
Europe's Digital Paradox: Citizens Feel Abandoned by Companies and Authorities on Cybersecurity - yet They also Don't Protect Themselves

- A representative study of 14,000 Europeans highlights citizens' concerns about digital threats and data sovereignty.
- Major concerns include identity theft, financial uncertainty and the effects of cyberattacks on democracy.
- While citizens recognize cybersecurity deficiencies and have little trust in companies and authorities, they do not take personal responsibility for their own protection.

Neckarsulm, September 4, 2025 – A representative cybersecurity study commissioned by Schwarz Digits and conducted among 14,000 citizens in 14 European countries reveals a remarkable paradox: While a vast majority of Europeans express significant concerns about digital threats and the sovereignty of their data, a considerable portion of them remain underprepared and vulnerable. The study highlights widespread fear of identity theft and concern over the severe impact of cyberattacks on democracy and businesses. It underscores the urgent need for improved security measures at both the personal and institutional levels. The pan-European survey paints a vivid picture of a populace grappling with digital anxieties.

"Our results paint an alarming picture: Europeans are increasingly living in fear of digital threats. At the same time, there is a lack of alternatives to the digital dependency trap from abroad", says Rolf Schumann, Co-CEO of Schwarz Digits. "This report serves as a crucial wake-up call for individuals, companies and governments alike to foster greater digital literacy and invest in robust, accessible sovereign security solutions."

High risk awareness meets real-world experiences

A staggering 88% of Europeans expressed concerns about data security and privacy protection using digital services such as streaming platforms, social media and online shops. In addition 65% of respondents are clearly concerned about the impact of cyberattacks on democratic processes, such as elections, as well as on their private lives.

This unease is amplified by real-world experiences: In 18% of households, there have already been cases of identity or data theft; another 17% reported fraudulent misuse of their credit card data. Perhaps more alarmingly, 37% of respondents know someone personally who has already become a victim. This makes the threat tangible for many. When asked about the greatest risks to their digital identity, respondents see responsibility almost equally split between "my own online behavior" (42%) and "inadequate cybersecurity practices by organizations that have my data" (43%).

"Our findings reveal that cybersecurity is no longer an abstract concept, but a palpable fear affecting the daily lives of Europeans", says Dr. Alexander Schellong, Member of the Executive Board and Managing Director of the Institute of Cybersecurity and Digital Sovereignty at Schwarz Digits. "The data clearly shows a trust deficit in both business and

governments when it comes to protecting personal data, which is not a surprise as we find tens of thousands new data packages with millions of stolen user data each on a monthly basis for our omniac service. Attackers no longer break in, they just log in."

Key findings of the study: The gap between concern and action

- **Low trust in government institutions:** Only 31% of Europeans believe that government agencies are taking sufficient measures to protect their digital identity and data.
- **Europe's handling of personal data is considered more reliable:** Two-thirds of Europeans (72%) trust European companies. Only a small number of Europeans trust Chinese (8%) or American (20%) providers of digital products or services.
- **Financial security and identity theft are major concerns:** Around 77% of respondents are very or rather concerned that criminals could withdraw money from their bank accounts, closely followed by concern about password theft (74%) and the fear of unauthorized online purchases (74%). In comparison, only 34% of participants are concerned about the misuse of streaming accounts for music or movies.
- **Incomplete protective measures:** Despite high levels of concern, the active use of advanced security measures varies. While 82% report using strong passwords, only 59% use two-factor authentication, and just 19% use a VPN.
- **Awareness versus action:** Although 61.9% of Europeans are aware of the "Darknet," only 10% have private cyber insurance, and only 28% are interested in purchasing such a policy.
- **Self-discovery by victims:** When identity or data theft occurs, the burden of discovery often falls on the individual: 57% of victims discovered the misuse themselves, while only 29% were informed by a company. Furthermore, after discovery, only 53% reported the incident to law enforcement authorities.

Further Information

Further information and the complete study for download can be found at <https://schwarz-digits.de/publikationen/cyber-security-study>.

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About the study

For the cybersecurity study, Schwarz Digits, in collaboration with the market research institute GIM, conducted a quantitative online survey. The survey took place in 14 European countries: Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. 1,000 people per country were surveyed (total n=14,000), who are nationally representative of the online-available population.

About Schwarz Digits

Schwarz Digits is the IT and digital division of Schwarz Group and offers impressive digital products and services that meet the high German data protection standards. With the aim of achieving the greatest possible digital sovereignty, Schwarz Digits provides the IT infrastructure and solutions for the extensive ecosystem of Schwarz Group's companies and develops it for the future. Schwarz Digits' sovereign core services include Cloud, Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, Communication and Workplace. In addition, Schwarz Digits creates optimal conditions for the development of trend-setting innovations for end customers, companies and public sector organizations. Schwarz Digits includes 8,000 employees of the brands STACKIT, XM Cyber, Schwarz Media, mmmake, Schwarz IT, Schwarz Digital, Lidl e-commerce and Kaufland e-commerce.