

# Public opinion polling among EU citizens

Focaldata research for ECNL

## Methodology Overview

The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL) commissioned Focaldata to run a poll in 12 European Union (EU) member states. The countries that the polls were conducted in were: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. ECNL commissioned the poll to understand the opinion of citizens on the introduction of the national security exemption into the proposed European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act).

A nationally representative population sample of 500 was surveyed in each country, which resulted in 6,105 participants in total.

Focaldata is a research data platform that combines sampling, scripting, fieldwork and data processing into a single intuitive tool.

Focaldata is a registered member of the British Polling Council (BPC) and Market Research Society (MRS).

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## Overview of findings

- Over half of adults are concerned about the use of AI in national security/defence.
- A clear majority of adults in the 12 EU member states included in the study thought that, regarding the use of AI for national security purposes, governments should **always respect the rights of all** individuals and groups.
- **Nearly two-thirds of** adults would feel concerned if another EU country they were travelling to had **fewer protections of their rights and freedoms** when it comes to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by secret services.

## Detailed summary of findings

### Over half are concerned about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in National Security and Defence

The top 3 areas people were most concerned about were:

1. Banking/Insurance/Credit Scoring - **56%** were concerned.
2. National Security/Defence - **55%** were concerned.
3. Social Media/Internet use tracking - **54%** were concerned.

### The majority agreed that the government's use of AI for national security purposes should ensure the rights of individuals and groups.

EU nationals from 12 states were asked to agree with one of two statements in response to the following: "**When the government uses artificial intelligence (AI) for national security purposes, it:**"

**Should always** ensure that rights of all individuals and groups are respected. **7 in 10** (70%) **agreed**.

**Spain** was the most in agreement with this statement, with over **8 in 10** (82%) agreeing.

**Older generations** more often thought that, regarding the use of AI for national security purposes, governments **should always respect the rights** of all individuals and groups.

Three-quarters, (74%) of people aged 65+ thought this, compared to two-thirds (66%) of 18-24 year olds.

### Most are uncomfortable regarding use of facial recognition technology in public spaces

**Half of people** (49%) are uncomfortable with the use of AI in public spaces.

Notably, **three-quarters** (74%) of **Polish adults** said they were **uncomfortable** about the premise. **One-fifth** (20%) said they were comfortable.

By contrast only **two-fifths** (42%) of Belgian adults were **uncomfortable**, with **half** (51%) saying they were **comfortable**.

## Majority are concerned about AI laws differing across EU States

**Two-thirds** of adults (65%) were **'concerned'** about another EU country potentially having fewer protections of their rights and freedoms when it came to the use of AI by secret services. Only **one-fifth** (21%) of adults **wouldn't be concerned**.

There was a consensus of opinion across age groups.

**Spanish** adults were the **most concerned** (74%), **Finnish** adults were the **least** (57%).

## Four-fifths of adults want access to how and when AI is assessing behaviour of the public

**Over four in five people** (82%) thought that it was important to be informed if AI is being used.

**Four in five people** (79%) thought it was important that they should have access to information about how the AI system works if it is used.