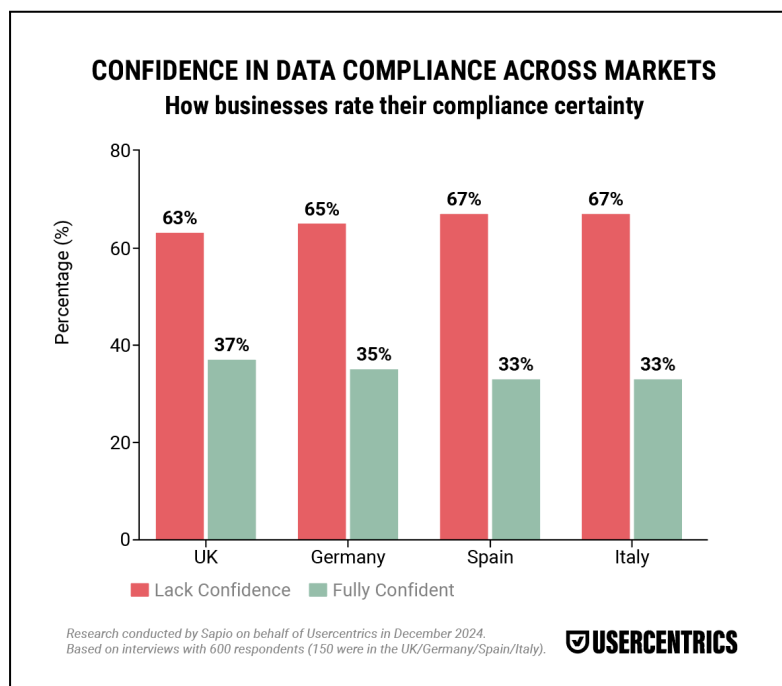


Two-thirds of European businesses doubt their compliance with data protection laws

Munich, March 20, 2025 – A significant majority of businesses across Europe and the UK are uncertain about whether they comply with local and EU regulations for data protection and requirements for cookie banners. According to research conducted by leading European privacy tech company Usercentrics, only about one-third of businesses are fully confident in their compliance.

Compliance concerns across markets

The survey polled key decision-makers responsible for website and consent management in the UK, Germany, Spain, and Italy. Businesses in Spain and Italy expressed the highest levels of doubt regarding their compliance status, but uncertainty was widespread.



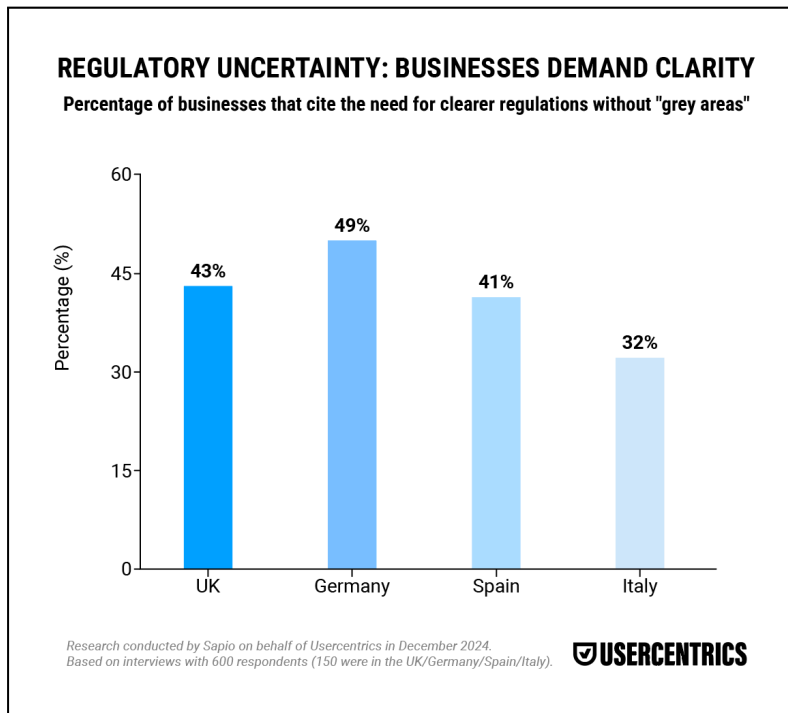
Sector disparities and key compliance barriers

The study also revealed significant differences across industries. Finance, insurance, and software companies demonstrated the highest confidence in compliance, while agriculture, government and public administration, and non-profit organizations reported the lowest levels of certainty.

When asked about their greatest challenges in achieving compliance, businesses identified two primary barriers: regulatory uncertainty and lack of internal resources.

Regulatory uncertainty

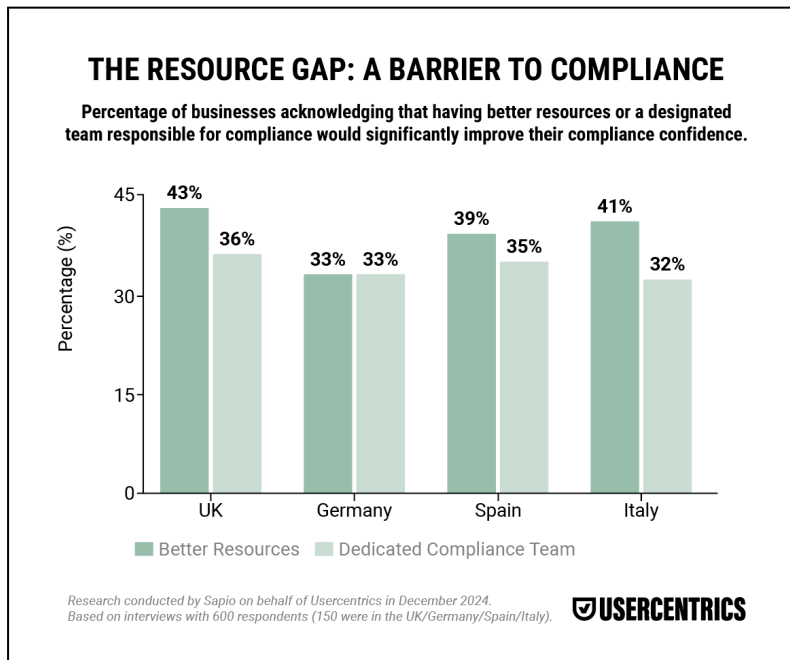
Many businesses struggle with unclear regulatory requirements. Nearly half of businesses in Germany (49%) and in the UK (43%) emphasized the need for more precise guidelines, citing concerns about legal grey areas. Companies in Spain (41%) also reflected a strong demand for regulatory clarity, while those in Italy (32%) showed the lowest percentage of concern in this area.



Lack of internal resources

Businesses also reported that insufficient internal resources hinder their compliance efforts. In the UK, 43% of companies stated that better resources would improve their compliance confidence, while 36% saw a dedicated compliance team as beneficial. Germany mirrored this sentiment, with 33% of businesses prioritizing both aspects equally.

In Spain and Italy, businesses considered better resources to be a more impactful factor to improving compliance certainty than having a dedicated compliance team. This was especially pronounced in Italy, where 41% of businesses saw resource availability as more crucial, compared to 32% prioritizing a compliance team.

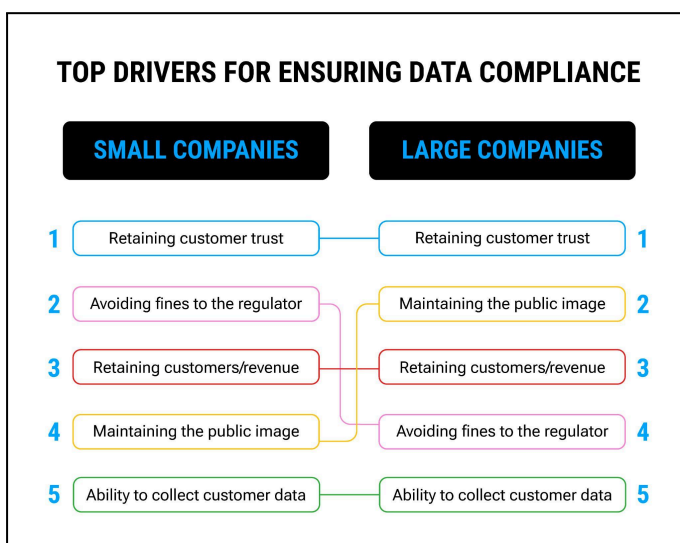


Customer trust as a key compliance driver

The study, which surveyed 600 businesses across four European markets, found that motivations for achieving compliance differ based on company size.

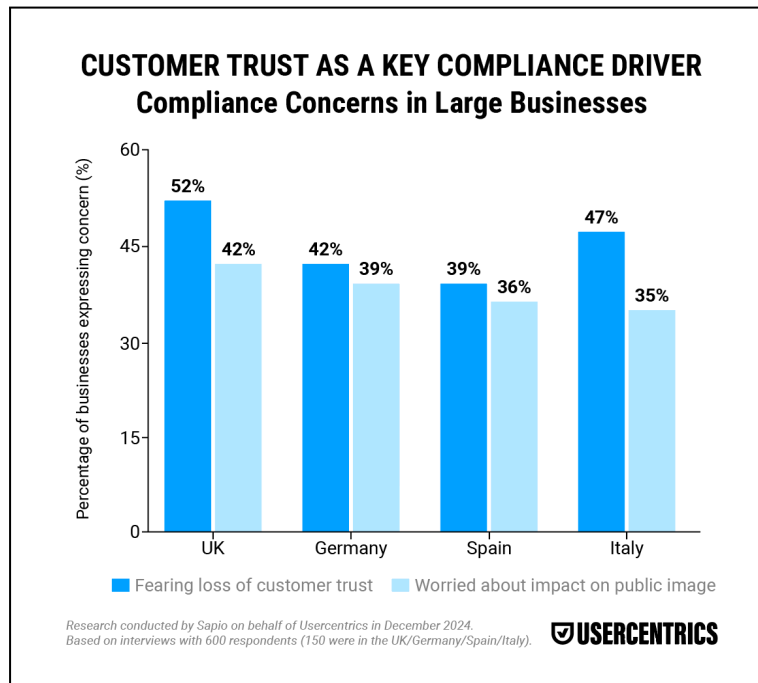
- Small businesses are primarily concerned about losing customer trust if they fail to comply.
- Large businesses share the concern for customer trust, but are equally worried about reputational damage caused by noncompliance.

This trend is consistent across all surveyed countries except Spain, where small and large businesses show similar attitudes toward compliance motivations.



Large businesses in the UK, Germany, Spain, and Italy are highly concerned about maintaining customer trust. The UK leads in this concern (52%), followed by Italy (47%).

Large companies also worry about the impact to public image caused by noncompliance, with businesses in Germany and the UK (both 42%) expressing notable concerns.



Small businesses in contrast, small businesses in the UK (38%) and Spain (36%) are the most concerned about losing customer trust. Spain also shows a high level of concern about damage to public image (35%). In Germany, both concerns are equally important (30% each), while Italy reports the lowest levels of concern, with 28% fearing loss of trust and 26% worried about public image.



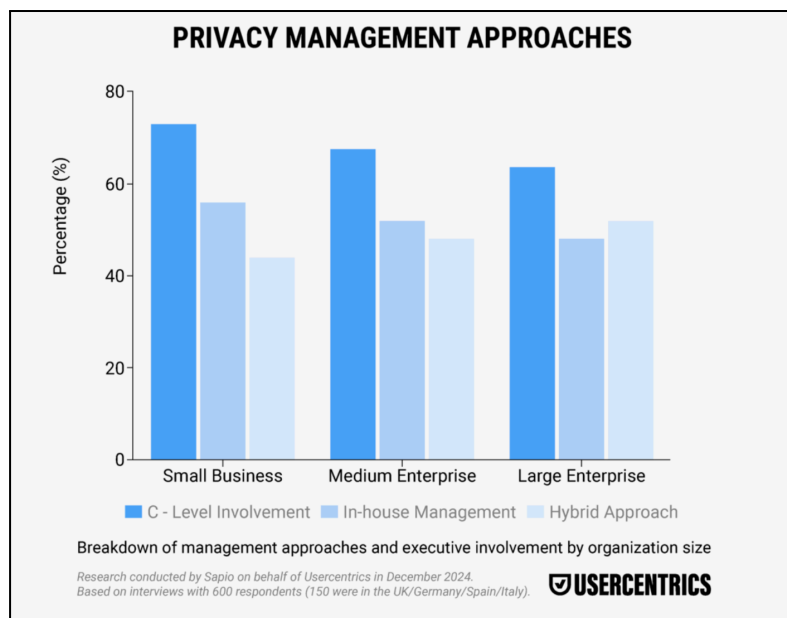
Privacy management becomes a strategic imperative

Privacy management has evolved from a compliance necessity to a strategic business priority. The survey indicates that 73% of privacy-related decisions are now made at the executive level. This signals a shift in how companies handle data privacy now that the GDPR is no longer new, and various complementary regulations have also come into force.

A clear divide exists in privacy management strategies:

- 56% of businesses manage privacy in-house
- 44% use a hybrid approach, combining internal resources with external expertise

Larger organizations are more likely to adopt hybrid solutions due to the growing complexity of regulations.



Privacy-Led Marketing: The future-proof strategy for building consumer trust

Tilman Harmeling, Senior Expert Privacy at Usercentrics, highlights increasing consumer awareness of data collection and the need for businesses to prioritize trust:

"Consumers are increasingly aware of data collection and sharing practices, and are adopting a zero-tolerance policy for poor data management. Their privacy is of extremely high value to them, and brands that are not valuing privacy are at risk of losing their customers' trust quickly. Companies should be mindful that consent banners are the control center for consumers to manage the data flow to the brands they interact with. If brands don't ensure these control centers are designed in a user-friendly, transparent, and compliant way, fines are the least of their problems. That is why we advocate for a privacy-first approach, which we call Privacy-Led Marketing. It helps businesses gain control over their consent management in a way that promotes compliance and strengthens customer trust through transparent data management practices."



Survey methodology

The research was conducted by Sapio on behalf of Usercentrics in December 2024. It is based on interviews with 600 respondents, with an equal split of 150 participants each from the UK, Germany, Spain, and Italy. All respondents have decision-making power over their company's website and consent banners. These included legal and compliance roles, web developers/website owners, and senior marketing decision-makers from all company sizes. It also included owners, C-level executives, and directors of small businesses.

For further information, interviews, or media inquiries, please contact:

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About Usercentrics

Usercentrics is a global market leader in the field of consent and preference management solutions. We believe in creating a healthy balance between data-driven business and Privacy-Led Marketing to unlock sustainable growth for every size of enterprise. Our products enable businesses to collect, manage, document and signal user consent on websites, apps, and other connected platforms to achieve compliance with global privacy regulations. Usercentrics is active in 195 countries on more than 2.3 million websites and apps, with over 5,400 resellers, and handles more than 7 billion daily user consents. Learn more on usercentrics.com.