PRIVACY, HACKER RISKS AND DIGITAL SECURITY

7 IN 10 ITALIANS BELIEVE THAT TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE, BUT ABOUT 6 IN 10 FEEL MORE CONTROLLED THAN SECURE

This mistrust crosses all generations, being strongest in Cagliari (63%) and Verona (62%), while the perception that technology increases personal security is higher in Bologna (41%), Rome (38%) and Florence (34%).

New research by **Changes Unipol**, carried out with Ipsos (market research and consulting firm), illustrates Italian opinions and perceptions of their relationship with technology at a time of increased hacker attacks in both our country and the rest of Europe.

The research also showed:

- **Almost 1 in 2 Italians** believe that they **have no control over how their personal data is collected and used online**, especially Baby Boomers (**51%**).

- **7 in 10 Italians** are willing to **waive their right to privacy in exchange for greater personal security.** Generation X is the least willing: **34%** would never waive their right to privacy.

- Italians trust **medical centres and scientific communities** (both **67%**) in the management of their personal data, followed by **banks and insurance companies (64%), public institutions (51%)** and **technology companies (47%).**

- **Artificial Intelligence** is considered to be **less "controlling"** than technology in general, but 50% still feel controlled by it compared to 32% who feel more secure.

- **The perception of control** by AI is most strongly felt in **Cagliari (65%), Verona (63%), Turin (60%) and Milan (58%). Generation Z** is the main exception: **over 4 in 10** associate AI with **greater security** as they demonstrate a more open, trustful attitude compared to older generations.

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Technology, by now, has become part of the everyday lives of Italians; they recognise the benefits but also understand the ambivalence and weak points that expose us to real or potential dangers as borne out by the many hacking attacks carried out in recent weeks in Italy and Europe. This is the

picture that has emerged from new research by **Changes Unipol**, carried out in association with Ipsos, which depicts a country that appreciates technology but also feels under observation, controlled and exposed.

83% of the Italians interviewed feel **comfortable** with their mobile phones, apps, digital payments and the online services of the public authorities, with this familiarity spanning all generations. Impressions on its impact are also generally positive: **7 in 10 Italians** (69%) believe that **technology improves the quality of life**, while **1 in 4** (23%) believe that it has **negative effects**; **Millennials** are the most positive (**76%**), with **Generation X** the **most sceptical** (**27%** gave negative responses).

However, the digital world is not the same for everybody: **1 in 3 Italians** (34%) have experienced **difficulties in accessing** services only available online. Surprisingly, this issue is encountered most often by the youngest, **40% of Generation Z** compared to **27%** of **Baby Boomers,** although this gap may be explained by Gen Z's tendency to use digital services more often.

Positive opinions do not translate into a higher sense of security. **58%** of Italians state that technology makes them **feel more controlled than protected,** while **only 30% feel more secure.** This perception crosses all generations, from **54%** of Generation Z to **60%** of Millennials. There are also differences at territorial level. The sensation of control is strongest in **Cagliari (63%)** and **Verona (62%)**, while in **Bologna (41%), Rome (38%)** and **Florence (34%)**, people believe technology makes people more secure.

The most delicate issue regards **personal data.** Italians are divided almost in half: **46% do not feel that they are in control** of how their information is collected and used online, compared to **45%** who feel they are. Even though **Baby Boomers** feel the most exposed **(51%), Generation Z** are not far behind **(46%).**

Italians are prepared to grant some leeway with respect to security, but within strict limits. **7 in 10 Italians** are willing to waive their right to a certain amount of **privacy** in exchange for increased personal protection, but in moderation. The boundary for all generations lies between public and private spaces: a certain amount of control is acceptable in public spaces like CCTV systems, but not in the private sphere. **Generation X** is the least willing to concede control: **34%** would never waive their right to privacy compared to about a quarter of other generations.

Trust and control in the digital world

Italians do not believe that all are equal when it comes to trusting the **management of their personal data. Healthcare facilities** like the local health authorities (ASL), hospitals and health record keepers, along with the **scientific and university community** top the classification of those considered most trustworthy (**67%**); they are followed by **banks and insurance companies (64%), state and public institutions (51%) and large technology companies** (**47%**).

Big tech is the category that most divides Italians: **almost 1 in 2** (47%) **do not trust them**, the same percentage that says the opposite.

Generation X is the most **sceptical** regarding the various entities, while **lack of trust in the state and public institutions is highest** among **Generation Z (47%).**

Surveillance technology also strongly divides opinion. Video cameras in public places are the only instrument associated with security: **50% of Italians** feel more protected compared to **42%** who feel more controlled. **Facial recognition (50%) and electronic payment tracking (52%)** veer more towards control even though **4 in 10 Italians** consider these measures to be reassuring. The perception of control prevails for **"smart" voice assistants** in homes (**54%**), **drones (56%)** and **geolocation (57%)**, reaching a peak for **online communication monitoring like chats and social media activity (65%).**

Artificial intelligence: an opportunity that does not offer complete reassurance

AI has already entered our lives with almost **6 in 10 Italians** (59%) having used it at least once; Generation Z is in the lead (almost 4 in 10 use it often) with Baby Boomers bringing up the rear. The prevailing sensation is positive: it represents an **opportunity for 6 in 10 Italians,** especially in scientific research, shopping, and crime prevention. Opinions are less enthusiastic for work and information where **AI represents a threat for 4 in 10 Italians.**

There is also a **perception of surveillance** associated with Artificial Intelligence, although to a lesser extent than technology in general: **50% of Italians** feel more controlled (compared to 58% for technology as a whole), **32% feel more secure**, while 18% are undecided. The perception of being observed is most keenly felt in **Cagliari (65%), Verona (63%), Turin (60%) and Milan (58%).**

Opinions regarding IA change with age. As people grow older, the percentage of those who associate it with greater security grows smaller: from **44% for Generation Z** to **35% for Millennials**, **27% for Generation X** and **23% for Baby Boomers.** Generation Z is the only one that believes security prevails over control, albeit by very little (44% compared to 42%), indicating a more open attitude towards technology. On the other hand, control prevails over security for over half of Generation X (54%) and Baby Boomers (53%).

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