

September 2025

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

Full report

Contents

Executive summary	3
Background and methodology	6
Chapter 1: Initial perceptions of online advertising	10
Chapter 2: Targeted advertising: Contextual advertising	14
Chapter 3: Targeted advertising: First party data advertising	20
Chapter 4: Targeted advertising: Behavioural advertising	25
Chapter 5: Targeted advertising: Common themes across all advertising approaches	28
Chapter 6: Measurement	34
Chapter 7: Expectations for new routes to viable online advertising	39
Appendix	42

Executive summary

Background, objectives, and methodology

In 2025, Thinks Insight & Strategy was commissioned by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to conduct research in the form of Citizens' Juries. The purpose of the research is to provide insight into the public's attitude to the use of data for online advertising. This is one strand of research that will help inform the ICO's upcoming statement, outlining their recommendations for new routes to viable online advertising approaches.

This research into new routes to viable online advertising set out to:

- Build a picture of the public's understanding and experiences of online advertising, and how their information is used in this context.
- Understand the public's expectations around the use of data in online advertising.
- Understand the public's views and expectations around consent, including the key factors that impact these views.

We undertook fieldwork in July 2025, engaging 32 participants in total from across three locations in two distinct stages:

1. A pre-workshop online community or telephone depth interview.
2. Three in-person Citizens' Jury workshops, held in Cardiff, Glasgow and Middlesbrough.

Participants worked through scenarios to discuss their expectations for how they want to control data used for targeting and measuring online advertising. We used the following definitions for the different approaches to online advertising that we explored.

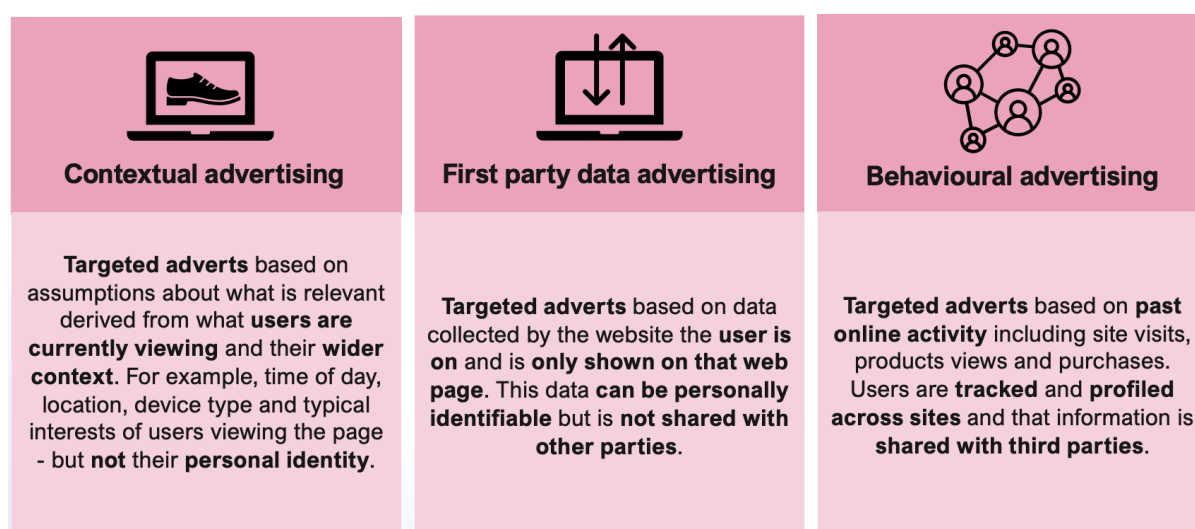


Figure 1: Types of targeted advertising explored in the Citizens' Juries.

Key findings

People felt that some advertising can be served and measured without their consent under specific conditions. Their views on consent for different advertising approaches were driven by the type of data involved and the perceived sensitivity of the data.

Broadly speaking, participants felt **contextual advertising** that used only the minimum amount of data required was acceptable without consent, such as seeing ads based on page content. But the more detailed data became, the more likely they felt its use should require consent. Participants felt that data they defined as more 'personal', such as name, email address, and granular location data were not acceptable without consent.

For **first party data advertising**, those more comfortable with online advertising felt the creation of an account inherently meant that some of their account data would be used for advertising. Others felt that there should be a consent option for advertising when creating an account. Those least comfortable with online advertising expected consent to be sought every time they visit a website, not just at the point of signing up. Those who were most sceptical about the use of account information did not want personal data, such as date of birth, name, or gender, to be used without consent.

Behavioural advertising drew a clear consensus. Participants expected consent to be required for any behavioural advertising, driven by discomfort about cross-site tracking.

With regards to **measurement**¹, the use of data without consent felt acceptable when it was aggregated and confined to a single site. However, participants expressed concerns that re-identified data² could be used for criminal activity, such as scams and hacking, and to re-target people with unwanted ads. They wanted strict controls around what data could be used for. Participants who wanted close control over their online data also insisted on an opt out option for all measurement approaches.

Participants' level of comfort with all forms of targeted and measuring advertising without consent was highly influenced by the nature of the

¹ Measurement was defined to participants as the way companies keep track of how well online ads are working. They use this information to decide how much to spend on ads and to get better results.

² Re-identified data is information that was originally anonymised but can now be linked back to a specific individual. This happens by combining the 'de-identified' data with other, publicly available or private data, which allows for the reverse of the initial anonymisation process. This can be done by anyone with the technical knowledge and the subsequent data can be sold on to third parties without the user's consent or knowledge.

ad. The more 'sensitive' the ad was seen to be, the more strongly they felt that consent should be required.

The context of the advertising influenced participants' level of acceptance about what requires consent. Participants had clear expectations that consent should be required where advertising could cause harm – for example, when consumers might think they are being given advice for medical conditions, or political advertising that risks exacerbating extremist views.

Concerns about the targeting of people who need extra support to protect themselves, such as those with health conditions or experiencing financial hardship, were a common theme across advertising approaches.

They felt that the targeting of people who need extra support to protect themselves should be prohibited without consent and subject to meaningful penalties with clear mechanisms for making complaints and ensuring accountability.

In the context of measurement, participants felt that the measurement of types of data that were seen to be more sensitive (for example, data related to a user's health) should require consent.

People want to know more about how and why their data is being used through clear and accessible information.

Current consent processes were described as unclear or misleading, with widespread suspicion that this may be deliberate. Participants wanted consent banners that are consistent across websites, written in clear language, and include explanations to ensure users can give informed consent where needed.

Overall, participants' views revealed questions about transparency and control in how data is used for online advertising. The need for consent varied depending on the type of data collected, the sensitivity of the topic, and the perceived intrusiveness of the data collection method. Across the board, participants called for simple, standardised explanations of how their data is used, stronger safeguards to prevent the targeting of people who need extra support to protect themselves, and meaningful mechanisms for accountability.

Background and methodology

Project background

As part of their [Online Tracking Strategy](#) for 2025, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is committed to making 'it easier for publishers to adopt more privacy-friendly forms of online advertising', encouraging them to deploy online advertising that does not involve behavioural, habit and activity tracking (including across different services and devices).

Currently, publishers must gain consent to use any information about a user or their device for any advertising-related purposes. When a user does not grant consent to the use of storage and access technologies for advertising purposes, there is no way to deliver commercially viable online advertising to them.

To address this, the ICO is reviewing its approach to enforcement of the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR) regulation 6 consent requirements. It is exploring whether a risk-based approach to enforcing PECR could allow publishers to deliver online advertising to users who have not granted consent, where there is a low risk to their privacy. They think that this can create opportunities to unlock business growth through innovation, while safeguarding people's privacy and improving user experience.

In 2025, Thinks Insight & Strategy was commissioned by the ICO to conduct research in the form of Citizens' Juries. The purpose of the research is to provide insight into the public's attitude to the use of data for online advertising. This research will inform the ICO's upcoming statement around low-risk processing activities that are unlikely to cause damage or distress or result in enforcement sanction.

Research objectives

This research into new routes to viable online advertising set out to:

- Build a picture of the public's understanding and experiences of online advertising, and how their information is used in this context.
- Understand the public's expectations around the use of data in online advertising.
- Understand the public's views and expectations around consent, including the key factors that impact these views.

Methodology

We used a Citizens' Jury approach to explore the public's experiences, understanding, and attitudes towards online advertising. The topics explored are nuanced and require a degree of technical knowledge. A deliberative approach such as a Citizens' Jury allows participants to build their understanding over the

course of the engagement and ensures more informed understanding of, and discussion about, the issues.

We engaged participants through two distinct stages as described below.

Pre-workshop online community or telephone depth interview

Participants were invited to a pre-workshop online community in the weeks leading up to their Citizens' Jury workshop, from 1st – 11th July 2025. The purpose of the online community was threefold:

- To introduce the project and familiarise participants with the key issues and content ahead of attending the Jury workshop.
- To gauge initial participant understanding and experiences of online advertising and how their data is used in this context.
- To understand initial views on the topic of privacy in online advertising.

In total, 27 participants completed the 90-minute online community, while five participants took part in an adapted version of the online community tasks in a one-hour telephone depth interview. This was offered as an alternative to the online community to support the inclusion of any digitally disengaged participants who did not feel confident completing online tasks.

Citizens' Jury workshops

After completing the online community or telephone depth interview, participants were invited to join a 6-hour in-person Citizens' Jury session. Three sessions were held over the course of one week in July 2025 in Glasgow, Cardiff, and Middlesbrough.

The session included a mix of plenary information sharing and feedback, as well as moderated discussions in small breakout groups. An overview of the structure of the day can be found in the appendix.

Exploring different advertising approaches

We used scenarios to help participants explore different advertising approaches.

Participants were introduced to three different approaches to **targeted online advertising**. Participants were first introduced to **contextual advertising**, before moving on to **first party data advertising**, and finished with **behavioural advertising**.

When presenting the contextual advertising and first party data advertising scenarios to participants, we started with scenarios that use limited data points and progressively added more types of data and complexity into the scenarios. The aim of this was to find the acceptable level of 'intrusiveness' within the contextual advertising and first party data advertising examples.

To explore behavioural advertising, we used the premise from the first party data advertising scenarios but built in more profiling, cross-site tracking, and data sharing with multiple advertising partners.

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

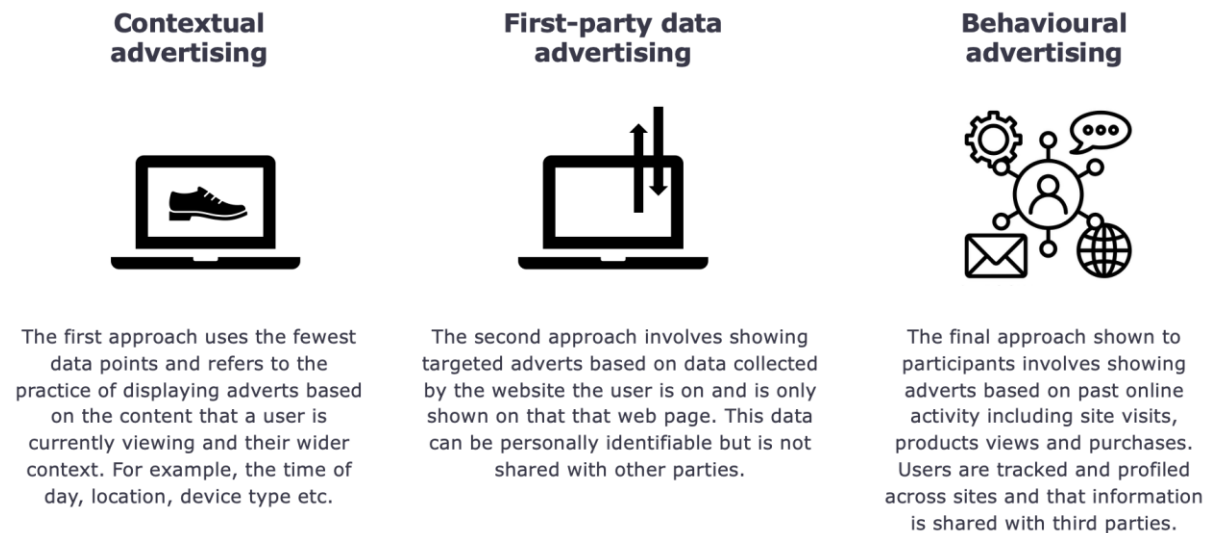


Figure 2: Types of targeted advertising explored in the Citizens' Juries.

Exploring approaches to measure advertising

When exploring how organisations should **measure** the success of their adverts, participants were introduced to two approaches:

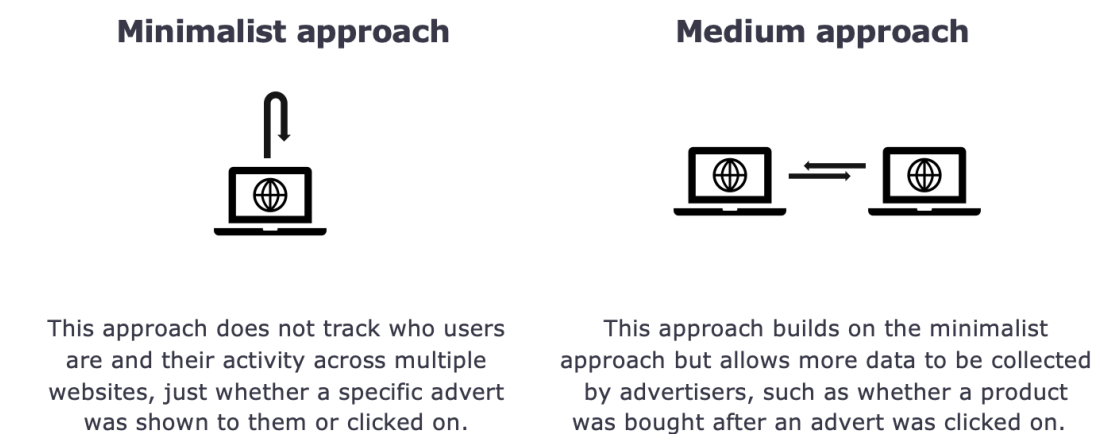


Figure 3: Approaches to measuring advertising explored in the Citizens' Juries.

For each approach explored, the research team used a scenario to frame the ad measurement approach. For each scenario, we provided a summary of how ads would be measured in that approach, an explanation of how impressions, views, clicks, conversions and attributions would be used, as well as a summary of what this approach would mean for advertisers, publishers, and users.

In chapters 2-6 of this report, we provide relevant information on each scenario explored. Full details of the content of each scenario can be found in the appendix.

Sample

32 participants completed the research by taking part in the online community and attending a Citizens' Jury. Three additional participants completed the online community tasks but were unable to attend a Citizens' Jury. Their views are included in the analysis in Chapter 1.

A full demographic breakdown of the sample that completed both the pre-workshop tasks and a Citizens' Jury is available in the appendix.

How to read this report

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of this report begins by exploring the initial perceptions, behaviours, and understanding participants had of online advertising from the online community and early conversations in the Citizens' Jury workshops.

Chapters 2-6

Chapters 2-6 of this report detail the participant responses and expectations surrounding the different approaches to targeted and measuring advertising as outlined above. Within each, we explore in detail the reactions to the different scenarios and their iterations, drawing out what participants found more or less acceptable about each. We highlight the similarities and differences in perspectives and diversity of participant views.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 brings together analysis from deliberations on the different approaches and scenarios, as well as participant generated principles to provide expectations for new routes to viable online advertising.

Note on this report

It is important to note that this is a qualitative methodology, therefore findings should not be considered as statistically representative. We explore and present the similarities and differences in participants' views and set out the key themes raised by participants throughout the research so that they can inform the recommendations for the ICO around new routes to viable online advertising.

Throughout the report, we have used quotes to illustrate our analysis of the pre-workshop tasks and Citizens' Jury discussions.

Chapter 1: Initial perceptions of online advertising

Summary of key findings from this chapter

- Participants started the research with predominantly negative associations of online advertising.
- Negative views were driven by perceptions that online advertising:
 - Is increasingly invasive and prevalent in recent years
 - Leads to an increase in scams and online fraud
 - Tracks and monitors people online
 - Is difficult to navigate and understand.
- Participants who commonly engage in online shopping appreciated online advertising that is personalised and relevant to their interests.
- Just under half of participants reported being most likely to click 'reject all' to cookies. They report doing so to protect their privacy and reduce the amount of personal data that is collected about them.
- Participants who are most likely to click 'accept all' to cookies report doing so out of convenience and impatience.
- Those who report choosing to customise cookies want to find a balance between privacy and convenience.
- Participants reported high levels of uncertainty around what they consent to when they 'accept all' cookies and felt that they lack control of their data when they browse the internet.

1.1. Initial understanding of online advertising

Prior to starting the workshop, out of 35 participants, 25 agreed that they understood the purpose of consent banners shown on websites. Despite this, 21 participants felt that the choices provided around data use online were not clear to them.

Participants had widely negative perceptions of the term 'cookies' in the context of online advertising, associating cookies with words such as 'confused', 'intrusive', and 'annoying'. However, there was some recognition that cookies are a necessary part of accessing websites for free.

While most participants understood that cookies are used to track user data, there were high levels of uncertainty around what is being consented to when the 'accept all' option is selected. In fact, out of 35 participants, 21 participants said that they do not feel in control of their data when they browse the internet, and 17 participants said that they do not know what kind of information is collected when they choose to click 'accept' when visiting a website.

"I really have almost no idea what they mean. Maybe something to do with the websites being able to track what you are doing."

- Middlesbrough

Despite mixed levels of understanding of the kind of information collected about them when they visit a website, participants thought this would include a range of data, such as:

- Personal data, such as emails, phone numbers, names, and addresses
- Browsing habits and search history
- Location data
- Shopping habits and preferences
- Time spent on a website.

1.2. Perceptions and behaviours around online advertising

Perceptions of online advertising

To introduce people to the research topic, we first asked them about their online experiences in general. When asked to think about positive associations with being online, access to information, entertainment and the ability to stay connected with friends and family were the most common positive associations given.

Online advertising was one of the most mentioned negative associations that participants had with being online in general. Negative views about online advertising were driven by:

- A perception that **online advertising has become increasingly invasive and prevalent**: Participants described feeling overwhelmed and annoyed by advertising when being online, reporting an increase in online adverts as a way the internet has got worse in the last 5 years.
- Views that there has been an **increase in scams and fraud online**: Participants reported being aware of an increase in online scams in recent years.
- A sense that people are **being monitored and tracked online**: Participants described online advertising as 'intrusive' and likened being tracked between websites to 'big brother'. This led to concerns around data privacy and the availability of information about people online.
- Participants' experiences of **cookies and consent banners being annoying and difficult to navigate**: Participants expressed their frustrations with pop-ups and cookies preventing access to websites and described their frustration in trying to understand the terminology used.

"There are still plenty of websites that don't allow you to reject cookies, the only option is to accept to carry on viewing content which is pretty poor."

- Middlesbrough

However, there was an appreciation of how useful online advertising can be when personalised and relevant to their interests. Participants who commonly use online shopping appreciated being shown relevant deals based on previous interests, as well as providing a quick and easy route to finding something they want.

"Occasionally I find it useful. I think I'm probably an ideal target for a marketer. If I see something that I'm thinking of, I am quite likely to click."

- Cardiff

Despite some positive associations, more than half of the participants (20) reported that they felt either somewhat or very uncomfortable with adverts seeming to know something about them. Only three felt somewhat comfortable, and no-one felt very comfortable.

Current behaviours around online advertising

Prior to starting the workshop, almost half of participants (17) said that they were more likely to select 'reject all', just over a third responded 'accept all' and just under a fifth tended to 'customise' their cookie preferences on websites.

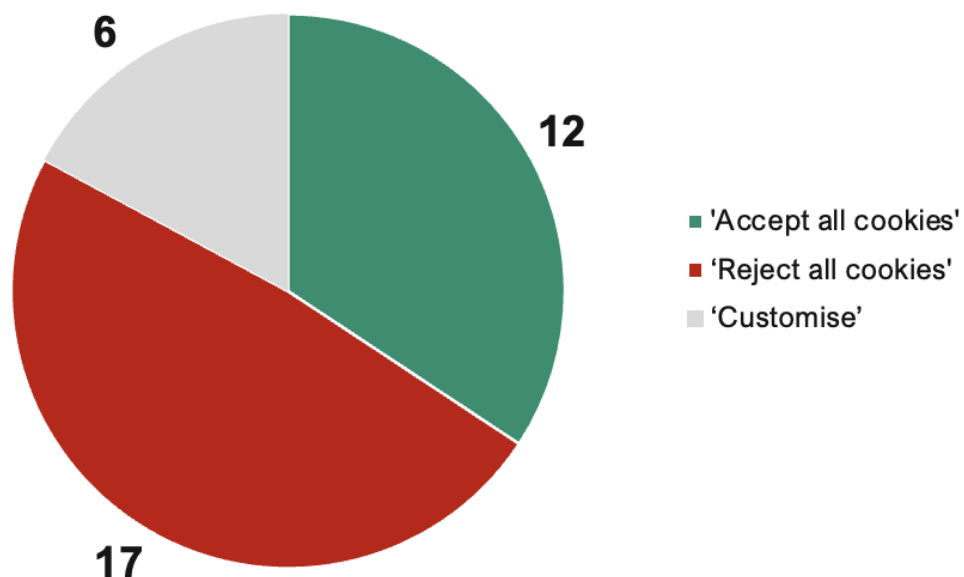


Figure 4: When a website asks you to consent to cookies, what do you normally do? N=35

Participants who reported 'rejecting all' cookies want to protect their privacy and limit the amount of data that is collected about them.

These participants felt that rejecting all cookies is easier than trying to make informed decisions each time about what data they are willing to share. They expressed a general distrust and discomfort with how cookies are used for surveillance and personalised advertising, prioritising their privacy and autonomy over the potential benefits of personalisation.

"I want to minimise what data is held about me. I go on too many websites to try and make an informed decision each time so it's easiest just to reject all"

- Middlesbrough

Participants who had previously expressed discomfort with companies sharing their data on the online community, reported that they had left websites in the past due to the cookie consent banner, preferring to avoid sites that required extensive data collection to use.

Participants who reported 'accepting all' cookies tend to do so out of convenience and impatience.

Participants who reported mostly selecting 'accept all' cookies prioritised quick access to the website or app over considering the privacy implications. Some expressed a lack of understanding about what cookies do, viewing them as a necessary evil to access online content. These participants were more likely to click 'accept all', as they were unsure of the implications and wanted quick and easy access to the webpage they wanted to view.

"We automatically click 'accept all' cookies because it's easier and faster than reading all the details or deciding what we want to allow. Many websites make the cookie notice pop up as soon as we visit, and we're often in a rush to get to the content we want, so we just click 'accept' to move on."

- Cardiff

Participants who reported choosing to customise their cookies do so to find a balance between convenience and privacy.

Participants who reported choosing to customise their cookies argued that completely rejecting cookies could sometimes impact the functionality of a website. By customising their preferences, they felt that they could allow cookies that are necessary for the website to work properly, while rejecting those that are solely for data collection and advertising purposes. They perceived that this approach would allow them to maintain more control over their personal information.

Chapter 2: Targeted advertising: Contextual advertising

Summary of key findings from this chapter

Participants wanted only the minimum amount of data required for contextual advertising to be processed without consent.

- Participants expected some data processing to occur without consent while visiting a website for contextual ads to be served.
- Using page content alone to serve ads was widely accepted, as it requires no personal data and was seen as helpful. However, this became less acceptable when more 'sensitive' assumptions were introduced.
- Participants became less comfortable as the granularity of location data increased. Country or regional location data was seen as acceptable without consent, whereas more specific data (such as town or full postcode) felt invasive. Participants felt that location data required consent at more granular levels.
- Participants wanted data use to be limited to data that was not considered 'personal' without consent.
- Collecting unnecessary data risked distrust in online advertising and perceptions of exploitation.

Participants called for transparency and having the option to opt out.

- Participants wanted transparency over what information was being used to inform adverts and view inferences made about them.
- Participants thought it was important for users to have the ability to opt out of some data use, even if they would not personally use it.

Please see the background and methodology section for detail on how we introduced advertising approaches to participants. The stimulus shown to participants (including definitions and iterations of each scenario) is available in the appendix.

2.1 Participants' views and expectations for contextual advertising

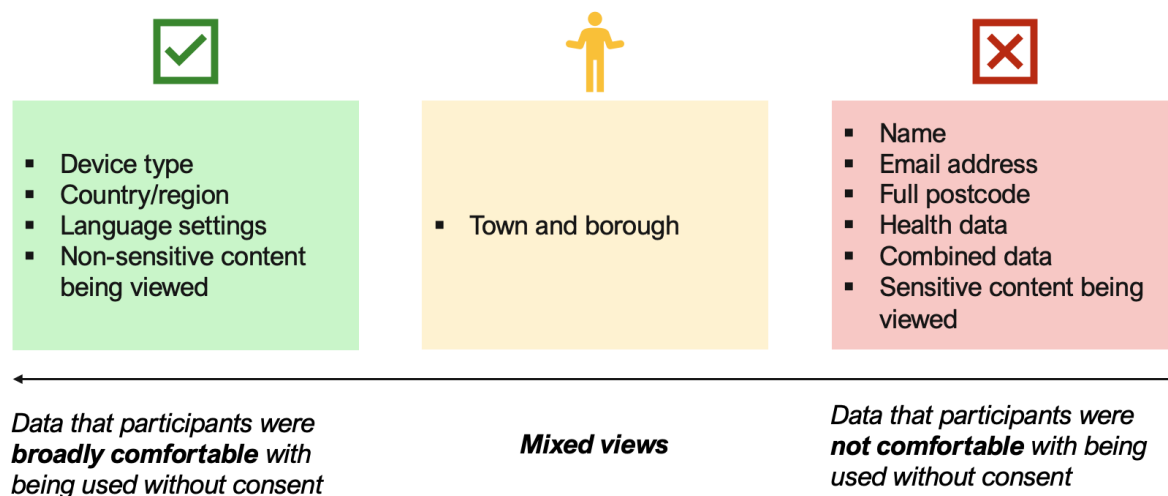


Figure 5: Scale of the level of comfort participants had data use for contextual advertising.

Participants expected to see ads based on the non-sensitive content of the site they are visiting without providing consent.

There was widespread agreement among participants that using information about the content being viewed to serve relevant adverts felt like a natural and reasonable step for advertisers to make their adverts more impactful.

Using only relevant phrases or content on the page was seen as acceptable by all participants, as advertisers are not using data beyond the content of the page being viewed. Participants felt that this level of tailored advertising was, at times, helpful and enriched their browsing experience.

However, there was a level of discomfort among participants at the prospect of users being (or feeling) 'profiled' based on the content of a webpage they are viewing.

Those who were uncomfortable with this did not like the idea of assumptions being made about them based on limited information and were particularly unsettled by 'sensitive' inferences being made about users. For example, in the travel blog scenario, they felt it was overly invasive to profile users based on gender and sexuality. Participants felt this added to the perception of intrusion into users' online lives and amplified distrust in companies that collected that data.

"I could see how people would be offended if this misidentified you... The assumptions could trigger people's insecurities."

Knowing the advertisement is personalised for you one way or another can make you a bit uncomfortable."

- Glasgow

Participants wanted only the minimum amount of data required to be used for contextual advertising without consent.

There was a strong consensus among participants that advertisers should engage in 'reasonable' data collection that gathered the minimum amount of data needed to serve contextual adverts. While there was variation across individual participants, 'reasonable' data collection was limited to non-personal, surface-level information necessary for delivering adverts. Broadly, participants found it acceptable if the data collected included only device type, language settings, general location (such as time zone or country), and content being viewed.

Participants wanted reassurance that only the minimum amount of data needed is used to deliver the advertising. There was a concern that collecting more data than necessary would feed into a sense of distrust among users. They felt that this could lead to users feeling like they were being exploited for their data. This contributed to the perceived lack of control over user data felt by participants.

Despite initially accepting data being collected without consent, further discussion of the travel blog scenario raised questions about why this type of data was needed, its usefulness, and how proportionate it was in this context.

"Initially I would say I feel quite neutral towards that information being taken, but now I'm thinking, why do you even need that information?"

- Cardiff

Participants became less comfortable as the granularity of location data increased.

Participant views on what was an acceptable level of location data varied depending on the level of granularity. There was widespread acceptance of country or regional level location data being collected without consent to help inform targeted advertising.

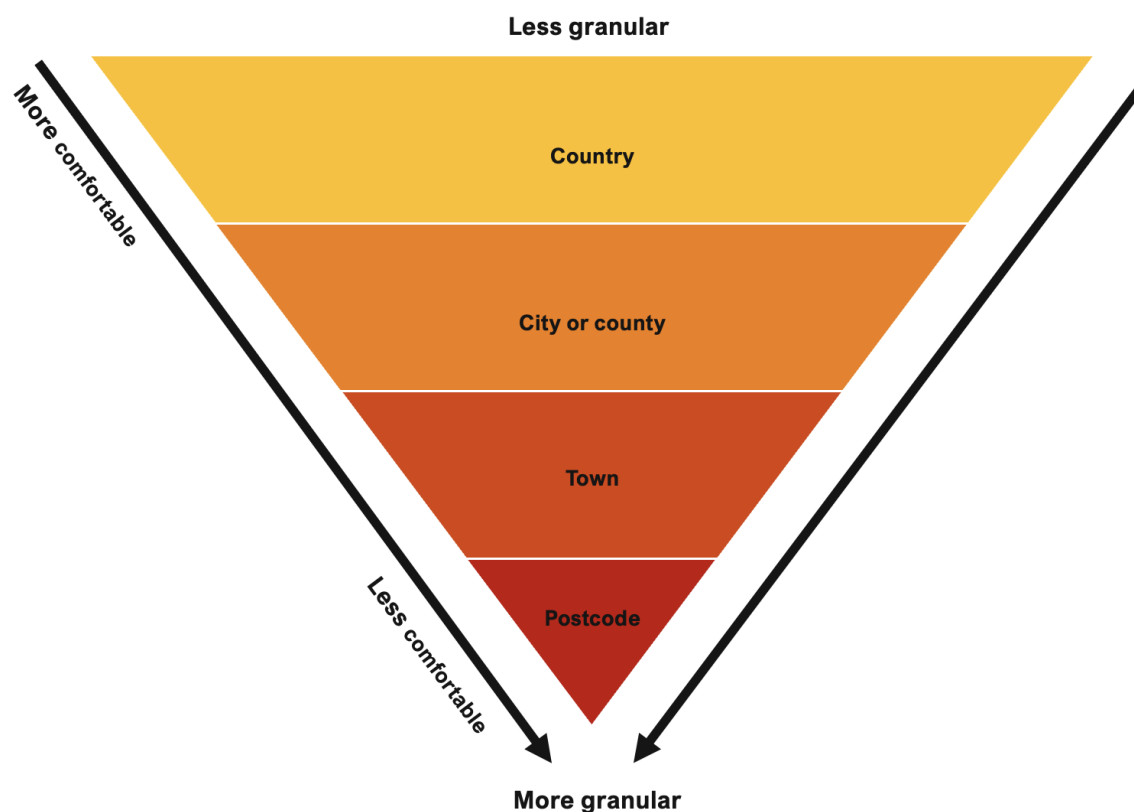


Figure 6: Level of comfort with location data collection changed with granularity.

Discomfort grew among participants as the location data became more specific. Collection of town and borough location data of users made participants more uneasy. Those that were uncomfortable felt that this level of data collection without consent was invasive, and they did not like the idea of assumptions being made about them based on location, such as the town they live in. There was a fear that it could lead to users being shown potentially harmful adverts, such as extreme political campaign messaging. They argued that this level of granularity should require user consent.

"England, Wales and Scotland is alright, but any closer than a particular county or a particular town... It feels a bit more invasive then, because they could look into the political stance of a small town and that could feed into [assumptions about] who you are as a person for living there."

- Cardiff

Collection of postcode level location data without consent drew the strongest discomfort from participants. This level of specificity felt unnecessary and those that rejected it argued that on balance, it would not give advertisers a justifiably greater level of insight for the perceived increase in invasiveness. These participants were alarmed by the

thought of an unknown organisation knowing where they lived without their consent. They also raised concerns about postcode level data being cross-referenced with public records to identify individual users.

Despite the general increase in discomfort among participants as granularity of location data increased, there were participants who were not concerned about location data being collected, regardless of granularity. These participants could be split into two groups: apathetic and appreciative.

Those that were **apathetic** were influenced by either a sense that they already lack so much control over their own data that they feel disempowered to care about the finer details of what data was being collected; or they felt that this kind of data collection could not do much harm, or impact on their life.

"They're going to make so many assumptions about you based on your postcode. Then how is that going to impact on my life?"

- Middlesbrough

Those who were **appreciative** felt that the benefits of targeted advertising specific to their location could outweigh any potential risks of their location being shared. For example, they appreciated getting adverts relevant to areas close to where they live, rather than further away.

Despite participants' variation in comfort level, they agreed that users should have a way of maintaining control over whether location data, of any level of granularity, is collected. For higher level location data collection, such as country or region, participants suggested that users should be able to opt out at any time. However, for more specific location data, there was a general feeling that consent should be required as soon as they enter a website.

Participants were uncomfortable with the use of what they defined as 'personal' data without consent for contextual advertising.

There was variance among participants on what constituted 'personal' data in the context of targeted advertising. However, participants made it clear that they did not want anything that could identify them as an individual to be used for contextual advertising, particularly without their consent.

Throughout, the types of data that were described as 'personal' included:

- Names and email addresses
- Location data: The more specific the location the more personal the data felt
- Health data such as medical conditions
- Combined data: Participants noted that even non-personal data could become personal when combined with other information.

"When multiple pieces of information are combined together, they can create a clear picture of an individual, which transforms non-personal data into personal data."

- Glasgow

There was an expectation that users should be able to view inferences made about them and be able to opt out.

While there was an acceptance that visiting a website does not require consent to see contextually relevant adverts, participants felt that there should be a way to view the inferences being made about a user based on context. They wanted a way of finding out what specific information was being used to inform adverts being shown to them. Participants felt uncomfortable about advertisers making assumptions about users based on limited data, described further in chapter 5. Wanting to see what inferences are used to target ads was related to a wider desire for advertisers and websites to be more transparent with users about what data they use. This sort of openness would, participants suggested, help them trust the way their data is being used.

"Where we haven't consented to certain data being used to build profiles on us or other people, it's sort of that overstep and assuming things about people... either their gender, their lifestyle... feels like the major crux point for our conversations."

- Cardiff

Participants were concerned that ads that may be relevant to an article the user is viewing may be inappropriate. For example, if someone with a gambling addiction was viewing an article about football and was served ads about betting, participants felt the user should be able to opt out of contextual advertising. This led participants to believe that there should be the option to opt out, even if they personally would not use it. The expectation for an opt out is further explored in chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Targeted advertising: First party data advertising

Summary of key findings from this chapter

Participants felt broadly comfortable with first party data advertising based on activity within the site and where data is not shared with third parties.

- Participants were most comfortable when data was not shared with third parties; advertising was based on activity within the site; and ads were perceived as being relevant and beneficial to the user.
- The use of purchase history data was seen as acceptable.

Participants had mixed views about where and when consent should be required for using account data for first party advertising for targeted ads.

- Those participants who were most comfortable with first party data advertising had an expectation that some of their account data would be used for advertising; this seemed acceptable because they had agreed to creating an account.
- Those who were more sceptical about account information being used were uncomfortable with personal information being used without consent. For these participants, they felt that just signing up is not a clear indication of consent.

Participants felt uncomfortable about inferring a user's emotional state to target advertising without consent.

- Participants felt that using social media posts and messages to infer a user's state of mind should not happen without consent.
- There were strong levels of discomfort when personal data, such as date of birth, gender or name, is linked with social media engagement data to infer a user's state of mind.

Please see the background and methodology section for detail on how we introduced advertising approaches to participants. The stimulus shown to participants (including definitions and iterations of each scenario) is available in the appendix.

3.1. Participants' views and expectations for first party data advertising

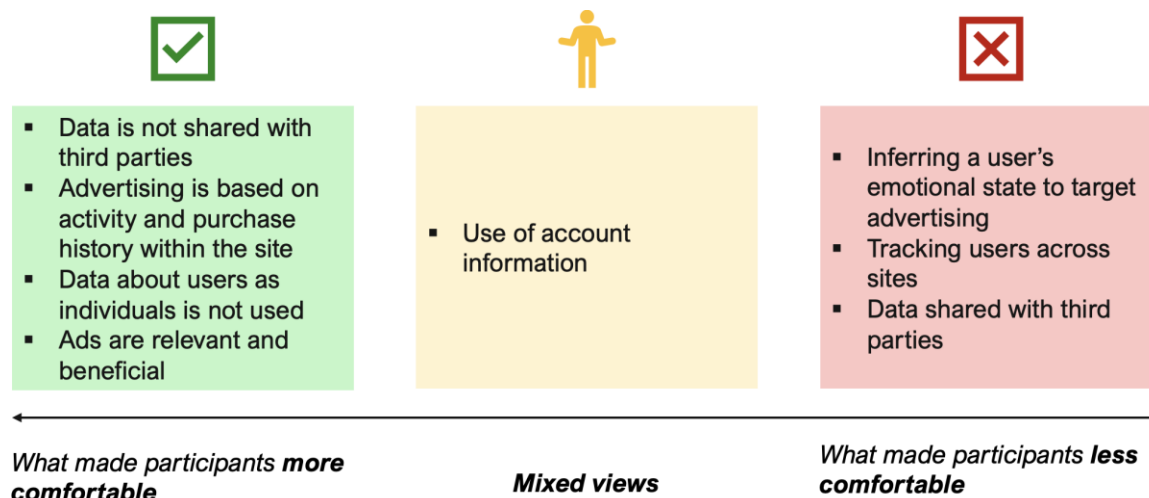


Figure 7: Scale showing what made participants more or less comfortable with first party data advertising.

Participants felt broadly comfortable with first party data advertising based on activity within the site and where data is not shared with third parties.

Participants' were broadly accepting of first party data advertising, including browsing history on the site, how long is spent on each page and purchase history. They deemed this data to be less 'personal' and were comfortable with this being used as long as:

- data was not shared with any third parties;
- advertising was based on activity within the site rather than across sites; and
- advertising was seen as relevant and beneficial.

While the scenarios explored in the Juries tested only websites with the possibility to create an account, we can infer that this sentiment would also apply to first party advertising without the creation of an account.

Participants had mixed views about using account data for first party advertising.

While participants were broadly comfortable with the use of account information, such as email, age, and saved account preferences, within the same website to serve adverts, we also heard contrasting views.

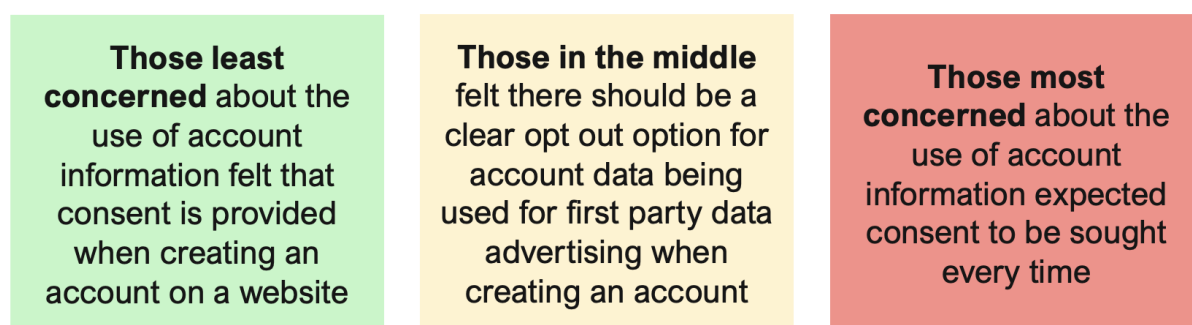


Figure 8: Scale showing participants' level of comfort with the use of account data.

Participants' acceptability with the use of account data for first party data advertising was driven by two factors:

- **Control over account data.** Participants who found the use of account data most acceptable felt that users have control over how their data is used. They reported that people have a choice about whether or not they sign up to a website. Therefore, a user can choose not to sign up to a website, or provide false account details, as participants in Glasgow reported doing themselves.

"It's OK in the context that you had to sign up and actively be like, here is the information I'm giving you that you can then use."

- Glasgow

- **Relevance of adverts.** Participants felt that users would benefit from advertised products because they are directly relevant to the website content increased acceptability. Participants who were most comfortable with the use of account information for first party data advertising largely felt that this data is being provided to optimise the overall experience of the website, including ads, and expected this based on their browsing activity and account data.

"It primarily shows me deals for those products and it just makes it easier because it's products I buy often but it's nice if they show me, this is a third off... it makes it easier and quicker. I think as long as the information stays within the website that I've already set up an account [with]."

- Glasgow

Those least concerned

Participants widely held a perception that there is an opt out option already inherent in the creation of an account because users make a choice whether to sign-up to an account and share their data in the first instance. Participants assumed that data being used for some advertising is part of the terms and

conditions that people accept when joining sites. In fact, participants' level of comfort with the use of purchase history data increased where there was a perception that a user had created an account with a website.

"When you do go onto sites and you join a group and things like that, without knowing it, you probably would have consented to your data anyway without reading the small print."

- Glasgow

Those in the middle

Others reflected that there should be a clear opt out option for account data being used for first party data advertising when a user signs up to a website, and signing up alone shouldn't be taken as providing consent. They felt that this should be an explicit part of the sign-up process, and updated in a user's preferences or shown on a banner as a user accesses a website. Participants who held this view felt this would improve transparency and give users more control over their data online.

Those most concerned

Participants who were most sceptical about online advertising, and concerned about the security of their data online were uncomfortable with the use of personal information from their account for advertising. For these participants, there was a strongly held expectation that consent should always be required to use personal information, such as date of birth, name, and gender for first party advertising.

"In principle I'd still like to be asked consent, that will fundamentally always be the red line for me. At the end of the day I'd rather be asked every time and be annoyed every time, because then I'm in control of everything."

- Middlesbrough

Participants with this view were influenced by their lack of trust in the online advertising system, referencing the potential for their data to be misused by bad actors, and a perception that they lack control over their data online.

"I'd be worried about the sort of details people can use to steal your information [like date of birth]."

- Glasgow

Participants felt discomfort inferring a user's emotional state to target advertising without consent.

Participants felt uncomfortable with the use of data to infer a user's emotional state to target advertising without their consent. This was influenced by a sense of mistrust in advertisers. There were strong levels of discomfort when personal data, such as date of birth, gender, or name is linked with social media engagement data to infer a user's state of mind.

Participants worried that advertisers could use data when a user is feeling particularly vulnerable to manipulate or exploit them. They felt strongly that this should not happen without consent.

"If they're monitoring your emotional state and then targeting something based on that, that suggests that they're targeting a weakness... So that in itself is like a bit of a red flag."

- Middlesbrough

Participants felt particularly uncomfortable where a user's emotional state of mind is used to deliver political messaging ads. They described this as 'manipulative and sinister' with participants raising fears about exacerbating extremist views (such as racism) which could cause further divisions in society.

Participants were particularly focused on this in the context of social media, but this view may extend to how they feel about other types of websites too.

Chapter 4: Targeted advertising: Behavioural advertising

Summary of key findings from this chapter

There was consensus among all participants that behavioural advertising requires consent.

- Participants felt that all behavioural advertising should require consent, regardless of the context.
- Participants did not feel comfortable with data being shared across platforms and devices to target ads without consent.

Please see the background and methodology section for detail on how we introduced advertising approaches to participants. The stimulus shown to participants (including definitions and iterations of each scenario) is available in the appendix.

4.1. Participants' views and expectations for behavioural advertising



Figure 9: Participants' views and expectations for behavioural advertising.

There was consensus among all participants that behavioural advertising requires consent.

Participants felt uncomfortable that behavioural advertising could make users feel like they are being tracked across the internet, or that they are being monitored using their device. They also worried that this could pressure users to purchase items from a previous site they visited, despite never actively searching for them.

The context of the advertising was influential in driving participants' concerns. Within the context of the two scenarios explored:

- Political messaging scenario: Participants were concerned about political advertising following users across sites, feeling that they could be coerced into an ideology that could influence elections. This felt more acceptable when advertising remains on the first party website where the user is viewing the content. However, where political adverts follow a user across websites, participants agreed that consent is required.
- Supermarket promotions scenario: Participants were concerned about adverts for health products following them across the internet, feeling that they could be coerced into spending money on products which may not be safe. Participants with this view felt this type of advertising was unethical.

There was a sense among participants in Middlesbrough that seeing adverts on YouTube, for example, for health products related to content they have viewed on a supermarket website would make them question how the advertisers/publishers know that information. Even if the information is from their browsing history, the fact it is relevant to their individual health makes them question how much advertisers and publishers know about them. This contributes to the feeling that their device is listening to them, which felt uncomfortable for participants.

"Seeing food and gluten free adverts on the M&S website – that feels relevant. But if I left that and I'm on YouTube for example, then I'd think "why is it following me?"

- Middlesbrough

Participants in Cardiff noted a distinction between political advertising and advertising a product. Although they still believed that consent should be required, participants explained how they would be less alarmed by being seemingly followed around the internet by retail products they might have been viewing, which they felt could be helpful for some.

"It serves me quite well. I get so much information that's sent to me and it suits me like concerts and stuff I'm interested in. But it worries me that it could be manipulated for the wrong reasons."

- Cardiff

Participants across locations were concerned about third party involvement in behavioural advertising and the security of data being shared across websites. Those who were most concerned were worried that this means their data is more likely to be misused because it is being shared with a larger number of organisations.

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

"I'm uncomfortable with my information being given out to YouTube and Instagram and going everywhere else in the world. I'd like to be asked for consent for this."

- Middlesbrough

Chapter 5: Targeted advertising: Common themes across all advertising approaches

This chapter brings together the common themes that emerged from participants' discussions across the range of targeted advertising approaches explored through the scenarios.

Summary of key findings from this chapter

The nature of ads influenced how comfortable participants felt with data being used for targeting advertising without consent.

- The more 'sensitive' the nature of the ad was seen to be, the greater the strength of feeling that consent should be required. Sensitive contexts included the use of political messaging, health conditions and medication.

Participants had mixed views on consenting users' data being used to make inferences about non-consenting users.

- Participants were concerned that this could lead to users feeling that their data is being misused or confusing whether their 'real' data is being used without consent.
- Inferences about sensitive attributes (e.g. gender, sexuality, medical conditions) felt particularly invasive.
- There were participants who were less concerned, seeing profiling as common in advertising.

Participants were concerned about data being used to target people who need extra support to protect themselves through targeted advertising.

- Participants worried about online advertisers targeting people when they are at their most vulnerable and exploiting them for financial gain. This included targeting medical adverts to people with health issues and misleading adverts.
- Participants wanted reassurance that there would be tangible consequences, such as fines or advertising bans, for using advertising to target people who need extra support to protect themselves, and for it to be clear to the public who they can complain to.

Participants expect clear, consistent and informative banners across advertising practices.

- Participants felt that online advertising and current consent banners purposefully confuse consumers and mislead people by not being clear on what data is used, by whom, and how it is used to deliver advertising.

- Participants suggested that advertising practices could be made easier for users to understand and make informed decisions about the use of their data by:
 - Improving consistency in how consent banners are presented across websites.
 - Using clear language and explanations.

Participants expect to have the option to opt out in situations where consent is not required.

- In situations where personal data is collected without consent, participants expect to have an option to opt out.
- Even if they do not intend to do this themselves, participants agree that this will help users feel in control of their data.

5.1. Overarching participants' views and expectations for targeted advertising

The nature of ads influenced how comfortable participants felt with data being used for targeting advertising without consent.

Across all locations, the nature of the ad was an important factor that influenced participant views on how comfortable they felt with what and how data was used without consent.

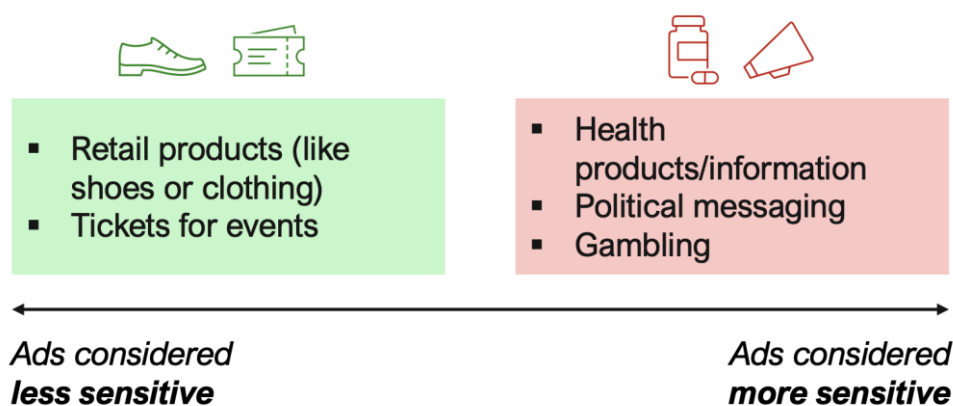


Figure 10: The types of adverts participants were more or less comfortable with.

Across the different scenarios explored, the more 'sensitive' the nature of the ad was seen to be, the greater the strength of feeling that consent should be required. While participants had different views on what defines a sensitive ad, the use of political messaging, health conditions, and medication felt more uncomfortable to participants when compared to advertising for shopping deals and retail products, such as shoes, clothing, and food.

When the supermarket promotion scenario introduced targeted ads for health supplements for symptoms of coeliac disease, this raised strong concerns about

the regulation and safety of products being advertised for participants in Cardiff. These participants worried about the risk of misleading users, who might perceive the ads to be giving medical advice. They were concerned about the potential negative implications for a person's physical and mental health if they are advertised health interventions based on inferences made about them.

Participants' deliberations indicated that the sensitivity of ads prompted concerns about the types of inferences made without consent. For example, in the supermarket scenario inferences made about a personal preference, such as being vegetarian felt acceptable. However, where browsing data was used to categorise people into 'buckets' of people living with certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, without consent, this felt uncomfortable for participants.

"I do not like the idea of my potential health problems being targeted by retailers. Drilling in too much doesn't seem necessary... But I don't mind recipes."

- Glasgow

Similarly, politically motivated advertising based on values and interests on social media felt instinctively uncomfortable for participants. Participants with this strongly held view were influenced by concerns of advertising contributing to creating an 'echo chamber' that entrenches deeply held views on social media. In their discussions, participants drew their own distinctions between political advertising on social media compared to advertising a product or service which was seen to be less harmful to individuals, and therefore, more acceptable.

"I think when I'm buying a product over any other website, I don't really have an issue with the way that you're using the data. But when it's something like social media which targets posts at you or specific attributes and things like that I think it becomes more important because that's an ideology."

- Cardiff

Participants had mixed views on consenting users' data being used to make inferences about non-consenting users.

Participants who were most concerned about profiling and control over their data felt that using the data of those who had consented to sharing it to make inferences about those who had not consented was a dishonest work around to the issue of consent. They argued that doing this would erode consumer trust and undermined the point of not consenting in the first place.

However, there were participants who were less concerned with data privacy and the idea of being profiled on this information. These participants felt that inferences made about individuals and profiling commonly happen across other forms of advertising. These participants discussed how adverts on daytime television are often targeted at older audiences as an example of this. For those

participants, this was seen as more acceptable and while this viewpoint was not widely held among participants, those that did feel this way, felt strongly.

Participants were concerned about data being used to manipulate or exploit people who need extra support to protect themselves through targeted advertising.

Across all approaches to targeted advertising, participants consistently expressed their concerns about data being used to target advertising to people who need extra support to protect themselves. They were concerned that people might not be informed about how online advertising uses data, particularly referencing older people. This concern influenced participant conversations and the expectations they had around advertising and the consent and controls required.

Participants reported the following concerns:

- **Targeting people when they are at their most vulnerable:** Concern that online advertisers purposefully target people when they are at their most vulnerable, and exploit them for their financial gain. For example, in the context of advertising urgent financial help for those with financial issues, targeting problem gamblers with gambling adverts, targeting people with medical issues and advertising of political messaging – and potentially exacerbating extremist views (as described in chapter 3).
- **Misleading adverts:** Concern that people could be exposed to and influenced by potentially misleading adverts, particularly in the context of health – for example, where people could buy products to help self-medicate an illness.

"What about the people who are perhaps more susceptible? This is what I'm kind of aware of as well. You know, we all browse, we all get these things popping up all the time."

- Middlesbrough

- **Confusion about how inferences are made:** Concern that people who need extra support to protect themselves would see adverts that appear specifically targeted at them. This could, in turn, make these users worried that personal data is being used to target these adverts, rather than it being based on inferences.

Participants wanted reassurance that ad content would be regulated to avoid exploitation of people who need extra support to protect themselves.

To help mitigate their concerns about people who need extra support to protect themselves being exploited by targeted advertisements, participants wanted clearer regulation on ads which can be targeted at users. They felt that they were unclear on the rules and regulations around online advertising and wanted

reassurance that there are definitive lines of accountability for advertisers and publishers.

In terms of what regulation should look like in practice, participants described wanting real, tangible consequences for using advertising to target people who need extra support to protect themselves, and for it to be clear to the public who they can complain to. Participants also spoke about the need for heavy fines or advertising bans for those who break the rules.

Participants expect clear, consistent, and informative banners across advertising practices.

Throughout the deliberations, participants described their expectations for more consistency and clarity in consent banners across all advertising practices.

Participants said that current approaches lack transparency, feeling as though consent banners purposefully confuse and mislead people by not being clear on what data is used, by whom, and how it is used to deliver advertising. This made online advertising difficult to navigate and contributed to a sense of unease about data being used.

Participants suggested that advertising practices could be made easier for users to understand and so make informed decisions about the use of their data.

These included:

- Greater consistency in how consent banners are presented to improve understanding and ensure users are not overwhelmed by the range of options, e.g. consent questions and options should be the same regardless of website.

"[Consent banners] should not be different for every website... every cookie pop up menu is different for different websites and then we have to go through them to see what to enable, what to disable."

- Glasgow

- Clear language and explanations to ensure users are able to give informed consent where necessary and can make decisions about using websites if consent is not required. Participants in Glasgow suggested using the style of language used on the gov.uk website to ensure it is accessible.

"[Consent banners] that are jargon free so we can make informed choices."

- Cardiff

Participants felt that giving people access to information about what data is used and by whom, in language and formats that people can easily understand, could improve trust in advertisers and publishers when using their data.

Participants expect to have the option to opt out in situations where consent is not required.

Where consent is not required, participants felt there should always be an option to opt out for targeted advertising. Even if they would not always opt out themselves, they felt there should always be that option to ensure users feel in control of how their data is used online.

Participants felt that they should be able to specifically opt out of data processing in relation to inferences made about them, use of location data, and account data if they wish.

Chapter 6: Measurement

Summary of key findings from this chapter

Participants expected some data collection without consent.

- Participants recognised the importance of using data to measure advertising by the industry.
- Participants felt broadly comfortable with aggregated data from a single website being collected for the purposes of measurement without the need for consent.
- Participants' level of comfort with measuring advertising was dependent on content of the advert. Measurement of types of data that were seen to be more sensitive (e.g. data related to a user's health) should require consent.
- Participants were less comfortable with tracking users across websites than approaches to measurement that stay on one website.

Participants felt that some controls are needed.

- Participants had concerns about re-identification for both aggregated and non-aggregated data.
- Participants wanted restrictions around purpose limitation to retain more control over their activity online.

Participants were introduced to the key features of how publishers and advertisers measure how adverts are performing. They were also introduced to two different approaches to measurement through scenarios. The introduction to ad measurement and the measurement scenarios that were presented to participants are outlined in the appendix.

6.1. Participants' views and expectations for measurement in advertising

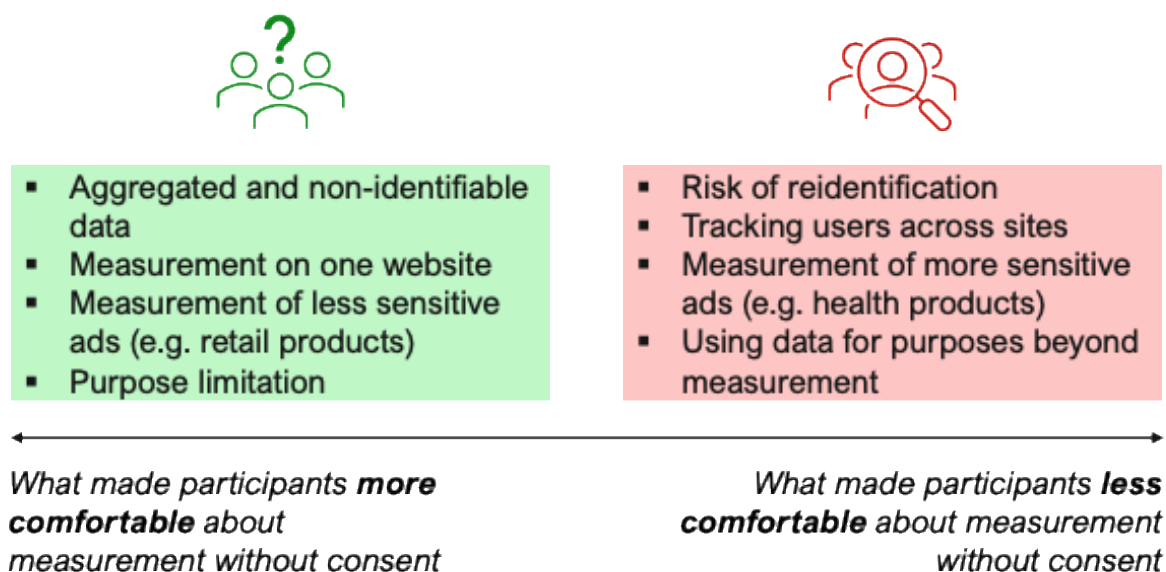


Figure 11: Scale showing what made participants more or less comfortable with measurement in advertising without consent.

Participants recognised the benefits of ad measurement to the industry and therefore expected some data collection without consent.

Participants acknowledged the need for advertisers to collect data on users, and this influenced high levels of acceptability towards both approaches to measurement that we tested. In particular, participants were comfortable with measurement of impressions and viewability of ads on a single website, on the condition that data is aggregated.

"The [baby food] scenario seems more useful for the ad company... it's not necessarily tracking our personal information, but it's letting them know whether an ad has worked. It seems safe and secure for us, but more information for them that doesn't invade our privacy."

- Glasgow

Participants felt that measuring adverts without consent was acceptable on the condition that this data is aggregated and non-identifiable.

Participants were broadly happy with the use of first party aggregated data to measure the effectiveness of an advert without consent. But some concerns remained about the detail of how this data would be handled.

Whether or not the data collected is aggregated was key in determining participants' levels of comfort. Participants described data being aggregated as a

'safety net', as the data collected could not be linked to any data they deemed 'personal', such as name, address, date of birth, and contact details.

"Because it would be very difficult to make any sort of inference about an individual from aggregated data, [I feel comfortable]."

- Cardiff

Where data is not aggregated, participants had concerns around advertisers and publishers being able to identify them as an individual, which did not feel proportionate to their needs for measurement. Across locations, this felt like a clear 'red line' to participants, who strongly felt that consent was needed to collect non-aggregated data for measurement.

"My standpoint would be implicit consent is fine for aggregated data, but it's personal data. That's why I think there has to be consent."

- Cardiff

Participants had concerns about re-identification.

Even where aggregated data is collected, there remained concerns about data security and privacy, such as potential security breaches. For participants who had these concerns, they raised questions about the possibility of the data being disaggregated in the future, and the potential for an individual to be 'reidentified'. In the case of a security breach, participants' specific concerns were around 'bad actors' gaining access to personally identifiable information, and using this for criminal activity such as identity theft and scams.

"I suppose the thing about giving information out to a third party is it could go anywhere in the world. The potential for it being hacked and then sold on the dark web or whatever. It doesn't particularly feel like a risk because you're part of a big group and you're still anonymous. But could somebody somehow ungroup that data and try and target you specifically?"

- Middlesbrough

Reassurances about how data is aggregated and the measures in place to ensure data breaches do not occur would make those who were more sceptical about this type of measurement feel more comfortable about it taking place without their consent.

Participants' level of comfort with measuring advertising was dependent on content of the advert.

As described within the context of targeted advertising in chapter 5, the content of the advert influenced participants' views on what was more or less acceptable in measurement. Whether the data collected could potentially reveal sensitive

data or information that could be used to identify a specific user determined which contexts participants were more or less comfortable with.

The greatest concerns were over adverts deemed to cover more sensitive topics, such as medical or healthcare advertising. Participants expressed concerns that collecting data in the pursuit of measuring these types of adverts might allow an organisation to identify sensitive information about them, or further data points that they have not consented to. For instance, if an advertiser knew the location of a person, and they were purchasing a very specific medication that would not be widely bought, they may be able to deduce they have a specific medical condition. Concerns were also raised about data being collected about potentially contentious medical interventions, such as the contraceptive pill, and the consequences this could have for users.

"Medications and things that can more easily individualise someone [are a red line]. You can imply a lot by the fact that someone might be ordering contraception online. You can imply that that person might be female or assigned female at birth at least. So, the line of when something's as sensitive as that, then the consent definitely needs to have an option there."

- Cardiff

The prospect of re-identification was more worrying for participants in the online pharmacy scenario than the baby food scenario, due to the nature of the advertising and the data collected on users. Participants who were most uncomfortable with medical or healthcare advertising strongly felt that consent would be needed for the measurement of this type of advertising.

Participants were less comfortable with tracking users across websites than approaches to measurement that stay on one website, but were still broadly happy for this to happen without consent at an aggregated level.

Collecting data across multiple websites impacted participants' comfort with their data being used for advertising measurement. The level of concern, however, was low; participants broadly remained comfortable enough with this scenario to be happy for this to happen without consent.

Participants that did have concerns felt that connecting activity between websites is too invasive and worried about lacking control over their data. They did not want a profile being created about their online behaviour without consent. Concerns were driven by being unaware of which organisations have access to their data, and the potential for these organisations to use this to target advertising to them in the future, as described later in this chapter.

Being unaware of, or unable to track, who has access to their data also raised concerns about whether these organisations were handling their data safely. There was a perception that the risk of a security breach rises as the number of

organisations that have access to users' data increases, reflecting similar concerns held about behavioural advertising tracking a user's behaviour across the internet.

"For me personally, this goes over the line as this ad is no longer self-contained... now there is some sort of overarching data that exists of you on this website, and what you were doing on this website."

- Glasgow

Participants wanted controls around purpose limitation to restrict the use of their data.

Participants expected organisations collecting measurement data, no matter the type, to only use it for the stated purpose of measurement. This was driven by the risks of re-identification outlined earlier in this chapter and reflects a wider lack of trust in organisations to use data collected for only the stated purposes.

Participants expressed concerns that data collected for the purposes of measurement could be shared with third-parties or combined with additional data points to target adverts to them without their consent. This was particularly concerning for measurement data of 'sensitive' products, like healthcare products.

"Because the product is pharmaceutical, I'm already a bit more cautious ... What's to stop [the data] being shared in future with other companies?... In theory, I would feel very comfortable. But emotionally, not so much."

- Glasgow

Participants expected controls for organisations to ensure that this data was not used beyond its intended purpose, and to ensure greater transparency and control over their data online.

Chapter 7: Expectations for new routes to viable online advertising

This chapter outlines a set of expectations for new routes to viable online advertising. The following expectations are rooted in analysis of participant deliberations across the jury sessions and analysis of the expectations they developed themselves at the end of each jury session. These expectations should be reflected in future decision making about different approaches for new routes to viable online advertising.

Expectation 1: Sharing data with third parties for advertising should always require consent.

Across the three approaches to targeted advertising explored, participants felt strongly that data being shared with third parties should always require consent. They worried that users would feel they are being tracked across websites or that their online activity is being monitored. While this view applied to personal, aggregated and anonymised data, it was strongest for the sharing of personal data.

Expectation 2: Consent should always be required for precise location data to be used in advertising.

Across jury discussions on both targeting and measurement advertising approaches, participants wanted consent to be required for the use of precise location data. The more precise the location got, the more uncomfortable the juries became about this data being used without consent. This was viewed as intrusive and not a proportionate use of data.

There was broad agreement that general location data, such as country or region could be used without consent, whereas there were more mixed views on the use of town or borough location, which felt too precise to share. Participants felt strongly that more precise locations, such as full postcodes, should require consent.

Expectation 3: Only limited use of first party data advertising was expected and accepted when users create an account for a website. Consent should still be sought for using more sensitive account data.

Participants felt that by creating an account for a website, a user would have the expectation for a website to use their sign-up data and preferences to deliver first party advertising. They felt that by creating an account, people should be comfortable with that website using some of their data for advertising. This felt different to just visiting a website, as users have chosen to share their information when registering.

But context affects this view. For example, the more sensitive the information required, the more likely participants were to suggest that consent should be sought at sign-up.

Expectation 4: Behavioural ads based on third party activity should always require consent.

Across the juries, participants were uncomfortable with behavioural advertising and adverts following people as they move between different websites. Participants had clear expectations about being able to make an informed choice about whether their data is used for behavioural advertising.

Expectation 5: Consent for measurement is not generally required if data is aggregated, not identifiable or re-identifiable.

Participants were largely comfortable with aggregated data being used for measurement. They recognised the importance of advertisers being able to gather the insights they need to understand the effectiveness of their advert. They felt that this was acceptable where data was not identifiable or re-identifiable.

It felt disproportionate that information that could be used to re-identify someone, such as date of birth, contact information, or precise location should be used for measurement without consent.

Expectation 6: Data used for measurement should only be held for a limited time.

Participants expected that there should be a time limit on how long data is held for when measuring advertising, even if data is aggregated. Participants did not reach a consensus on how long data could be held, with views ranging from six months to several years. They did not like the idea of data being held by organisations indefinitely and felt it was important that data is only held for as long as is necessary - ideally the shorter the amount of time, the better.

Expectation 7: Publishers should share information about the type of advertising being used on their website and the data collected, even if consent is not required.

Participants suggested that publishers who use data without consent should always include a disclaimer on their site, or signpost users to somewhere obvious, so that people can make informed choices about using a website. They suggested that this should include what data is being used and how it is being used, even when consent is not required.

Expectation 8: There should be consequences, such as fines and advertising bans, for advertisers and publishers using targeted advertising to exploit people who need extra support to protect themselves in industries deemed more sensitive.

There were widespread concerns about the risks of organisations targeting advertising at people who need extra support to protect themselves for financial gain. Participants felt that there should be different standards for different industries - such as medical, political messaging and gambling industries - which they perceived to be more sensitive and could have wider negative implications

than, for example, retail. Participants felt that if rules are broken then there should be consequences, such as heavy fines or advertising bans, and it should be clear to the public who they can complain to.

Appendix

- i. Overview of the Citizens' Jury workshop agenda
- ii. Definitions and scenarios
- iii. Overview of expert videos
- iv. Full sample breakdown

i. Overview of the Citizens' Jury workshop agenda

Below is a brief overview of the structure of the workshop:

Chapter	Content covered
Introduction to the Citizens' Jury	Information was shared on the aims and purpose of the research.
Introduction to online advertising	<p>Participants watched three videos to build their understanding of online advertising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of online advertising (delivered by an ICO colleague) • Advertisers' perspective • Publishers' perspective <p>The videos detailing the advertisers' perspective and the publishers' perspective were recorded by advertising and publishing experts respectively. After participants had watched the videos, these experts joined the workshop via Zoom for a question and answer session with participants.</p> <p>Participants received information on what may change in the future regarding online advertising and data use.</p> <p>Participants were introduced to targeted advertising.</p>
Exploring targeted advertising	Participants were introduced to different targeting practices with various levels of data-reliance, starting with contextual, moving on to first party and finishing with behavioural advertising approaches. Participants worked within their breakout groups to discuss their expectations around consent in each scenario.

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

<p>Exploring measurement of advertising</p>	<p>Information was shared on how measurement of advertising works, including risks for users and benefits for publishers and advertisers.</p> <p>Participants were then asked to consider two different measurement scenarios and discuss expectations around consent in their breakout groups.</p>
<p>Expectations for online advertising</p>	<p>Based on the discussions throughout the day, participants came up with a list of expectations for the use of data in online advertising.</p>

ii. Definitions and scenarios

The following pages contain:

- Definitions used to introduce participants to different approaches to targeted advertising and measurement.
- Scenarios (and their different iterations) shown to participants during the Citizens' Jury workshops to illustrate how targeted advertising and measurement of advertising works, and what data may be collected. Participants were given time to reflect on each iteration before being shown the next, allowing moderators to pull out where any 'red lines' were as they progressed through the scenarios.

Contextual advertising

We introduced participants to the concept of contextual advertising in their breakout group discussions, using the following definition:

Contextual ads can be based on the content of the page a user is viewing. It can include things like the time of day, their location, the device they're using, and general information like typical interests of the users viewing the page—but not their personal identity.

It's a way to make ads more relevant to users without needing to know exactly who they are.

Advertisers and publishers use 'content categories' which helps put the content on websites into hundreds of categories. For example, a user viewing a website about car reviews may be shown adverts for car insurance. The website would fall into the categories of 'automotive' and 'personal finance'.

An assumption about what is relevant is made based on what users are currently viewing and the wider context.

We used two scenarios to explore participants' view on contextual advertising: a travel blog and financial news website. Half of participants in each location discussed the travel blog, and half discussed the financial news website scenario.

We introduced three iterations of each scenario to participants, which built on one another. For each contextual advertising scenario, we tested:

- **Iteration one:** Views on using the most basic form of contextual advertising to serve ads based on the content of the article. The travel blog scenario also used device data (such as device type, language and time zone) in this iteration.
- **Iteration two:** How views changed when a website makes inferences about a user based on similar people that had consented to personalised advertising to serve more specific ads. This included testing the use of additional data such as time of day and location.

- **Iteration three:** How views changed with the use of additional data to serve ads based on content of the article, article sentiment, and time of day. This included targeted adverts being shown by a webpage based on inferred sexuality and adverts for urgent financial help based on the contents of a financial article being viewed.

Scenario A: Travel Blog

Scenario (1/3)

- You are browsing a travel blog on your phone, looking at articles about beach holidays.
- **The website uses contextual advertising to show you ads that match the content of the articles** (what the article is about). You see ads for beach resorts in Greece next to the article.
- Your phone tells the website that you're on a mobile device which is an Android, your language settings are set to English and that you're in the UK time zone.
- All of this happens in the background to make the ads more relevant to you, without needing to know exactly who you are.

Scenario (2/3)

- You continue to look at the travel blog on your phone.
- Because it's late summer, you might see ads for last-minute getaways.
- Since you're in Oldham, the ads might feature flights from Manchester Airport.
- **The website might assume your age group and interests** based on people similar to you that had consented to personalised advertising. For example, people with Android phones, in a particular postcode in Oldham and are interested in travel websites.
- As a result, you might be shown ads for adventure tours or family-friendly resorts.

Scenario (3/3)

- The travel blog article was categorised under 'adventure travel' and 'Greece'. Because the article mentions a festival for LGBTQIA+ community, it's also categorised under 'nightclubs'.
- Artificial intelligence is used to scan the article text to assess the tone of the article (if it is positive or negative). It finds that the article talks positively about the party culture on some Greek islands.
- Based on similar people who consented to personalised advertising on the travel blog, the publisher makes an assumption that you are a man.
- **Based on these attributes, readers of the article might be profiled as a man who likes to travel and party.**

- You then see an ad for a group holiday on the Greek island Mykonos known for its party culture and many LGBTQIA+ venues.

Scenario B: Financial news

Scenario (1/3)

- You are reading a news article about rising mortgage rates on a financial news site.
- **The site works with an advertising partner that scans the article's content for relevant financial terms or phrases.**
- When an article discusses 'mortgage rates', the system automatically displays mortgage comparison ads from participating banks.

Scenario (2/3)

- The site also gathers information about your location, postcode and the tablet or device you're using.
- **It uses information about other people who live in that postcode with a similar brand and model of tablet or device to make more accurate guesses about ads you might find relevant.**
- You then start to see ads for more specific mortgage products from local building societies.

Scenario (3/3)

- The article goes on to discuss the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on single parent families. You are reading this article at night, before going to bed.
- **The site uses a combination of financial terms in the article, your device information, your postcode and the time of day to show you more targeted ads.**
- You start to see ads for 'urgent help' or 'emergency funds' such as payday loans, and credit card deals, or parenting advice platforms and buy-now-pay-later schemes.

First party data advertising

We introduced participants to the concept of first party data advertising in their breakout group discussions, using the following definition:

First party data is information a company collects directly from its users or customers through its own website.

In this approach to advertising, data is collected about a user and is only used to decide which advertisements are shown on that specific web page or by that specific organisation. This data is not shared with any other organisation.

Data potentially used in first party data advertising could include:

- Account data, such as name, email address and postal address
- Behavioural data, for example time spent looking at specific content on a webpage
- Purchase history

We used two scenarios to explore participants' views on first party data advertising: a supermarket promotions scenario and political messaging scenario. Half of participants in each location discussed the supermarket promotions scenario, and half discussed the political messaging scenario.

We introduced three iterations of each scenario to participants, which built on one another. For each first party data advertising scenario, we tested:

- **Iteration one:** Views on using first party data advertising to serve ads based on information directly from activity on a site. This included data collected about what is searched for, what is clicked on, and how long is spent on each page. It also categorises the user into broad categories based on the content a user engages with. For the political messaging scenario this also included the use of account data such as age, gender, and location and engagement data, such as posts on a social media website.
- **Iteration two:** How views changed when a website uses more information from a user's account to target relevant ads. In the supermarket promotion scenario this included information like name, gender, date of birth and saved preferences. In the political messaging scenario, the social media website also analysed the user's posts and messages to infer their emotional state of mind combining this with profiles of similar users to determine what ads a user might engage with. It also used information about when a user is most active and most emotionally engaged in the site.
- **Iteration three:** How views changed when a website uses more profiling techniques to serve ads based on multiple data points from a user's account, browsing history and activity on the website. This also tested

views on inferring a health condition in the supermarket scenario and serving ads about one political party in the political messaging scenario.

Below is the stimulus that was shown to participants:

Scenario C: Supermarket promotions

Scenario (1/4)

- You are browsing a supermarket's website and looking at recipes.
- **The supermarket gathers information directly from your activity on their site.** They use this data to show you ads from other advertisers, like health-conscious food brands.
- They collect data about what you search for, which recipes you click on, and how long you spend on each page. **They categorise you into broad categories**, like 'vegetarian' or 'gluten-free' based on what you looked at.

Scenario (2/4)

- **The supermarket uses information from your account, like name, gender and date of birth and the saved preferences on your account to target you with ads.** You set your preferences for gluten free foods and meals.
- As you continue browsing the recipes, the supermarket shows you ads for gluten-free products from gluten free brands, like bread or pasta, while you're still on their site.
- **If you create an account, they can link your recipe browsing with your shopping history.**
- Over time, this allows their advertising partners to show more targeted ads like health supplements for symptoms of coeliac disease.
- **All of this stays within the supermarket's own system.**

Scenario (3/4)

- **The supermarket uses data they have from your account, browsing their site, your loyalty card (like in-store purchases) and context of the page you are viewing (what's on it) to show you ads.**
- The recipe you are reading says that it is low carb and unlikely to significantly spike your blood sugar.
- Because you showed interest in the recipe (by spending a long time reading it) and the content of the recipe site is categorised as 'diabetes', you see ads to help with diabetes management (e.g. for glucose monitors)

Scenario D: Political messaging on social media

Scenario (1/4)

- You join a social media site to follow well-known personalities, join special interest groups and communicate with friends.

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

- **The site uses your account data** (age, gender, location) **and engagement data** (group memberships, articles and posts on the social media site) to figure out your values and interests.
- You see adverts that relate to your interests and values such as climate change and environmental groups.

Scenario (2/4)

- As you continue to use the site, it builds up a more detailed picture of your interests. **It does this using the content you engage with and when, and your emotional state of mind via your posts and messages.**
- This is combined with profiles of similar users to figure out more information about who you are and what you might engage with.
- You see ads for protests and political events with activist slogans framed in ways that appeal to who you are and what you are interested in. For example, protests about fossil fuels.
- **These are timed for maximum impact and shown to you when you're most active on social media and emotionally engaged.**

Scenario (3/4)

- **The site combines information about your social media activity and contextual information such as your location and device data.**
- There is a local election coming up in your area. You and others with similar profiles in a similar geographical location are shown ads about upcoming political rallies.
- You are also shown an increased amount of campaign videos from one political party that aligns with your political interests and values.

Behavioural advertising

When exploring behavioural advertising, the following definition was used:

Behavioural advertising is a type of online advertising that shows you ads based on your past actions, like the websites you visited previously, things you clicked on, or products you looked at.

A user's activity is tracked across multiple sites to build a picture of that user.

If you browse for running shoes on one website and then see ads for running shoes on a different website, that's behavioural advertising.

Data used in behavioural advertising:

- Websites you visit
- Search terms you use
- Products you have viewed or purchased

Our approach to introducing behavioural advertising to participants differed from contextual and first party data advertising.

The two scenarios explored in first party data advertising were used to present a fourth iteration which introduced the concept of behavioural advertising. We used the supermarket promotions and political messaging scenarios to help tease out what was more or less acceptable for behavioural advertising. We grounded the behavioural advertising approach in a context already well understood by participants to avoid overwhelming them with too many different scenarios. This allowed participants to remain focused on the laddering of more complex ways that data is collected and used.

Below is the stimulus that was shown to participants:

Scenario C: Supermarket promotions

Scenario (4/4)

- **Later, because of your repeated interest in gluten-free content, you start seeing ads for private health insurance plans** that cover dietary consultations or chronic condition support.
- **On YouTube and Instagram**, you are shown ads for at-home gluten sensitivity test kits and private clinics that offer diagnostic services.
- This happens even though you never searched for them directly.

Scenario D: Political messaging on social media

Scenario (4/4)

- Later you visit a news site and read articles about the local election.

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

- You see more ads from the political party that aligns with your values **based on data about your activity on the social media site.**
- After that you go on to YouTube and the site shows you ads of influencers' video channels that align with your political values and leanings.
- These ads are based on your activity on the original social media site.

Measurement

Participants were introduced to the key features of how publishers and advertisers measure how adverts are performing in the following way:

Measurement means keeping track of how well online ads are working. Companies use this information to decide how much money to spend on ads and to make sure that money is being used wisely.

Measurement is used to answer three key questions:

- How many people saw the advertisement?
- How did people interact with the advertisement?
- What actions did people take after seeing or clicking the advertisement? This is also known as the conversions or attributions.

Ads can appear in many places, reach different people, and look or work in different ways. By seeing which ones work best, a brand can spend its money more wisely and get better results.

We used two different scenarios to explore participants' views on how adverts are measured. Participants explored both scenarios in small groups before discussing their views at their breakout table. In the scenarios we tested:

- **Baby food scenario:** A more privacy conscious approach that collects data on impressions, views, and clicks, but does not track conversions or attributions. In this scenario, there is no tracking across websites.
- **Online pharmacy scenario:** In this scenario, impressions, views, and clicks are measured in the same way, however the publisher also tracks if someone visited the site and if someone bought a product. This data is aggregated and not shared at an individual level.

Below is the stimulus that was shown to participants:

Scenario A: Baby food

- A baby food company wants to promote a new product range for toddlers. They place banner ads on a parent forum.
- The parent forum (the publisher) and the baby food company (advertiser) **agree to a privacy-conscious approach to measure the advert.**
- This approach does not track users across different websites or use the same ID numbers representing people across websites.
- **They track when someone sees an ad and when they click on it. They do not track if someone visits the baby food company site or goes on to buy the product.**

Impressions, clicks and views are used in the same way as scenario B:

- **Impressions:** Both the parent forum (the publisher) and the baby food company (advertiser) record that the ad appeared. They don't collect any information about who saw it.
- **Views:** They only check if the ad was visible on the screen to make sure the ad wasn't hidden or fake, but they don't go any deeper than that.
- **Clicks:** They record if people click the ad, but no other personal information is collected.

But conversions and attributions are used differently in this scenario:

- **Conversions:** They don't track what happens after people click the baby food advert. If you choose to buy or sign-up, that information is not connected to your activity on the publisher site.
- **Attribution:** Over a period of time, they use mathematical methods to guess which baby food advert worked best, but they don't follow you across different sites.

The conversions are not tracked, so the publisher who is showing you the ad will know that you clicked it, but they won't know that you bought something.

What it means for advertisers and websites:

- This approach represents the core elements that advertisers need to deliver campaigns (ads).
- No tracking across websites is enabled so websites and advertisers won't get a complete picture about who's viewed their ads.
- Only measuring these data points gives a broad picture and may not be detailed enough for **advertisers with** smaller budgets who need to know if their ad led to a purchase or not.

What it means for users:

- This approach only shows that the ad was delivered and maybe clicked, without tracking people or collecting detailed data.
- **This approach uses less of people's information.**

Scenario B: Online pharmacy

- An online pharmacy wants to promote some of their products. They run digital ads across many different websites and apps, like news sites and lifestyle blogs to reach more people.
- The news sites and lifestyle blogs (publishers) track data about how many ads were clicked and share this information with the online pharmacy (the advertiser).
- The online pharmacy also knows how many users visited the online pharmacy's website and went on to purchase.

- **This information is grouped together and not tied to an individual** – a user will be one of many people who went from a publisher's site to the online pharmacy's site.
- The online pharmacy receives aggregated data from the lifestyle blog and news sites. They will know that over the past week, their ad was shown on 100 websites and how many people bought something from each website after seeing the ad. But they will not receive information about individuals.

Impressions, clicks and views are used in the same way as scenario A:

- **Impressions:** Both the news sites/lifestyle blogs (the publishers) and the online pharmacy (the advertiser) record that the ad appeared. They don't collect any information about who saw it.
- **Views:** They only check if the ad was visible on the screen to make sure the ad wasn't hidden or fake, but they don't go any deeper than that.
- **Clicks:** They record if people click the ad, but no other personal information is collected.

But conversions and attributions are used differently in this scenario:

- **Conversions:** Information about if you visit a brands' site or buy a product is collected but not shared at an individual level. It is connected to your previous activity on the publisher's site and grouped with other people's information. It is sent to advertisers as a summarised report. It's not much information but is very useful for the advertiser.
- **Attribution:** They use mathematical methods and statistics reports more accurately and quickly understand which ads worked best, but they don't follow you across different sites.

The publisher and advertiser will know that you clicked the ad and will also know that you bought something on the website where the ad sent you. Because they have more information about what happened after you clicked the ad, they can figure out faster and guess more accurately which ad worked best.

What it means for advertisers and websites:

- Advertisers receive a summary report of the number of people who clicked on their ad and visited their site.
- This approach is useful to a wider range of advertisers, particularly large and medium sized businesses.

What it means for users:

- This approach shows that the ad was delivered and maybe clicked.
- Your individual activity is tracked but it is grouped with other people's information as a statistic so you can't be identified individually.

iii. Overview of Expert Videos

This section of the appendix provides an overview of the content of the two expert speaker videos from the Citizens' Juries.

Videos of the publisher and advertiser perspectives were shown to the Juries early on in the Jury workshops (see Jury agenda in section 2 of the appendix) after the topic was introduced.

Publisher perspective: James Florence, Head of Advertising Technology at Immediate Media

- **Introduction:** Introduction of Immediate Media as a publisher producing content across magazines, websites, podcasts, and video, with advertising central to funding this work.
- **Role of publishers:** Immediate Media was outlined as a portfolio of trusted brands such as *BBC Good Food* and *Radio Times*. James described how publishing now spans video, audio, apps, events, and third-party platforms like Spotify and YouTube, requiring publishers to operate as both content creators and technology companies.
- **Importance of advertising:** Participants heard how dependent publishing is on online advertising for revenue. James described the importance of online advertising in keeping content free, supporting journalism, and enabling businesses to reach audiences.
- **How it works:** James described how data is used by publishers to improve relevance, measure impact, and ensure ads reach genuine audiences, focusing on groups with shared interests rather than individuals.
- **Shift to privacy-preserving models:** Participants learnt how new approaches aim to reduce individual tracking while maintaining relevance, but widespread opt outs significantly affect publishers' ability to fund content.
- **Impact on consumers:** Greater privacy and control are seen as positive by publishers, but reduced ad revenues risk driving more paywalls and subscriptions. The challenge lies in balancing privacy with accessibility.

Advertiser perspective: Katie Eyton, Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer at Omnicom Media Group UK

- **Introduction:** Introduction of Omnicom Media Group and the role of media agencies in deciding where to place adverts so they reach the right audiences.
- **Use of data in advertising:** Advertising budgets are limited, so data is crucial for targeting. Contextual advertising places ads alongside relevant content, but audience data (e.g. age, income, lifestyle) makes targeting more precise and valuable, leading to the rise of data brokers. These brokers use cookies and device identifiers to track browsing, searches, and locations, then group people into marketable segments.

- **Functions of cookies and identifiers:** Beyond profiling, cookies support important uses such as age restrictions (e.g. preventing children from seeing alcohol ads), frequency capping to avoid ad fatigue, verifying delivery of impressions, and measuring outcomes like purchases or donations.
- **Impact of cookie consent:** Rejecting cookies prevents advertisers from targeting, measuring, or verifying campaigns. Even contextual advertising, which does not track individuals, becomes difficult to sell without cookies because publishers cannot prove effectiveness to advertisers.
- **Consequences for consumers:** Without the ability to measure advertising impact, publishers struggle to generate revenue, making it harder to keep content free. This risks reducing consumer choice and increasing reliance on subscriptions or paywalls.

iv. Full sample breakdown

We used a purposive recruitment approach using a recruitment specification and screener to ensure that we recruited participants with a mix of demographics, including age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as a mix of attitudes and behaviours towards using online services and data usage.

As this research is qualitative, the sample represents a range of experiences and perspectives, rather than being designed to achieve statistical representation.

The table below details the demographics of the participants who took part in the Citizens' Jury workshops.

Citizens' Jury sample		
Gender	Man	13
	Woman	18
	Other gender identity	1
Location	Glasgow	10
	Cardiff	8
	Middlesbrough	14
Ethnicity	Asian / Asian British	6
	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	1
	White British / White European / White other	24
	Mixed	1
Age	18 - 29	5
	30 - 44	11
	45 - 64	10
	65 +	6
Disability	Long-term illness, health problem, disability or impairment	14
Sexuality	Straight / Heterosexual	27
	Lesbian / Gay	2
	Bisexual / Pansexual	3

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

Employment status	I work full time. (30+ hours per week)	10	
	I work part time. (8-29 hours per week)	10	
	I am not working, but seeking work or temporarily unemployed / sick	3	
	I am not working and not seeking work	2	
	Student	1	
	Homemaker / house person / housewife / househusband etc.	0	
	Retired	6	
Household composition	One person household	8	
	Single family household	18	
	Multiple family household	4	
	Houseshare	2	
	Other	0	
SEG	ABC1	17	
	C2DE	15	
Attitudes toward online services	How often do you use online services such as social media, online shopping, or streaming services?	Daily	27
		Several times a week	4
		Once a week	1
	When websites or apps ask for your permission to use your data to show you more relevant or personalised ads, what do you typically do? (Please select the option that best describes your usual response)	I usually accept	8
		I usually reject	13
		It depends	10
		I don't really think about it	1
	How comfortable would you say you feel doing things online? (e.g. shopping, communicating with friends,	I am very comfortable doing things online	24

Citizens' Juries on New Routes to Viable Online Advertising

	accessing entertainment, engaging with public services etc.)		
		I am somewhat comfortable doing things online	4
		I am somewhat uncomfortable doing things online but am able to manage	4