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International Publics Brace for Cyberattacks on Elections, Infrastructure, National Security

Many doubt their countries are prepared for major cyber hacks

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International Publics Brace for Cyberattacks on Elections, Infrastructure, National Security

Many doubt their countries are prepared for major cyber hacks

As the pace and magnitude of cyberattacks have increased around the world, a new survey shows that people in multiple countries think it is likely that government data, public infrastructure and elections will be targeted by future hacks. Opinion is mixed, however, on whether their nations are prepared for such events.

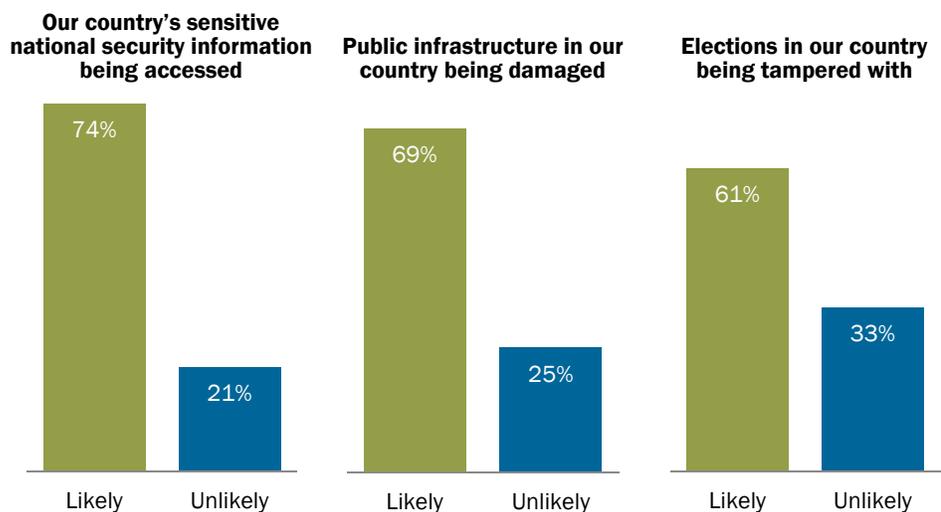
Across the 26 countries surveyed by Pew Research Center, nearly half (47%) say their country is well prepared to handle a major cyberattack, but an equal share disagrees. Attitudes vary widely by country. Two-thirds or more in Israel (73%) and Russia (67%), for example, say their nations are ready for a major cyber incident, while fewer than one-in-five Brazilians (16%) and Argentines (9%) say the same. In the United States, just over half of Americans (53%) think their country is prepared to handle a major cyberattack.

But half or more in some of the world's largest economies, including Germany and Japan, think they are not ready for cyberattacks.

In many cases, views about a country's preparedness are shaped in part by partisanship and attitudes toward the party in power. People who support the governing party are often more likely to think their nation can handle a large cyber hack. In the U.S., Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are far more likely (61%) than

People say cyberattacks on national security information, public infrastructure and elections are likely in their country

It is ___ that, in the future, a cyberattack will result in ...



Note: Percentages are medians based on 26 countries. "Likely" includes those who say a cyberattack is "very" or "somewhat" likely and those who volunteer that such attacks have already happened.

Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey. Q48a-c.

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Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (47%) to say the country is prepared for an attack on computer systems.

When it comes to the likelihood of cyberattacks, most say that an attack where sensitive national security information will be accessed is either very or somewhat likely (or volunteer that this has already happened). A median of 74% across the 26 countries hold this view.

While relative fears about the likelihood of attacks on public infrastructure and election tampering are less widespread than concerns about national security data being breached, a median of 69% and 61%, respectively, say these are likely to happen. Worries about infrastructure attacks are more prevalent among older respondents in a handful of nations, such as in Sweden, Canada and Germany. Meanwhile, relatively few Russians say election tampering is likely to happen to their nation (44%).

Of the 26 publics surveyed, Americans are among the most likely to say cyberattacks will happen. Roughly eight-in-ten or more in the U.S. say public infrastructure will be damaged (83%), national security information will be accessed (82%), or elections will be tampered with (78%) via cyberattack. Democrats in the U.S. are much more convinced of likely election tampering (87%) than are Republicans (66%), and older Americans are more worried about infrastructure damage.

These are among the findings of a Pew Research Center survey in 26 countries among 27,612 respondents from May 14 to Aug. 12, 2018.

Globally, publics are split on whether their country is prepared for a major cyberattack

Several of the nations surveyed have been victims of notable cyberattacks against their public infrastructure or government agencies in [recent years](#). Overall, publics are split on whether their country is prepared for such attacks: A median of 47% say it is, while the same proportion says it is not.

In the U.S., which has been the victim of over 100 major cyber incidents since 2006, more say the country is prepared than unprepared for a major cyberattack (53% vs. 43%).

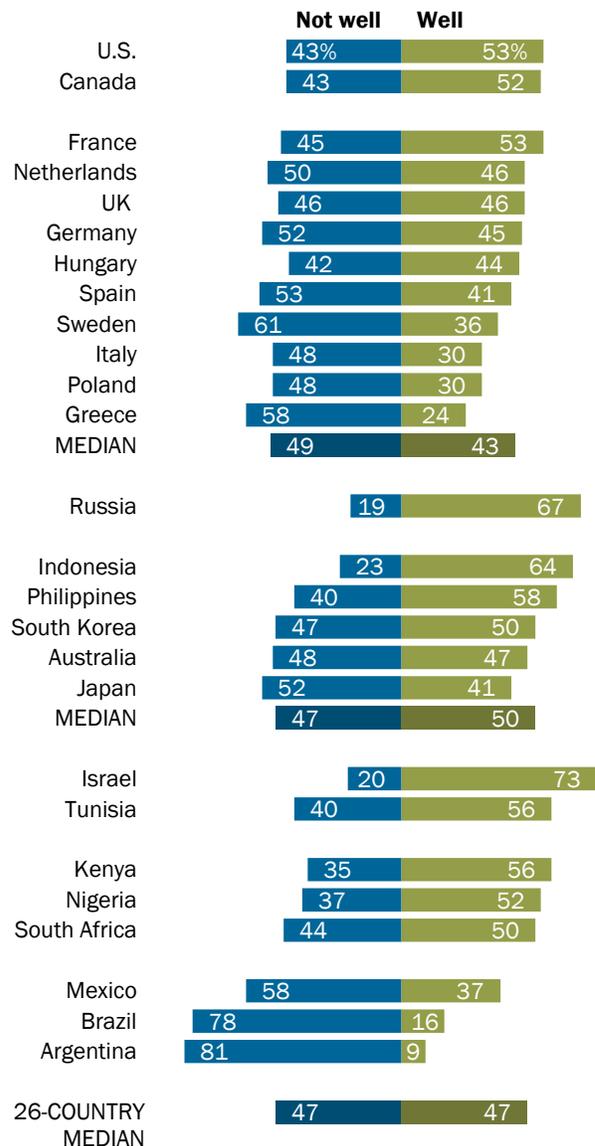
Europeans, on balance, are more pessimistic than optimistic about whether their countries can deal with a large-scale cyber hack. France is the only country in the region where more than half say it is well-prepared to deal with a cyber incident.

Public doubts about the ability to fend off a major cyber hack are especially widespread in some Latin American countries. Roughly eight-in-ten in both Argentina and Brazil say their countries are not prepared, including 49% of Argentines and 42% of Brazilians who describe their countries as not prepared *at all*.

Not all publics feel ill-prepared for an attack. Two-thirds of Russians and 64% of Indonesians believe their country is ready to address a significant attack. Israelis are even more optimistic: Almost three-quarters agree that their nation is prepared for a major cyberattack. Meanwhile, in three sub-Saharan African nations surveyed, half or more say they are well prepared for such attacks.

Israelis and Russians are most likely to say their country is ready to deal with a major cyberattack

Our country is ___ prepared to handle a major cyberattack



Note: "Don't know" and "Refused" responses not shown.
Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey. Q49.

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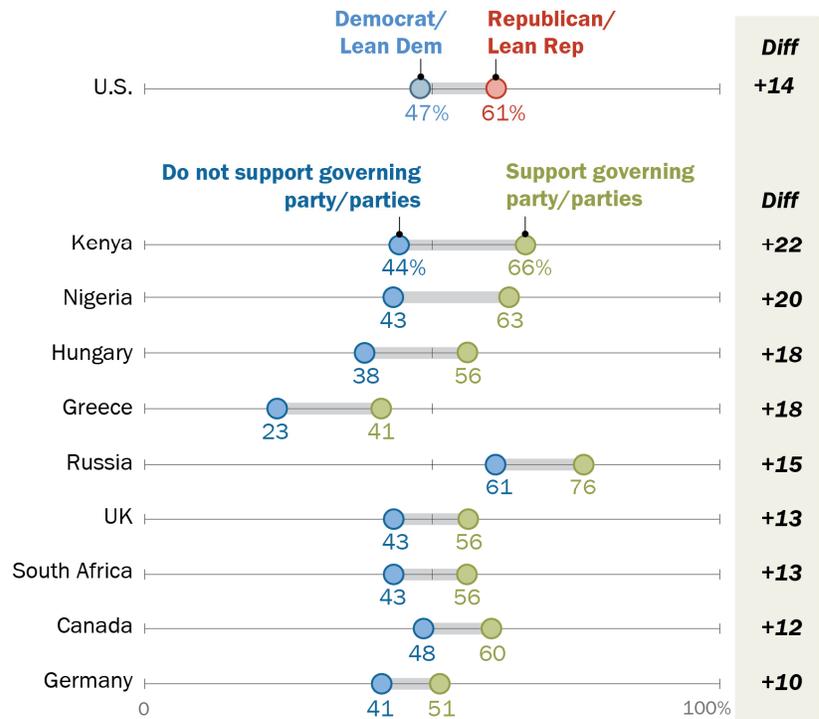
In some Asian-Pacific nations surveyed, there are doubts about the ability to protect against cyberstrikes. Roughly half in Japan (52%), Australia (48%) and South Korea (47%) say their country is *not well* prepared to handle a major cyberattack.

In 10 of the nations surveyed, perceptions of readiness are higher among supporters of the party or parties in power. In the U.S., for example, 61% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents believe the U.S. is well-prepared to deal with a major cyber incident. Fewer than half of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (47%) agree.

Roughly three-quarters of Russians who support President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party are optimistic that their country could handle an attack, compared with 61% among those who do not support the party. A similar pattern is found in a diverse set of countries across Africa and Europe, as well as in Canada.

People who support the party in power are more likely to say their country is ready for cyberattack

Our country is well prepared to handle a major cyberattack



Note: All differences shown are statistically significant. See Appendix for list of governing parties by country.

Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey. Q49.

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National security breaches seen as most likely form of cyberattack, but worries about infrastructure damage and election tampering abound

There is general agreement across the 26 countries surveyed that all three forms of cyberattacks asked about – national security information being accessed, public infrastructure being damaged, and elections being tampered with – are likely scenarios.

Concerns about sensitive government information being hacked are especially widespread. Half or more in each country surveyed say a cyberattack that accesses confidential government data is likely to occur. This includes eight-in-ten or more in South Korea, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan, the U.S. and Tunisia. Almost half of Americans (47%) say the accessing of sensitive national security data is *very* likely to happen or has already occurred.

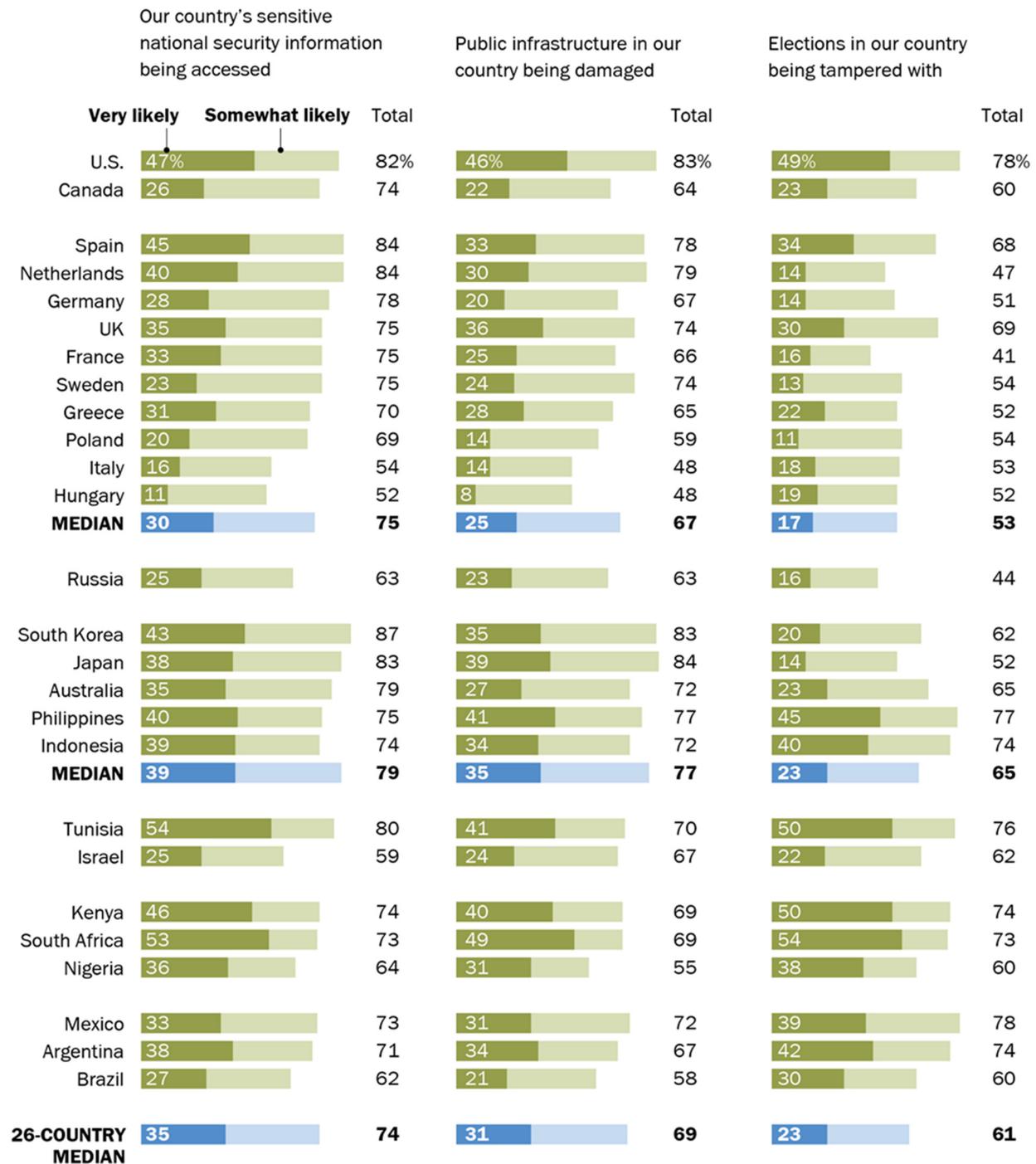
Across the 10 European countries polled, a median of three-quarters say national security hacking is likely, although concern is less acute in Italy (54%) and Hungary (52%). Meanwhile, nearly eight-in-ten across five Asian-Pacific nations surveyed say national security data being accessed by hackers is likely.

Worries about damage to public infrastructure are not as common as worries about vulnerabilities in national security data, but roughly half or more in every country surveyed believe it is likely. Concern is highest in Japan (84%), the U.S. and South Korea (83% each). But two-thirds across Europe and majorities in the Middle Eastern, sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries surveyed also deem infrastructure attacks likely.

Election tampering is seen as likely by a median of 61% across the 26 countries surveyed. Nearly eight-in-ten Americans as well as Mexicans (78% each) say that elections are likely to be tampered with. Roughly three-quarters in the Philippines, Tunisia, Kenya, Argentina, Indonesia and South Africa share this view. The French, Russians and Dutch are the least concerned about election tampering: Fewer than half in each country say cyberattacks against elections are likely.

People around the world think cyberattacks on sensitive government data, public infrastructure and elections are likely in the future

It is ___ that, in the future, a cyberattack will result in ...



Note: Total includes those who say a cyberattack is "very" or "somewhat" likely and those who volunteer such attacks have already happened.
Source: Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey. Q48a-c.

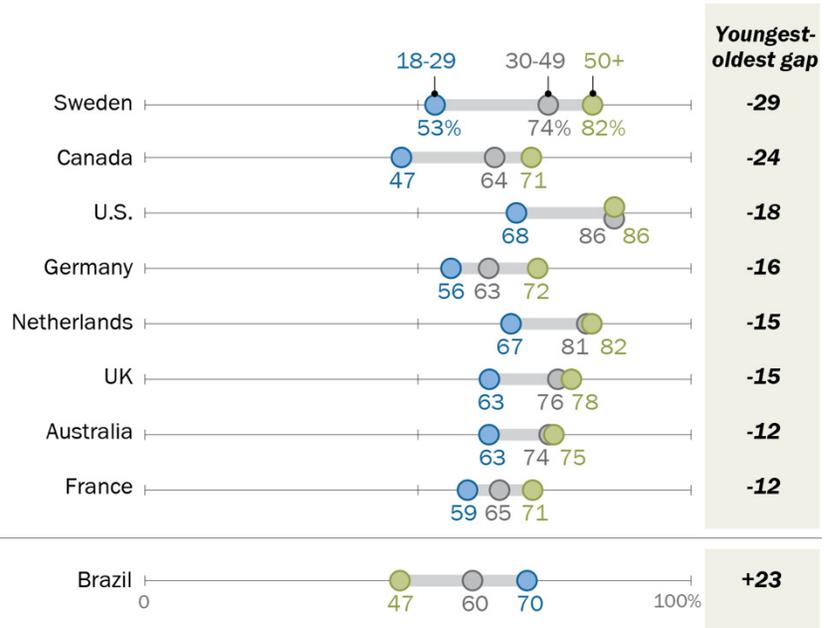
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In many Western countries, younger people are less concerned than those 50 and older about potential attacks on public infrastructure, such as power grids and internet systems. This difference is largest in Sweden, where only 53% of those ages 18 to 29 think an attack on infrastructure is likely, compared with 82% of Swedes ages 50 and up. Large double-digit gaps also occur in Canada, the U.S., Australia and most of the Western European countries polled.

The pattern on this question is reversed in Brazil, where younger people are more worried than those 50 and older about cyberattacks against public infrastructure.

In Western countries, younger people are less worried about cyberattacks on public infrastructure

It is likely that, in the future, a cyberattack will result in damage to public infrastructure in our country, such as power grids or phone and internet systems



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. "Likely" includes those who say a cyberattack is "very" or "somewhat" likely and those who volunteer that such attacks have already happened.

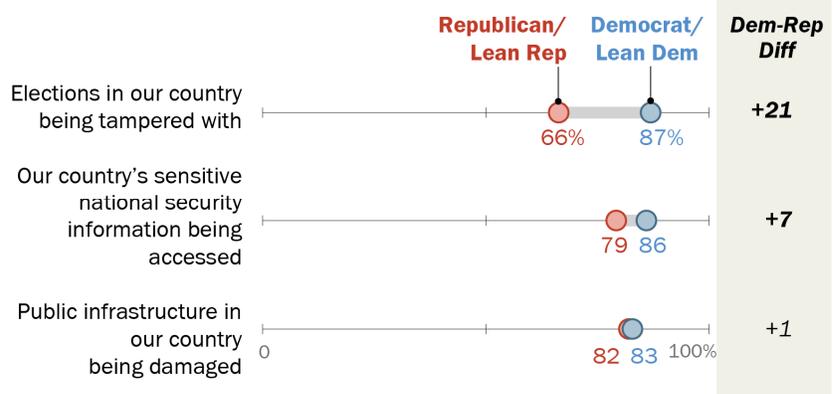
Source: Global Attitudes Survey, Q48a.

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In the U.S., there is a noticeable partisan gap on the likelihood of an election cyberattack. Nearly nine-in-ten Democrats (87%) say it is likely, compared with 66% of Republicans. Democrats are also slightly more likely to worry about hackers obtaining sensitive national security information. But there is no significant difference in views of the likelihood of attacks on public infrastructure.

Democrats more worried than Republicans about potential election tampering via cyberattack

It is likely that, in the future, a cyberattack will result in ...



Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**. "Likely" includes those who say a cyberattack is "very" or "somewhat" likely and those who volunteer that such attacks have already happened.

Source: Global Attitudes Survey, Q48a-c.

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Methodology

About the Pew Research Center's Spring 2018 Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of D3 Systems, Inc., Kantar Public UK, Kantar Public Korea and Langer Research Associates. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are [available here](#).

[Detailed information on survey methods for this report](#)

[General information on international survey research](#)

Appendix: Political categorization

For this report, we grouped people into two political categories: those who support the governing political party (or parties) and those who do not. These categories were coded based on the party or parties in power at the time the survey was fielded, and on respondents' answers to a question asking them which political party, if any, they identified with in their country.¹

In countries where multiple political parties govern in coalition (as in many European countries), survey respondents who indicated support for any parties in the coalition were grouped together. In Germany, for example, where the center-right CDU/CSU governed with the center-left SPD at the time of the survey, supporters of all three parties were grouped together. In countries where different political parties occupy the executive and legislative branches of government, the party holding the executive branch was considered the governing party.

Survey respondents who did not indicate support for any political party, or who refused to identify with one, were considered to be *not* supporting the government in power.

In some countries, no respondents identified with one or more of the parties currently in a coalition government. Countries where an insufficient number of people identified with any party in government have been excluded from the analysis. Below is a table that outlines the governing political parties in each country; only political parties mentioned by respondents are shown.

¹ Governing parties were not updated to account for elections that occurred after the survey was fielded and resulted in a new party (or parties) serving in government. Language used to measure party identification varied country by country.

Appendix: Political categorization

Countries	Governing political party(ies)
Australia	Liberal Party, Liberal-National Party, Country-Liberal Party, National Party
Brazil	PMDB, PSDB, PP, PTB, PRB, PV, PSD
Canada	Liberal Party
France	En Marche
Germany	CDU, CSU, SPD
Greece	Syriza, Independent Greeks
Hungary	Fidesz, Christian Democratic People's Party
India	National Democratic Alliance: BJP, Shiv Sena, Lok Janshakti, Akali Dal, Janata Dal (United)
Indonesia	PDI-P, PPP, Golkar, PKB, People's Conscience Party, National Democratic Party (Nasdem), PAN
Israel	Likud, Yisrael Beitenu, Jewish Home, Kulanu, United Torah Judaism, Shas, Degel Hatorah, Agodat Yisrael
Italy	Northern League, Five Star Movement*
Japan	Liberal Democratic Party, Komeito
Kenya	Jubilee Party, New FORD-Kenya
Mexico	Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)
Netherlands	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, Christian Democratic Appeal, Democrats 66, Christian Union
Nigeria	All Progressives Congress
Poland	Law and Justice (PiS)
Russia	United Russia
South Africa	African National Congress
Spain	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party**
Sweden	Social Democratic Party, Green Party
Tunisia	Nidaa Tounes, Ennahdha Movement, Free Patriotic Union, Afek Tounus, Republican Party, Social Democratic Path, People's Movement
United Kingdom	Conservative Party
United States	Republican Party***

* In Italy, the coalition government was not formally formed and sworn in until during the fieldwork period. Supporters of either party are considered supporters of the ruling party for the entirety of fieldwork. The name used in the survey was "Northern League" (now called League).

** In Spain, a vote of no confidence was held during fieldwork, causing a transition to a government led by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. Supporters of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party are considered supporters of the ruling party for the entirety of fieldwork.

*** In the United States, supporters of the governing party include Republicans and Republican-leaning independents. Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents are classified as not supporting the governing party.

Note: South Korea was excluded from this analysis. Argentina and the Philippines are not shown due to insufficient sample size.

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Topline Questionnaire

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Spring 2018 Survey
January 9, 2019 Release**

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see Methodology section and our [international survey methods database](#).
- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- Not all questions included in the Spring 2018 survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.

		Q48a. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that, in the future, a cyberattack will result in the following situation? a. Public infrastructure in (survey country) such as power grids or phone and internet systems will be damaged						
		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	Has already happened (DO NOT READ)	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2018	45	37	11	4	1	2	100
Canada	Spring, 2018	22	42	26	8	0	2	100
France	Spring, 2018	25	41	24	9	0	1	100
Germany	Spring, 2018	19	47	27	4	1	3	100
Greece	Spring, 2018	27	37	18	7	1	10	100
Hungary	Spring, 2018	7	40	25	15	1	12	100
Italy	Spring, 2018	11	34	25	10	3	17	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2018	30	49	17	4	0	1	100
Poland	Spring, 2018	13	45	24	8	1	9	100
Spain	Spring, 2018	33	45	15	7	0	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2018	24	50	20	4	0	1	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2018	36	38	16	7	0	3	100
Russia	Spring, 2018	22	40	18	10	1	9	100
Australia	Spring, 2018	27	45	19	6	0	2	100
Indonesia	Spring, 2018	34	38	10	6	0	11	100
Japan	Spring, 2018	39	45	9	3	0	3	100
Philippines	Spring, 2018	41	36	9	12	0	3	100
South Korea	Spring, 2018	35	48	11	4	0	2	100
Israel	Spring, 2018	23	43	24	6	1	4	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2018	41	29	12	14	0	4	100
Kenya	Spring, 2018	39	29	9	15	1	8	100
Nigeria	Spring, 2018	28	24	14	22	3	9	100
South Africa	Spring, 2018	48	20	9	17	1	5	100
Argentina	Spring, 2018	34	33	10	13	0	9	100
Brazil	Spring, 2018	21	37	22	12	0	8	100
Mexico	Spring, 2018	30	41	9	13	1	5	100

		Q48b. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that, in the future, a cyberattack will result in the following situation? b. Elections in (survey country) will be tampered with						
		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	Has already happened (DO NOT READ)	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2018	45	29	12	9	4	2	100
Canada	Spring, 2018	23	37	27	11	0	2	100
France	Spring, 2018	15	25	31	27	1	1	100
Germany	Spring, 2018	14	37	40	7	0	1	100
Greece	Spring, 2018	22	30	26	12	0	9	100
Hungary	Spring, 2018	12	33	19	17	7	11	100
Italy	Spring, 2018	13	35	20	10	5	17	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2018	14	33	31	20	0	1	100
Poland	Spring, 2018	11	43	23	11	0	12	100
Spain	Spring, 2018	34	34	19	12	0	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2018	13	41	33	12	0	1	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2018	29	39	20	8	1	2	100
Russia	Spring, 2018	14	28	26	17	2	13	100
Australia	Spring, 2018	22	42	23	11	1	2	100
Indonesia	Spring, 2018	40	34	10	6	0	10	100
Japan	Spring, 2018	14	38	30	12	0	7	100
Philippines	Spring, 2018	44	32	6	14	1	2	100
South Korea	Spring, 2018	20	42	23	14	0	2	100
Israel	Spring, 2018	21	40	26	9	1	3	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2018	50	26	6	14	0	3	100
Kenya	Spring, 2018	48	24	7	14	2	5	100
Nigeria	Spring, 2018	36	22	12	18	2	9	100
South Africa	Spring, 2018	54	19	6	16	0	4	100
Argentina	Spring, 2018	42	32	8	10	0	7	100
Brazil	Spring, 2018	28	30	17	15	2	7	100
Mexico	Spring, 2018	38	39	9	9	1	4	100

		Q48c. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that, in the future, a cyberattack will result in the following situation? c. (Survey country)'s sensitive national security information will be accessed						
		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	Has already happened (DO NOT READ)	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2018	45	35	9	7	2	2	100
Canada	Spring, 2018	26	48	18	6	0	2	100
France	Spring, 2018	33	42	19	5	0	0	100
Germany	Spring, 2018	28	50	19	2	0	2	100
Greece	Spring, 2018	30	39	16	4	1	9	100
Hungary	Spring, 2018	10	41	21	13	1	13	100
Italy	Spring, 2018	14	38	20	9	2	17	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2018	40	44	12	3	0	2	100
Poland	Spring, 2018	20	49	17	4	0	10	100
Spain	Spring, 2018	45	39	8	6	0	2	100
Sweden	Spring, 2018	22	52	21	3	1	1	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2018	34	40	17	6	1	2	100
Russia	Spring, 2018	23	38	17	11	2	11	100
Australia	Spring, 2018	33	44	14	5	2	2	100
Indonesia	Spring, 2018	39	35	9	5	0	12	100
Japan	Spring, 2018	38	45	10	3	0	4	100
Philippines	Spring, 2018	40	35	9	13	0	3	100
South Korea	Spring, 2018	43	44	9	3	0	2	100
Israel	Spring, 2018	24	34	26	10	1	5	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2018	54	26	5	11	0	4	100
Kenya	Spring, 2018	45	28	9	11	1	6	100
Nigeria	Spring, 2018	35	28	11	14	1	11	100
South Africa	Spring, 2018	52	20	8	14	1	6	100
Argentina	Spring, 2018	38	33	7	11	0	10	100
Brazil	Spring, 2018	26	35	18	12	1	8	100
Mexico	Spring, 2018	32	40	10	11	1	6	100

		Q49. In general, how well prepared do you think (survey country) is to handle a major cyberattack on computer systems in this country—very well, somewhat well, not too well or not well at all?					
		Very well	Somewhat well	Not too well	Not well at all	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2018	14	39	25	18	3	100
Canada	Spring, 2018	9	43	28	15	6	100
France	Spring, 2018	7	46	32	13	2	100
Germany	Spring, 2018	6	39	40	12	4	100
Greece	Spring, 2018	1	23	33	25	18	100
Hungary	Spring, 2018	6	38	27	15	15	100
Italy	Spring, 2018	4	26	34	14	23	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2018	3	43	34	16	4	100
Poland	Spring, 2018	2	28	35	13	23	100
Spain	Spring, 2018	11	30	33	20	6	100
Sweden	Spring, 2018	3	33	47	14	2	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2018	11	35	30	16	7	100
Russia	Spring, 2018	18	49	16	3	13	100
Australia	Spring, 2018	9	38	31	17	5	100
Indonesia	Spring, 2018	18	46	19	4	13	100
Japan	Spring, 2018	2	39	42	10	7	100
Philippines	Spring, 2018	25	33	29	11	3	100
South Korea	Spring, 2018	6	44	35	12	3	100
Israel	Spring, 2018	29	44	17	3	7	100
Tunisia	Spring, 2018	29	27	16	24	4	100
Kenya	Spring, 2018	28	28	22	13	9	100
Nigeria	Spring, 2018	29	23	21	16	10	100
South Africa	Spring, 2018	25	25	20	24	7	100
Argentina	Spring, 2018	3	6	32	49	9	100
Brazil	Spring, 2018	5	11	36	42	7	100
Mexico	Spring, 2018	5	32	22	36	6	100