

FREE, EASY AND SECURE

What consumers expect from the digital euro

Findings from a 10-country consumer survey on digital payments



Acknowledgements

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We also wish to thank the consumer organisations which contributed to the survey: Altroconsumo, Arbeiterkammer (AK), Asociación de Usuarios Financieros (ASUFIN) Consumentenbond, Deco Proteste, EKPIZO, Federación de Consumidores y Usuarios (CECU), KEPKA, Organización de consumidores y Usuarios (OCU), Testachats, UFC – Que Choisir, Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband (vzbv), and Zveza potrošnikov Slovenije (ZPS).

¹ Gathering five national consumer organisations and giving voice to a total of more than 1.5 million people in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Brazil, Euroconsumers is the world's leading consumer cluster in innovative information, personalised services and defence of consumer rights. Its European member organisations are part of the umbrella network of BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation. Together they advocate for EU policies that benefit consumers in their daily lives.

IN A NUTSHELL

58% of adults and 49% of teens have heard about the digital euro, but only **11%** and **9%** respectively feel informed about it. However, consumers have clear views on what digital payment methods should offer them.



More than half of the surveyed European consumers consider that the most important aspects of *existing* digital payment methods are ease of use (**58%**) and safety (**56%**). Low or no commission (**34%**), privacy (**33%**) and quick checkout processes (**32%**) also rank highly.

If a *new* digital payment method was introduced, consumers say it should be secure and reliable (**55%**), easy to use (**53%**), and with very low or no fees (**49%**).

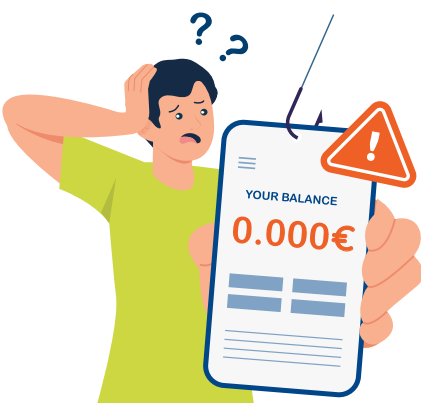
It should also grant the possibility to easily get a refund in case of fraud or scams (**44%**), ensure privacy of personal data (**42%**) and be universally accepted (**36%**).

Over half of respondents (55%) who use digital payment methods have experienced some difficulties – from technical errors to security concerns or lack of skills. In parallel, **46%** of teens and **39%** of adults have helped a friend or family member make a digital payment.



22% of adults and 18% of teens

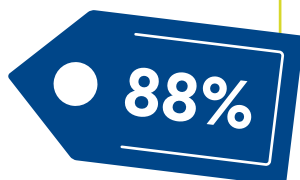
report being victims of a security breach or fraud related to a digital payment in the last five years.



Nearly half of teen users (**47%**) and **42%** of adults are comfortable sharing personal data for fraud prevention and anti-money laundering checks, but willingness to share data for commercial purposes is much lower and declines with age.

81% of adults and 72% of teens are at least somewhat concerned about privacy violations.

Most respondents believe that paying digitally should be free of charge for consumers (**87%**). Additionally, **85%** believe that every consumer should have access to a free basic bank account and **88%** believe that every bank account should offer a payment card free of charge.



Support for keeping cash widely accepted remains very strong (85%), and **46%** of teens and **52%** of adults fear losing the option to choose between payment methods in the future.



WHY THIS SURVEY?

The digital euro, if issued by the European Central Bank (ECB), would offer a public digital payment method² for the euro area, alongside physical cash. As EU policymakers and the ECB continue developing its design, this survey aims to inform about consumer preferences related to digital payments across Europe.

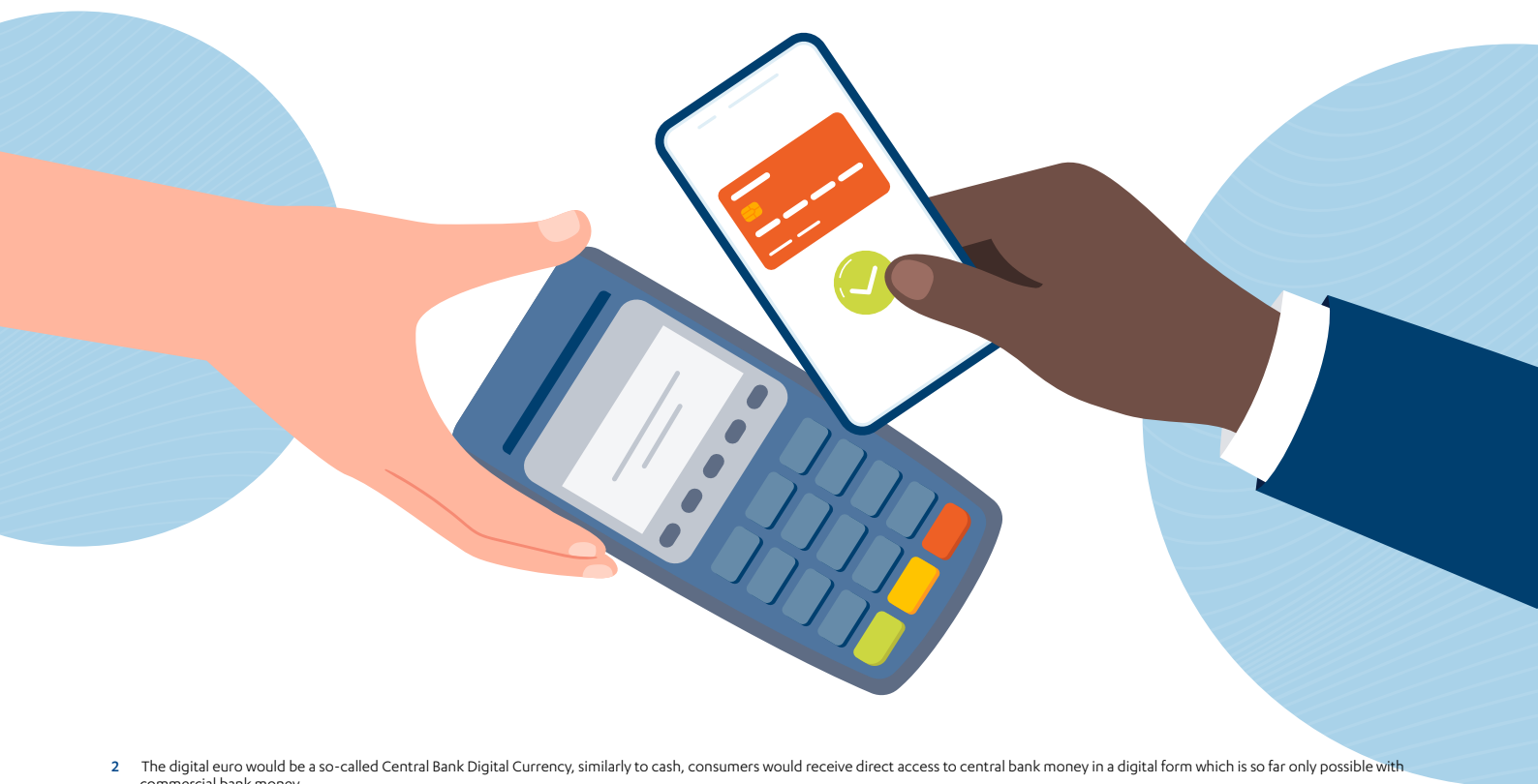
To ensure the digital euro is successful, it has to be an attractive new payment option, that addresses consumers' preferences and concerns when paying digitally. Existing studies, such as the [ECB's Study on the Payment Attitudes of Consumers in the Euro area](#), already identify key factors that would persuade consumers to try new payment solutions: higher security standards, ease of use, lower cost, more privacy, and speed.

However, more detailed evidence is needed to understand how consumers experience digital payments today, and what they expect from a new payment option. This BEUC survey aims to provide more in-depth insight, quantifying the importance to consumers of the potential characteristics and features of a digital currency to inform the design of the digital euro.

Covering 10 euro area countries,³ the survey results explore what consumers value most in digital payments and the barriers they face. The findings are segmented by a combination of socio-demographic characteristics – with a focus on age and gender – offering insights into the behaviours and expectations of different groups. It also includes a special focus on young consumers aged 14–17, who are highly digitalised and likely to be early adopters of a digital euro, yet whose views have not received as much attention in existing research.

To avoid bias in the responses, the survey asked about digital payments more broadly – rather than directly about the hypothetical preferences for the digital euro – given the complexity and novelty of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and a relatively low level of awareness and information among consumers.

Covering 10 euro area countries, the survey results explore what consumers value most in digital payments and the barriers they face



² The digital euro would be a so-called Central Bank Digital Currency, similarly to cash, consumers would receive direct access to central bank money in a digital form which is so far only possible with commercial bank money.

³ The survey was conducted in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the Netherlands.

METHODOLOGY

This survey is a joint effort from BEUC (The European Consumer Organisation), Euroconsumers, ICRT (International Consumer Research & Testing), and 13 consumer organisations: Altroconsumo (IT), Arbeiterkammer (AT), ASUFIN (ES), CECU (ES), Consumentenbond (NL), DECO PROteste (PT), EKPIZO (GR), KEPKA (GR), OCU (ES), Testachats (BE), UFC – Que Choisir (FR), vzbv (DE), and ZPS (SI).

An English language questionnaire was developed by Euroconsumers and BEUC, then translated and adapted to the national contexts of 10 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the Netherlands.

The fieldwork was carried out in parallel in the 10 countries between 20 May 2025 and 6 June 2025. The data, which was collected via an online questionnaire, was analysed by Euroconsumers. In every country, around 1,000 responses were collected, with a total of 10,227 valid responses (8,688 adults and 1,539 teens) addressing a sample of the population aged 14–74.

For each country, the sample was a priori stratified, and a posteriori weighted to reflect the national distributions (aged 14–74) in terms of age, gender, region and educational level. An additional weighting procedure was applied to round the sample sizes to 1,000 (150 teens and 850 adults), to ensure the same contribution of each country to the average (EU) value.



MAIN TAKEAWAYS



The main takeaways offer first an overview about how consumers rank key features in terms of importance for a new digital payment method before giving some highlights on the preferences related to the five most important key features. The main takeaways are completed by a special focus on young consumers and their preferences and a section on consumer preferences related to cash.

What matters most to consumers in a new payment method

Consumers find it most important that a new digital payment method is (in order of importance): 1) secure and reliable, 2) easy to use, 3) has low or no fees, 4) provides the ability to get a refund in case of fraud or scams 5) protects privacy and 6) universally accepted (see Figure 1).⁴

Adults and teens give similar answers, with security and reliability and ease of use as top priorities. Among all age groups, older adults (55–74) rank these

features the highest (59% and 58% respectively).

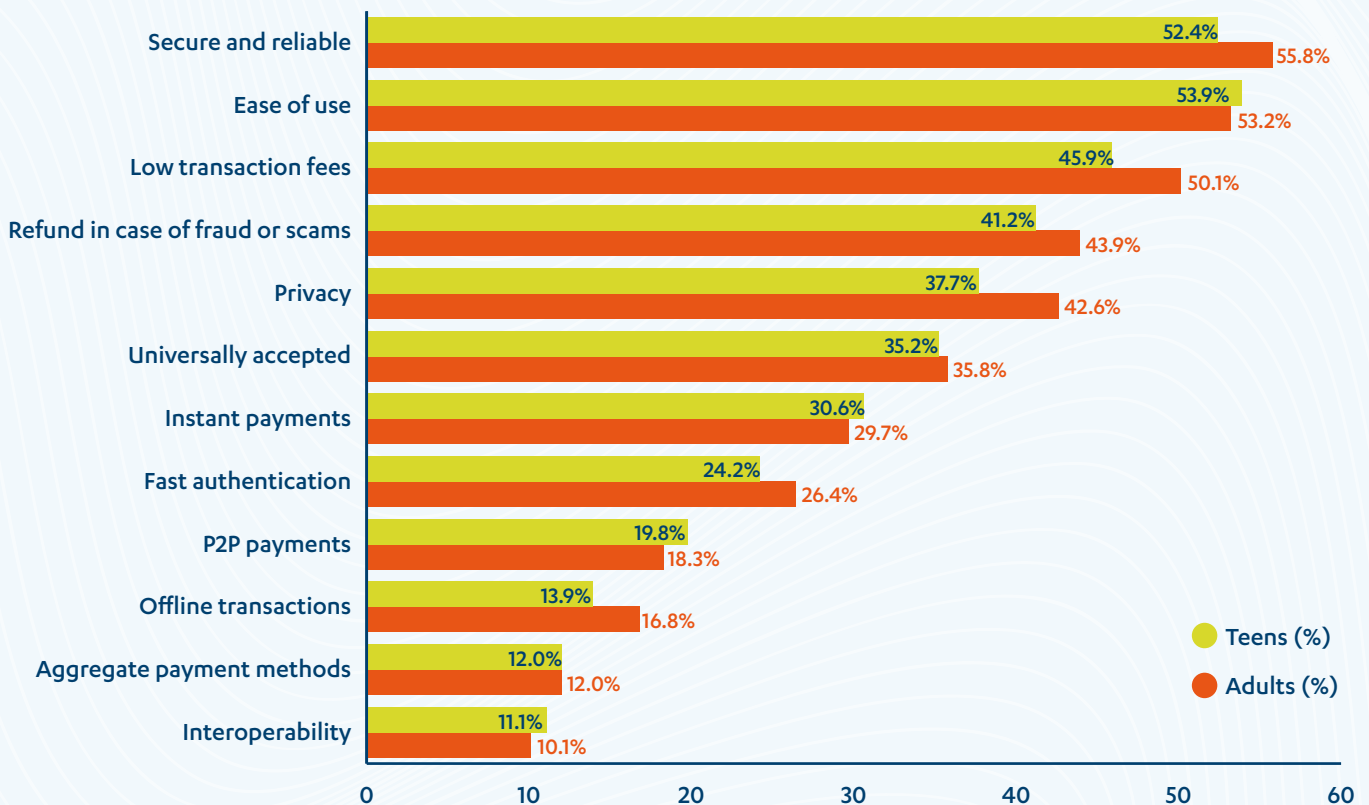
Low fees are another key driver (chosen by 50% of adults and 46% of teens), with older adults valuing this feature the most (55%). By country, low or no fees is a particularly high priority for adults in Slovenia (63%), Greece (60%), France (55%), Spain (53%), and Belgium (52%).

The possibility of being refunded in case of fraud is important to consumers

(selected by 44% of adults and 41% of teens), especially older adults (49%) and respondents in Portugal (51%), Slovenia (50%), Austria (48%) and Germany (46%).

Ensuring privacy of personal data (43% adults and 38% teens) is valued more by women than men across all ages. Among adults, privacy stands out more in Portugal (52%), Spain (47%) and Slovenia (47%) than in countries like Belgium (34%) and Austria (34%).

If a new digital payment method was introduced, which are the most important features that it should have? [Figure 1]



⁴ Respondents were presented with a list of 12 features from which they could select up to 5.

Our survey shows that security and reliability is the most important feature for a new digital payment method

Universal acceptance is considered particularly important in countries like Germany (46%), Portugal (45%), Austria (40%), and Italy (39%), where support for a new payment method that can be used everywhere is particularly high as compared to the overall European figures (36% and 35% respectively for adults and teens).

Allowing for instant payments (30% adults and 31% teens), a fast authentication method (26% adults and 24% teens), person-to-person payments (18% adults and 20% teens) and offline transactions (17% adults and 14% teens) are also valued by consumers.

Younger adults (aged 18–34) prioritise certain features more than other age groups: offline transactions (23%), aggregation of pre-existing digital payment methods (14%) and interoperability (13%).

From the gender segmentation of the results, we also observe differences. While the overall ranking of key features remains the same for both genders, women – both teens and adults – prioritise more security, ease of use, privacy, and the ability to get a refund in case of fraud, while men give more importance to features like universal acceptance, allowing for instant payments, fast authentication, and the possibility to aggregate existing digital payment methods.

1. Concerns about security are highly relevant for respondents of all ages

Most adults (82%) and teens (77%) say they are at least somewhat concerned about becoming victims of cyberattacks or online fraud and scams. Worries about not being able to get a refund if they fall victim to fraud are even higher among adults (86%), with a similar share concerned about not receiving a refund if a product or service they paid for is not delivered (83%).

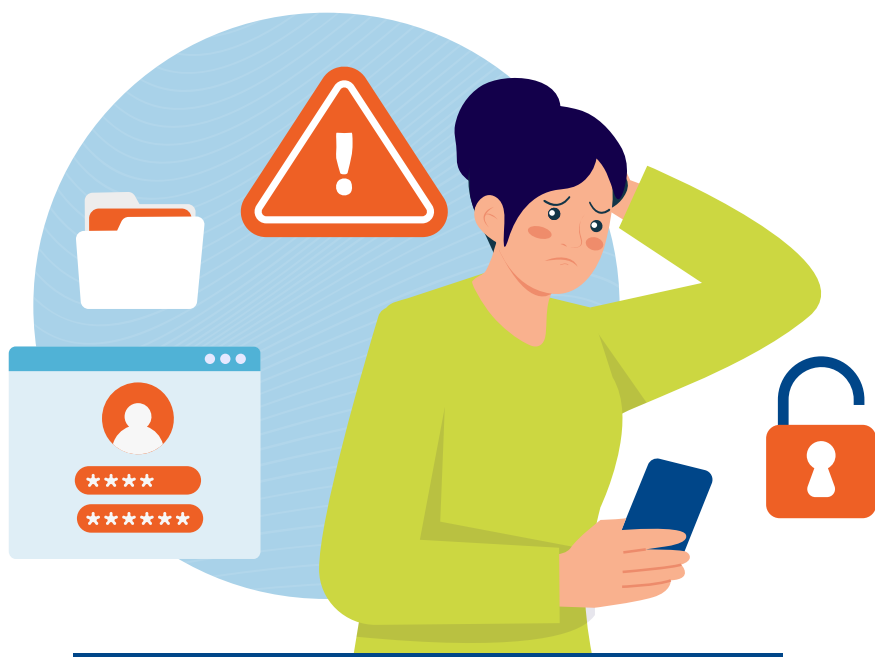
Looking at specific groups, young adults aged 18–34 are the most worried about not being able to recover their money in case of fraud or scams (44% responded ‘very concerned’) and about not being able to get their money back if a product or service is not delivered (38%

responded ‘very concerned’). Gender differences are also clear: women across all age groups have higher levels of concern. For instance, men are more likely to respond ‘not at all concerned’ for all the risks presented, while women more often respond ‘very concerned’.

A significant share of adults report having been victims of fraud or a security breach related to a digital payment they made

16% of adults say that, at least once, they have been victim of a security breach or fraud related to a payment by credit or debit card, 15% related to a payment from their bank account and 9% through a digital wallet. 15% of teens have been victim from payments related to both prepaid/debit cards and from payment apps/platforms. When looking at the types of incidents reported, the most common reason is **phishing** for all payment methods and age groups.

Most adults and teens say they are at least somewhat concerned about becoming victims of cyberattacks or online fraud and scams



However, perceptions of safety remain high and vary depending on the payment method without clear indication why consumers feel safer with one method rather than another. Almost nine out of 10 adult users (**88%**) say they feel safe using digital wallets and payment apps, while three in four (**75%**) say the same about online banking or debit and credit cards. Among teens, **74%** feel safe using prepaid or debit cards, and **69%** feel safe using payment apps.

2. Ease of use: Physical cards as the preferred payment method

As for the methods consumers pay with, physical cards are the most used by adults, both in stores and online. In physical shops, **62%** of adults use cards frequently, compared to **42%** cash and **25%** mobile payments. Online, **46%** of adults use cards frequently, **25%** mobile apps, and **17%** bank transfers. This frequent use of cards aligns with expectations reported: **88%** of both

teens and adults agree that every bank account should offer a payment card free of charge.

Digital wallets and payment apps are also widely used and well-rated: **81%** of adults and **77%** of teens used one in the past year. Satisfaction is especially high among young adults (18–34), who value their ease of use, universal acceptance, ease of adding and modifying payment options, and security. The main reason some respondents still do not adopt them is a preference for traditional methods like cards or cash.

Have you ever encountered any difficulties when making digital payments? If so, select all that apply [Figure 2]



Many consumers report that digital payments are not always simple, with more than half saying they have encountered some difficulty when paying digitally

Across the 10 countries, **55%** of adults and **51%** of teens say they have faced at least one difficulty when making digital payments. For both adults and teens, the most common obstacles are declined payments, not having enough money available on the payment method, website crashes during transactions, the shop not having their payment method as an option, and digital payments not being accepted.

Teens seem more likely to report issues related to digital skills – **13%** said they did not know how to make the payment or found the process too complicated, compared to **9%** of adults. Similarly, **10%** of teens made a mistake when adding the beneficiary data compared to **6%** of adults.

Age per se is not a predating factor as to whether consumers encounter problems, but the level of digital and financial literacy is. Adults under 42 years old with lower levels of digital and financial literacy experienced the most problems, with only **19%** saying they never encountered a problem. In contrast, older adults over 60 years old with higher level of digital literacy report the fewest problems, **73%** say they have never encountered one.

46% of teens and 39% of adults have helped a friend or relative to make a digital payment

Young adults (18–34 years old) are the most likely to help others with digital payments (**62%** report to have done so). This figure is even higher (**75%**) among respondents under 32 years with a high level of digital literacy. On the opposite, only **12%** of adults over 60 years old with low level of digital literacy reported helping others with digital payments.

When asked about the reasons for helping a friend or family member to make a digital payment, the most frequent answer was a lack of skills: **41%** of adults said it was because the payment was too complicated or the person they were helping did not know how to make it. This was followed by needing help registering or installing the app (**29%**), concerns about payment security (**16%**), and a lack of access to a digital payment method (**11%**) or to a digital device (**10%**).



3. Paying digitally should be free of charge

Most adults (87%) believe that paying digitally should be free of charge for consumers, a view shared across all countries and age groups, and especially so among older adults: 90% of those aged 55–74 agree, compared with 81% of adults aged 18–34. Similarly, a strong majority of adults and teens (88%) think that every bank account should offer a payment card at no extra cost (92% in the case of adults aged 55–74), and 85% of adults and teens agree that everyone should have access to a basic bank account free of charge.

4. Refunds in the event of fraud & scams are highly valued

Respondents also express expectations for consumer protection in case of fraud. A large majority of adults (85%) say that digital wallet providers should grant refunds in the event of fraud, scams, or security violations. The level of agreement is higher among older adults aged 55–74 (88%) and teens aged 16–17 (87%), and in countries like Slovenia (91%), Portugal (89%), Greece (88%) and Spain (87%).

Most adults (87%) believe that paying digitally should be free of charge for consumers

5. Attitudes towards data sharing depend on the purpose, many are open to share data for safety but not for commercial purposes or with third parties

When it comes to personal data protection, among adults, 42% feel comfortable sharing their personal data for fraud prevention or anti-money laundering checks, while 27% explicitly disagree. Willingness to share data lowers when the purpose is commercial (26%) or when it involves third parties (23%).

Teens are generally more comfortable sharing their data than adults, especially for fraud prevention checks (47% for teens aged 14–15, compared with 41% of adults over 55). Adults over 55 are the least willing to share data for commercial purposes or with third parties, with a majority disagreeing (56% and 60%, respectively). Across all age groups, men tend to be more willing than women to share their personal data.

When it comes to how people behave with privacy settings, less than half of adults and teens (47%) say they carefully read the privacy consent of the mobile payment apps they use. On the other hand, applying restrictions is more common: 62% of adults limit location permissions for their mobile payment apps, and 59% limit access to smart-phone data.

Regarding privacy violations, such as misuse of personal or financial data or law enforcement surveillance, 81% of adults and 72% of teens are at least somewhat concerned.



Special focus on young consumers: Many teens already pay digitally, but their choices are affected by age restrictions, apart from their preferences

Teens (14–17) are highly digital, using an average of more than two devices to access the internet across the 10 countries. Many already use digital payments, but cash still plays a big part in their transactions.

Over one in four teens (**26%**) did not make any digital payment in the past 12 months, compared with just **4%** of adults. The main reasons for not paying digitally are that they are not allowed to by their parents (**42%**), **26%** report they have no need, **24%** prefer cash or cards, and **22%** lack their own bank account.

Almost half of teens (**49%**) report using cash frequently in physical stores, while **19%** say the same for mobile payment apps. Physical cards rank in the middle, with **27%** using them frequently and **28%** never using them.

74% of teens made at least one online purchase in the past year. **20%** frequently used physical cards to pay online (compared to **46%** of adults), and **19%** frequently used mobile payment apps – less than 18–34-year-olds (**38%**) but more than older adults aged 55–74 (**15%**).

39% of teens made peer-to-peer payments in the past 12 months. This

percentage varies across countries – from **15%** for Italy to **71%** in the Netherlands. For peer-to-peer transactions, mobile payment apps are frequently used by teens (**26%**) and more than cash (**18%**).

When teens do use digital payments, ease of use (**58%**), safety (**46%**), quick check out processes (**33%**), easy to track recent purchases (**26%**), privacy (**26%**), lower or no fees (**25%**), and wider acceptance (**25%**) are the main drivers of choice.

A large majority of teens are at least somewhat concerned about risks in digital payments, including not being able to recover their money in case of fraud or scams (**82%**) or in case a product or service is not delivered (**81%**). Still, teens are less concerned than adults, and fewer express being “very concerned” about all the risks presented.

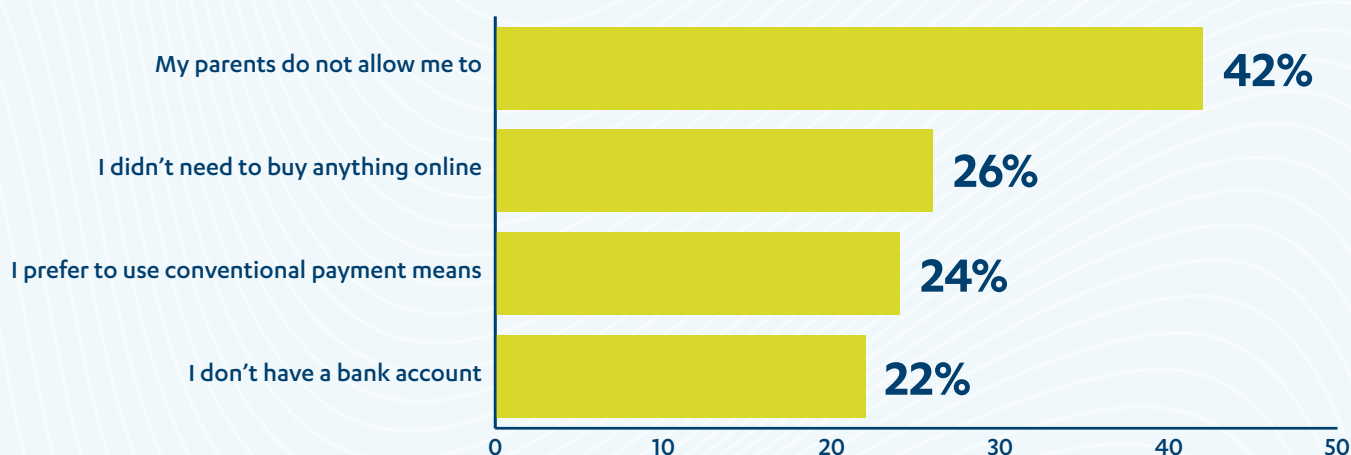
In terms of data protection attitudes, teens are more willing to share personal data than adults, with **47%** comfortable sharing their data for fraud prevention checks. Willingness is lower for commercial purposes (**33%**) and for sharing data with third parties (**30%**), where almost half explicitly disagree (**45%** and **48%** respectively). At the same time, teens

are the group that apply most data restrictions: **62%** limit both location permissions and smartphone data access – a tendency that decreases with age and is lowest among older adults (**55%**).

Teens are very sensitive to fees and monetary losses. Most agree that digital payments should be free for consumers (**87%**), that everyone should have access to a basic bank account free of charge (**85%**), and that every bank account should offer a payment card without extra cost (**88%**). They also support that digital wallet providers should grant refunds in the event of fraud or scams (**86%**).

A large majority of teens are at least somewhat concerned about not being able to recover their money in case of fraud or scams

Why haven't you made any digital payments in the past 12 months? [Figure 3]*



*This graph only uses teens' data

Despite digital payments, there is strong support for cash across generations



Support for keeping cash available also remains high. **85%** of consumers believe cash should continue to be accepted everywhere at no additional cost, a view which is widely shared among all age groups: for older adults (55–74) (**88%**) and the youngest respondents (14–17) (**85%**). Across countries, cash acceptance is most strongly supported in Spain (**88%**), Germany (**87%**), Austria (**87%**), and the Netherlands (**87%**).

On payment preferences and behaviours, **48%** of adults say they prefer digital payments over cash whenever possible, with younger adults (18–34) showing the strongest preference (**54%**). Belgium

(**59%**) and the Netherlands (**58%**) stand out with higher preferences for digital over cash, while Austria (**41%**) and France (**42%**) have the lowest preference for digital payments. About one in four adults (**26%**) report having stopped shopping at a merchant that didn't accept digital payments, a behaviour more common among young adults (**34%**) than among older adults (**19%**).

Digital payments are also perceived to influence spending and money management. **46%** of teens and **39%** of adults feel that having access to digital payments makes them spend more than when using cash. With the highest difference between younger teens (14–15) with **51%** agreeing vs. older adults (55–74) with **28%** agreeing.

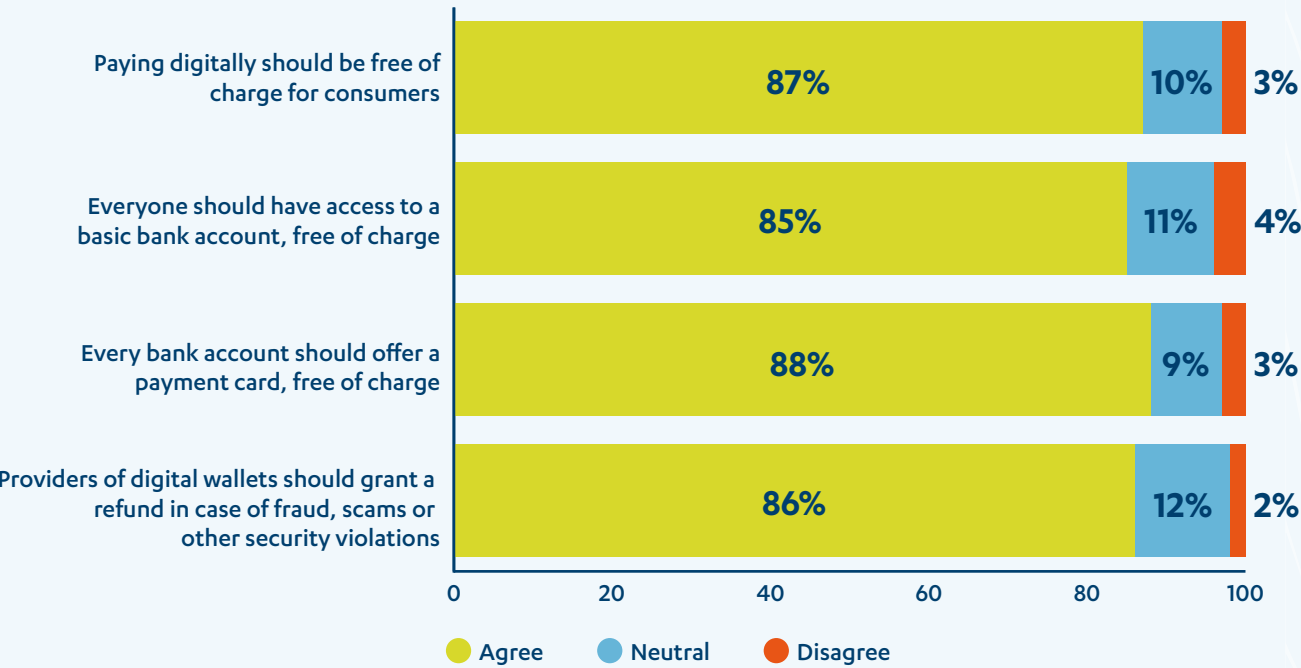
On the other hand, **59%** of adults and **60%** of teens say that digital payments help them keep better track of their spending, with the strongest agreement among adults aged 18–34 (**67%**) and the lowest among adults aged 55–74 (**52%**). There are significant differences between countries: **74%** of Italian adults agree that

digital payment methods make it easier to track spending, while only **44%** of Germans agree to the same statement.

When asked about the future, more than half of adults (**52%**) say they fear losing the opportunity to choose between different payment methods

(e.g., cash, cards, digital wallets, etc.). This concern is highest among adults aged 27–51 with higher level of digital literacy (**59%**) and lowest with adults with lower levels of digital and financial literacy (**37%**). By country, the fear is strongest in Spain (**58%**) and lowest in Italy (**41%**).

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? [Figure 4]*



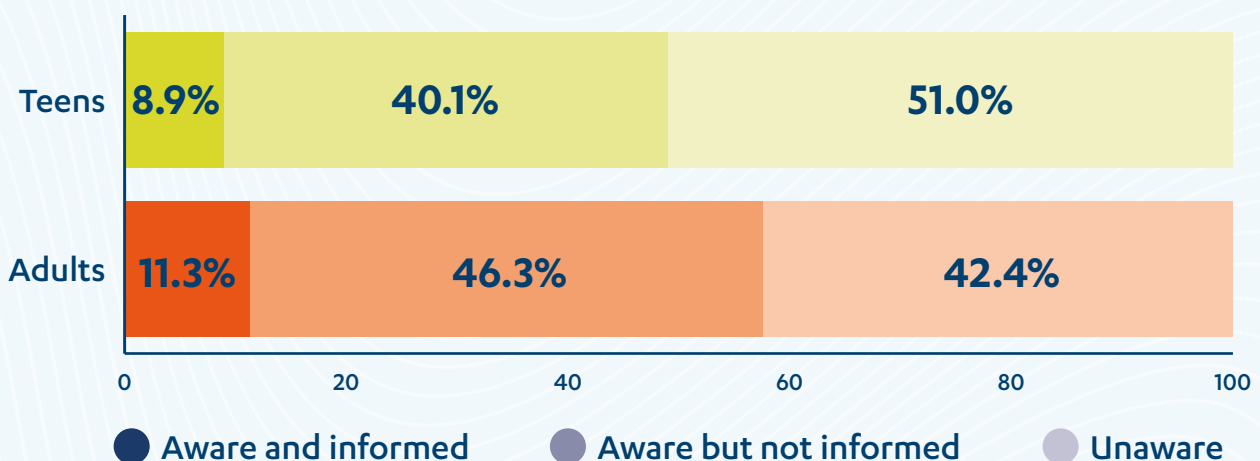
*This graph only uses teens' data

To measure awareness, the survey ended with one direct question on the digital euro

Awareness of the digital euro is higher among adults (58%) than teens (49%), but only 11% and 9% respectively feel informed about it. In the case of adults, awareness is highest among men with higher digital literacy (30% are aware and informed about it), and lowest among those with low digital literacy living in small villages (60% not aware). For teens, awareness is highest (18% aware and informed) among those living in large cities and with at least one sibling aged 14–17. It is lowest (53% not aware) for those without siblings of this age.



Have you ever heard about digital euro? [Figure 5]



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The ECB is moving forward with developing the digital euro, and the European Parliament and Council are shaping their positions on the proposed legislation. Our research reveals both what is working well and areas for improvement in the current digital payment ecosystem that a well-designed digital euro could help address. Here are BEUC's key takeaways and policy recommendations:



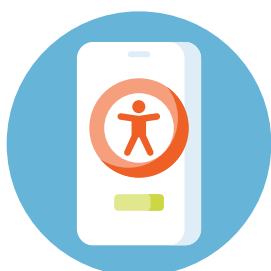
The digital euro should be easy to use and secure. Currently, consumers consider ease of use (58%) and safety (56%) the most important aspects of digital payments, and they reported the same for new payment methods. To succeed, the digital euro should be designed to prioritise these features from the start.



Our survey revealed worrying levels of concern over payment fraud and money losses. **The digital euro must ensure strong fraud prevention and protection – including easy refund procedures and reliable dispute resolution systems** – to be trusted as a safe payment option.



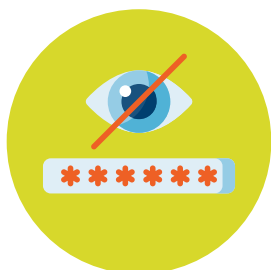
88% of both teens and adults believe that every bank account should offer a free payment card. **A digital euro card** – the most widely used payment method among both teens and adults for digital payments – **should be offered free of charge** to meet consumers' expectations, ensure broad adoption and accessibility.



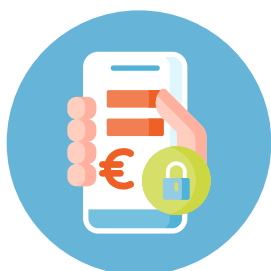
46% of teens and 39% of adults have helped a friend or relative make a digital payment, most often because it was too complicated or they did not know how to do it. **The digital euro should include strong accessibility features** to address this gap, serving its role as a public payment method by increasing inclusion and access in the payments landscape.



87% of adults and teens agree that paying digitally should be free for consumers, and 85% believe everyone should have access to a basic bank account at no cost. The digital euro should reflect this by ensuring **that basic services are offered free of charge**.



Consumers strongly value privacy in payments. **The digital euro should offer enhanced privacy compared to current methods** – both online and, particularly, offline for low-value and proximity payments – while still applying fraud and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) checks for higher-risk transactions online.



Teens are already digital and, like adults, value easy and secure payment options. Yet, 26% did not pay digitally, mainly because they are not allowed. Adding extra **safety features and controls (such as transaction and spending limits)** could encourage parents to allow teens to use the digital euro.



As 52% of adults fear losing the ability to choose how they pay, access and acceptance to cash remain very important. When it comes to the digital euro, communication efforts should clearly explain that the **digital euro will complement, not replace, cash and existing payment options**. Communication should also target groups with lower awareness – such as teens and adults with low digital literacy, and those living in smaller towns or rural areas.



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