



The California Privacy Initiative

A Project of Consumer Action and the Consumer Federation of America

Survey Report: Too Many Californians Are Still Unaware of Privacy Rights

The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) that took effect in January 2020 gives residents important rights concerning their personal information. Consumer Action and Consumer Federation of America, with support from the Rose Foundation, have launched the California Privacy Initiative to educate Californians about the law and encourage them to exercise their rights. As part of the project, we queried residents about their awareness of and experience with some key provisions of the CCPA.

Why are these CCPA rights important?

People are increasingly being tracked, online and offline, as they go about their daily lives. The information collected about them over time and from different sources is combined and analyzed to create profiles of their preferences, behavior, attitudes, abilities and other characteristics. These profiles can determine what offers they receive—not only for products and services but for employment, credit, housing, and other economic opportunities—and the prices or rates they pay. There are also concerns about law enforcement access to peoples' data and the risk of identity theft as vast amounts of personal information are compiled. Exercising the rights to see, delete, and stop their data from being sold helps Californians protect themselves from unwanted, unfair, and harmful uses of their personal information.

Measuring awareness of CCPA rights

Our online survey was conducted by Engine Insights from Oct. 7 to Oct. 12, 2021. We asked Californians if they had seen the notice of their privacy rights on businesses' websites they visited in the past year and whether they had asked

to see the personal information collected about them, asked to delete their information, or requested that it not be sold. The survey also asked whether businesses should be required to obtain people's consent before collecting, using, selling, or sharing their personal information for purposes other than to provide the goods or services they requested.

Who participated in the survey?

1,507 California residents 18 years of age or older participated in the survey. They had a choice of doing so in English or Spanish; 98 percent chose English, and 2 percent, Spanish. Respondents were:

- 67 percent White
- 9 percent Black
- 4 percent Native American or Alaska Native
- 10 percent Asian
- 14 percent Other

When asked "Do you consider yourself to be of Hispanic/Spanish/Latino descent," 35 percent said yes, 65 percent said no. Whites in the survey findings exclude those who identified as Hispanic.

What are the main survey findings?

Most Californians have seen the notice about their CCPA rights on businesses' websites.

More than two-thirds (69 percent) of those surveyed said they saw the notice of their rights required by the CCPA some of the time or more frequently on websites they visited in the last year. But only 14 percent said they always saw the notice and an equal number said they never saw it.

Younger, richer and more educated Californians were more likely to see the notice of their CCPA rights.

More young people said they saw the notice on businesses' websites than older people, and more people with incomes over \$100,000 or who graduated from college said they saw the notice than those with incomes of less than \$50,000 or with only a high school degree or less education.

The prominent 'Do Not Sell My Personal Information' option works.

Far more Californians said they had asked a business whose website they visited not to sell their personal information at least once (63 percent) than had asked to delete their data (47 percent) or to see the information that had been collected about them (46 percent).

The top reason why Californians did not make CCPA requests was because they did not know they could.

More than half (51 percent) said they did not ask for their personal information to be deleted because they did not know they could. Slightly fewer (48 percent) said that was the reason they didn't ask to see the information that had been collected about them or ask a business not to sell their information (42 percent).

Younger, Black and Hispanic Californians more frequently said they did not know they could make these requests than older and White people.

More survey respondents at the lower end of the income and educational scales also gave that reason for not making these requests.

More White people said they did not make these requests because they did not think it was necessary than Blacks and Hispanics.

Richer, older and higher-educated Californians were also more likely to say they did not make these

requests because they did not think it was necessary.

Some found making these requests too complicated.

For instance, 12 percent of survey respondents age 18-34 said they did not ask to see the pieces of information collected about them because it was too complicated, compared to 5 percent of those age 65 and older. This was also more of a problem for Blacks and Hispanics than for Whites.

The other reasons why Californians are not making these requests should be explored.

More than 10 percent of the survey respondents chose "none of these" when presented with a list of reasons why they did not make these requests (11 percent of those who did not ask to see their data, 16 percent of those who did not ask a business not to sell their data, and 13 percent of those who did not ask to delete their data).

Californians who made CCPA requests were not entirely satisfied with businesses' responses.

Of those who asked to see or delete their data, 73 percent were very or somewhat satisfied with the responses; 71 percent of those who asked for their data not be sold were very or somewhat satisfied with the responses. More than a quarter were not too satisfied or not satisfied at all.

Californians overwhelmingly favor data minimization.

Nine out of 10 survey respondents said that businesses should be required to get their permission if they want to collect, use or share their personal information for any purpose other than to provide the product or service they requested.

What are the takeaways for California policymakers?

Too many Californians are still unaware of important rights under the CCPA. The ability to see and delete their personal information should be as prominent and easy to act on as their right to ask businesses not to sell their data. The new California Privacy Protection Agency should explore the reasons why some people have not exercised these rights, and why those who have were not entirely satisfied with businesses' re-

sponses. More educational outreach is needed, especially to young people and minority communities. Californians clearly want more limits on the information businesses can collect about them and its use beyond what is necessary to fulfill

their requests. The “notice and opt-out” model places too much of a burden on individuals to understand businesses’ data practices and take action.

Detailed Survey Findings

How often did people see the notices about their California privacy rights on businesses’ websites?

Companies that do business in California, online and offline, must provide notice of Californians’ rights under the CCPA. Focusing on the online context, the survey asked how often people had seen that notice when visiting businesses’ websites in the last year:

- 14 percent said they always saw the notice of Californians’ privacy rights
- 29 percent said they saw the notice most of the time
- 26 percent said they saw the notice some of the time
- 17 percent said they did not see the notice very often
- 14 percent said they never saw the notice

Were there any major demographic differences?

Generally, more young and middle-aged people said they saw the notice of Californians’ privacy rights on businesses’ websites than older people.

- 17 percent of those age 18-34, 20 percent age 35-44, and 14 percent age 44-55 said they always saw these notices, compared to 8 percent age 55-64 and 6 percent age 65 and over
- Only 10 percent of those age 18-34 said they never saw the notice, compared to 24 percent age 65 and over

People with higher incomes were most likely to have seen the notice.

- 75 percent of those who make \$100,000 or more said they saw the notice some of the time or more frequently, compared to 64 percent

who make \$50,000 or less

- Of those in the \$50,000 or less income bracket, 17 percent said they never saw the notice, compared to 11 percent in the \$100,000 and over income bracket

There were no significant differences between White, Black and Hispanic survey respondents on this question. Those with higher levels of education said they saw the notice more frequently than those at the lower end of the educational scale, however.

- 75 percent of college grads said they saw it some of the time or more frequently, compared to 66 percent of those with a high school degree or less
- 19 percent of those with a high school degree or less said they never saw it, compared to 10 percent of those with college degrees

How often did people exercise their rights to see the personal information collected about them, delete it, or tell the business not to sell it?

When asked how many times survey respondents had asked a business whose website they visited in the last year what specific pieces of personal information it had collected about them:

- 17 percent said they asked to see the information collected about them once
- 29 percent said they asked to see the information collected about them more than once
- 54 percent said they never asked to see the information collected about them

The results were nearly the same when asked how many times they asked a business whose website they visited in the last year to delete their personal information:

- 18 percent said they asked to delete their personal information once
- 29 percent said they asked to delete their personal information more than once
- 53 percent said they never asked to delete their personal information

Far more, however, had asked a business whose website they visited in the last year not to sell their personal information:

- 15 percent said they asked for their personal information not to be sold once
- 48 percent said they asked for their personal information not to be sold more than once
- 36 percent said they never asked for their personal information not to be sold

Why didn't people make these requests?

Survey respondents who did not make these requests were asked to choose from three reasons why, or indicate that it was none of those reasons. For each type of request (to see what specific pieces of personal information were collected about them, to delete their personal information, or to ask not to sell their personal information), not knowing they could was the top reason why people did not make them:

- 51 percent of those who did not request that their personal information be deleted said it was because they did not know they could
- 48 percent of those who did not ask what personal information had been collected about them said it was because they did not know they could
- 42 percent of those who did not ask a business not to sell their personal information said it was because they did not know they could

The fact that the CCPA requires businesses to provide a clear and conspicuous "Do Not Sell My Personal Information" link on their websites may account for why fewer survey respondents gave "I did not know I could" as the reason for not making that request than for not asking to see or delete their information.

Were there any major demographic differences?

More young people gave not knowing as the reason they did not make these requests than older people:

- 56 percent of those age 18-34 said they did not ask for their information to be deleted because they did not know they could, compared to 49 percent of those age 65 and older
- 50 percent of those age 18-34 said they did not ask to see their information because they did not know they could, compared with 44 percent of those age 65 and older
- 44 percent of those age 18-34 said they did not ask a business not to sell their information because they did not know they could, compared to 38 percent of those age 65 and older

Slightly more Black and Hispanic survey respondents gave "I did not know I could" as the reason they did not make these requests than Whites. For example:

- 44 percent of Whites said the reason they did not ask to see their data was because they did not know they could, compared to 48 percent of Blacks and 49 percent of Hispanics
- 47 percent of Whites said the reason they did not ask to delete their data was because they did not know they could, compared to 51 percent of Blacks and 54 percent of Hispanics
- 36 percent of Whites said they did not ask a business not to sell their data was because they did not know they could, compared with 37 percent of Blacks and 44 percent of Hispanics

There were some starker differences, however, among those who said the reason they did not make such requests was because they did not think it was necessary:

- 38 percent of Whites said they did not ask to see the personal information that had been collected about them because they did not think it was necessary, compared to 39 percent of Blacks and 25 percent of Hispanics
- 36 percent of Whites said they did not ask for their information to be deleted because they did not think it was necessary, compared to 28

percent of Blacks and 22 percent of Hispanics

- 45 percent of Whites said they did not ask a business not to sell their personal information because they did not think it was necessary, compared to 30 percent of Blacks and 24 percent of Hispanics

The number of older people who said they did not make these requests because they didn't think it was necessary was significantly higher than the number of younger people:

- 47 percent of those age 65 and older did not think it was necessary to ask the businesses not to sell their personal information, compared to 21 percent of those age 18-34

- 43 percent of those age 65 and older did not feel it was necessary to see the information collected about them, compared to 25 percent of those age 18-34

- 38 percent of those age 65 and older did not think it was necessary to ask to delete their data, compared to 20 percent of those age 18-34

Income was sometimes a factor in why survey respondents didn't make such requests. For instance:

- 46 percent of survey respondents with incomes of less than \$50,000 said they did not ask a business not to sell their personal information because they did not know they could, compared to 36 of those with incomes of \$100,000 or more

- 29 percent of those with incomes of less than \$50,000 said they did not ask a business not to sell their personal information because they did not think it was necessary, compared to 43 percent with incomes of \$100,000 or more

There were some demographic differences among those who said they tried to make these requests but it was too complicated. For example:

- 12 percent of those age 18-34 said they did not ask to see the pieces of information collected about them because it was too complicated, compared to 5 percent of those age 65 and older

- Only 5 percent of Whites said they did not ask a business not to sell their data because it was too complicated, compared to 15 percent of Blacks and 14 percent of Hispanics

Survey respondents at the low end of the educational scale (high school degrees or less) were less likely to know they could make these requests than those who had graduated from college. For instance:

- 52 percent of those with high school degrees or less said they did not ask to delete their data because they did not know they could, compared to 47 percent of college grads

- 49 percent of those with high school degrees or less said they did not ask to see their data because they did not know they could, compared to 42 percent of college grads

- 43 percent of those with high school degrees or less said they did not ask a business not to sell their data because they did not know they could, compared to 34 percent of college grads

College grads were more likely to say they did not make these requests because they did not feel it was necessary than those at the lowest end of the educational scale:

- 39 percent of college grads said they did not ask to see the personal information collected about them because they did not think it was necessary, compared to 27 percent of those with high school degrees or less

- 42 percent of college grads said they did not ask a business not to sell the data because they did not think it was necessary, compared to 27 percent of those with high school degrees or less

- 36 percent of college grads said they did not ask to delete their data because they did not think it was necessary, compared to 23 percent of those with a high school degree or less

There were a number of survey respondents who chose "none of these" as the reason why they did not make these requests (11 percent of those who did not ask to see their data, 16 percent of those who did not ask a business not to sell their data, and 13 percent of those who did not ask to delete their data). We did not have sufficient

funding to probe this further in the survey or via focus groups. It might be useful for the new California Privacy Protection Agency to explore this question.

How satisfied were people who made these requests with businesses' responses?

Survey respondents who made these requests were not entirely satisfied with businesses' responses:

- 30 percent were very satisfied, and 43 percent were somewhat satisfied, with businesses' responses to their requests to delete their data, but 28 percent were not too satisfied or not satisfied at all
- 27 percent were very satisfied, and 46 percent were somewhat satisfied, with businesses' responses to their requests to see the information that was collected about them, but 27 percent were not too satisfied or not satisfied at all
- 25 percent were very satisfied, and 46 percent were somewhat satisfied, with businesses' responses to their requests not to sell their data, but 29 percent were not too satisfied or not satisfied at all

We do not know why more than a quarter of people who made these request were not satisfied with the businesses' responses; this is another question that the California Privacy Protection Agency may want to explore.

Were there any major demographic differences?

More younger people were satisfied with the businesses' responses than older people (for example, 30 percent age 18-34 were very satisfied with the responses to their requests to see the data that had been collected about them, compared to 21 percent of those 65 and over). There were no significant differences by income, race, or education.

Should businesses ask before collecting, using or sharing people's data for secondary purposes?

Nine out of 10 survey respondents said that businesses should be required to get their permission if they want to collect, use or share their personal information for any purpose other than to provide them with the product or service they requested. This principle, often referred to as "data minimization," was overwhelmingly popular across all demographics. There were some variations:

- 96 percent of those age 65 and older agreed, compared to 88 percent of those age 18-34
- 93 percent of Whites agreed, compared to 85 percent of Blacks and 89 percent of Hispanics
- 93 percent of college grads agreed, compared to 85 of those with high school degrees or less
- 93 percent of those with incomes over \$100,000 agreed, compared to 88 percent of those with incomes of less than \$50,000

[Click here](#) to view charts illustrating the major survey findings. [Click here](#) to view the survey questions.

Consumer Action

www.consumer-action.org

Through education and advocacy, Consumer Action fights for strong consumer rights and policies that promote fairness and financial prosperity for underrepresented consumers nationwide.

Consumer Federation of America

www.consumerfed.org

The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) is an association of non-profit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education.

© 2022