

2025 Data Privacy Survey Results

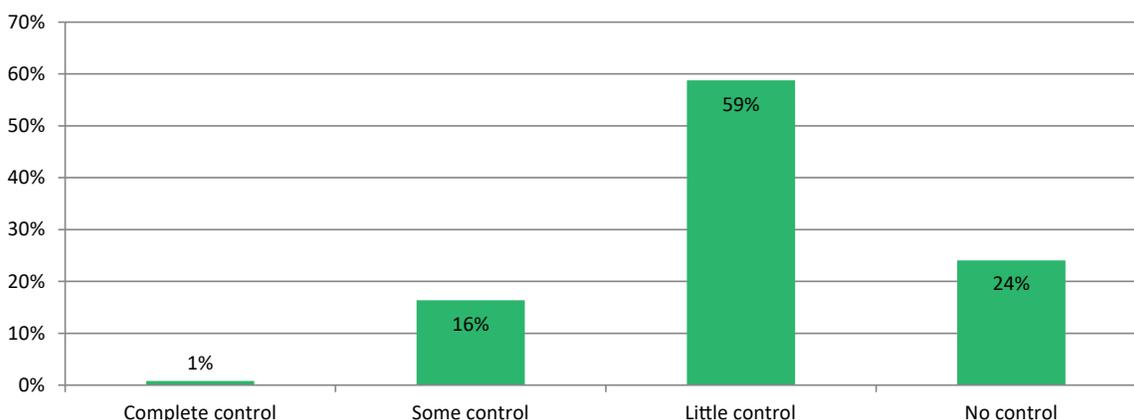
Key Findings from the Attorney General’s 2025 Data Privacy Survey

In 2025, the Attorney General’s Office launched a [Data Privacy Survey](#) available to all residents of Washington state.¹ The key findings were:

1. Respondents expressed a lack of control over their personal data and distrust of data collectors.
2. Respondents want to give informed consent prior to the collection, sharing, or sale of their data, but less than half have ever done so.
3. Most respondents were unfamiliar with “Deceptive Design” concepts and struggle with opting-out of targeted advertising and deleting their data.

Respondents expressed a lack of control over their personal data and distrust of data collectors

How much control do you feel you have over who has access to your personal information?



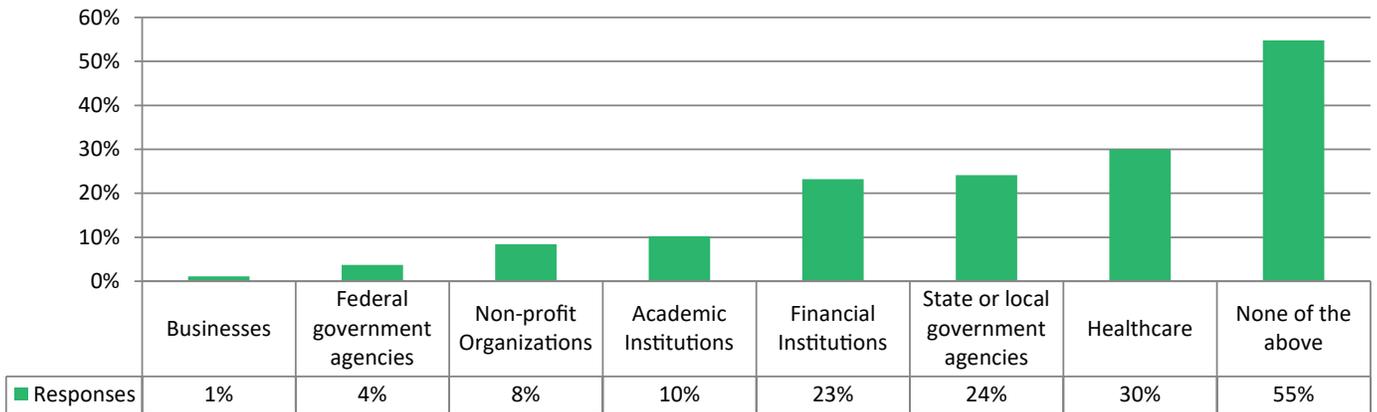
83% of respondents felt they had little to no control over who has access to their personal information. Respondents broadly expressed concern over the use of complex and vague language in user privacy policies, felt they were generally unhelpful for users, and believed they primarily existed to protect the data collector. 42% of respondents said they “rarely” or “never” read privacy policies before using a service. Only 7% said they “always” do.

“I feel as though so many entities send out complicated notices about what they do with my personal info, that I wind up feeling pretty powerless about having any control in the matter.”

– Anonymous, King County

¹ The survey included 35 questions, providing residents with an opportunity to share their feelings and knowledge about data privacy, and changes they would like to see in the future. The survey was limited to responses from Washington residents and was open from July 30 to November 14, 2025. In total, the survey received 706 responses with 26 of 39 counties represented.

Which of the following entities do you trust will keep your personal information private and secure?



*Respondents were asked to mark all that apply, thus bars may not add up to 100%

Respondents also expressed a lack of trust in data collectors across all sectors when it comes to keeping their personal information private and secure. 55% of respondents said they didn't trust any industry to keep their data safe, and only 1% of respondents said they would trust private businesses to keep their information private and secure. Several respondents noted the prevalence of data breaches as evidence for the inability of these industries to keep their information safe. 84% of respondents said they had received a data breach notice in the last year.

"I have worked in cybersecurity for over 20 years, and I trust no entity to keep info safe, despite their best efforts. In the case of businesses, they intentionally sell it."

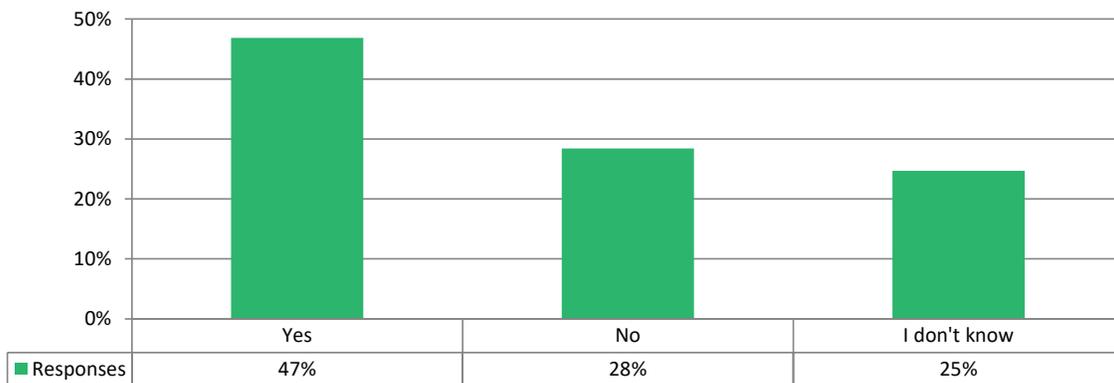
- Anonymous, Kitsap County

"My trust in entities to keep my personal information private and secure has mostly vanished over the past year. It seems to depend on who's in charge and their motives. I hope WA both on state and local governmental level will invest in ways to keep personal information private and secure and not hand over any unnecessary data to the federal government or other groups."

- Anonymous, Pierce County

Respondents want to give informed consent prior to the collection, sharing, or sale of their data, but less than half have ever done so

Have you ever given informed consent to any business, agency, or other entity to collect, share, or sell your data?



Informed Consent is a privacy concept that defines how businesses and agencies inform you about their intentions to use your data. Informed consent means: (1) The collecting entity informs you of the data that will be collected, why they need it, and how they intend to use it; (2) This information is presented in plain language - no technical jargon or legal language; (3) You have freely given your consent for the data to be collected; AND (4) The collector makes it clear that you can withdraw your consent at any time.

An overwhelming majority of respondents believed informed consent should be required before their data is collected. 95% of respondents said there would be “no circumstance” where they would be comfortable having their data collected, shared, or sold without their informed consent. However, less than half of respondents said that they have affirmatively provided informed consent to a data collector.

“Data collection must be opt-in and revocable. We must have the right to see what data institutions are collecting about us, and clear disclosure of how they are using it. Personal data should never be for sale without the explicit, informed, opt-in consent of legal adults.”

– Anonymous, King County

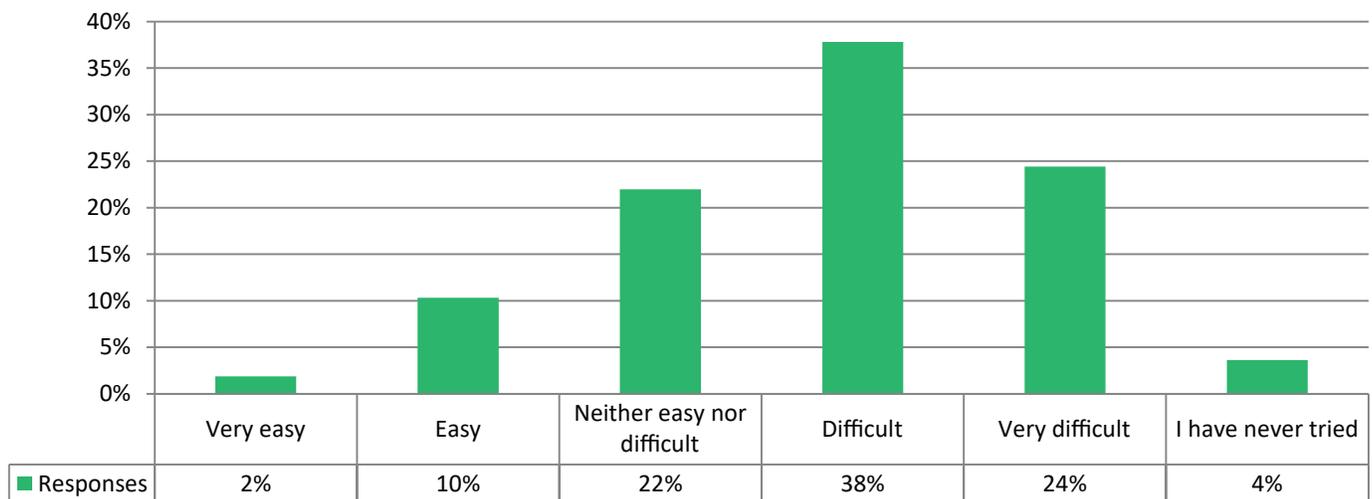
Most respondents were unfamiliar with “Deceptive Design” concepts and struggle with opting-out of targeted advertising and deleting their data

Survey respondents were asked about their familiarity with several data privacy concepts. One such concept was “Deceptive Design”, a practice by which websites or apps are designed to influence a user to do something they may not have intended to, such as accepting all cookies, or subscribing to a newsletter. Identifying these design patterns is crucial for preventing the exploitation of consumers. Nearly two-thirds of respondents said they were “not so familiar” or “not at all familiar” with “Deceptive Design” practices.

“Websites asking about cookies have the right idea but it’s hard for most of us to understand what we are or aren’t agreeing to.”

– Anonymous, Thurston County

How Difficult is it to Opt-out of Targeted Advertising from an App or Service?



Furthermore, 62% respondents found it “difficult” or “very difficult” to opt-out of targeted advertising and to request the deletion of their data. 65% found it “difficult” or “very difficult” to request their personal information be deleted from an app or service, with an additional 21% saying they had never tried.

Conclusion

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with the current state of data privacy policies and practices in Washington state. Data breaches, confusing privacy terms and conditions, and the use of data without informed consent have generated a high level of frustration and distrust among respondents toward data collectors. Respondents broadly expressed a desire for limits on data collection and usage, as well as increased transparency in how and why data is collected.

When asked what data privacy means to them, one respondent shared:

“At its heart, to me, data privacy means that I should be able to use my personal devices without constant fear of my conversations being eavesdropped for ad-metrics... It’s about keeping my own thoughts and notes and ideas to myself until I’m ready to share them - and I shouldn’t have to share what I’m not ready to. Most of all, it’s about not letting the powerful create tools that enable mass-scale manipulation of people and society by the few, to our collective detriment. To be meaningful, data privacy law and policy must be designed to protect the most vulnerable people first.”

– Anonymous, King County

This survey was conducted to better understand how Washingtonians experience data privacy in their daily lives and where they believe current systems fall short. These findings will directly inform the Attorney General’s Office’s ongoing work in several ways:

- Helping to identify priority areas for consumer protection and enforcement;
- Shaping policy analysis and legislative engagement;
- Guiding public education and outreach efforts; and
- Ensuring that the perspectives of impacted communities are reflected in future data privacy initiatives.

Respondents’ emphasis on transparency, meaningful consent, limits on data use, and protections for vulnerable populations provides clear direction for where attention and resources are most needed.

The Attorney General’s Office expresses sincere gratitude to all respondents who took the time to complete the survey and provide their honest perspectives on this important issue. Your input not only highlights the real-world impacts of data privacy practices but also plays a critical role in shaping our efforts to protect the safety, rights, and personal information of all Washingtonians.

For more information regarding Data Privacy in Washington state, visit the Attorney General’s Data Privacy Hub at atg.wa.gov/data-privacy.

