ISACA

EUROPE EDITION

The State of Privacy in 2026

In today's digital landscape, privacy concerns are at an all-time high as personal data is collected and analyzed on an unprecedented scale. As data breaches and information misuse become common, privacy professionals are increasingly called upon to develop and implement robust processes and policies to ensure individuals' data is protected and that their organizations are staying compliant in an increasingly complex regulatory environment.

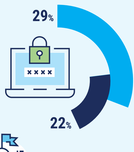
The new State of Privacy survey report from ISACA gathers insights from more than 1,800 global privacy professionals, including 485 in Europe, exploring trends in privacy staffing, operations, breaches, privacy awareness training, privacy by design, and use of AI tools by privacy professionals. See key insights below and access the complimentary global research report at **www.isaca.org/state-of-privacy**.

Bright spots

Privacy professionals are having a slightly easier time understanding their privacy obligations:

29% of organizations find it easy to understand their privacy obligations

22% say it is difficult (down from 3/ % in 2025)



58% believe their Board of Directors has **adequately prioritized privacy.**

79% use a **framework or law/ regulation** to manage privacy in their organization.

65% of organizations review and revise privacy awareness training at least **annually**

78% believe that privacy training has had a **strong or some positive impact** on privacy awareness in the organization.

PERSISTENT RESOURCE CHALLENGES

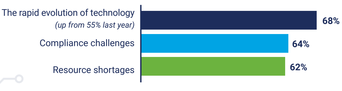
Privacy teams are stretched and stressed

5 **The median privacy staff size** remained unchanged at 5 this year, the same as in 2025.

Technical privacy roles appear to be more understaffed than legal/ compliance roles, similar to previous years' survey results.

67% **say their roles are more stressful** now compared to 5 years ago.

TOP STRESSORS:



Hiring and retention

Both technical and legal/compliance privacy roles continue to be understaffed:

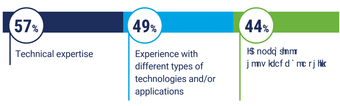
51% Technical roles understaffed

39% Legal/compliance roles understaffed

CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS CONSIDERED VERY IMPORTANT:

1. **57%** Organizational fit, e.g. culture—a new option included in this year's survey
2. **55%** Prior hands-on experience in a privacy role
3. **51%** Adaptability—also a new option included this year

TOP SKILLS GAPS:



Room for improvement

47% **Fewer than half** felt very or completely confident in their organization's privacy team's ability to achieve compliance with new privacy laws and regulations.

SLIGHTLY FEWER ORGANIZATIONS ARE PRACTICING PRIVACY BY DESIGN:

63% **Always or frequently practice** privacy by design when building new applications or services.

MOST USED METRICS TO TRACK PRIVACY TRAINING:

68% Number of employees completing training

55% Decrease in privacy incidents

MOST COMMON PRIVACY FAILURES:

40% say that their privacy program faces obstacles.

TOP 3 OBSTACLES FOR PRIVACY PROGRAMS

DECREASING OPTIMISM AROUND BUDGETS

Less than one-fifth of respondents (05%) say their privacy budgets will increase in the next year.

Over half of respondents (54%) anticipate a decrease in their privacy budget in the next 12 months.

Rising use of AI

34% have no plans to use AI (bots or machine learning) to perform any privacy-related tasks (**down from 43% in 2025**).

30% **have plans to use AI** for this function in the next 12 months.

SOURCE: ISACA, State of Privacy 2026, www.isaca.org/state-of-privacy