

New Verve Research: Consumers More Willing to Accept Ads for Free Content, But AI-Related Privacy Fears Soar

75% of consumers are more open to watching ads for free content versus two years ago, yet 65% are more worried about how their data is used to train AI



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Research released today by Verve shows that consumers are increasingly receptive to ad-supported content but also are more worried about how their data is used, particularly in relation to AI. Now in its second year, the [2025 In-App User Privacy Report](#), shares insights from a survey of 4,000 consumers across the UK and US, exploring the balance between privacy concerns, personalization, and the evolving value exchange in digital advertising.

Ad-supported models on the rise

Three in four consumers (75%) said they are more willing to watch or receive ads in exchange for free content than they were two years ago, a sharp rise from the 67% who responded this way in Verve's 2024 survey. This shift comes amid subscription fatigue and tighter budgets, creating new opportunities for publishers and advertisers. Nearly three-quarters (72%) also said they would be less likely to pay to remove ads if those ads were targeted and interesting.

Growing concern about data use, especially AI

Despite stronger privacy controls, consumers are more anxious about how their data is handled. Two-thirds (67%) are more concerned about unauthorized access and cybercrime than they were two years ago, while 65% are more worried about not knowing how their data will be used. The most striking shift: Nearly two-thirds (65%) said they are more concerned about their data being used to train AI, up 20 percentage points in just 12 months.

An overwhelming 97% agreed that app publishers and platforms need to do more to be transparent about how data is collected and used.

Relevant ads drive discovery and efficiency

The study confirmed that personalization remains a strong driver of engagement. Over three in five respondents credited relevant ads with helping them discover new products (62%), while

more than half said personalized ads made shopping faster (55%) and helped them find discounts (57%).

Shifting patterns in data sharing

Consumers are becoming more protective of highly identifying information such as names and email addresses, but more open to sharing demographic and contextual data such as age, region, and even health information. Willingness to share varies by app category:

- *Shopping, social media, and streaming apps rank highest for data sharing.

- *Dating apps remain the most privacy-sensitive, with 54% unwilling to share any personal information.

- *CTV (connected TV) was the environment where consumers were most likely to share email addresses, despite being perceived as the least secure platform.

Privacy controls and demographic differences

Overall, 65% of respondents said they feel more in control of their privacy settings than two years ago, down slightly from 68% in 2024. While men said that a stronger understanding of their data made them more likely to share it, women reported the opposite. Year over year, men gained 3 percentage points in likeliness, while women lost nearly triple that amount. Younger consumers (16–24) and higher-income earners (45–54) saw double-digit declines in confidence, highlighting the need for more tailored trust strategies.

“Stronger privacy controls have helped the industry innovate, but control alone isn’t enough,” said Aviran Edery, SVP & GM of Marketplace at Verve. “What consumers want is transparency. When people understand how their data is used and feel in control of it, they are far more willing to engage. That’s where publishers and advertisers can build lasting trust.”

The formula for trust

The report concludes that sustainable growth in mobile advertising will come from balancing transparency, value, and control. Trust is now the industry’s most valuable currency, and brands that can demonstrate responsibility while delivering engaging, relevant ad experiences will gain the competitive edge.

The 2025 In-app User Privacy Report also features commentary from industry leaders at ID5, GeoEdge, and Singular.

The survey was conducted by Censuswide, an international market research consultancy headquartered in London. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.

For the full report, download the 2025 In-App User Privacy Report from [Business of Apps](#).

Methodology

The research survey was conducted by Censuswide on behalf of Verve between August 13 and

August 19, 2025. Quantitative data was gathered via an online survey from a total of 4,000 respondents aged over 16 across the UK and US. The nationally representative respondent base featured an even split of 2,000 consumers in the UK and 2,000 in the US, in addition to covering a mix of genders and five core age groups: 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55 plus. Year-over-year comparisons reference Verve's 2024 In-App User Privacy Report, for which CensusWide collected data from 4,001 consumers evenly split between the UK and US; this survey was conducted during August 2024.

About Verve

Verve Group is a fast-growing software platform in the advertising technology industry, connecting advertisers seeking to buy digital ad space with publishers monetizing their content. Driven by its mission "Let's make media better." Verve provides responsible, AI-driven advertising solutions that deliver superior outcomes for advertisers and publishers. The company focuses on emerging media channels like mobile in-app, connected TV and others. In anticipation of growing demand from users and advertisers for greater privacy, Verve has developed cutting-edge ID-less targeting technology that enables efficient advertising within digital media without relying on identifiers such as cookies or IDFA. Thanks to its strong differentiation and execution, Verve has achieved a revenue CAGR of 33 percent over the past four years reaching net revenues of 437 million euros in 2024 with an adj. EBITDA margin of 30 percent. Verve's main operational presence is in North America and Europe, and it is registered as a Societas Europaea in Sweden (registration number 517100-0143). Its shares - with the ISIN SE0018538068 - are listed on the regulated market of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange (Ticker: VRV) and on Nasdaq First North Premier Growth Market in Stockholm (Ticker: VER).

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