over eight in ten (82%) respondents who use the Internet have used an online social network, with 76% saying they use them at least two or three times a month<sup>4</sup>.

Frequent use is by far the most common: more than half (56%) use online social networks daily or almost daily. Just over one in ten (13%) use them two or three times a week, while 5% use them once a week and 2% use them two or three times a month. Just over one in twenty (6%) use them less often.

Almost one in five (18%) never use online social networks.

Comparing these results to those from 2015 shows the use of online social networks has increased considerably – and in particular daily or almost daily use. Overall there has been a 15 percentage point increase in the proportion who are users of online social networks<sup>5</sup>, but the proportion who use them daily or almost daily has increased by 22 points during this period.

**D20** How often, if at all, do you use online social networks?  
(% - EU)



(March 2019 - February/March 2015)

Base: respondents who use the Internet (N=23,106)

<sup>4</sup> D20 How often, if at all, do you use online social networks?

<sup>5</sup> In this report a user of online social networks is defined as someone who uses online social networks two or three times a month or more.



### A large majority purchase goods or services online

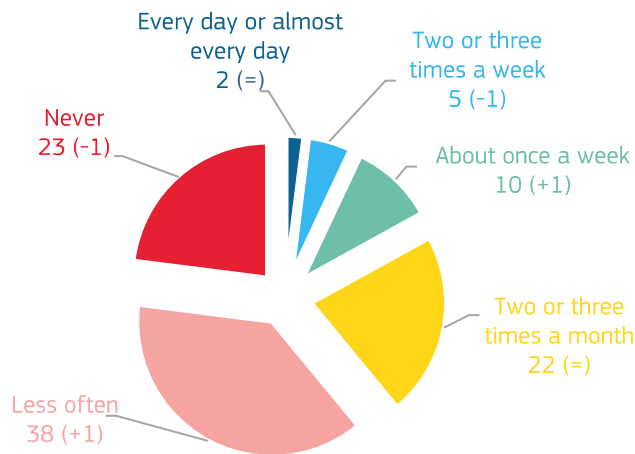
More than three quarters (77%) of Internet using respondents purchase goods or services online, however for most this is not a frequent activity<sup>6</sup>. Just 2% buy online daily or almost daily, 5% do so two or three times a week and 10% about once a week. Just over one in five (22%) purchase online two or three times a month, while 38% do so less often.

Almost one quarter (23%) never purchase goods or services online.

The proportion who buy online regularly<sup>7</sup> is 39% - the same proportion as in 2015.

**QB7** How often, if at all, do you purchase goods or services online (e.g. clothes, books, tickets or food)?

(% - EU)



(March 2019 - February/March 2015)

Base: respondents who use the Internet (N=23,106)

<sup>6</sup> QB7 How often, if at all, do you purchase goods or services online (e.g. clothes, books, tickets or food)?

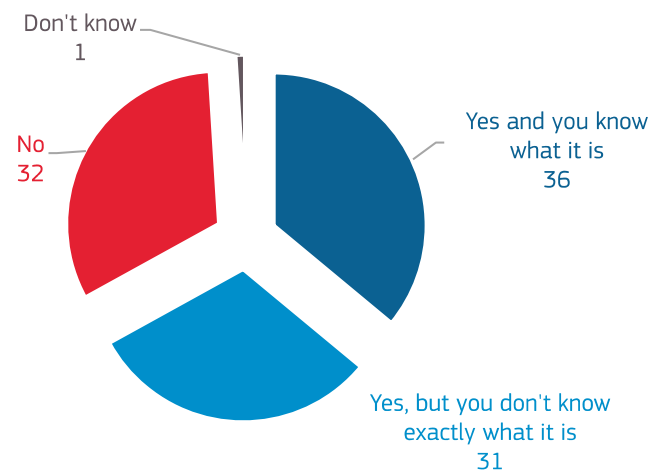
<sup>7</sup> Regular online shoppers are defined in this report as those who buy online at least two or three times a month.

## II. KNOWLEDGE OF THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

### More than two thirds have heard of GDPR





The majority (67%) of respondents have heard of GDPR, although there is a fairly even split between those who have heard of it and know what it is (36%) and those who have heard of it but don't know exactly what it is (31%)<sup>8</sup>. Almost one third (32%) have not heard of it.

**QB17** Have you heard of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in 2018? (% - EU)



Base: all respondents (N=27,524)

Socio-demographic segments presenting the highest share of 'Yes you have heard of it and you know what it is':

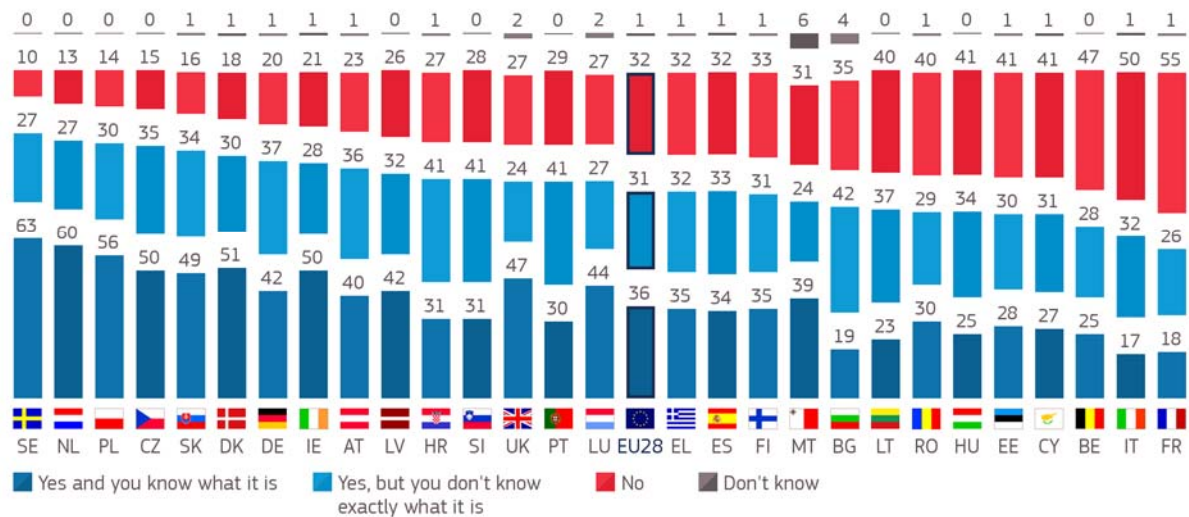
-  • Aged 25-39 (45%);
-  • Those who completed education aged 20 or more (53%);
-  • Those who use the Internet daily (43%);
-  • Those who regularly shop online (50%).

<sup>8</sup> QB17 Have you heard of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in 2018?

The majority of respondents in all but two countries have at least heard of the GDPR, although proportions range from 90% in Sweden, 87% in the Netherlands and 86% in Poland to 53% in Belgium, and 58% in Cyprus and Estonia. The exceptions are France (44%) and Italy (49%).

There are six countries where at least half of all respondents have heard of GDPR and know what it is: Sweden (63%), the Netherlands (60%), Poland (56%), Denmark (51%), Ireland and Czechia (both 50%).

**QB17** Have you heard of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in 2018? (%)



Base: all respondents (N=27,524)

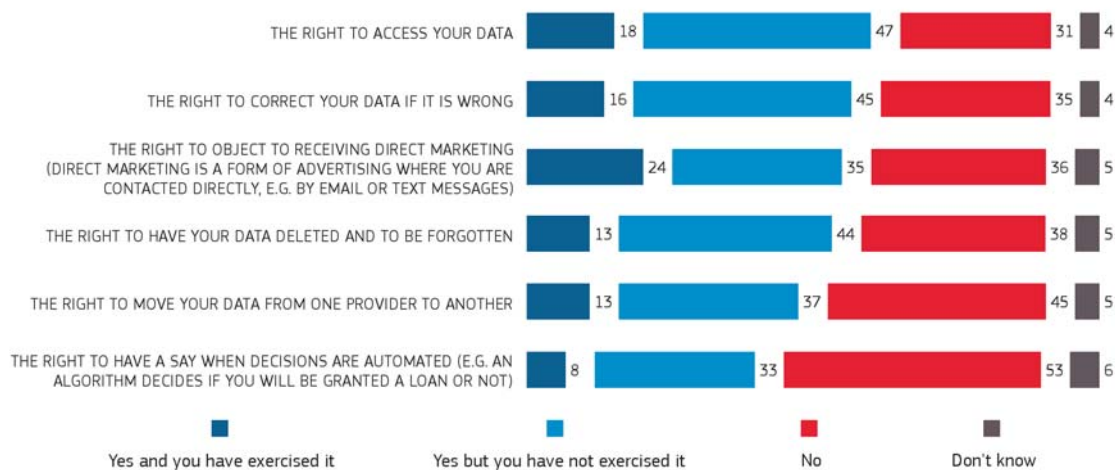
**A majority of respondents have heard of most of the rights guaranteed by GDPR, and some have already exercised these rights**

All respondents were asked whether they have heard of a number of rights guaranteed by GDPR<sup>9</sup>. Almost two thirds (65%) have heard of the right to access their data, while 61% have heard of the right to correct their data if it is wrong.

At least half of all respondents have heard about the right to object to receiving direct marketing (59%), the right to have their data deleted and forgotten (57%) and the right to move their data from one provider to another (50%). Just over four in ten (41%) have heard about the right to have a say when decisions are automated.

In most cases more than one in ten respondents have already exercised these rights. Almost one quarter (24%) have exercised their right to object to receiving direct marketing. Almost one in five (18%) have exercised their right to access their data, while 16% have exercised their right to correct their data if it is wrong. Just over one in ten (13%) have exercised their right to have their data deleted and to be forgotten, and the same proportion (13%) have exercised their right to move data from one provider to another. Finally, 8% have exercised their right to have a say when decisions are automated.

**QB18** The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guarantees a number of rights. Have you heard of each of the following rights? (% - EU)

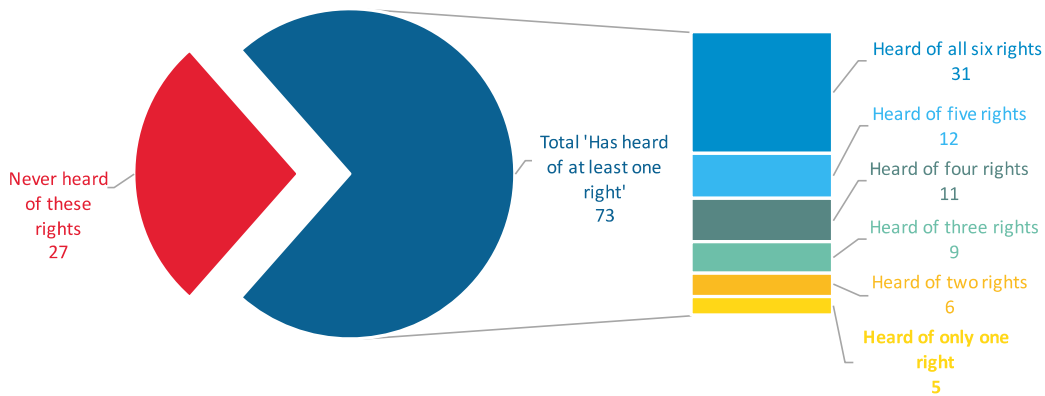


Base: all respondents (N=27,524)

<sup>9</sup> QB18 The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guarantees a number of rights. Have you heard of each of the following rights? 18.1 The right to access your data; 18.2 The right to object to receiving direct marketing ; 18.3 The right to correct your data if it is wrong; 18.4 The right to have your data deleted and to be forgotten; 18.5 The right to have a say when decisions are automated (e.g. an algorithm decides if you will be granted a loan or not); 18.6 The right to move your data from one provider to another.

A broader view of these results shows that over three in ten respondents (31%) have heard of all the rights asked about in the survey, while over one quarter (27%) have not heard of any of them. Overall almost three quarters (73%) have heard of at least one right guaranteed by GDPR.

QB18T The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guarantees a number of rights. Have you heard of each of the following rights?  
(% - EU)



Base: all respondents (N=27,524)

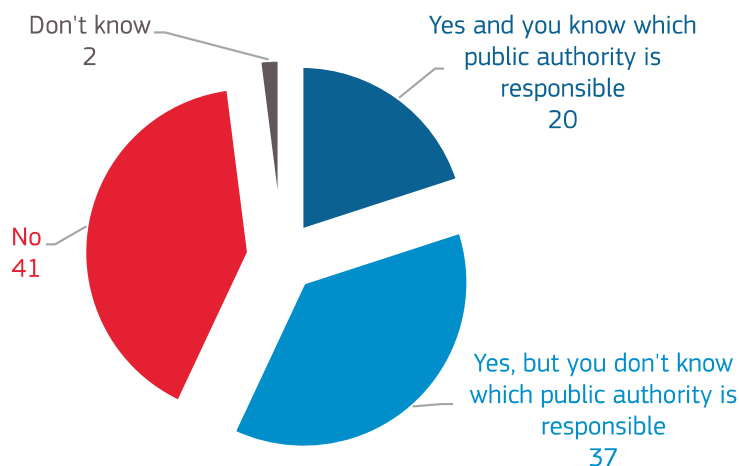
**The majority have heard about a public authority in their country responsible for protecting their personal data rights**

Almost six in ten (57%) say they have heard about the existence of a public authority in their country responsible for protecting their rights regarding their personal data<sup>10</sup>. One in five have heard of this and know which public authority is responsible, while 37% have heard of it but don't know which authority is responsible.

Just over four in ten (41%) have not heard of such an authority.

Awareness of the public authority in their country responsible for protecting their rights regarding their personal data has increased considerably since 2015 (+20 pp)<sup>11</sup>.

**QB16** Have you heard about the existence of a public authority in (OUR COUNTRY) responsible for protecting your rights regarding your personal data? (% - EU)



Total 'Yes'	No	Don't Know
57% (+20)	41% (-20)	2% (=)

(March 2019 – February/March 2015)

Socio-demographic segments presenting the highest share of 'Yes and you know which public authority is responsible':

- 📅 • Aged 40-54 (24%);
- 🎓 • Those who completed education aged 20 or more (29%);
- @ • Those who use the Internet daily (24%);
- 🔒 • Those who have heard of GDPR (27%).

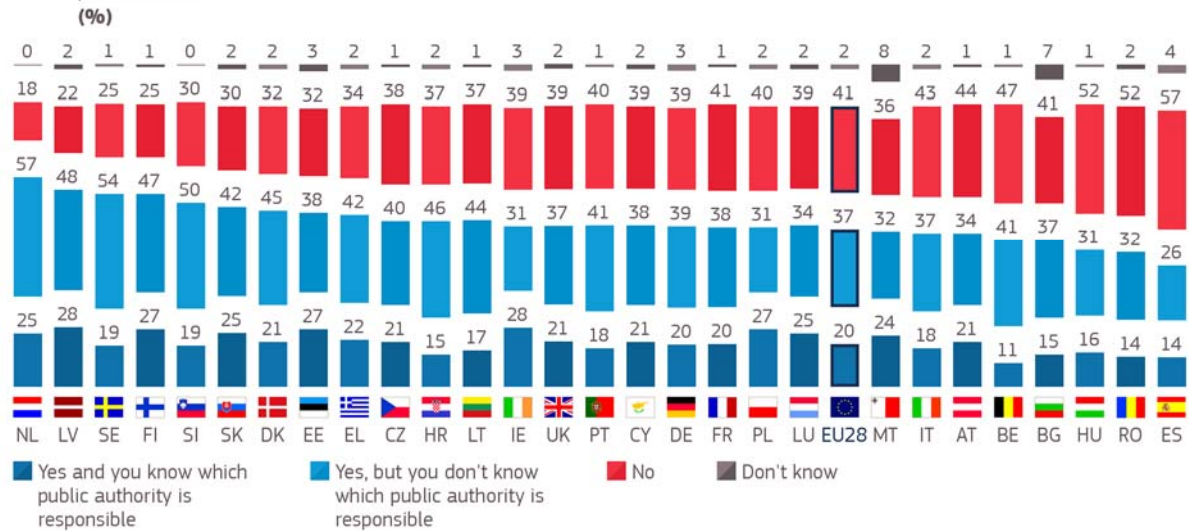
<sup>10</sup> QB16 Have you heard about the existence of a public authority in (OUR COUNTRY) responsible for protecting your rights regarding your personal data?

<sup>11</sup> In 2015 the question just had yes/no options, so the trends compare the total yes from the current survey with the results from 2015.

The proportion of respondents who have heard about the public authority in their country responsible for protecting their personal data rights varies widely across the EU. Respondents in the Netherlands (82%), Latvia (76%) Finland and Sweden (both 74%) are the most likely to have at least heard of such an authority, while those in Spain (40%), Romania (46%) and Hungary (47%) are the least likely to have done so.

In 17 countries at least one in five respondents know which public authority is responsible, with the highest proportions observed amongst those in Latvia, Ireland (both 28%), Finland, Estonia, and Poland (all 27%).

**QB16** Have you heard about the existence of a public authority in (OUR COUNTRY) responsible for protecting your rights regarding your personal data?



Base: all respondents (N=27,524)

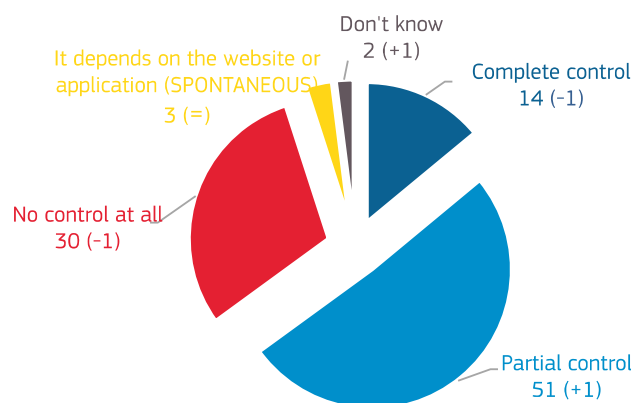
### III. CONTROL OVER PERSONAL DATA

#### The majority of respondents feel they have at least partial control over the information they provide online

Almost two thirds of respondents (65%) who provide personal information online feel they have at least some control over this information<sup>12</sup>, however just 14% feel they have complete control. Just over half (51%) feel they have partial control over this information, while 30% feel they have no control at all. A small proportion (3%) say it depends on the website or application, while 2% say they don't know.

These results are stable compared to 2015

**QB9** How much control do you feel you have over the information you provide online, e.g. the ability to correct, change or delete this information? (% - EU)



(March 2019 - February/March 2015)

Base: respondents who have provided personal information online (N=18,975)

Socio-demographic segments presenting the highest share of Total 'at least some control':

- 📅 • Aged 15-39 (70-68%);
- 🎓 • Those who completed education aged 20 or more (67%);
- 🔒 • Those who have heard of GDPR (68%);
- 🛒 • Those who regularly shop online (70%).

<sup>12</sup> QB9 How much control do you feel you have over the information you provide online, e.g. the ability to correct, change or delete this information?

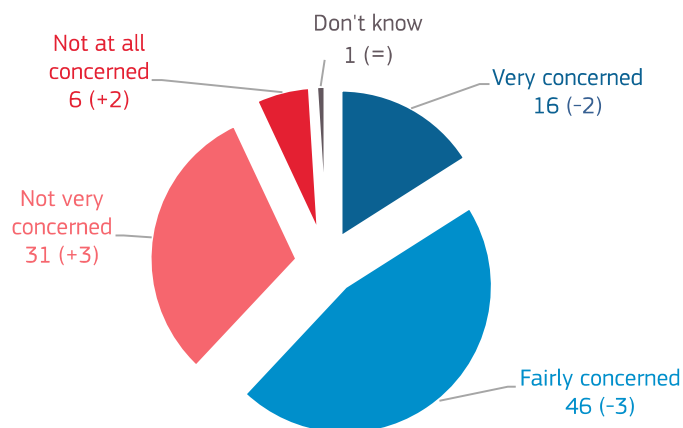


### More than six in ten are concerned about not having complete control over the information they provide online

Respondents who feel they have partial or no control over the information they provide online were asked how concerned they were about this<sup>13</sup>. Overall 62% say they are concerned, with 16% 'very concerned'. Almost four in ten (37%) say they are not concerned, with 6% saying they are 'not at all concerned'.

Respondents are now less likely to say they are concerned than they were in 2015 (-5 pp).




**QB10** How concerned are you about not having complete control over the information you provide online? Would you say you are...? (% - EU)



(March 2019 - February/March 2015)

Base: respondents who feel to have only partial or no control over the information provided online (N=15,915)

Socio-demographic segments presenting the highest share of Total 'concerned':

-  • Aged 55 or more (67%);
-  • Unemployed (72%);
-  • Those who have changed privacy settings on social networks (65%).

<sup>13</sup> QB10 How concerned are you about not having complete control over the information you provide online? Would you say you are...?

#### IV. DATA COLLECTION AND PRIVACY POLICIES

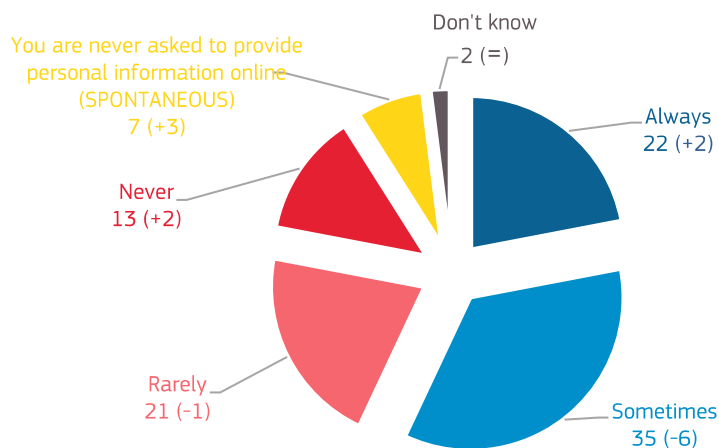
##### Just over one in five say they are always informed about the conditions attached to the collections and use of their personal data online

Amongst respondents who use the Internet, the majority (57%) say that they are at least sometimes informed about the conditions under which their data is collected and may be used further<sup>14</sup>. Just over one in five (22%) say they are always informed, while 35% say they are sometimes informed. A further 21% say they are rarely informed, while 13% say they are never informed.

More than one in twenty (7%) say they are never asked to provide personal information online.

Compared to 2015, respondents are now slightly less likely to say they are at least sometimes informed of the conditions of the data collection and the further uses of their data (-4 pp).

**QB13** In general, when you are asked to provide personal information online, how often would you say that you are informed about the conditions of the collection and further uses of your data? (% - EU)



(March 2019 - February/March 2015)

Base: respondents who use the Internet (N=23,106)

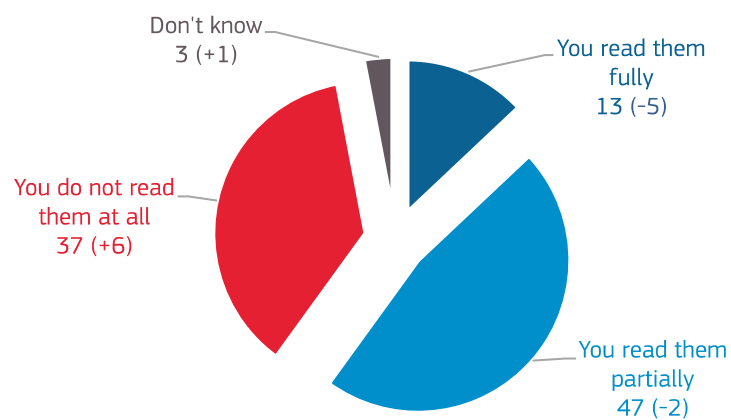
<sup>14</sup> QB13 In general, when you are asked to provide personal information online, how often would you say that you are informed about the conditions of the collection and further uses of your data?

### Six in ten read privacy statements on the Internet, although only a small proportion fully read them

Amongst respondents who use the Internet, the majority (60%) read privacy statements on the Internet – although they are more likely to do so partially (47%) than fully (13%)<sup>15</sup>. More than one third (37%) do not read these statements at all.

Respondents are less likely to at least partially read privacy statements than they were in 2015 (-7 pp), and in particular to read them fully (-5 pp).

**QB14** Thinking about privacy statements on the Internet, which of the following sentences best describes what you usually do? (% - EU)



(March 2019 - February/March 2015)

Base: respondents who use the Internet (N=23,106)

<sup>15</sup> QB14 Thinking about privacy statements on the Internet, which of the following sentences best describes what you usually do?

**The length of privacy statements is the main reason respondents do not fully read them**

Respondents that only partially read privacy statements on the Internet, or who don't read them at all, were asked why this was the case<sup>16</sup>. By far the most common reason is that they are too long to read (66%). This is the only reason mentioned by more than one third.

Almost one third (31%) say they find these statements unclear or difficult to understand, while 17% say it is enough for them to see the website has a privacy policy and 15% believe the law will protect them in any case.

At least one in ten don't think it is important to read these statements (11%), while 10% don't think the websites will honour them. One in twenty (5%) say they don't know where to find these statements.

Compared to 2015, respondents are now less likely to say they find these statements unclear or difficult to understand (-7 pp), or that they think websites will not honour them (-5 pp).

**QB15** What are the reasons why you do not usually read privacy statements, or only read them partially? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)  
(% - EU)



Base: respondents who do not read privacy statement or only partially (N=19,516)

<sup>16</sup> QB15 What are the reasons why you do not usually read privacy statements, or only read them partially?

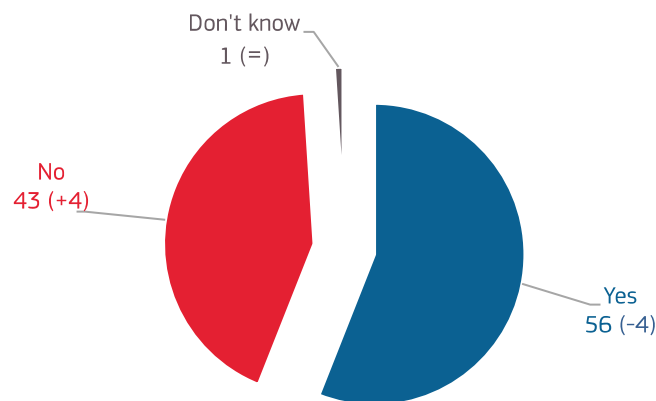
## V. SOCIAL NETWORK PRIVACY SETTINGS

### The majority of social network users have tried to change the default privacy settings of their profile

More than half (56%) of all social network users have tried to change the privacy settings of their personal profile from the default settings on an online social network<sup>17</sup>. Just over four in ten (43%) have not.

Compared to 2015, the proportion who have tried to change these default settings has decreased by four points.

**QB11** Have you ever tried to change the privacy settings of your personal profile from the default settings on an online social network? (% - EU)



(March 2019 - February/March 2015)

Base: online social network users (N=17,537)

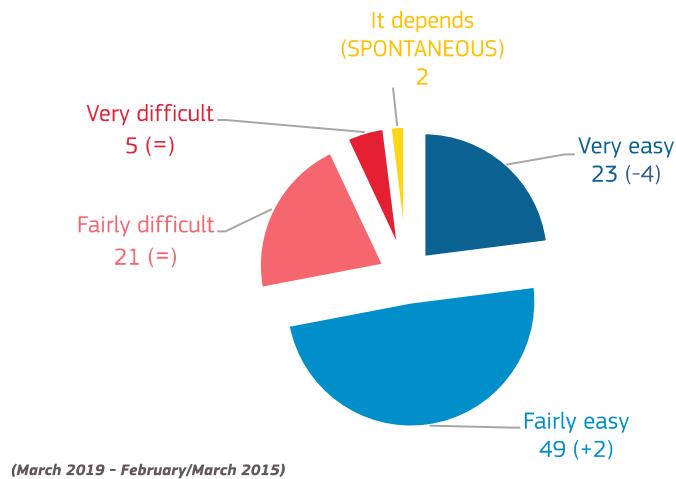
<sup>17</sup> QB11 Have you ever tried to change the privacy settings of your personal profile from the default settings on an online social network?

### The majority found it easy to change the privacy settings of their personal profile(s)

The majority (72%) of respondents who have tried to change the default privacy settings on their social network profile(s) say they found it easy to do<sup>18</sup>, with 23% saying it was 'very easy'. Just over one quarter (26%) say it was difficult, with 5% saying it was 'very difficult'.

The proportion who say they find it easy change settings has remained stable since 2015 (-2 pp).

**QB12a** In general, how easy or difficult did you find it to change the privacy settings of your personal profile(s)? (% - EU)



Base: respondents who tried to change the privacy settings of their personal profile on social network (N=9,826)

<sup>18</sup> QB12a In general, how easy or difficult did you find it to change the privacy settings of your personal profile(s)?

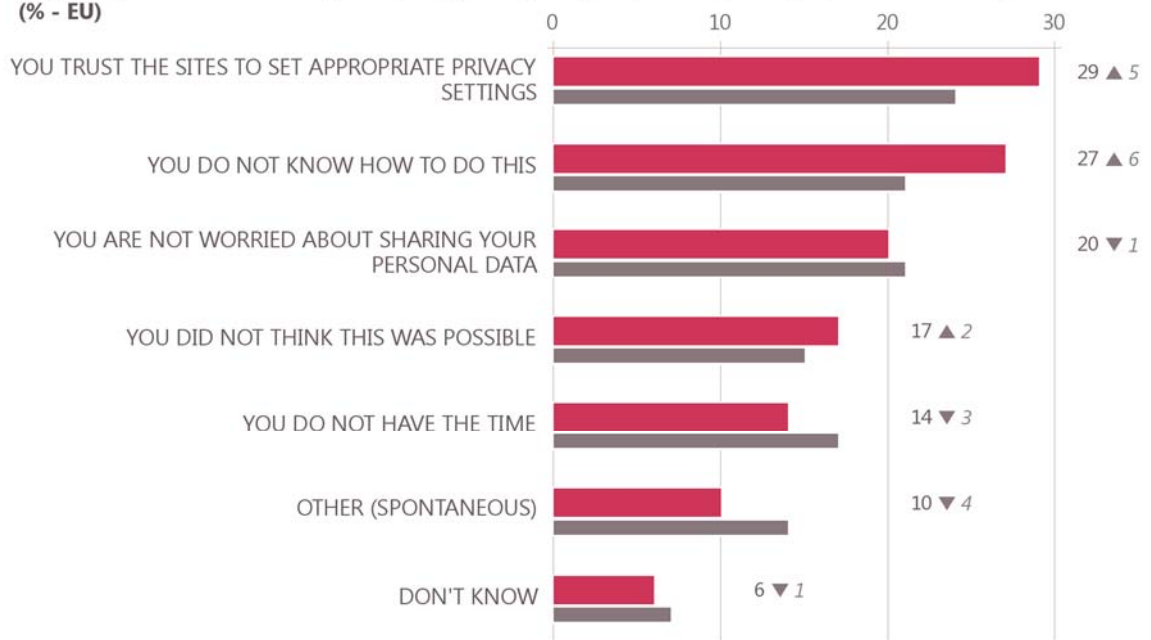
**Trust in social network sites, and a lack of knowledge are the main reasons respondents have not tried to change default privacy settings**

The most common reasons social network users give for not trying to change their personal profile's default settings<sup>19</sup> are that they trust the sites to set appropriate privacy settings (29%) or that they do not know how to do this (27%). One in five say they are not worried about sharing their personal data.

More than one in ten say they did not think it was possible to change these settings (17%) or that they did not have the time (14%).

Compared to 2015, respondents are now more likely to say they don't know how to do this (+6 pp) or that they trust sites to set appropriate privacy settings (+5 pp).

**QB12b** Why have you not tried to change the privacy settings of your personal profile(s)? (MAX. 3 ANSWERS)  
(% - EU)



Base: respondents who did not try to change the privacy settings of their personal profile on social network (N=7,495)

<sup>19</sup> QB12b Why have you not tried to change the privacy settings of your personal profile(s)?