



Office of the  
Privacy Commissioner  
of Canada

Commissariat  
à la protection de  
la vie privée du Canada

# **2020 Survey of Canadians on Privacy-Related Issues**

## **Final Report**

**Prepared for the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada**

Supplier Name: Phoenix SPI  
Contract Number: 2R008-200076 001 CY  
Award Date: 2020-09-24  
Contract Value: \$68,697.49  
Delivery Date: 2021-03-10

Registration Number: 038-20

For more information, please contact: [publications@priv.gc.ca](mailto:publications@priv.gc.ca)

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

**Canada** 

## **2020 Survey of Canadians on Privacy-Related Issues**

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Supplier name: Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.

March 2021

This public opinion research report presents the results of a telephone survey conducted by Phoenix SPI on behalf of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. The research study was conducted with 1,502 Canadians aged 16 and older between November 21<sup>st</sup> and December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

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Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada  
30, Victoria Street  
Gatineau, Quebec  
K1A 1H3

**Catalogue Number:**

IP54-109/2021E-PDF

**International Standard Book Number (ISBN):**

978-0-660-37776-6

**Related publications (POR registration number: POR 038-20):**

Catalogue number (Final report, French) IP54-109/2021F-PDF

ISBN: 978-0-660-37777-3

*Aussi offert en français sous le titre Sondage auprès des Canadiens sur les enjeux liés à la protection de la vie privée de 2020.*

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## Executive Summary

The Privacy Commissioner of Canada is an advocate for the privacy rights of Canadians, with the powers to investigate complaints and conduct audits under two federal laws; publish information about information-handling practices in the public and private sectors; and conduct research into privacy issues. Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (OPC) to conduct a telephone survey of Canadians on privacy-related issues.

### 1. Background and Objectives

Mandated by Parliament to act as an ombudsman and guardian of privacy in Canada, the Privacy Commissioner, among other things, is responsible for enforcing the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA). The OPC's mandate to protect and promote privacy rights includes promoting awareness and understanding of privacy issues by the Canadian public. In support of this, the OPC, every two years, has conducted quantitative research with the general population to collect the information it needs to advance and report on its core responsibility of protecting privacy rights.

The purpose of this research is to better understand the extent to which Canadians are aware, understand, and perceive privacy-related issues. Specifically, the objective of the research is to explore Canadians' attitudes and opinions of privacy issues that fall under the OPC's four strategic privacy priorities: economics of personal information; government surveillance; reputation and privacy; and the body as information. In addition, this year, the OPC wanted the survey to address how, if at all, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has influenced Canadians' views and concerns over their privacy.

The research findings will be used to learn more about Canadians' concerns and attitudes toward privacy, their awareness of privacy institutions, and views on personal information management as a whole. This knowledge will inform and guide outreach efforts with Canadians. The results will also help the OPC report on results as required in its Departmental Results Framework (DRF), specifically on whether privacy rights are respected and obligations are met, and whether Canadians are empowered to exercise their privacy rights.

### 2. Methodology

A 14-minute random digit dialling (RDD) telephone survey was administered to 1,502 Canadian residents, 16 years of age or older between November 21<sup>st</sup> and December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020. An overlapping dual-frame (landline and cell phone) sample was used to minimize coverage error. The results can be considered representative of the population of Canadians aged 16 and older. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results can be considered accurate within  $\pm 2.5\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The margin of error is greater for results pertaining to subgroups of the total sample. Data were weighted to reflect the population in terms of age, gender, and region. For a more complete description of the methodology, refer to the Appendix: 1. [Technical Specifications](#).

### 3. Highlights

***Many Canadians said they are knowledgeable about their privacy rights, in general and specifically when it comes to protecting these rights. Canadians continue to be concerned about protecting their personal privacy.***

Nearly two-thirds of Canadians (64%) rated their knowledge of their privacy rights as good or very good. In addition, just over half (58%) said their knowledge of how to protect their privacy rights is good or very good. Canadians' knowledge of their privacy rights and how to protect them has not changed since 2018. While concern about the protection of their privacy remains high among Canadians, the intensity of this concern has declined slightly, from 37% extremely concerned in 2016 and 2018 to 32% in 2020. Underscoring concern, almost half of Canadians (47%) do not have enough information to know how new technologies might affect their personal privacy (a small majority of 52% do feel confident about their knowledge of the privacy implications of new technologies).

***More than six in 10 Canadians are confident that government respects their privacy rights; fewer feel this way about businesses. When it comes to trust in specific types of businesses, banks rate the highest among Canadians.***

More than six in 10 Canadians (63%; up from 55% in 2018) feel that the federal government, in general, respects their privacy rights. Fewer, but still a significant minority of 45%, believe that businesses respect their privacy rights. Trust in businesses protecting privacy rights has increased seven percent since 2018, from 38% in 2018 to 45% this year. The vast majority of Canadians (81%) have at least a fair amount of trust that banks will protect the personal information they share with them. Following this, fewer have a fair amount or a great deal of trust in telecommunication and internet companies (47%), online retailers (40%) and Big Tech (39%). Canadians were least likely to trust social media companies to protect their personal information – 2% have a great deal and 15% a fair amount of trust in these companies.

***Canadians are concerned about how their online personal information will be used by organizations.***

More than eight in 10 Canadians (86%; up from 76% in 2018) are concerned about people using information available about them online to attempt to steal their identity, including almost half (48%) who said they are extremely concerned about identity theft. Nearly three-quarters of Canadians are concerned about social media platforms gathering personal information that they (73%) or someone else (74%) posted online to create a detailed profile of their interests and personal traits. In addition, 68% of Canadians are concerned about how companies and organizations might use information available about them online to make decisions about them, such as for a job, an insurance claim or health coverage.

***Canadians are reluctant to share personal information about their body, except when talking to a healthcare provider by phone or online.***

Six in 10 Canadians (60%) said they are comfortable sharing personal information about their body while talking to a healthcare practitioner by phone or online, but far fewer are comfortable sharing this same information in various other scenarios. In fact, majorities of Canadians indicated they would be uncomfortable providing a DNA sample to a company that might share it with police (60%), providing a DNA sample to a company for genetic testing (55%), and allowing their fitness tracker data to be shared with employer / insurance companies (66%).

***Many Canadians have refused to provide personal information due to privacy concerns and adjusted privacy settings on a social media account. Fewer have taken other actions to protect their privacy and some have even traded their personal information for discounts or incentives on goods or services.***

Seven in 10 Canadians (71%; down from 76% in 2018) have refused to provide an organization or business with their personal information due to privacy concerns. Slightly more (74%) have adjusted privacy settings on a social media account. Far fewer have deleted a social media account due to privacy concerns (41%) or stopped doing business with a company that experienced a privacy breach (40%). In recognition of the value of their personal information to companies, more than one-third of Canadians (38%; up from 30% in 2018) have provided their personal information for discounts or incentives on a good or service.

***Canadians' views on the Government of Canada collecting and using citizens' personal information are divided.***

One-third of Canadians (32%) support the Government of Canada having powers to collect and use personal information as part of intelligence-gathering activities. Support declines seven percent when respondents were asked if the Government of Canada should have such powers, *even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy.*

Outside of intelligence gathering, there is no strong consensus on what Canadians would feel comfortable with when it comes to the Government of Canada collecting personal information about citizens: 41% would be comfortable with the government collecting information from financial institutions to make economic decisions, 45% would be comfortable with the government collecting information from online sources to make decisions about access to government programs and services, and 57% would be comfortable with the government collecting information from online sources to investigate potential fraud.

***Canadians are more likely to feel uninformed about how their personal information is handled by businesses and government, and many feel they have little control over how their information is used.***

While 46% of Canadians feel informed about how their personal information is handled by *companies*, slightly more than half (54%) have not very much or no information at all about this. Similarly, 43% of Canadians feel informed about how *government* handles their personal information and 55% feel they are not well informed about this. The majority of Canadians also feel they have not very much or no control at all over how their personal information is used by companies (61%) or by government (65%).

#### **4. Notes to Reader**

- All results in the report are expressed as a percentage, unless otherwise noted.
- Throughout the report, percentages may not always add to 100 due to rounding and/or multiple responses being offered by respondents.
- The number of respondents changes throughout the report because questions were asked of sub-samples of survey respondents. Readers should be aware of this and exercise caution when interpreting results based on smaller numbers of respondents.

- Only subgroup differences that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level and pertain to a subgroup of at least n=20 are described in the report. The exception regarding sample size are differences indicative of a pattern.
  - For the regional results, surveys completed by respondents from Nunavut or the Northwest Territories are grouped with the Prairies, and surveys completed by respondents from the Yukon are grouped with British Columbia.
- Reference is made to findings from similar surveys conducted in previous years. When comparing results over time, it should be kept in mind that the sample size and sample frame varies from wave to wave. Prior to 2012, approximately 2,000 Canadians were interviewed compared to approximately 1,500 starting in 2012. In addition, a dual sample frame (landline and cell phones) was introduced in 2012.
- The survey questionnaire is [appended](#) to the report.
- The tabulated data are available under separate cover.

## 5. Contract Value

The contract value was \$68,697.49 (HST included).

## 6. Statement of Political Neutrality

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



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Alethea Woods  
President  
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.



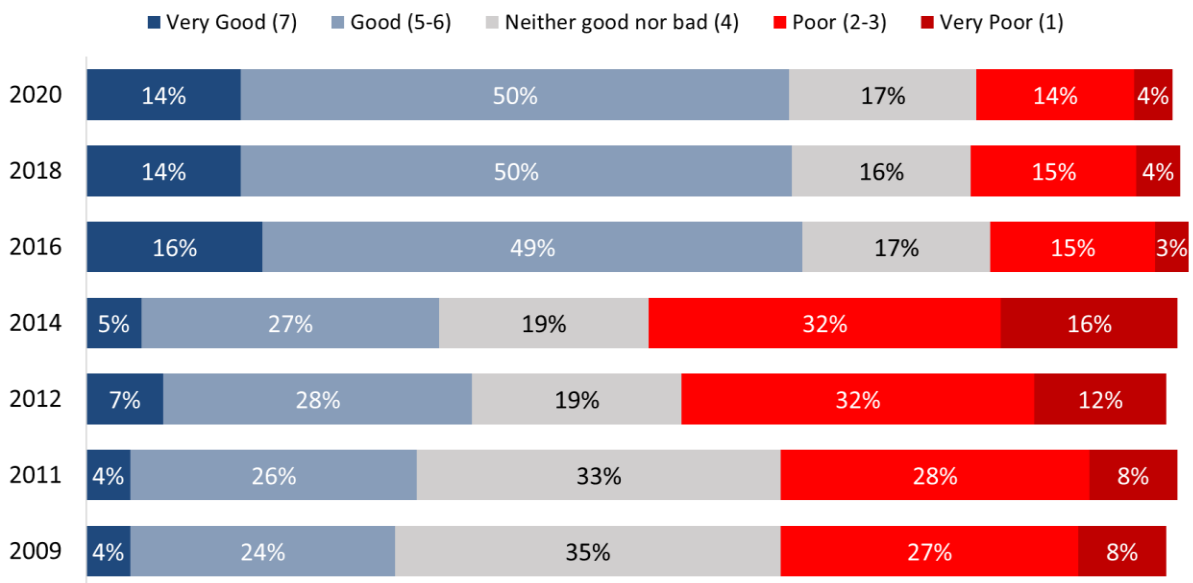
# Detailed Findings

## 1. Knowledge, concern, and general perceptions

### **More than six in 10 Canadians claim to be knowledgeable of their privacy rights**

Nearly two-thirds of Canadians surveyed rated their knowledge of their privacy rights as good (50%) or very good (14%). In contrast, just under one in five Canadians rated their knowledge of their privacy rights as poor (14%) or very poor (4%). Canadians’ knowledge of their privacy rights has been consistent since 2016 (64% in 2020 versus 64% in 2018 and 65% in 2016).<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1: General knowledge of privacy rights



Q1. How would you rate your knowledge of your privacy rights?  
 Base in 2020: n=1,502; Don't know (1%)

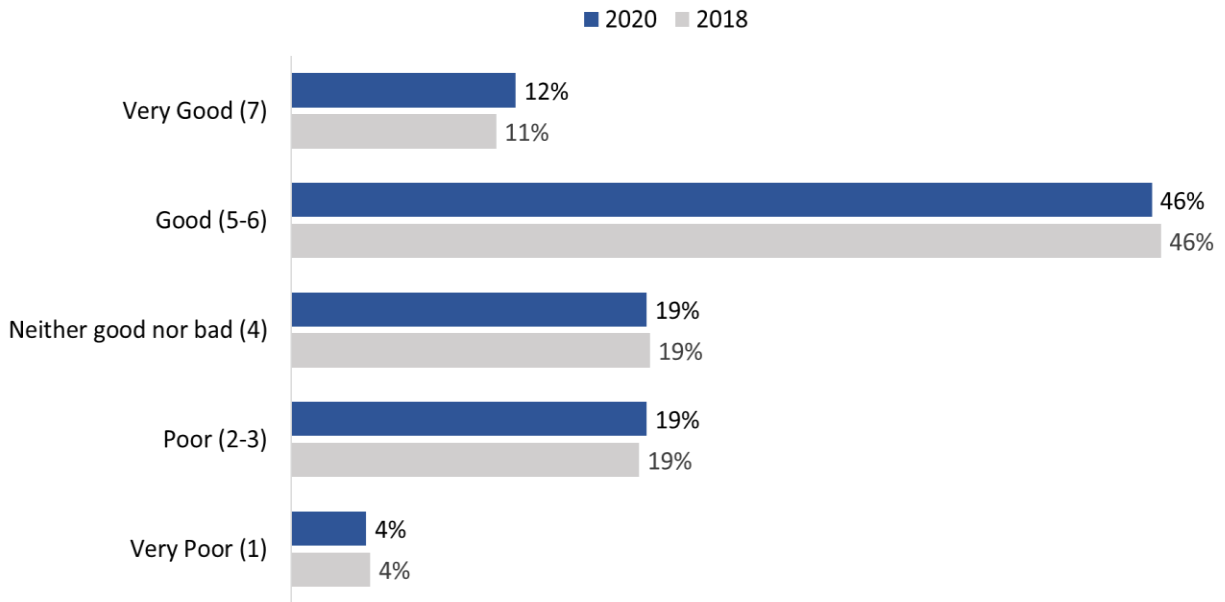
Canadians aged 55 and older (70%), as well as those aged 35 to 54 (66%), were more likely to rate their knowledge of their privacy rights as good or very good (i.e., scores of 5-7 on the 7-point scale) when compared to those aged 16 to 24 (55%) and 25-34 (54%).

<sup>1</sup> This question was modified in 2016. In previous waves, the survey question wording was: How would you rate your knowledge of your privacy rights *under the various laws protecting your personal information*? Beginning in 2016, the question was shortened to: How would you rate your knowledge of your privacy rights? This change explains, at least in part, the significantly lower ratings reported from 2009 to 2014.

**More than half of Canadians know how to protect privacy rights**

More than half (58%) of Canadians rated their knowledge of how to protect their privacy rights as good (46%) or very good (12%). In contrast, approximately one-quarter (23%) said they have poor (19%) or very poor (4%) knowledge of how to protect their privacy rights. Knowledge of how to protect privacy rights is virtually unchanged since 2018.

Figure 2: Knowledge of how to protect privacy rights



Q2. How would you rate your knowledge of how to protect your privacy rights?  
 Base in 2020: n=1,502; Don't know (1%)

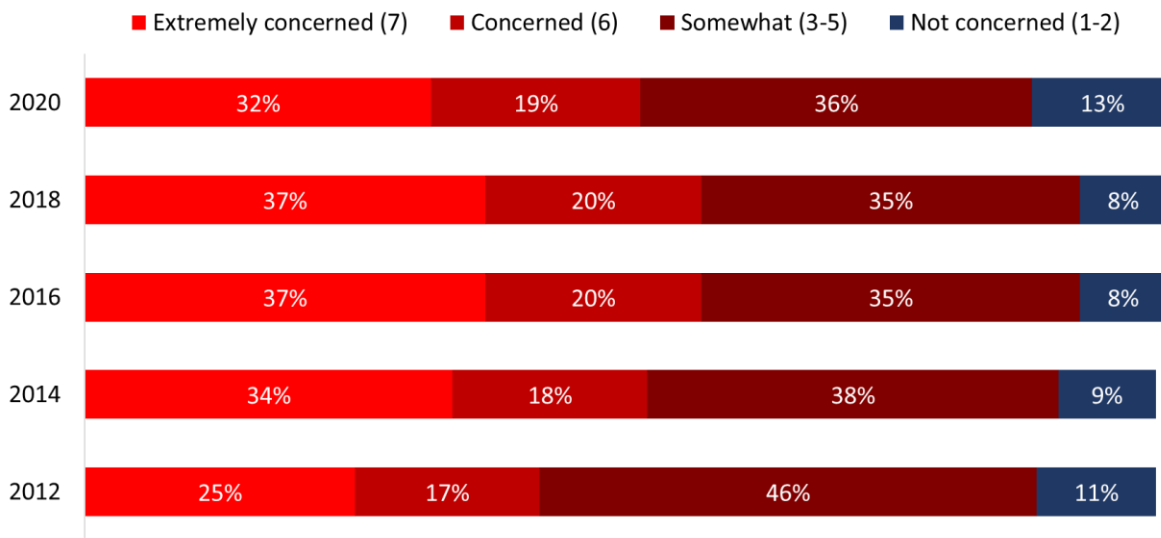
Self-assessed knowledge is significantly higher in Atlantic Canada (62%) and Ontario (60%) than it is British Columbia<sup>2</sup>, where exactly half (50%) said they have good or very good knowledge of how to protect their privacy rights (i.e., scores of 5-7 on the 7-point scale).

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of the analysis and reporting, respondents from the Yukon Territory have been included with British Columbia.

**Nearly nine in 10 Canadians express some level of concern about protecting personal privacy**

The vast majority of Canadians (87%) expressed some level of concern about the protection of their privacy (i.e., scores of 3-7 on the 7-point scale), including 32% of Canadians who said they are extremely concerned about the protection of personal privacy. Few Canadians (13%) are not concerned about protecting their privacy. These results are largely unchanged from 2018; however, the proportion of Canadians who said they are extremely concerned about the protection of their personal privacy has decreased five percent since 2018 (32% in 2020 versus 37% in 2018).

Figure 3: Concern about protection of personal privacy



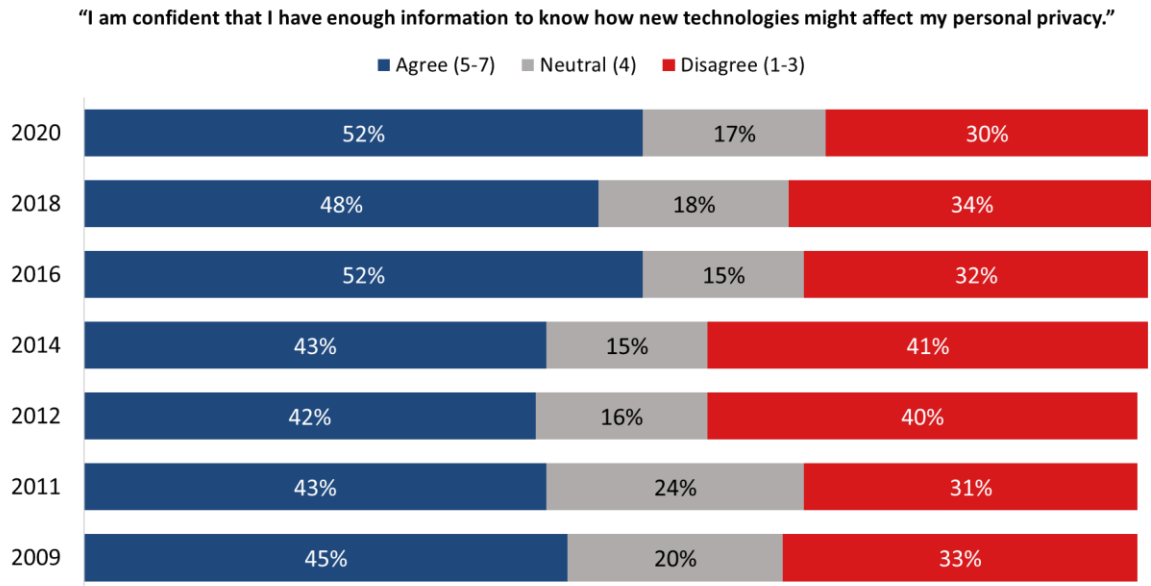
\*Q3. In general, are you concerned about the protection of your privacy? [QUESTION MODIFIED IN 2020]  
 Base in 2020: n=1,502

Canadians in Quebec (39%) were significantly more likely than Canadians in Atlantic Canada (28%), the Prairies (24%), and British Columbia (29%) to be extremely concerned (a score of 7 on the 7-point scale) about protecting their personal privacy. Additionally, the likelihood of being extremely concerned about the protection of one’s personal privacy increased with age, from 20% of 16 to 24 year olds to 38% of those aged 55+.

**Many feel confident about their knowledge on the privacy implications of new technologies**

Approximately half of Canadians (52%) said they are confident they have enough information to know how new technologies might affect their personal privacy. In contrast, almost as many (47%) said they did not have enough information about this (30% disagreed outright with this premise and 17% were neutral). This represents a slight increase since 2018 when 48% reported their agreement with the statement: “I am confident that I have enough information to know how new technologies might affect my personal privacy.”

Figure 4: Knowledge of how new technologies affect privacy



Q4c. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. To do so, use a 7-point scale, where ‘1’ means you strongly disagree and ‘7’ means you strongly agree.  
 Base in 2020: n=1,502; Don’t know (1%)

The following subgroups of Canadians were more likely to agree that they have enough information to know how new technologies might affect their personal privacy:

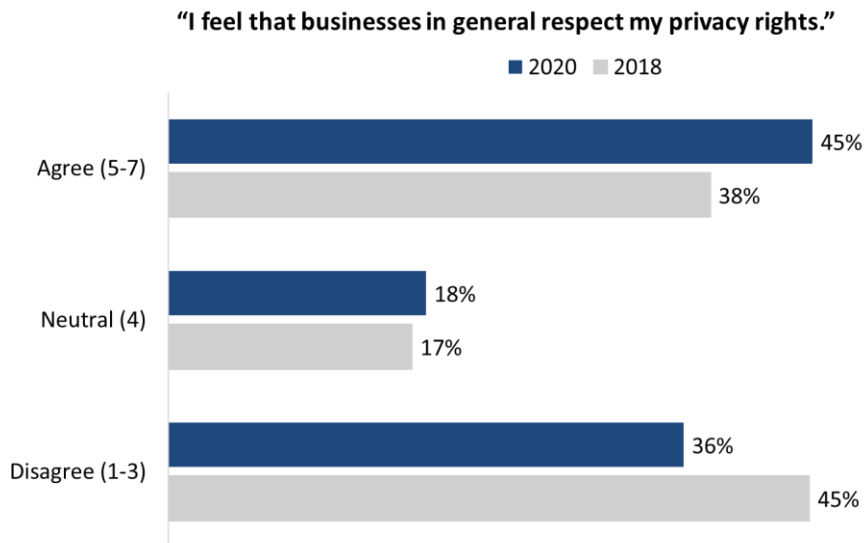
- Those who reside in Quebec (57%) compared to British Columbia (46%).
- 16 to 24 year olds (65%) and 25 to 34 year olds (59%) compared to those aged 35+ (49%).
- Men (56%) compared to women (50%).
- Those who completed college or some university (57%) or at least some high school (58%) compared to university graduates (45%).

## 2. Attitudes Towards Privacy and Related Issues

### **Significant minority are confident that businesses respect their privacy rights**

More than four in 10 Canadians (45%) believe that businesses in general respect their privacy rights. In contrast, a significant minority of Canadians (36%) disagreed with the statement, *I feel that businesses in general respect my privacy rights*. Trust in businesses protecting the privacy rights of Canadians has increased seven percent since 2018, from 38% in 2018 to 45% this year.

Figure 5: Views on whether businesses respect privacy rights



Q4a. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements, using a scale of 1 to 7.  
Base in 2020: n=1,502

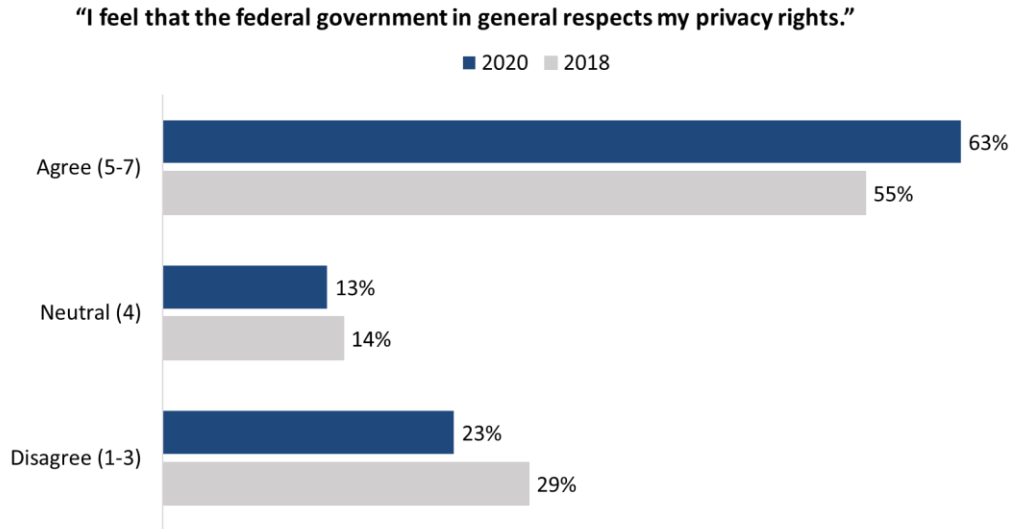
Agreement that businesses respect the privacy rights of Canadians was higher among residents of Atlantic Canada (53%) and the Prairies<sup>3</sup> (49%). Moreover, while half (50%) of women agreed that businesses respect their privacy rights, fewer men (40%) felt the same.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of the analysis and reporting, respondents from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have been included with the Prairies.

**More than six in 10 Canadians are confident that government respects their privacy rights**

More than six in 10 Canadians (63%) feel that the federal government, in general, respects their privacy rights. This represents an eight percent increase from 2018, when 55% of respondents agreed with the statement: *I feel that the federal government in general respects my privacy rights.* Just under one-quarter (23%) disagreed, indicating that they feel the federal government does not respect their privacy rights.

Figure 6: Views on whether the federal government respects privacy rights



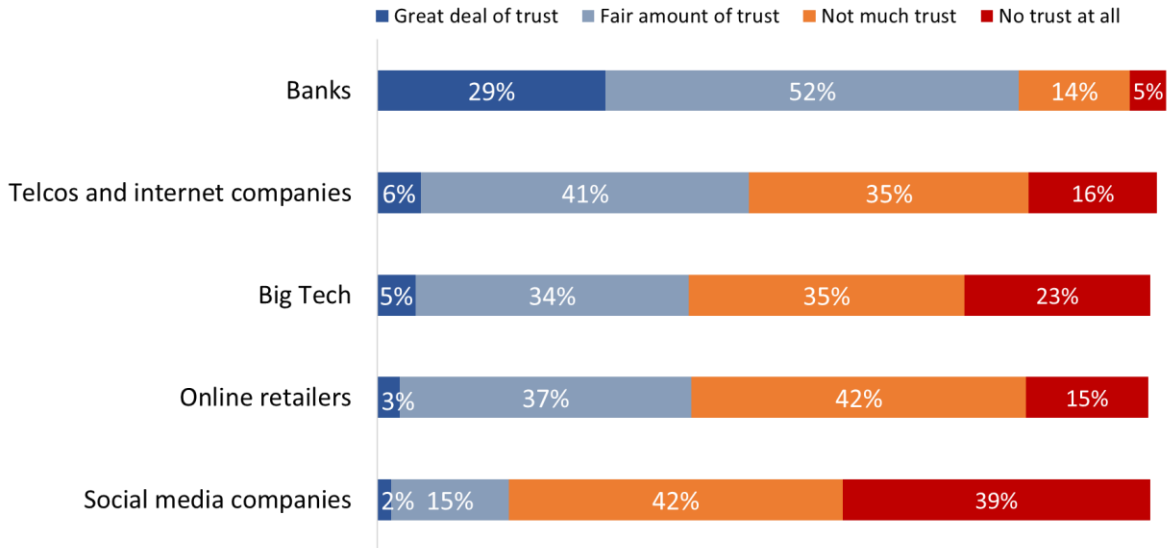
Q4b. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements, using a scale of 1 to 7.  
Base in 2020: n=1,502

The likelihood of agreeing that the federal government respects privacy rights was highest among residents of Quebec (74%) and Atlantic Canada (71%).

**Majority trust banks to protect their personal information; limited trust in other organizations**

When asked to rate their level of trust in various organizations, eight in 10 Canadians (81%) said they have at least a fair amount of trust in banks to protect the personal information they share with them.

Figure 7: Trust in different organizations to protect personal information



5. How much trust do you have in the following organizations to protect the personal information you share with them?  
 Base: n=1,502; Don't know: 2% or less

Following this, fewer than half have a fair amount (41%) or a great deal (6%) of trust in telecommunication and internet companies, while approximately four in 10 reported some level of trust in Big Tech (39%) and online retailers (40%). Canadians expressed the lowest level of trust in the ability of social media companies to protect their personal information – 2% have a great deal and 15% a fair amount of trust.

Canadians aged 16 to 24 were among those most likely to report at least a fair amount of trust in all organizations:

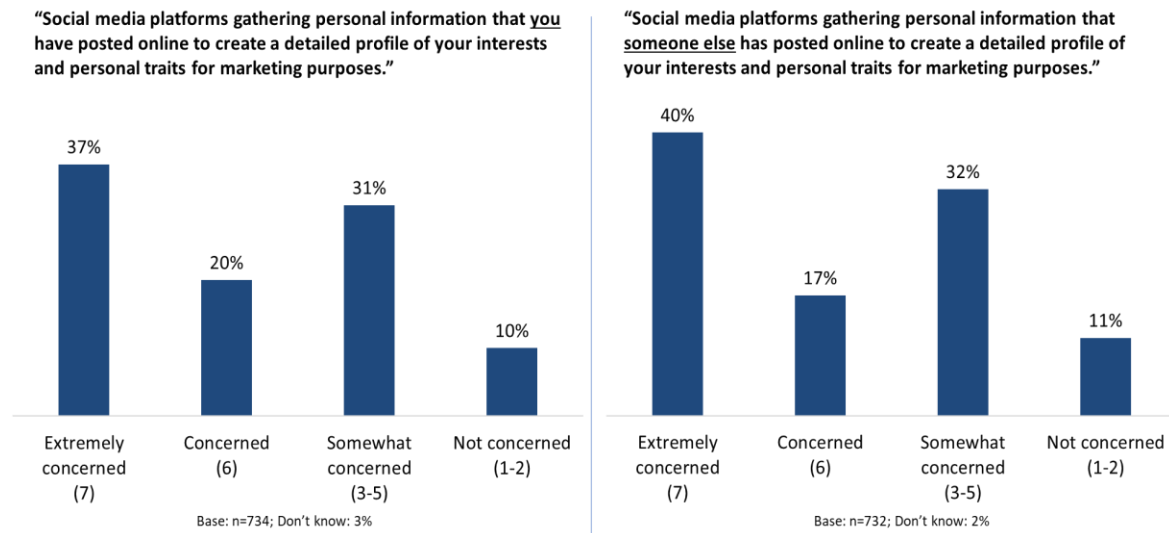
- Banks, 90%;
- Telecommunications and internet companies, 58%;
- Big Tech, 51%;
- Online retailers, 51%; and
- Social media companies, 24%.

### 3. Online and mobile privacy

#### **Most Canadians are concerned about social media platforms gathering personal information**

Nearly nine in 10 Canadians are at least somewhat concerned about social media platforms gathering personal information that they (88%) or someone else (89%) posted online to create a detailed profile of their interests and personal traits. The proportion of Canadians extremely concerned increases slightly when the personal information being gathered by social media platforms is information that someone else has posted online about them (40% versus 37%).<sup>4</sup>

Figure 8: Concern about social media platforms creating user profiles



Q6a. Thinking about the information available about you online, please tell me whether you're concerned about each of the following. To do so, I'd like you to use a 7-point scale, where '1' means you're not at all concerned and '7' means you're extremely concerned. How about social media platforms gathering personal information [SPLIT SAMPLE: that you have / someone else has] posted online to create a detailed profile of your interests and personal traits for marketing purposes.

Base: those with access to the internet/mobile device.

Canadians aged 55 and older were more likely than younger Canadians to express concern about social media platforms gathering personal information that they or someone else posted online to create a detailed profile of their interests and personal traits.

<sup>4</sup> A split sample experiment was used to measure concern about social media platforms gathering personal information. Respondents from the first split sample (n=734) were asked if they are concerned about social media platforms gathering personal information that **they** have posted online. Respondents from the second split sample (n=732) were, instead, asked if they are concerned about social media platforms gathering personal information that **someone else** has posted online.

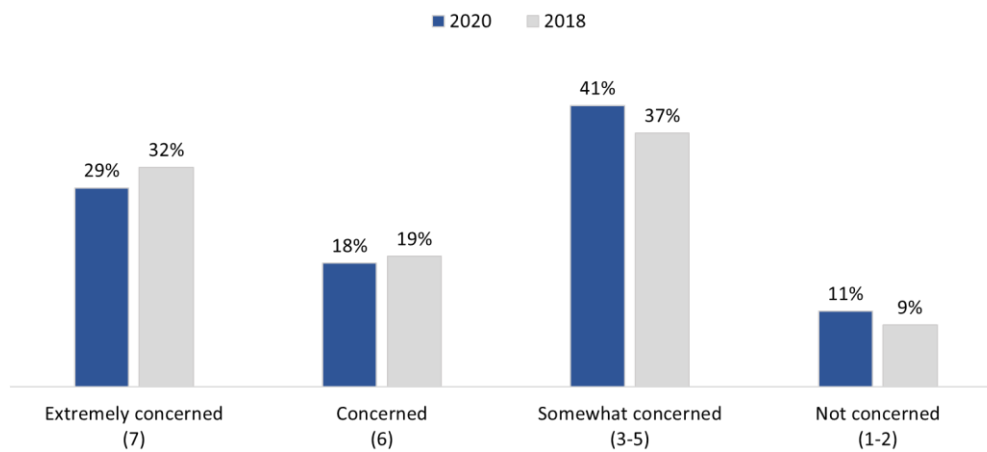


**Many Canadians are concerned about how companies and organizations use online personal information**

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of Canadians said they are at least somewhat concerned about how companies and organizations might use information available about them online to make decisions about them, such as for a job, an insurance claim or health coverage. Concern is more likely to be moderate (41%) than strong (29%), however. Compared to 2018, Canadians’ views on this issue are virtually unchanged (88% reported some level of concern, including 32% who said they are extremely concerned).

Figure 9: Concern about how companies or organizations will use online personal information

**“Companies or organizations using information available about you online to make decisions about you, such as for a job, an insurance claim or health coverage.”**



Q6b. Thinking about the information available about you online, please tell me whether you’re concerned about companies or organizations using information available about you online to make decisions about you, such as for a job, an insurance claim or health coverage. To do so, I’d like you to use a 7-point scale, where ‘1’ means you’re not at all concerned and ‘7’ means you’re extremely concerned.

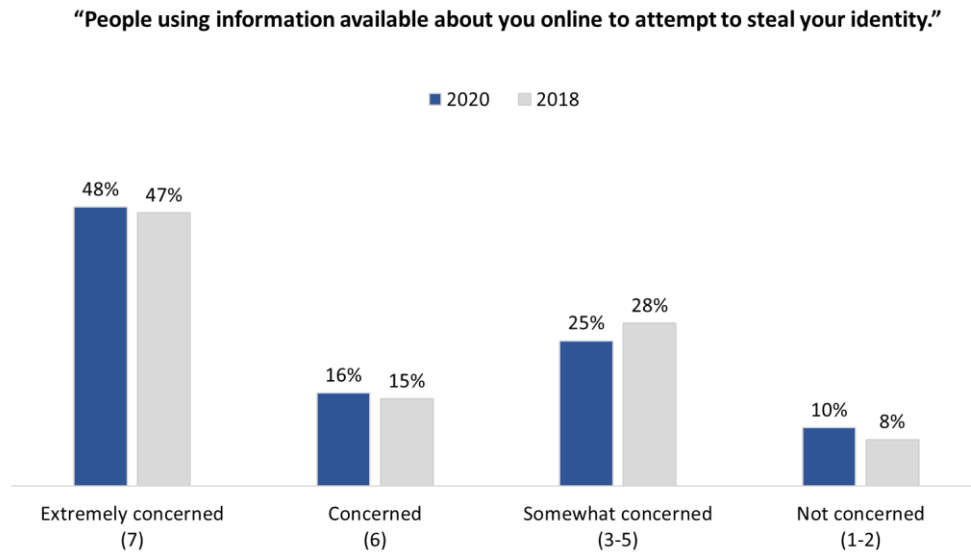
Base in 2020: n=1,466; those with access to the internet/mobile device. Don’t know: 1%

Concern about companies or organizations using personal information available about online to make decisions about Canadians, such as for a job, an insurance claim or health coverage, generally increased with age.

**Widespread concern about identity theft among Canadians**

Approximately nine in 10 Canadians (89%) expressed some level of concern about people using information available about them online to attempt to steal their identity, including almost half (48%) who said they are extremely concerned about identity theft. The proportion of Canadians concerned about identity theft has not changed since 2018.

Figure 10: Concern about identity theft



Q6c. Thinking about the information available about you online, please tell me whether you’re concerned about people using information available about you online to attempt to steal your identity? To do so, I’d like you to use a 7-point scale, where ‘1’ means you’re not at all concerned and ‘7’ means you’re extremely concerned. Base in 2020: n=1,466; those with access to the internet/mobile device. Don’t know: 1%

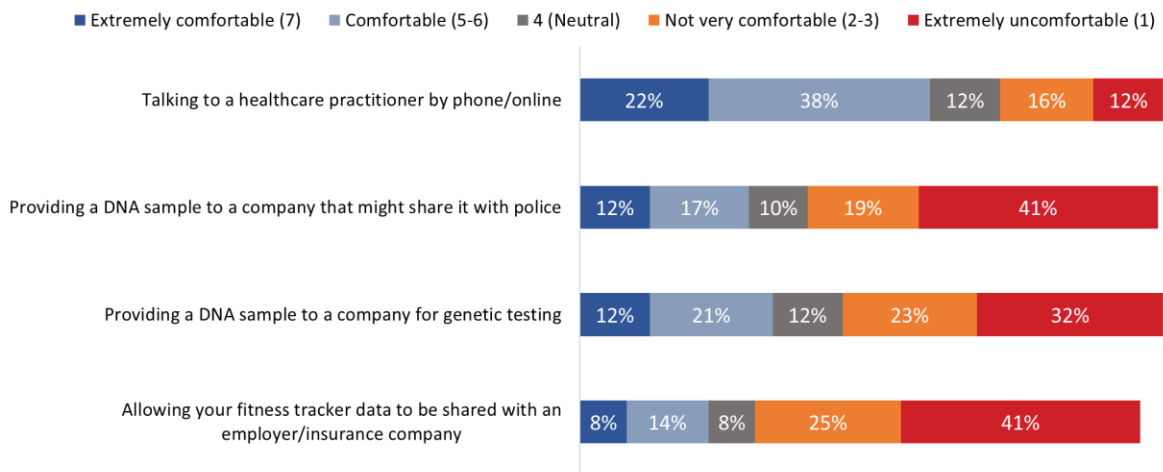
Canadians aged 55+(55%) were more likely to say they are extremely concerned about identity theft compared to those aged 16 to 24 (37%) 35 to 54 (44%) years of age. Moreover, regionally, respondents in Quebec were more likely than those who reside in other regions of the country to be extremely concerned that the information available about them online might be used to attempt to steal their identity (57% versus 40% of those in British Columbia, 44% of Atlantic Canadians, 45% of Ontarians and 48% of those in the Prairies).

## 4. Body as Information

### **Many Canadians are reluctant to share personal information about their body**

Six in 10 Canadians (60%) said they are comfortable sharing personal information about their body while talking to a healthcare practitioner by phone or online, but far fewer are comfortable sharing this same information in various other scenarios. In fact, majorities of Canadians indicated they would be uncomfortable providing a DNA sample to a company that might share it with police (60%), providing a DNA sample to a company for genetic testing (55%), and allowing their fitness tracker data to be shared with employer / insurance companies (66%).

Figure 11: Comfort sharing personal information in different scenarios



Q7. Advances in technology are making it easier to collect information about our bodies, like our fingerprints, for non-medical purposes, in addition to medical ones. Thinking about personal privacy, how comfortable are you providing information about your body in the following scenarios?

Base: n=1,502; Don't know: 2% or less

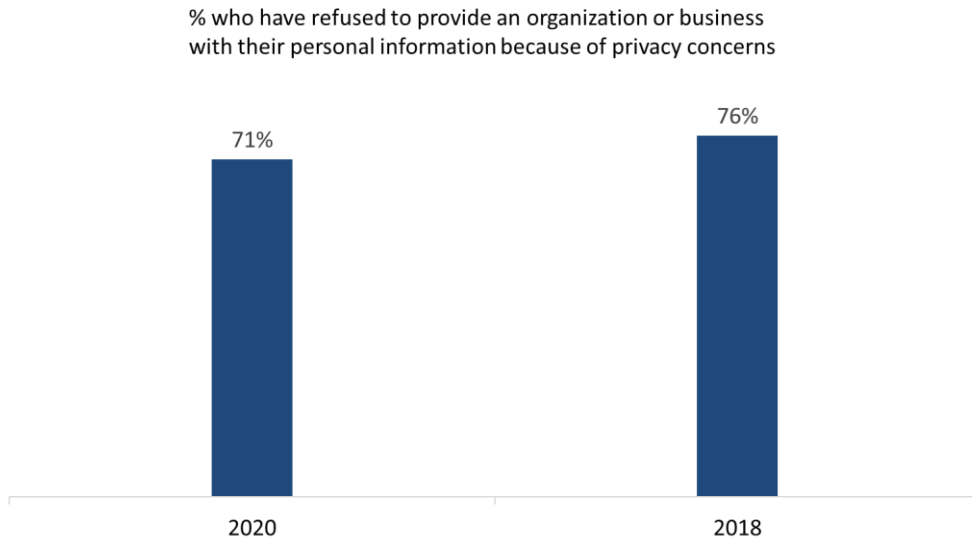
With the exception of talking to a healthcare practitioner, the likelihood of being uncomfortable with all these scenarios was higher among Canadians aged 35 and older compared to those aged 16 to 24.

## 5. Economics of Personal Information

### ***Many Canadians have refused to provide personal information due to privacy concerns***

Seven in 10 Canadians (71%; down from 76% in 2018) have refused to provide an organization or business with their personal information due to privacy concerns.

**Figure 12: Actions taken to protect privacy**



Q8d. Have you refused to provide an organization or business with your personal information because of privacy concerns?

2020 Base: n=1,484; those for whom the scenario applies.

Canadians in Ontario (78%) were more likely than Canadians who reside in the Prairies (67%) and British Columbia (64%) to have refused to provide their personal information to an organization or business because of privacy concerns. Respondents with a university degree (76%) and those aged 35 to 54 (77%) were also more likely to report having refused to provide their personal information to an organization or business.

**Nearly four in 10 provide their personal information for discounts and incentives**

Nearly four in 10 Canadians (38%) have provided their personal information for discounts or incentives on a good or service. This represents an eight percent increase since 2018 (from 30% in 2018 to 38% in 2020).<sup>5</sup>

Figure 13: Actions taken to protect privacy

% who have provided their personal information for discounts or incentives on a good or service



Q8c. Have you provided your personal information for discounts or incentives on a good or service? [QUESTION MODIFIED IN 2020]

2020 Base: n=1,485; those for whom the scenario applies.

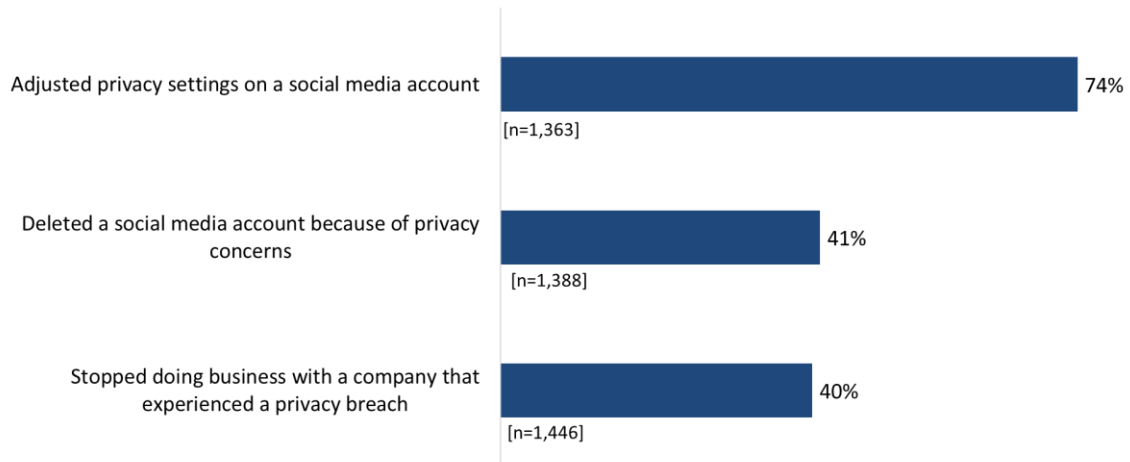
Regionally, Canadians in Ontario (44%) and the Prairies (36%) were more likely than those who reside in Quebec (29%) to have provided personal information for discounts or incentives. Moreover, willingness to provide one's personal information in exchange for discounts or incentives was lower among Canadians aged 55+ (25% versus 43% of 35 to 54 year olds, 49% of 25 to 34 year olds, and 49% of 16 to 24 year olds) and higher among university graduates (43% compared to 32% of those who completed high school or less).

<sup>5</sup> This year, the question was modified to read: Have you **provided** your personal information for discounts or incentives on a good or service? In 2018, it read: Have you **traded** your personal information for discounts or incentives on a good or service? The change in wording may be responsible, at least in part, for the change in Canadians' responses since 2018.

**Many Canadians have adjusted privacy settings on a social media account; fewer have taken other actions to protect privacy**

Three-quarters (74%) of Canadians have adjusted privacy settings on a social media account. Following this, four in 10 have deleted a social media account due to privacy concerns (41%) or stopped doing business with a company that experienced a privacy breach (40%).

Figure 14: Actions taken to protect privacy



Q8a, b, e. The following questions focus on actions you may have taken when it comes to your personal information. Have you:...

Base: those for whom the scenario applies. Don't know: 1% or less

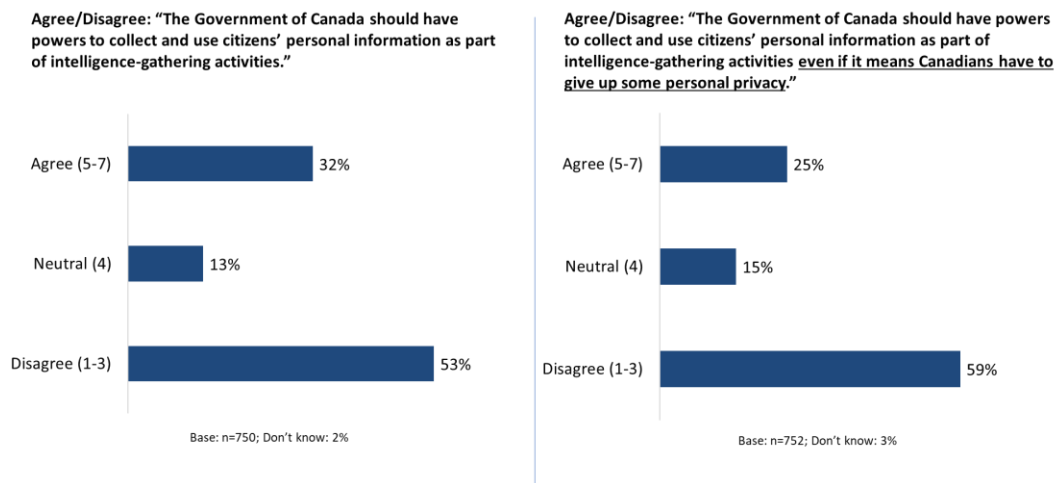
Canadians in Quebec were most likely to report having deleted a social media account due to privacy concerns (51% versus 34% of respondents from the Prairies, 35% from Atlantic Canada and British Columbia, and 41% from Ontario). Moreover, respondents in Quebec (49%) along with those in Ontario (44%) were more likely than Canadians elsewhere to say they have stopped doing business with a company that experienced a privacy breach (versus 28% of those from Atlantic Canada and British Columbia and 34% of respondents from the Prairies). The likelihood of having adjusted privacy settings on a social media account was lower among those aged 55+ (51% versus 88% of those under 35 and 84% of 35 to 54 year olds) and those who have completed high school or less (62% versus 76% of those who completed college or some university and 79% of those who graduated university).

## 6. Transparency and Consent

### **More Canadians oppose than support the Government of Canada having powers to collect and use Canadians' personal information**

One-third of Canadians (32%) support the Government of Canada having powers to collect and use personal information as part of intelligence-gathering activities. Support declines seven percent when respondents were asked if the Government of Canada should have such powers, *even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy*.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 15: Support for the Government of Canada collecting / using Canadians' personal information



Q9a. Using a 7-point scale, where '1' means strongly disagree, and '7' means strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *The Government of Canada should have powers to collect and use citizens' personal information as part of intelligence-gathering activities / ...even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy.*

Base: n=1,502; [SPLIT SAMPLES]

The following were more likely to agree that the Government of Canada should have powers to collect and use citizens' personal information for intelligence-gathering activities:

- Canadians in Quebec (42%) compared to those from the Prairies (26%) and British Columbia (26%).
- Those aged 55+ (37%) versus 16 to 24 year olds (22%) and 35 to 54 year olds (25%).
- Canadians who completed high school or less (39%) or who completed college or some university (32%) compared to university graduates (22%).

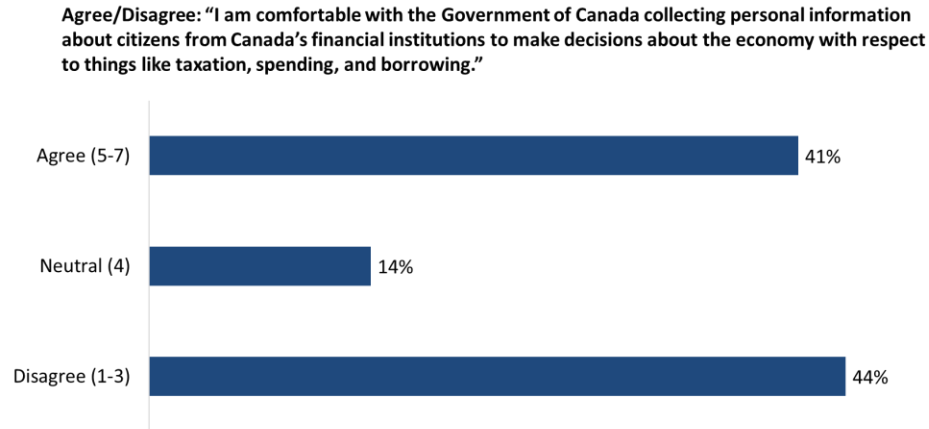
University graduates (30%) were more likely than Canadians who completed college or some university (20%) to agree that the Government of Canada should have powers to collect and use citizens' personal information for intelligence-gathering activities *even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy*.

<sup>6</sup> A split sample experiment was used to measure support for Government of Canada powers to collect and use citizens' personal information. Respondents from the first split sample (n=750) were asked if the Government of Canada should have powers to collect and use citizens' personal information as part of intelligence-gathering activities. Respondents from the second split sample (n=752) were, instead, if the Government of Canada should have powers to collect and use citizens' personal information as part of intelligence-gathering activities *even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy*.

**No consensus on the collection of personal information to inform economic decisions**

Four in 10 Canadians (41%) agreed that they would be comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting personal information about citizens from Canada’s financial institutions to make decisions about the economy with respect to things like taxation, spending, and borrowing. However, at 44%, slightly more Canadians disagreed, indicating that they would not be comfortable with this collection of their personal information.

**Figure 16: Comfort with Government of Canada collecting Canadians' personal information from financial institutions**



Q9b. Using a 7-point scale, where '1' means strongly disagree, and '7' means strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *I am comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting personal information about citizens from Canada’s financial institutions to make decisions about the economy with respect to things like taxation, spending, and borrowing.*

Base: n=1,502; Don’t know: 1%

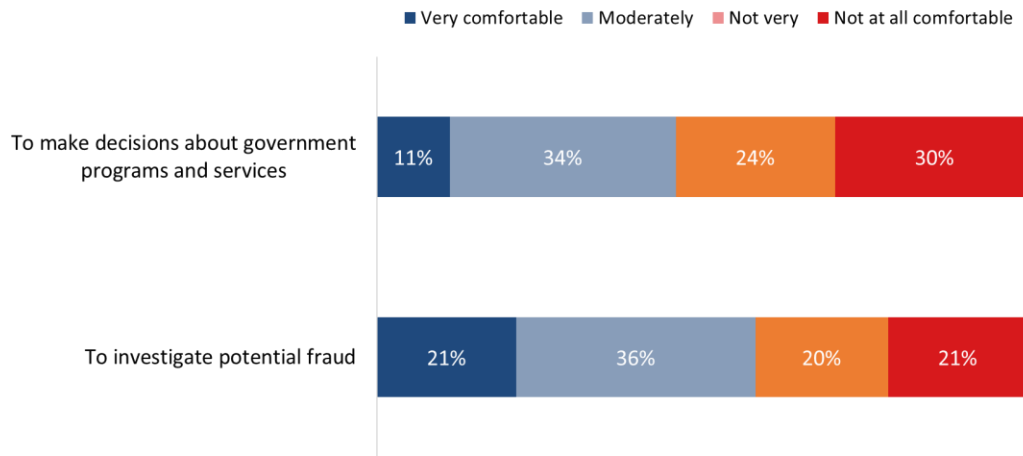
Canadians with a university degree (47%) were more likely than those who completed college or some university (35%) to say they are comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting personal information from financial institutions to inform economic decisions. Those aged 55+ (36%) compared to 35 to 54 year olds (42%) and 16 to 24 year olds (52%) were less likely to agree, as were those from the Prairies (31%) compared to Quebec (41%), Atlantic Canada (43%) and Ontario (47%).



**Many Canadians are comfortable with the collection of personal information from online sources to investigate potential fraud; fewer are comfortable with this being done to make decisions about programs and services**

More Canadians are comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting Canadians’ personal information from online sources, such as social media posts, to investigate potential fraud (57%) than to make decisions about access to government programs and services (45%). Regarding decisions about government programs and services, more Canadians—54%—are not comfortable (as opposed to comfortable) with the Government of Canada collecting their personal information from online sources for this purpose.

Figure 17: Comfort with the collection of Canadians’ personal information from online sources



Q10. Would you be comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting personal information about citizens from online sources, such as social media posts, to make decisions about government programs and services / to investigate potential fraud, such as tax evasion?

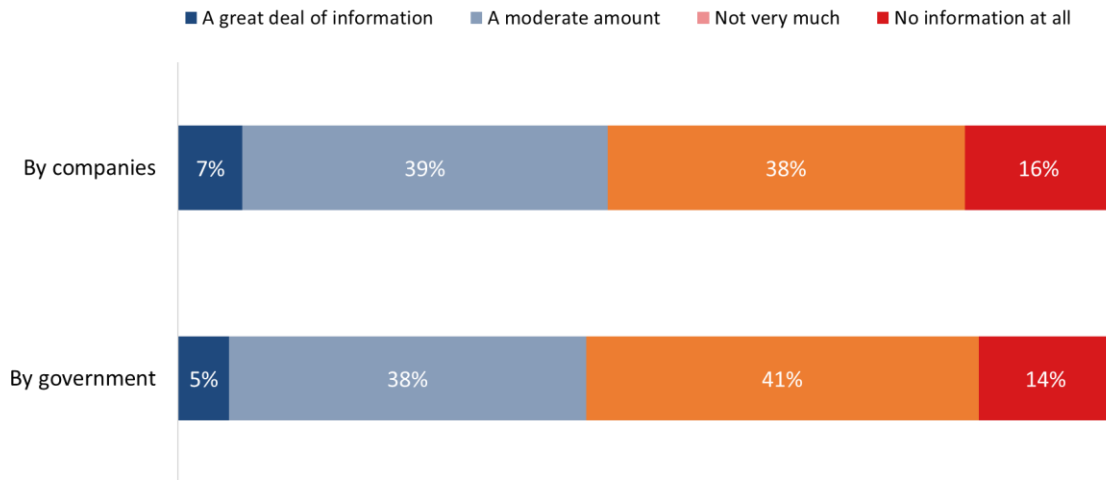
Base: n=1,502; Don't know: 1%

Nearly half of Canadians in Ontario (48%) would be comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting personal information to make decisions about government programs and services (compared to 37% of those from Atlantic Canada and 39% of those from British Columbia). In addition, 16 to 24 year olds (62%) were most likely to be comfortable with this (versus 44% of 25 to 34 year olds, 46% of 35 to 54 year olds and 38% of those aged 55+). When it comes to using this information to investigate potential fraud, Ontarians (62% compared to 51% of those from the Prairies), and Canadians 16 to 24 years of age (67% compared to 53% of those aged 55+) were more likely to have said they are comfortable with this.

**Canadians are more likely to feel uninformed about how their personal information is handled by businesses and government**

While 46% of Canadians said they feel informed about how their personal information is handled by *companies*, slightly more than half (54%) indicated they have not very much or no information at all about this. Similarly, 43% of Canadians feel informed about how *government* handles their personal information and 55% feel they are not well informed about this.

Figure 18: Extent to which Canadians feel informed about how their personal information is handled...



Q11. How much information do you feel you have about how [companies/government] handle[s] your personal information?

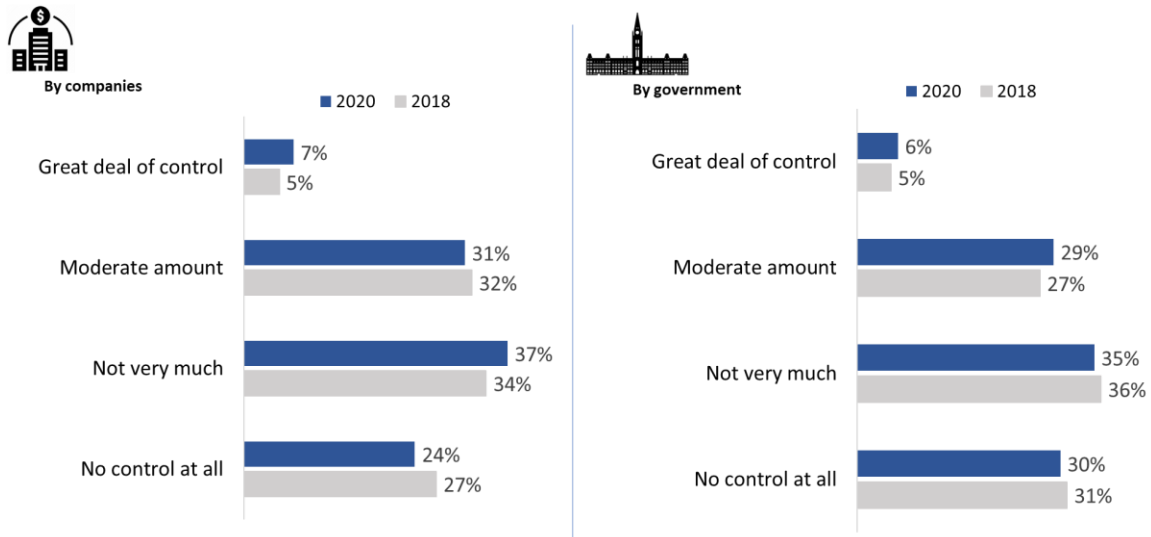
Base: n=1,502; Don't know: 1%

Those in British Columbia (32%) were least likely to have said they feel they have a moderate or great deal of information about how companies handle their personal information (versus 43% of Atlantic Canadians, 47% of Quebecers, 44% of Ontarians, and 45% of those from the Prairies). In contrast, Quebec residents (55%) were most likely to have said they are informed about how government handles their personal information (41% each of those from the Prairies and British Columbia, 43% of Ontarians and 45% of Atlantic Canadians).

**Majority feel they have little control over how their information is used by government or companies**

The majority of Canadians feel they have not very much or no control at all over how their personal information is used by companies (61%) or by government (65%). This year, views are consistent with those reported in 2018.

Figure 19: Level of control over how personal information is used



Q12. How much control do you feel you have over how your personal information is being used: by companies / by government?

Base: 2020 n=1,502; Don't know: 1%

The following groups were more likely to have said they have a great deal or a moderate amount of control over how their information is used by companies:

- Those from the Prairies (43%), Atlantic Canada (41%) and Ontario (40%) compared to those from British Columbia (26%).
- 16 to 24 year olds (53%) compared to 35 to 54 year olds (36%) and those aged 55+ (33%).
- Canadians who completed high school or less (47%) or college or some university (38%) compared to university graduates (31%).

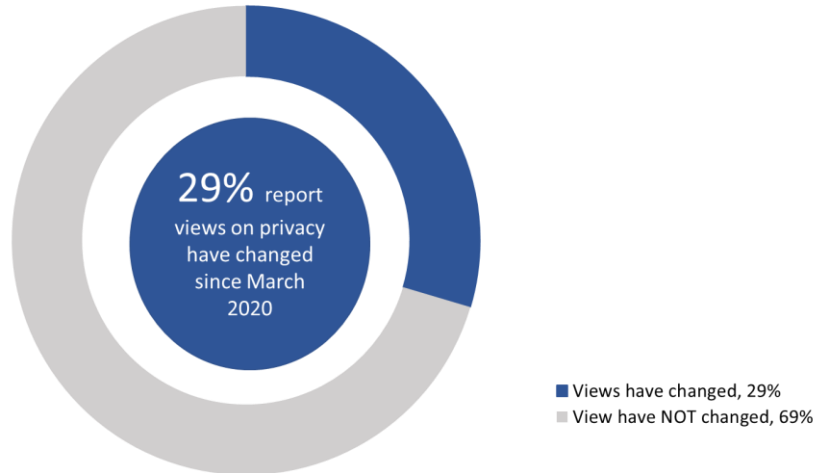
Women (38%) were more likely than men (32%) to feel they have a great deal or a moderate amount of control over how their information is used by the government.

## 7. COVID-19

### ***Most Canadians' views on privacy and the protection of their personal information have not been impacted by COVID-19***

Approximately seven in 10 (69%) Canadians said their views of privacy and the protection of their personal information have not changed in any way since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. In contrast, one in three (29%) said their views have changed since March 2020.

Figure 20: Impact of COVID-19 on views of privacy



Q13. Have your views of privacy and the protection of your personal information changed in any way since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March?

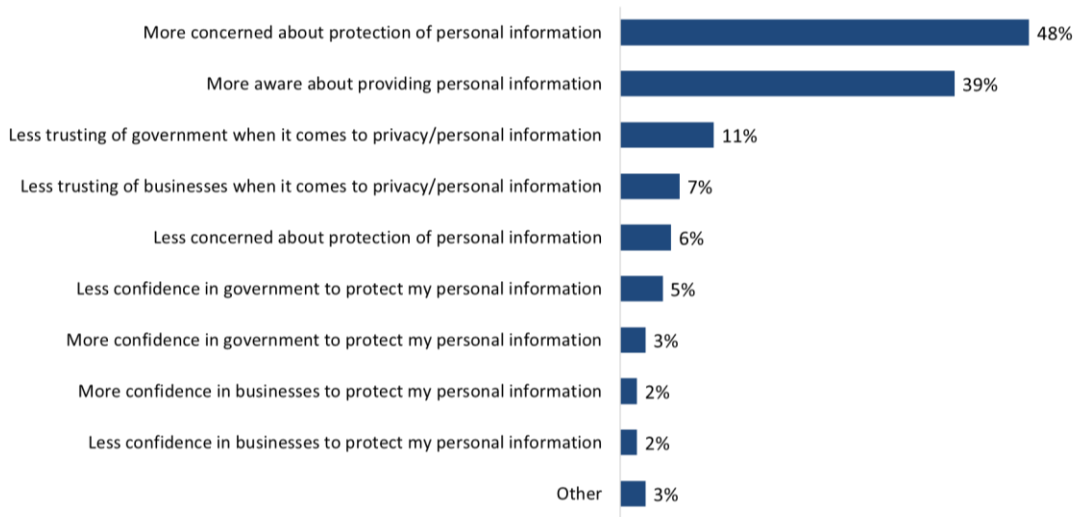
Base: n=1,502; Don't know=1%

Regionally, Quebecers (34%) were more likely to report that their views regarding the protection of their personal information have changed since the beginning of COVID-19, particularly in comparison to those in Atlantic Canada (25%), and British Columbia (25%).

**Many Canadians say they are more concerned about the protection of their personal privacy**

Among Canadians who said their views regarding the protection of their personal information have changed since COVID-19 (n=408), nearly half (48%) reported that they are more concerned about personal privacy now. Following this, 39% said they are more aware about providing personal information. One in 10 each are less trusting of government (11%) and businesses (7%) when it comes to privacy and their personal information. The full range of responses are depicted below in figure 21.

Figure 21: Ways in which privacy views have changed since the start of the pandemic



Q14. How have your views changed? [multiple responses accepted]

Base: n=408; those who said their views of privacy and the protection of personal information have changed. Don't know: 4% / Refused: 1%

Canadians in Atlantic Canada (59%) and Ontario (55%) were more likely to report being more concerned about the protection of personal information now than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, those in Quebec (49%) and the Prairies (50%) were, instead, more likely to report being more aware when providing personal information.

## Appendix

### 1. Technical Specifications

The following specifications applied to this survey:

- A 14-minute random digit dialling (RDD) telephone survey was administered to 1,502 Canadian residents, 16 years of age or older, between November 21<sup>st</sup> and December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020.
- Elemental Data Collection Inc. (EDCI) carried out data collection, under subcontract to Phoenix SPI.
- The questionnaire was pre-tested in advance of the fieldwork to ensure that it measured what it intended to measure and that respondents understood the questions.
- An overlapping dual-frame (landline and cell phone) sample was used to minimize coverage error. The same random selection process was used for both the landline and cell phone sample, thereby ensuring the integrity of the probability sample.
- The sample frame was geographically disproportionate to improve the accuracy of regional results. The distribution of completed surveys was as follows:

<b>Strata</b>	<b>Completed Interviews</b>
Atlantic	201
Quebec	351
Ontario	400
Prairies*	350
British Columbia**	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,502</b>

\*Includes Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

\*\*Includes the Yukon Territory.

- Based on a sample of this size, the overall results can be considered accurate within  $\pm 2.5\%$ , %, 19 times out of 20 (adjusted to reflect the geographically disproportionate sampling).
- The following table presents information about the final call dispositions for this survey and calculation of the response rate:

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Landline</b>	<b>Cell</b>
<b>Total Numbers Attempted</b>	89,951	48,364	41,587
<b>Out-of-scope - Invalid</b>	62,872	30,576	32,296
<b>Unresolved (U)</b>	15,072	9,785	5,287
No answer/Answering machine	15,072	9,785	5,287
<b>In-scope - Non-responding (IS)</b>	10,397	6,921	3,476
Language barrier	402	255	147
Incapable of completing (ill/deceased)	159	135	24
Callback (Respondent not available)	1,185	453	732
Refusal	8,287	5,866	2,421
Termination	364	212	152
<b>In-scope - Responding units (R)</b>	<b>1,610</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>528</b>

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Landline</b>	<b>Cell</b>
Completed Interview	1,502	1,015	487
Quota Filled	44	42	2
Not Qualified – Employment exclusions	48	25	23
Not Qualified – Age	16	0	16

- The overall response rate was 10% (10% for the landline sample and 9% for the cell phone sample). The response rate formula is calculated as follows:  $[R=R/(U+IS+R)]$ . This means that the response rate is calculated as the number of responding units [R] divided by the number of unresolved [U] numbers plus in-scope [IS] non-responding households and individuals plus responding units [R].
- The survey data have been weighted by region, age and gender using population figures from Statistics Canada's 2016 census data. The weights correct for the disproportionate regional sampling. Any respondents who refused to provide their age were given a neutral weight so as not to skew the weighting proportions. The table below shows the unweighted and weighted proportions for the variables used to create the weights:

	<b>Unweighted</b>	<b>Weighted</b>
<b>Base</b>	n=1,502	n=1,502
<b>Region</b>		
Atlantic Canada	201	101
Quebec	351	351
Ontario	400	574
Prairies*	350	271
British Columbia**	200	204
<b>Age</b>		
16 to 24	72	198
25 to 34	115	236
35 to 54	388	486
55 or older	898	552
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	705	722
Female	780	763
Another gender	5	5

\*Includes Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

\*\*Includes the Yukon Territory.

- A non-response analysis was conducted to assess the potential for non-response bias. Survey non-response can bias results when there are systematic differences between survey respondents and non-respondents. The survey sample differs from the population more significantly in terms of age (as is often the case with telephone surveys of the general population). Canadians under 35 were under-represented in the survey sample and those aged 35 and older were over-represented in the survey sample. To estimate the amount of bias introduced into the survey results, the unweighted and weighted results by age were compared for Q1: knowledge of privacy rights. The analysis indicates that the age bias had virtually no impact on the survey estimates for knowledge of privacy rights.

## 2. Survey Questionnaire

### Introduction

Hello / Bonjour (pause), the Government of Canada is conducting a research survey on issues of interest to Canadians. Would you prefer that I continue in English or French? Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais?

My name is [Interviewer's name]. I'm calling on behalf of Phoenix SPI, a public opinion research company. The survey takes less than 15 minutes and is voluntary. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. Your answers will remain anonymous, and the information you provide will be administered according to the requirements of Canada's privacy laws. May I continue?

[LANDLINE SAMPLE]

- A. We choose telephone numbers at random and then select one person from each household to be interviewed. To do this, we would like to speak to the person in your household, 16 years of age or older, who has had the most recent birthday. Would that be you?

Yes	GO TO E
No	ASK TO SPEAK TO ELIGIBLE PERSON; REPEAT INTRO

[CELL SAMPLE]

- B. Are you 16 years of age or older?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

- C. Are you in a place where you can safely talk on the phone and answer my questions?

Yes	GO TO E
No	ASK D

- D. We would like to conduct this interview with you when it is safe and convenient to do. When would it be more convenient for me to call back?

SCHEDULE CALL-BACK IF POSSIBLE (TIME/DAY): \_\_\_\_\_

[EVERYONE]

- E. Do you work in any of the following areas? [READ LIST]

Advertising or Market Research or Public Relations  
The media (i.e. TV, radio, newspapers)

THANK/DISCONTINUE IF ANY OF THE ABOVE



**THANK/DISCONTINUE MESSAGE:** “Thank you for your willingness to take part in this survey, but you do not meet the eligibility requirements of this study.”

F. In which province or territory do you live?

Newfoundland and Labrador  
Prince Edward Island  
Nova Scotia  
New Brunswick  
Quebec  
Ontario  
Manitoba  
Saskatchewan  
Alberta  
British Columbia  
Yukon  
Northwest Territories  
Nunavut

**PROGRAMMING NOTES:**

- Accept Don't know and Refused for all questions if volunteered by a respondent.
- Record Don't know and Refused separately for all questions.
- Section headings should not be read to respondents.
- Reveal the sponsor – Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada – at the end of the survey.
- For questions about the legitimacy of the survey, invite the respondents to use the Canadian Research Insights Council's Research Verification Service. PROJECT NUMBER: 20201009-PH791.

## Knowledge, Concern and General Perceptions

Many of the questions in this survey are about privacy and the protection of personal information. Personal information includes things like your name, income, and email address, as well as information like your purchasing habits and online activities.

1. How would you rate your knowledge of your privacy rights? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where '1' means very poor and '7' means very good. **[TRACKING]**
2. Using the same scale of 1 to 7, how would you rate your knowledge of how to protect your privacy rights? **[TRACKING]**
3. In general, are you concerned about the protection of your privacy? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where '1' means not concerned at all, and '7' means extremely concerned. **[TRACKING-MODIFIED]**

4. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. To do so, use a 7-point scale, where '1' means you strongly disagree and '7' means you strongly agree.  
[TRACKING]

[READ/ROTATE]

- a. I feel that businesses in general respect my privacy rights.
  - b. I feel that the federal government in general respects my privacy rights.
  - c. I am confident that I have enough information to know how new technologies might affect my personal privacy.
5. How much trust do you have in the following organizations to protect the personal information you share with them? Do you have a great deal of trust, a fair amount of trust, not much trust, or no trust at all in .... [READ/ROTATE ITEMS]? [NEW]
- a. Banks
  - b. Telecommunications and internet companies
  - c. Online retailers
  - d. Social media companies
  - e. The "big tech" companies like Microsoft, Apple and Google

## Online and Mobile Privacy

These next questions deal with issues related to online and mobile privacy.

[IF A RESPONDENT VOLUNTEERS THAT HE/SHE DOES NOT USE THE INTERNET OR HAVE A MOBILE DEVICE, RECORD THIS AND SKIP TO Q7.]

6. Thinking about the information available about you online, please tell me whether you're concerned about each of the following. To do so, I'd like you to use a 7-point scale, where '1' means you're not at all concerned and '7' means you're extremely concerned. How about...  
[TRACKING – 6a - MODIFIED]

[READ/ROTATE]

- a. Social media platforms gathering personal information [SPLIT SAMPLE: that you have / someone else has] posted online to create a detailed profile of your interests and personal traits for marketing purposes.
- b. Companies or organizations using information available about you online to make decisions about you, such as for a job, an insurance claim or health coverage.
- c. People using information available about you online to attempt to steal your identity.

## Body as Information

7. Advances in technology are making it easier to collect information about our bodies, like our fingerprints, for non-medical purposes, in addition to medical ones. Thinking about personal privacy, how comfortable are you providing information about your body in the following scenarios? Please use a 7-point scale, where '1' means you're extremely uncomfortable and '7' means you're extremely comfortable with this. **[NEW]**

[READ/ROTATE]

- a. Providing a sample of your DNA to a company to perform genetic testing to determine your likelihood for developing future health conditions.
- b. Allowing information collected by your fitness tracker to be shared with your employer or insurance provider.
- c. Providing a sample of your DNA to a DNA testing company if this company may share your genetic data with police and law enforcement agencies.
- d. Talking to a healthcare practitioner over the telephone or online about health concerns instead of during an in-person appointment.

## Economics of Personal Information

8. The following questions focus on actions you may have taken when it comes to your personal information. Have you:... ? ROTATE ITEMS; RECORD YES/NO; ACCEPT DOES NOT APPLY IF VOLUNTEERED. **[TRACKING 7c and d only -c MODIFIED]**
- a. Adjusted privacy settings on a social media account?
  - b. Deleted a social media account because of privacy concerns?
  - c. Provided your personal information for discounts or incentives on a good or service?
  - d. Refused to provide an organization or business with your personal information because of privacy concerns?
  - e. Stopped doing business with a company that experienced a privacy breach?

## Transparency and Consent

9. Using a 7-point scale, where '1' means strongly disagree, and '7' means strongly agree, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: [READ/ROTATE] **[NEW]**
- a. The Government of Canada should have powers to collect and use citizens' personal information as part of intelligence-gathering activities / [SPLIT SAMPLE: 50% TO BE READ THIS ADDITION] ...even if it means Canadians have to give up some personal privacy.
  - b. I am comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting personal information about citizens from Canada's financial institutions to make decisions about the economy with respect to things like taxation, spending, and borrowing.
10. Would you be comfortable with the Government of Canada collecting personal information about citizens from online sources, such as social media posts, [INSERT A/B ON ROTATION]? IF "COMFORTABLE", ASK: would that be moderately comfortable or very comfortable / IF "NOT

COMFORTABLE”, ASK: would that be not very comfortable or not at all comfortable? And what about INSERT B/A ON ROTATION? **[NEW]**

- a. to make decisions about government programs and services
  - b. to investigate potential fraud, such as tax evasion
11. How much information do you feel you have about how [READ ITEM/ROTATE] handle[s] your personal information? Would you say a great deal of information, a moderate amount, not very much, or no information at all? **[NEW]**
- a. companies you do business with
  - b. government
12. How much control do you feel you have over how your personal information is being used [READ ITEM/ROTATE]? Would you say a great deal of control, a moderate amount, not very much, or no control at all? **[TRACKING]**
- a. by companies you do business with?
  - b. by government?

### **COVID-19 [NEW]**

The pandemic has resulted in more daily activities, such as work, school, shopping and doctor’s visits being carried out online. I’d like to talk about privacy issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

13. Have your views of privacy and the protection of your personal information changed in any way since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March?
- Yes
  - No

IF Q13=YES, OTHERWISE GO TO Q15:

14. How have your views changed? [DO NOT READ LIST; ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES, BUT DO NOT PROBE]
- a. More concerned about protection of personal information
  - b. Less concerned about protection of personal information
  - c. More confidence in government to protect my personal information
  - d. Less confidence in government to protect my personal information
  - e. More confidence in businesses to protect my personal information
  - f. Less confidence in businesses to protect my personal information
  - g. Less trusting of government when it comes to privacy and my personal information
  - h. Less trusting of businesses when it comes to privacy and my personal information
  - i. Other: (specify)

## Demographics

The last few questions are for classification purposes only. Your answers will remain anonymous and confidential.

15. In what year were you born?

Record year: \_\_\_\_\_

[If the respondent prefers not to provide a precise birth year, ask:]

16. Would you be willing to tell me in which of the following age categories you belong? [READ]

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

or 65 or older?

[Do not read] Prefer not to answer

17. What is your gender? [READ]

Female

Male

Other - Please Specify

[Do not read] Prefer not to answer

18. What language do you speak most often at home? [READ; ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES]

English

French

Other

[Do not read] Prefer not to answer

19. What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed? [READ LIST]

Less than a High School diploma or equivalent

High School diploma or equivalent

Registered Apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma

College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma

University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level

Bachelor's degree

Postgraduate degree above bachelor's level

[DO NOT READ] Prefer not to answer

That concludes the survey. Thank you very much for your thoughtful feedback. It is much appreciated. This survey was conducted on behalf of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

**Record by observation:**

- Language of interview