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# ONLINE SAFETY AWARENESS IN MOLDOVA

E-GOVERNANCE ACADEMY  
January 2024

magenta consulting

 eGA.ee



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LET'S EMPOWER  
THE CYBER RESILIENCE  
OF MOLDOVA!

Moldova  
Cybersecurity  
Rapid Assistance  
2022 – 2023



Implemented by  eGA  
e-governance academy

**Sample size:** 1151 respondents, aged 16 to 64.

**Geography:** 12 randomly selected groups of areas, both urban and rural.

**Sample type:** stratified multi-stadial probability sampling.

**Respondents:** both internet users and non-users from randomly selected families.

**Data collection method:** Face-to-Face CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) using tablets.

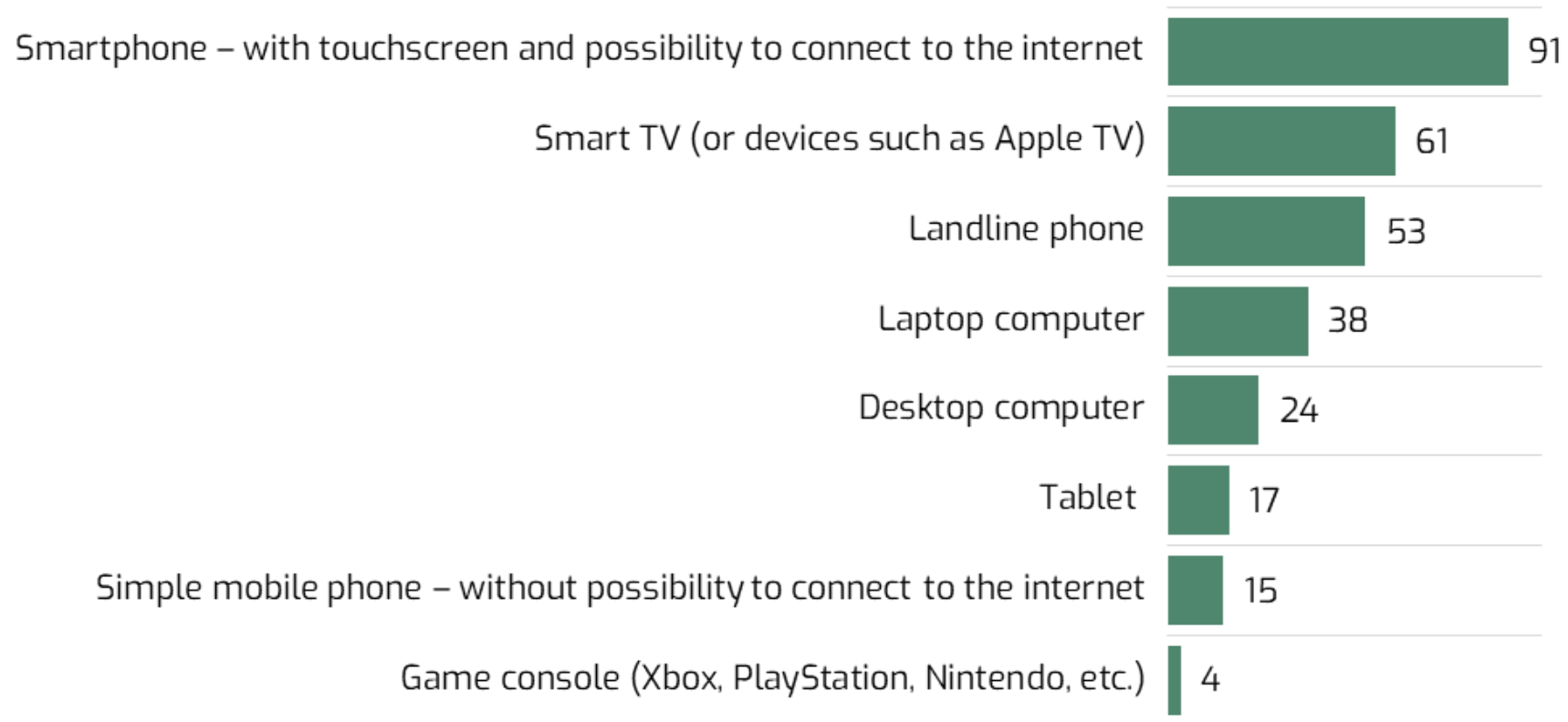
**Data collection period:** 30 November – 29 December 2023.

\* It is recommended to carefully interpret data with a small base (no. of respondents less than 30 /  $N < 30$ )

## **Internet usage and online behavior**

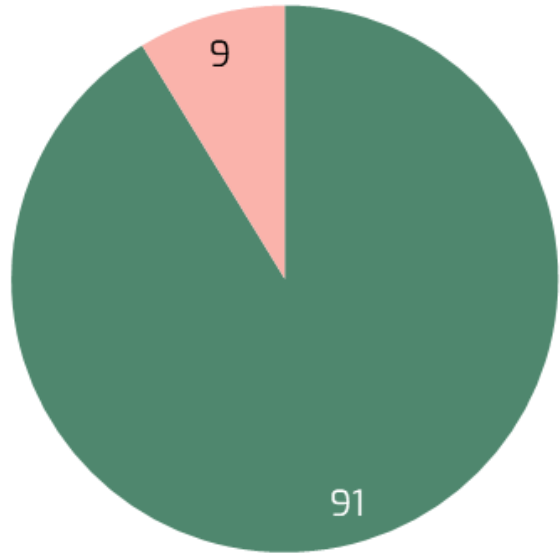
## Q6. What type of personally owned devices do you have in your household? (one response in a row), %

TOTAL, N= 1151



Smartphones are the most prevalent personally owned devices in households, with a high adoption rate of 91%. Smart TVs or similar devices, also have a significant presence, with 61% of households owning them. Landline phones remain in use in slightly more than half of the households surveyed (53%).

## Demographic profile of the respondents that own and don't own a smartphone.



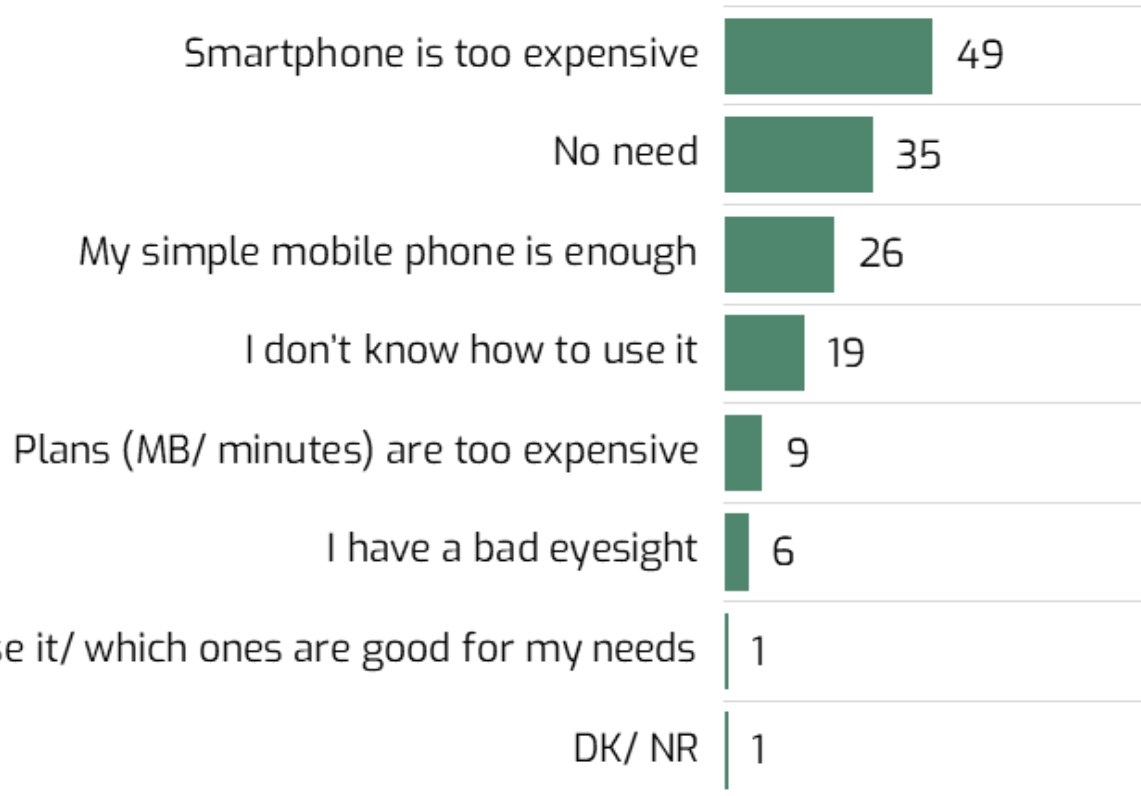
■ Own a smartphone    ■ Don't own a smartphone

Most respondents that don't own a smartphone are older people (55-64 y.o.), that are retired, live in rural areas and have a low income.

		Own a smartphone, N=1051	Don't own a smartphone, N=100
Gender	Female	52	44
	Male	48	56
Age	16 – 34 y.o.	42	7
	35 – 54 y.o.	39	23
	55 – 64 y.o.	19	69
Area	Urban	46	19
	Rural	54	81
Region	North	28	19
	Centre	23	40
	Chisinau	29	12
	South	20	29
Occupation	Employed / Work	55	29
	Student	10	0
	Parental leave	5	0
	Pensioner (age or disability)	11	47
	Unemployed, I don't work	18	23
	Don't know/ No answer	1	1
Studies	Primary/Gymn./Middle Sch.	19	38
	High school/ secondary	19	18
	Secondary specialized	14	19
	Secondary professional	21	16
	Higher education	26	7
Language	Romanian/Moldovan	78	82
	Russian	21	12
	Other	2	6
Economic situation of the household	Income is enough, we can save up	11	1
	Income is sufficient, but we can't save up	34	9
	It is rather difficult with the income	33	23
	It is very difficult with the income	20	64
	Don't know/ No answer	2	3

**Q7. Could you please tell me the reason why you don't have a smartphone? (open ended), % of those who do not have a smartphone**

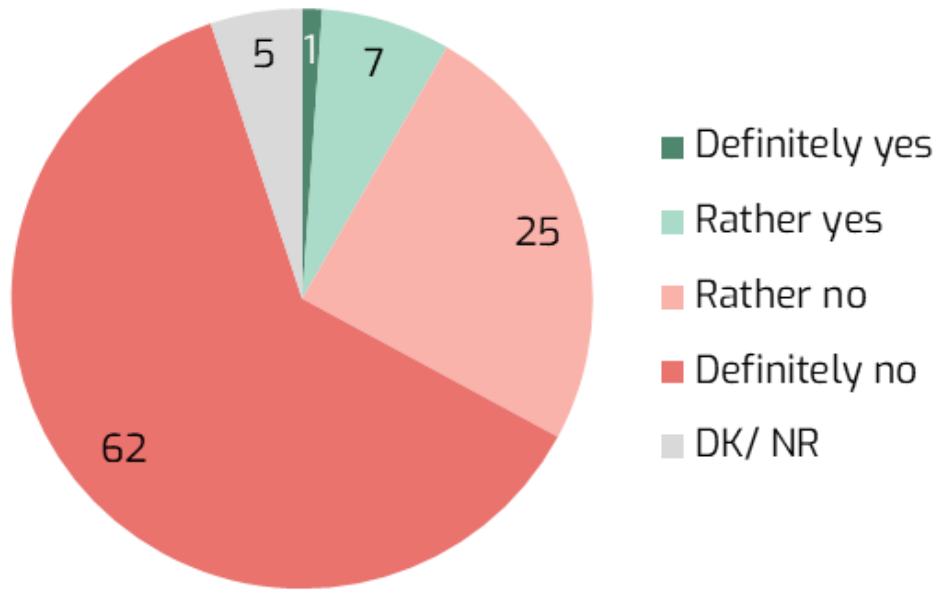
**TOTAL, N=100**



The most common reason cited by the respondents for not having a smartphone is the cost, with 49% indicating that smartphones are considered too expensive. Additionally, 35% of respondents mentioned that they don't see a need for a smartphone, while for a quarter their simple cell phone is enough (26%).

Q8. Do you intend to buy a smartphone in the next 12 months? (one answer), % of those who do not have a smartphone

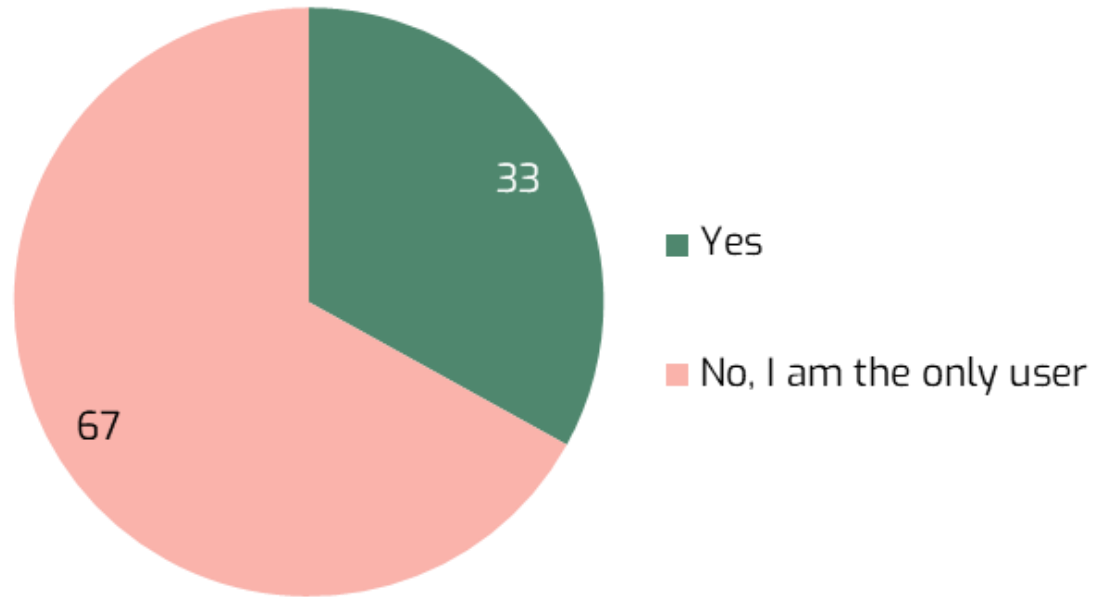
TOTAL, N=100



87% of the surveyed population does not plan to acquire a smartphone in the near future.

Q9. Is there any person who occasionally uses your smartphone, e.g. a family member or a person who knows your password? (one answer), % of those who have a smartphone

TOTAL, N=1051

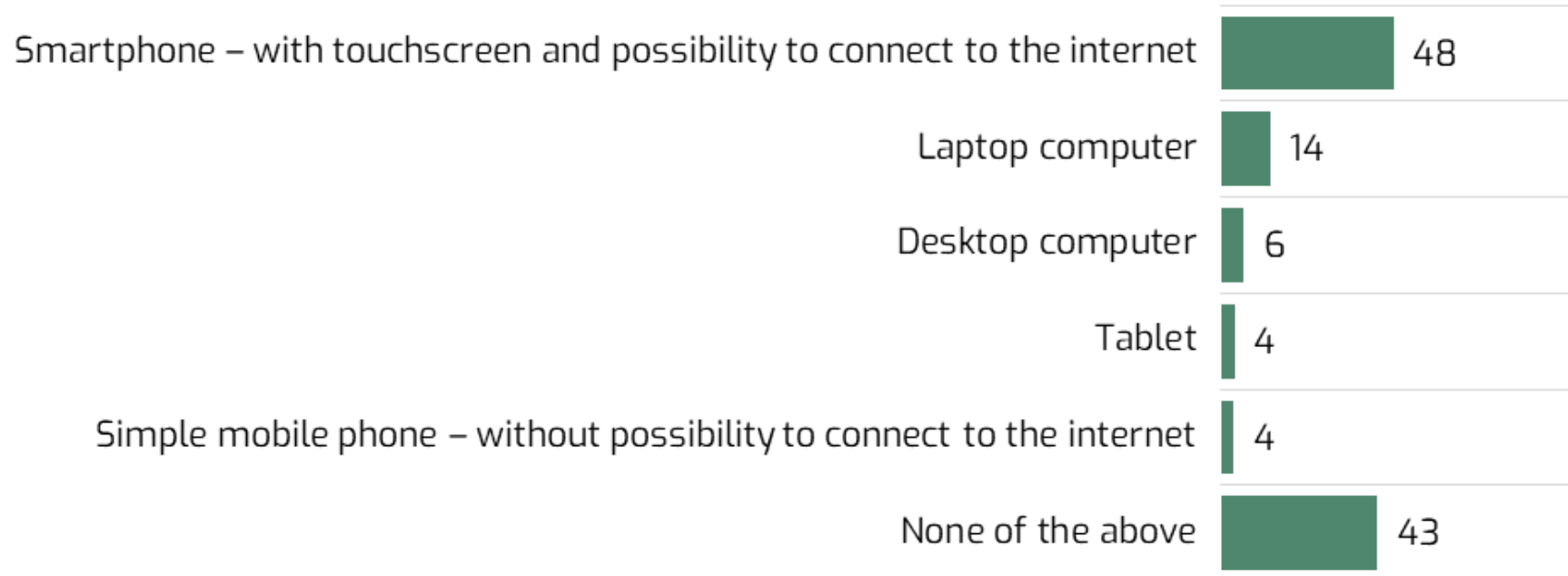


67% are the exclusive users of their smartphones, with no one else occasionally using their device or having access to their password. However, a third of respondents mentioned that there is someone else, such as a family member or someone who knows their password, who occasionally uses their smartphone (33%).



**Q10. Do you use any of your personal devices for work? If yes, please specify which ones? (one answer per row),**  
% of those who have any personal device

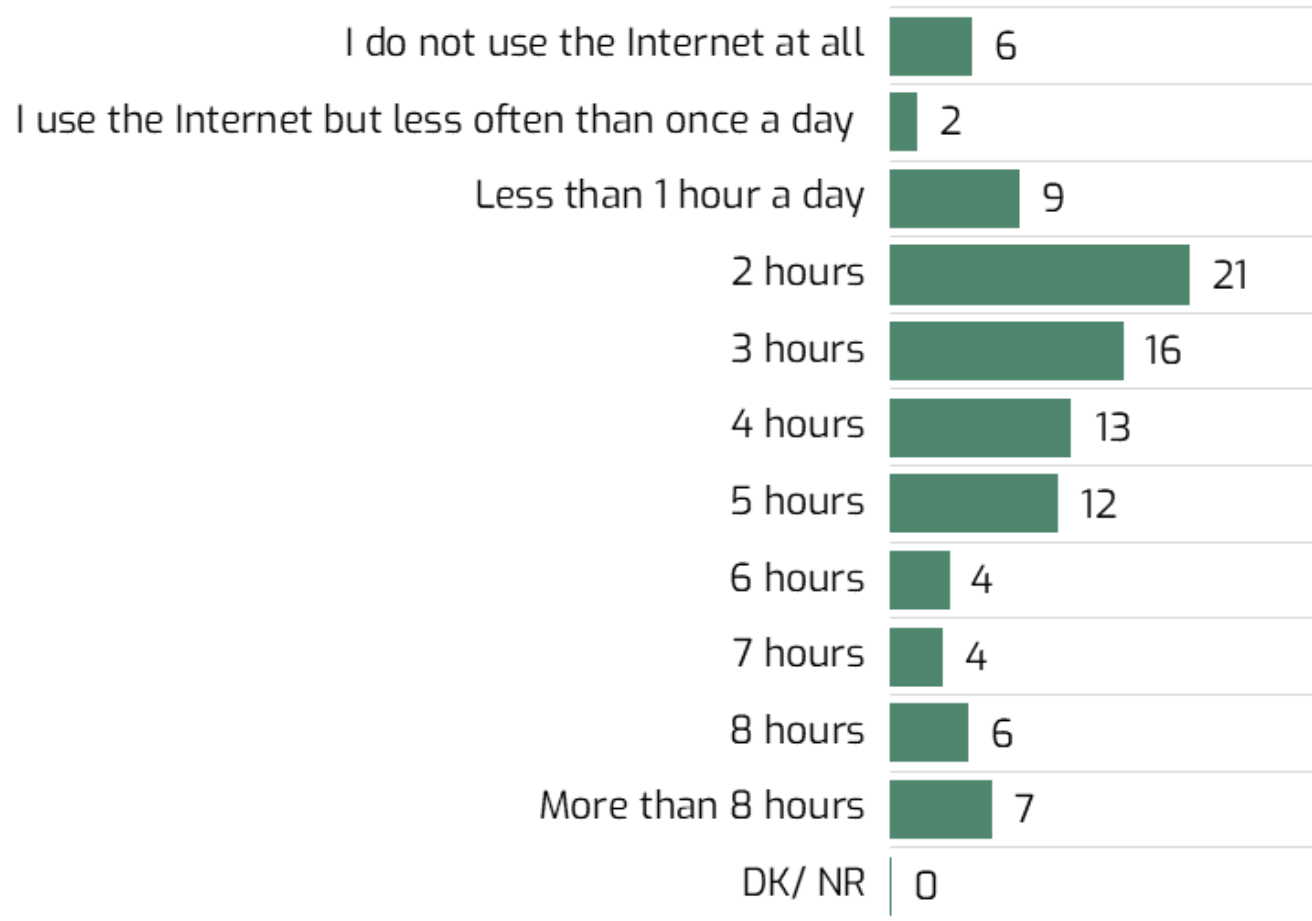
**TOTAL, N=1139**



Nearly half of the respondents use smartphones for work-related tasks (48%). Additionally, 14% use laptop computers, while 6% rely on desktop computers for work.

**Q11. Approximately how many hours per day do you use the Internet for personal needs? Please take into account time spent on all types of devices (one answer), %**

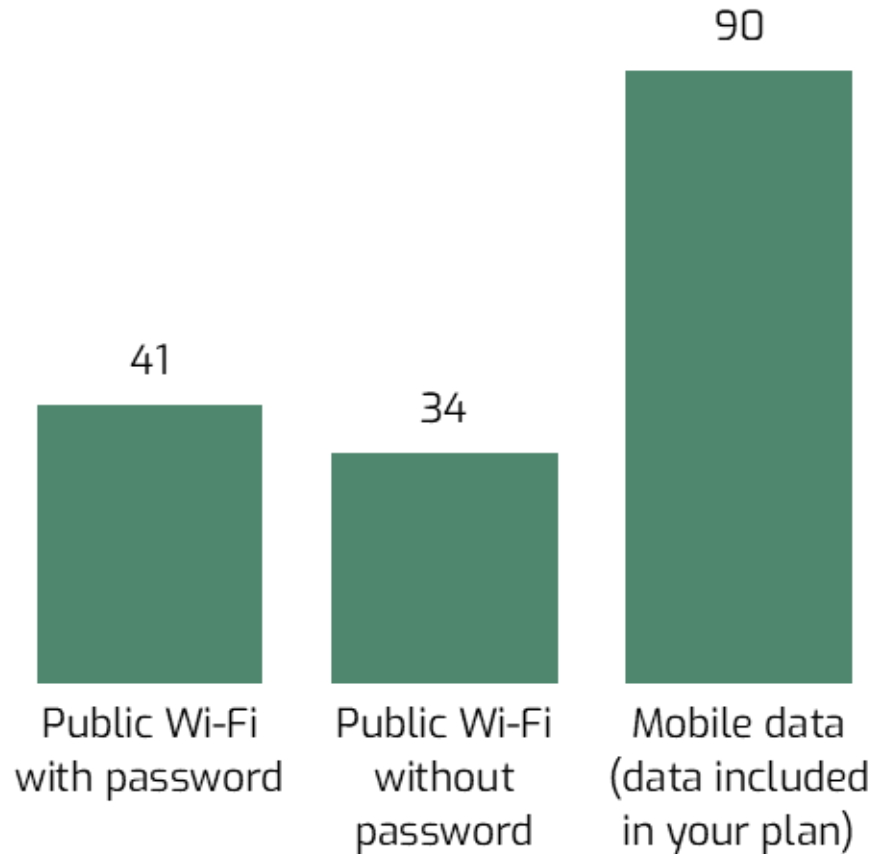
**TOTAL, N=1151**



The majority of individuals fall within the range of 2 to 4 hours of daily internet use, with 21% spending 2 hours, 16% dedicating 3 hours, and 13% allocating 4 hours each day. On the extremes, 9% of respondents utilize the internet for less than 1 hour, while 7% are heavy users, spending more than 8 hours online daily. It's interesting to note that some use the internet less frequently than once a day (2%), while 6% do not use the internet at all.

**Q12. Which ways to connect to the internet did you use at least once during the last 3 months? (one answer in a row), % of those who use the internet**

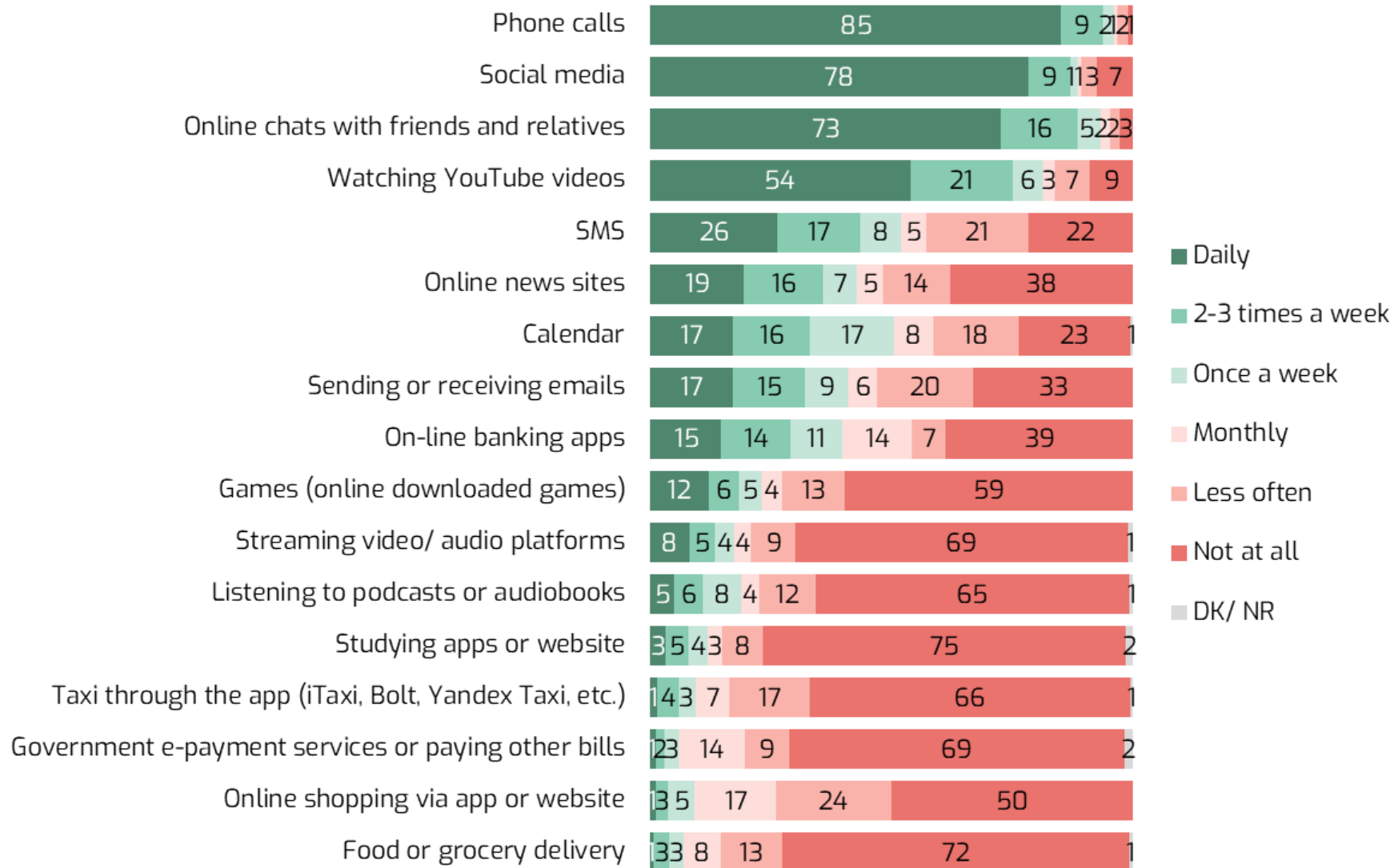
**TOTAL, N=1084**



Mobile data usage is the most prevalent means of accessing the internet, with a majority of respondents relying on data included in their mobile plans (90%). Additionally, some connect to public Wi-Fi networks, with 34% using open networks without passwords and 41% using secured networks that require passwords.

**Q13. What are the activities you do online, for personal needs, with your smartphone/ tablet/ computer? (one answer per row), % of those who use the internet**

**TOTAL, N=1084**



The top 3 online activities mentioned by respondents, that they engage in at least 2-3 times a week are:

- Phone calls (94%);
- Social media (87%);
- Online chats with friends and relatives (89%).

Some activities that respondents do not practice at all include:

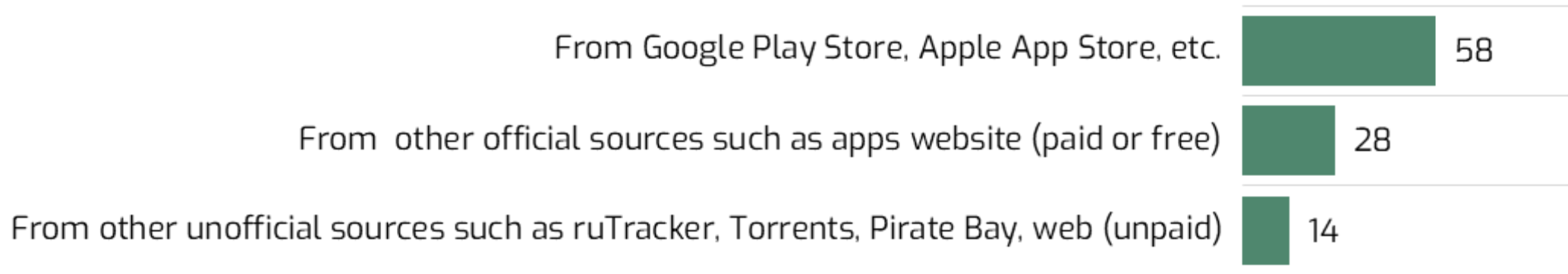
- Studying apps or websites (75%);
- Food or grocery delivery (72%);
- Government e-payment services (69%);
- Streaming video/audio platforms (69%).

## **Practices related to the safe use of apps**

Q14. During the last 12 months, have you downloaded applications or software's from... (one answer per row), % of those who use the internet

14

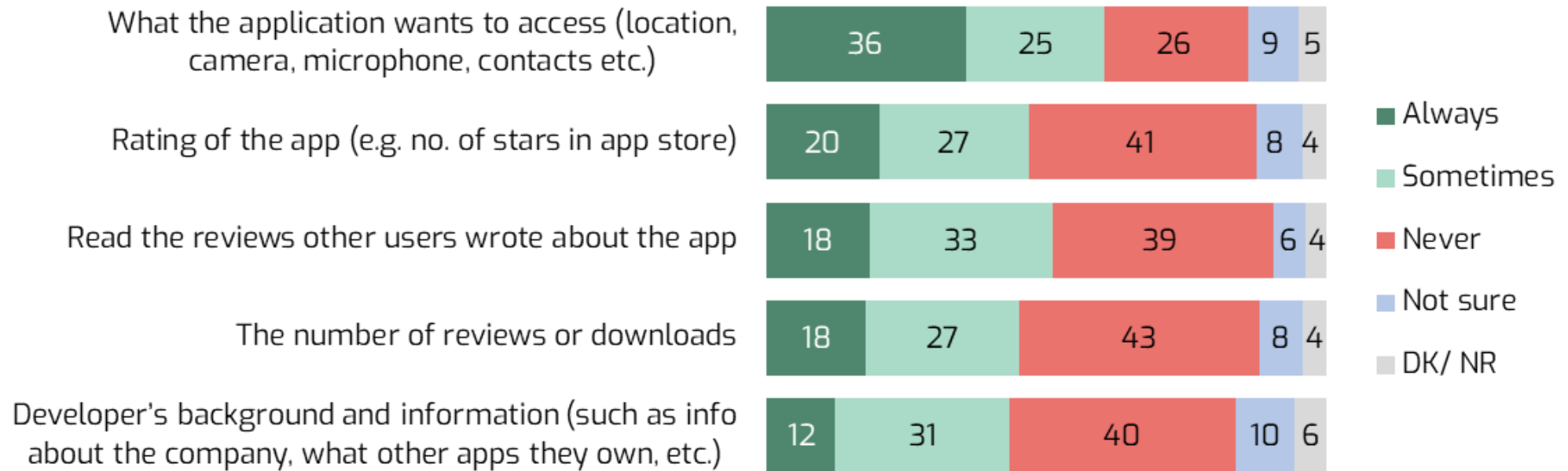
TOTAL, N=1084



More than half of the respondents primarily use official sources such as Google Play Store and Apple App Store to download applications (58%). 28% also opt for applications from other official websites, whether paid or free. Meanwhile, a smaller group occasionally accesses software from unofficial sources like torrents or web-based platforms, typically without payment - 14%.

**Q15. When installing an app, do you check following things? (one answer per row), % of those who use the internet**

**TOTAL, N=1084**



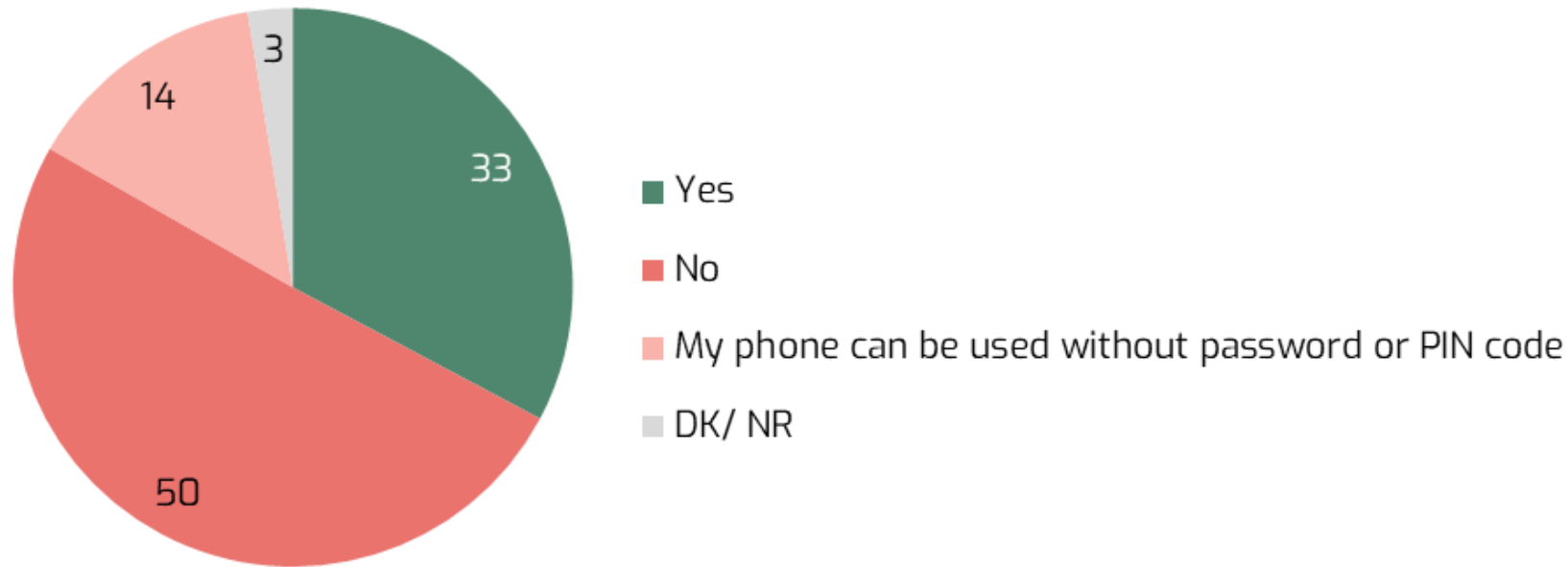
More than a third of respondents always check what the application wants to access when installing an app (36%), while one in five checks the rating of the app (20%). 43% never check the number of reviews or downloads an app has.

## **Practices related to passwords / PIN codes**



## Q16. Does somebody know the password or PIN code to your mobile phone? (one answer), %

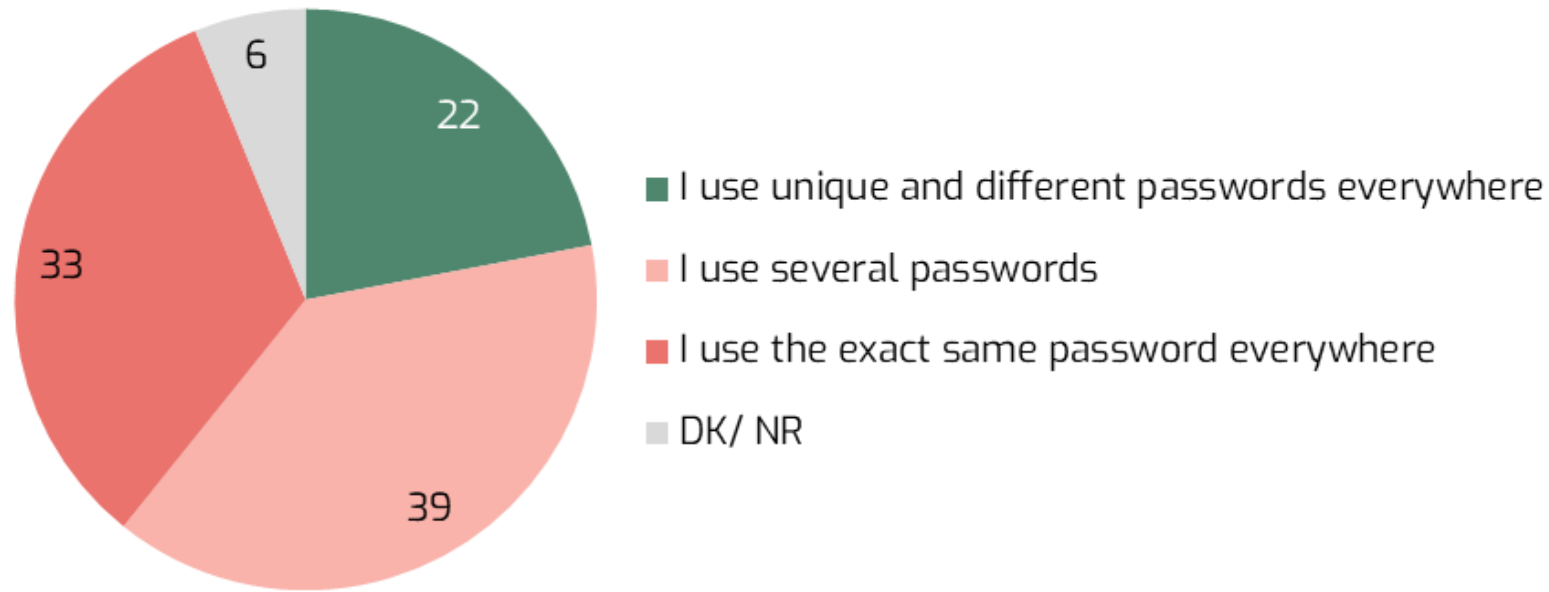
TOTAL, N=1151



Half of those surveyed maintain the privacy of their mobile phones by not sharing their password or PIN code (50%), while 33% mentioned that someone else knows this access information. Additionally, 14% reported that their phones can be used without any password or PIN code.

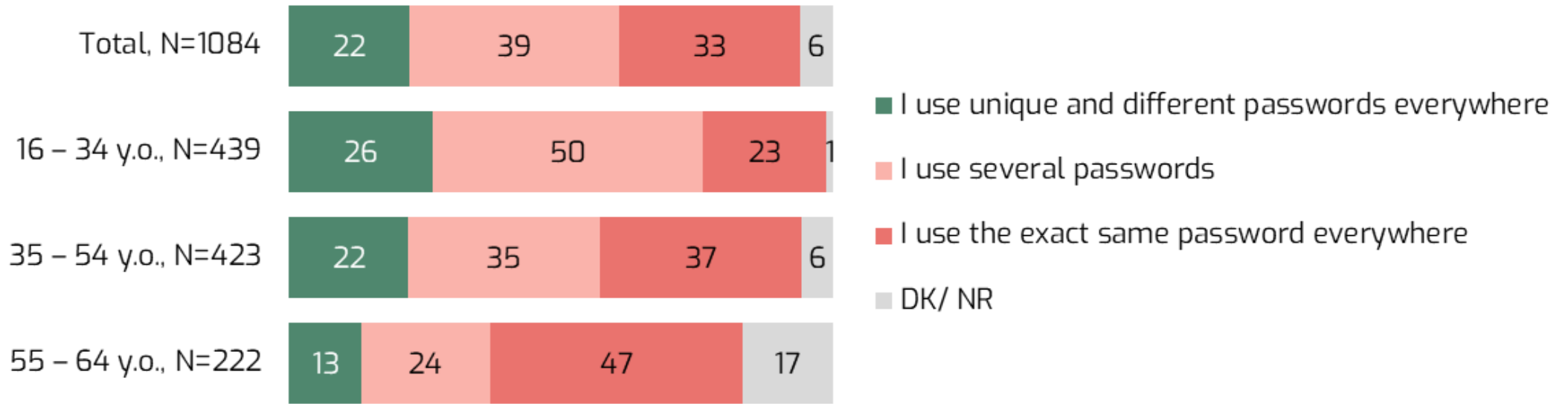
Q17. Which statement describes best the way you set and use passwords for different online services (email, social media, apps, streaming platforms, etc.)? (one answer), % of those who use the internet

TOTAL, N=1084



While 22% of individuals prioritize online security by using unique and different passwords for various online services, 39% opt for the use of several passwords across their accounts. A third uses the exact same password everywhere (33%).

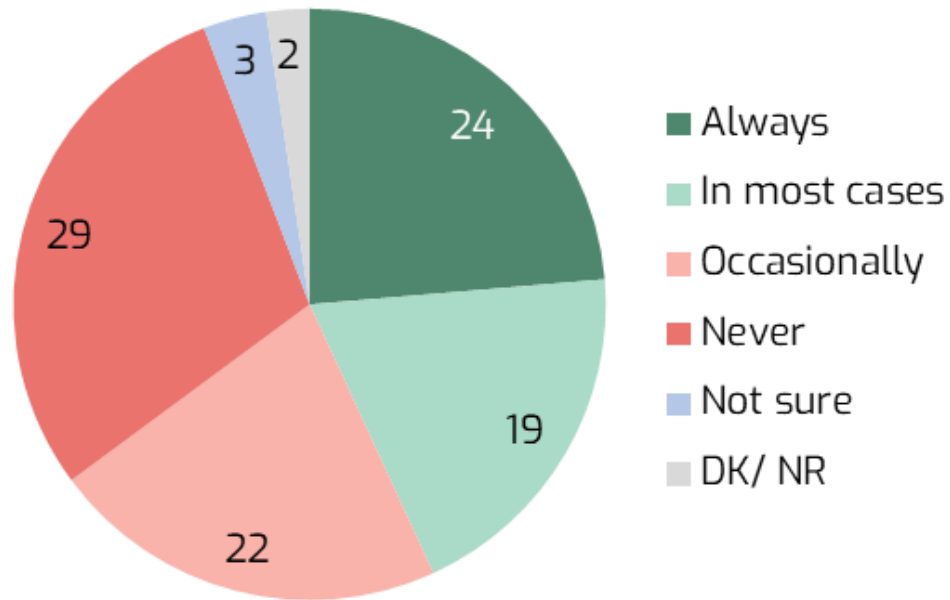
**Q17. Which statement describes best the way you set and use passwords for different online services (email, social media, apps, streaming platforms, etc.)? (one answer), % of those who use the internet, disaggregated by age**



Younger respondents (aged 16-34), tend to use several passwords (50%), while the older participants (55-64) – to use the exact same password on all accounts (47%).

Q18. When logging in, how often do you use the feature “remember me / password” from the browser, app, or website? (one answer), % of those who use the internet

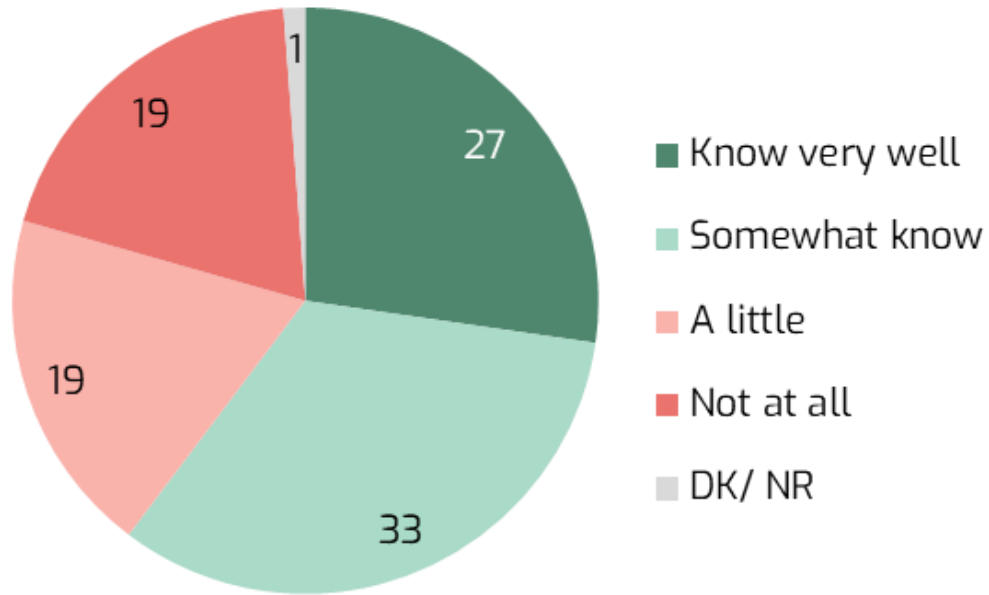
TOTAL, N=1084



29% of the respondents never use the “remember me/password” feature, prioritizing manual logins for added security. On the other hand, one fourth consistently opt for the convenience of "remember me" across their logins - 24%. Meanwhile, 19% use it in most cases, and 22% do so occasionally.

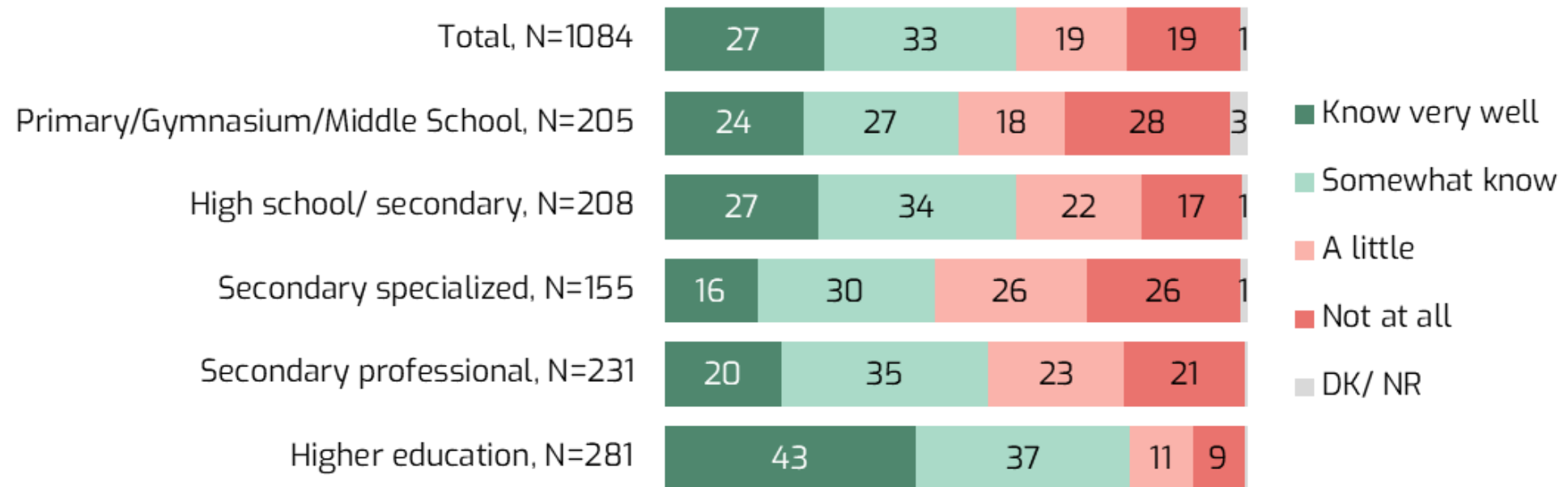
Q19. Do you know what are the characteristics of a strong password? (one answer), % of those who use the internet

TOTAL, N=1084



60% of the respondents claim to know the characteristics of a strong password.

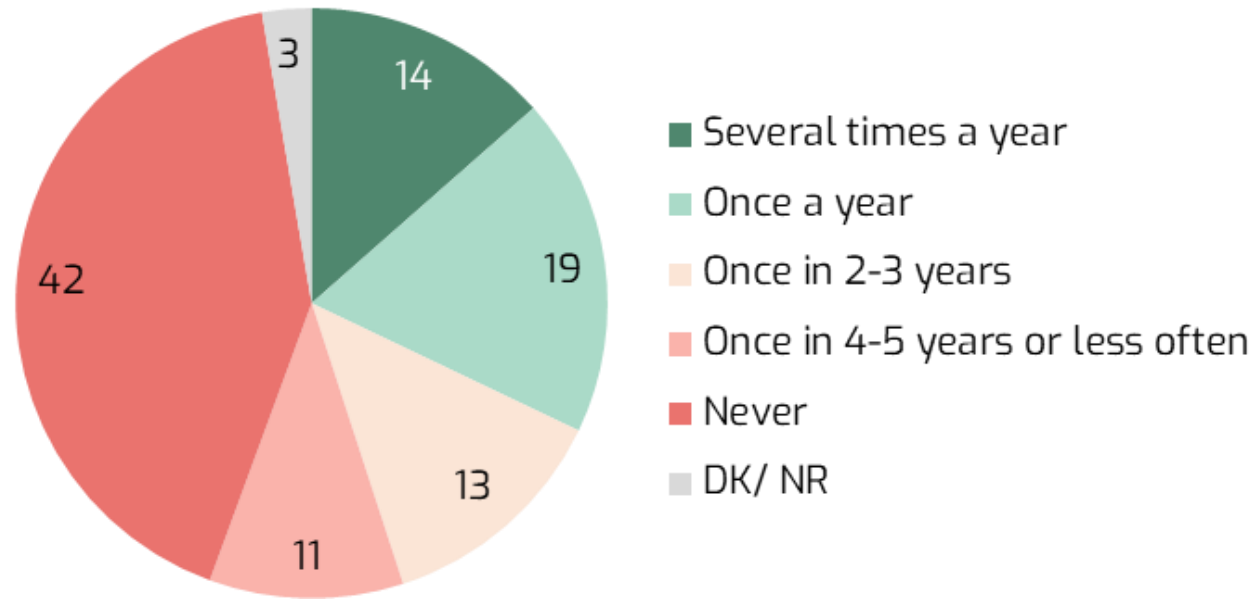
**Q19. Do you know what are the characteristics of a strong password? (one answer), % of those who use the internet, disaggregated by the level of education**



Individuals with higher education levels are more likely to declare that they possess a better understanding of the characteristics of a strong password.

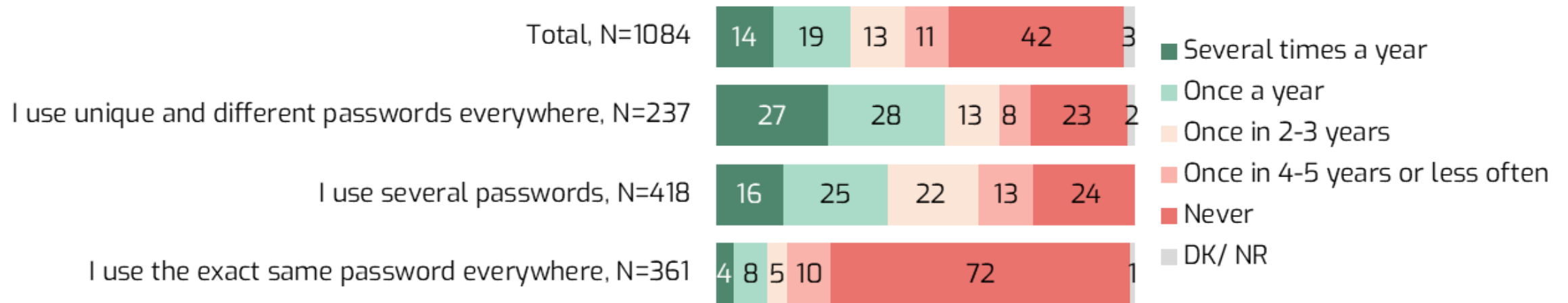
**Q20. How often do you have a habit of changing your passwords for security purposes? (one answer), % of those who use the internet**

**TOTAL, N=1084**



19% reported changing their passwords once a year, while 14% do so several times a year. Most of the respondents state that they never change their passwords (42%).

**Q20. How often do you have a habit of changing your passwords for security purposes? (one answer), % of those who use the internet, disaggregated by the habit of setting the passwords**

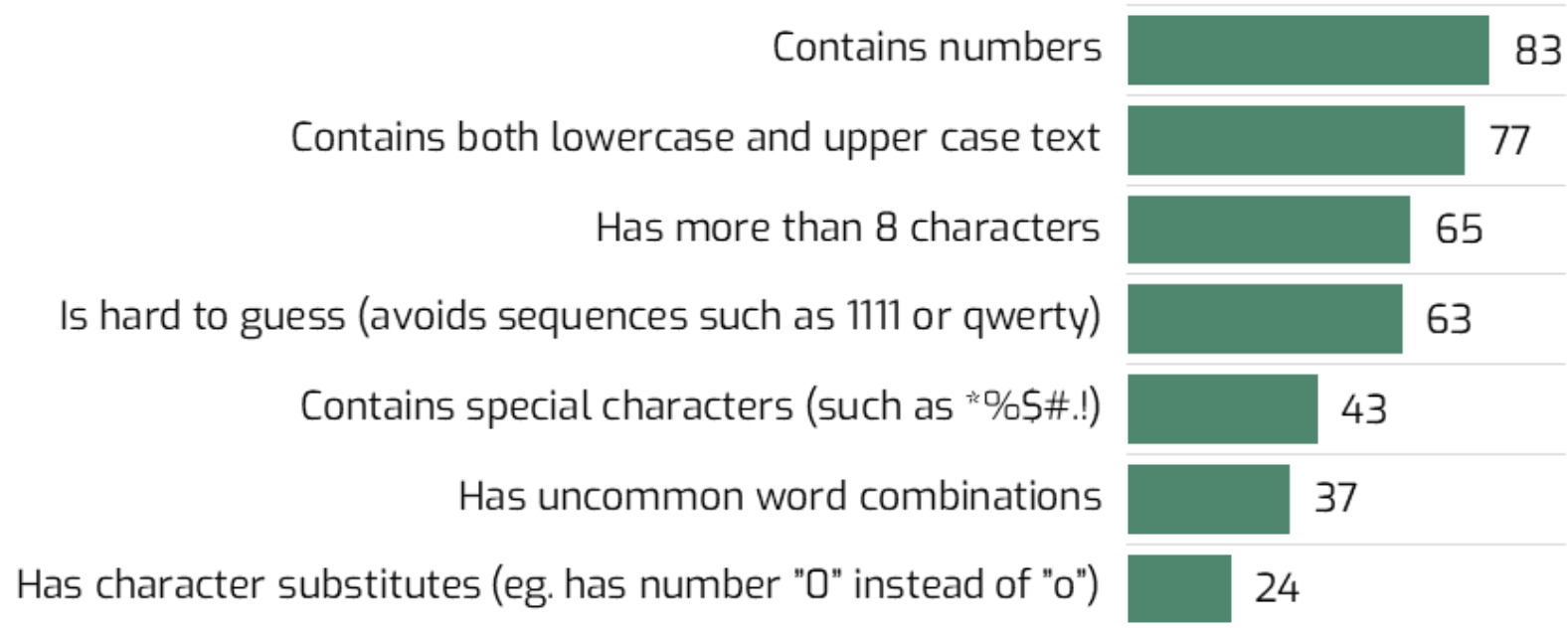


Most respondents who change their passwords more frequently also tend to use different passwords for their accounts. Conversely, 72% of respondents who use the same password for all their accounts never change their account password.



**Q21. Please do not mention your password. Please respond only with “yes” or “no” whether your password contains these elements or not. (one answer per row), % of those who use the internet**

**TOTAL, N=1084**

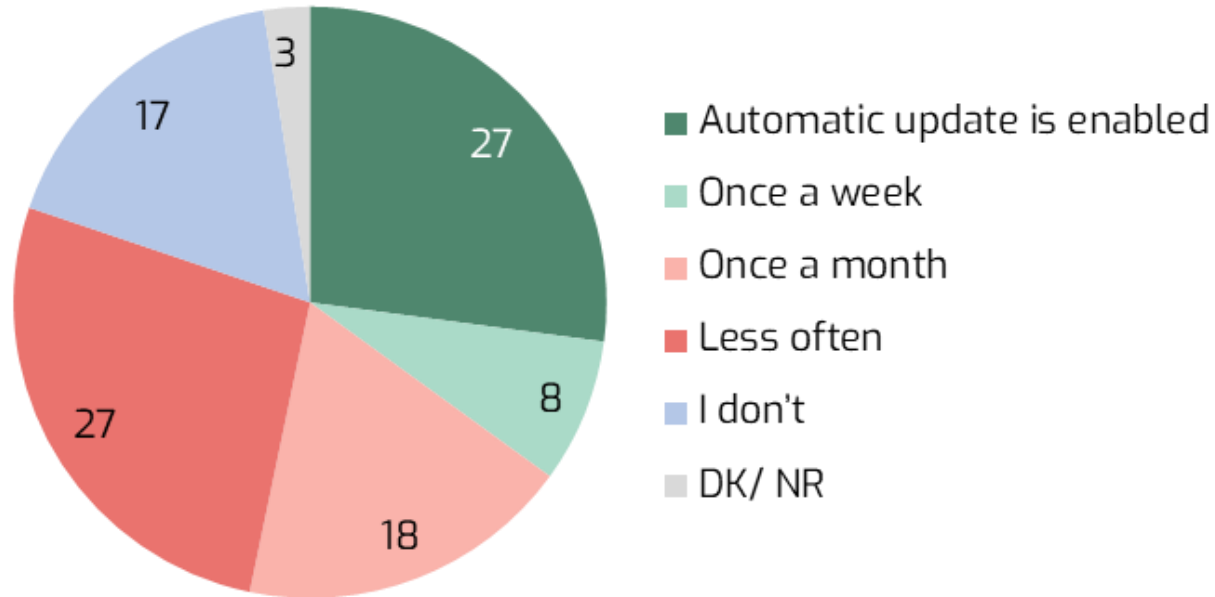


The majority of respondents incorporate numbers (83%) and use both lowercase and uppercase text (77%) in their passwords. Additionally, 65% have passwords with more than 8 characters and 63% strive to make their passwords hard to guess.

**Practices related to cyber security**

**Q22. How often do you update your software's / apps on your computer or smartphone? (one answer), % of those who use the internet**

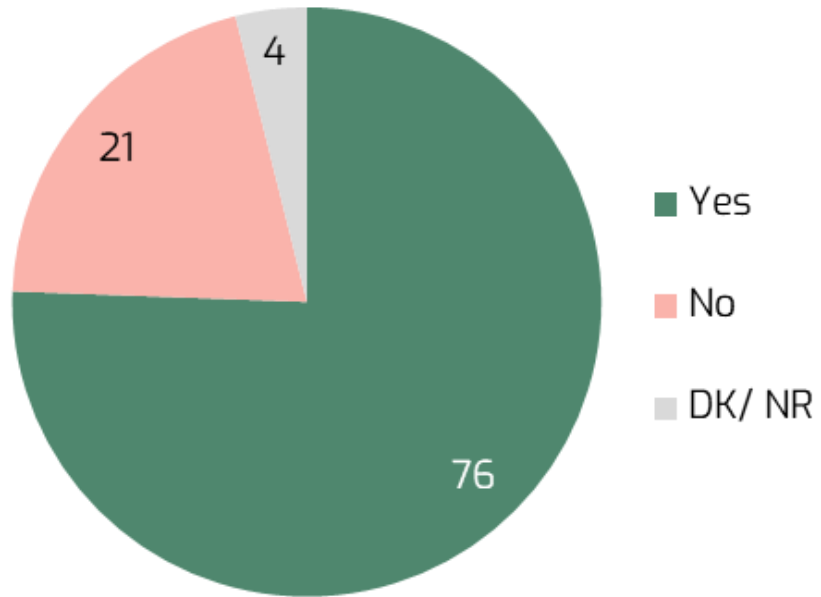
**TOTAL, N=1084**



More than a quarter of respondents opt for the convenience of automatic updates, ensuring that their software and apps are regularly kept up to date without manual intervention (27%). Conversely, 8% take a proactive approach, updating once a week, while 18% do so on a monthly basis. On the other hand, 27% update less frequently and 17% of respondents reported not updating their software or apps at all.

**Q23. Do you have security software / anti-virus installed on your computer? (one answer), % of those who have a computer**

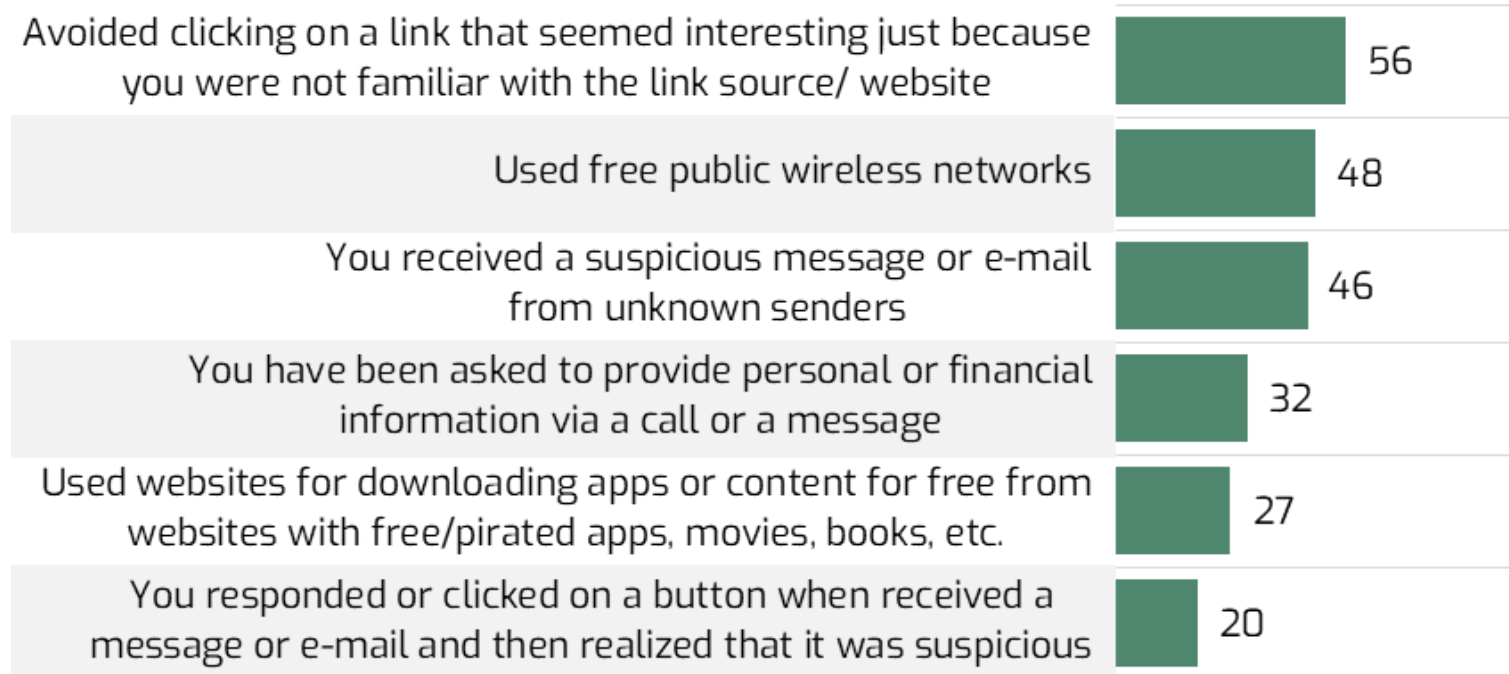
**TOTAL, N=601**



Three quarters of respondents have security software or anti-virus programs installed on their computers - 76%. 21% reported not having such security measures in place.

**Q24. In the past 2 years which of these things did you do or happened to you online? (one answer per row), % of those who use the internet**

**TOTAL, N=1084**

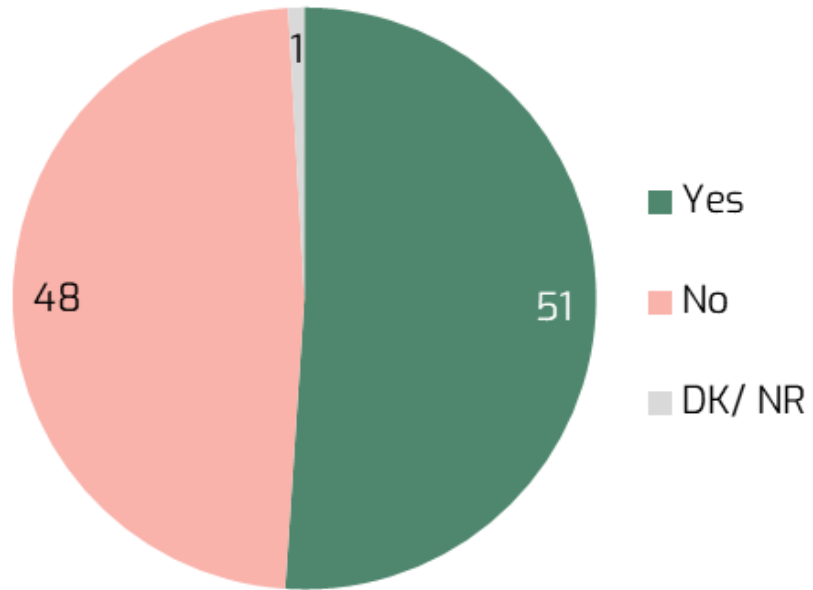


56% have demonstrated cautious online behavior by avoiding unfamiliar links. Less than half have utilized free public wireless networks (48%) and received suspicious messages or emails from unknown senders (46%).

## **Knowledge about cybercrime**

Q25. Are you familiar with the word cybercrime? (one answer), %

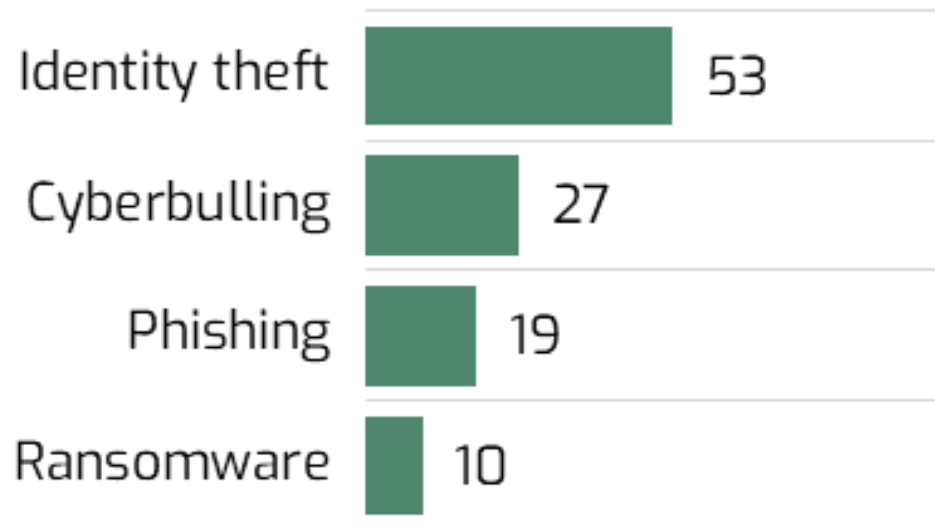
TOTAL, N=1151



51% of respondents are familiar with the term "cybercrime," indicating a majority awareness of this concept. However, 48% reported not being familiar with the term.

## Q26. Are you familiar with these words? (one answer per row), %

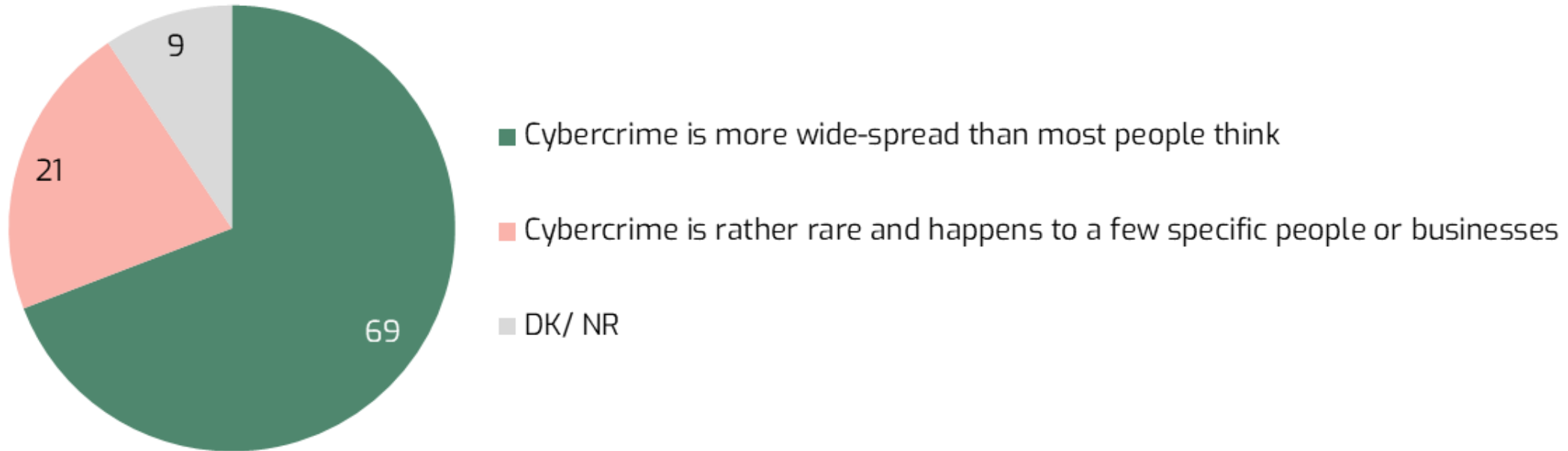
TOTAL, N=1151



"Identity theft" is the most recognized term, with 53% of respondents familiar with it, indicating a broad understanding of this form of cybercrime. However, "cyberbullying" has a somewhat lower level of recognition, with 27% of respondents being familiar with the term. "Phishing" is known by 19% of respondents, suggesting that this term may be less widely understood compared to others. Lastly, "ransomware" has the lowest level of familiarity, with one in ten respondents recognizing the term (10%).



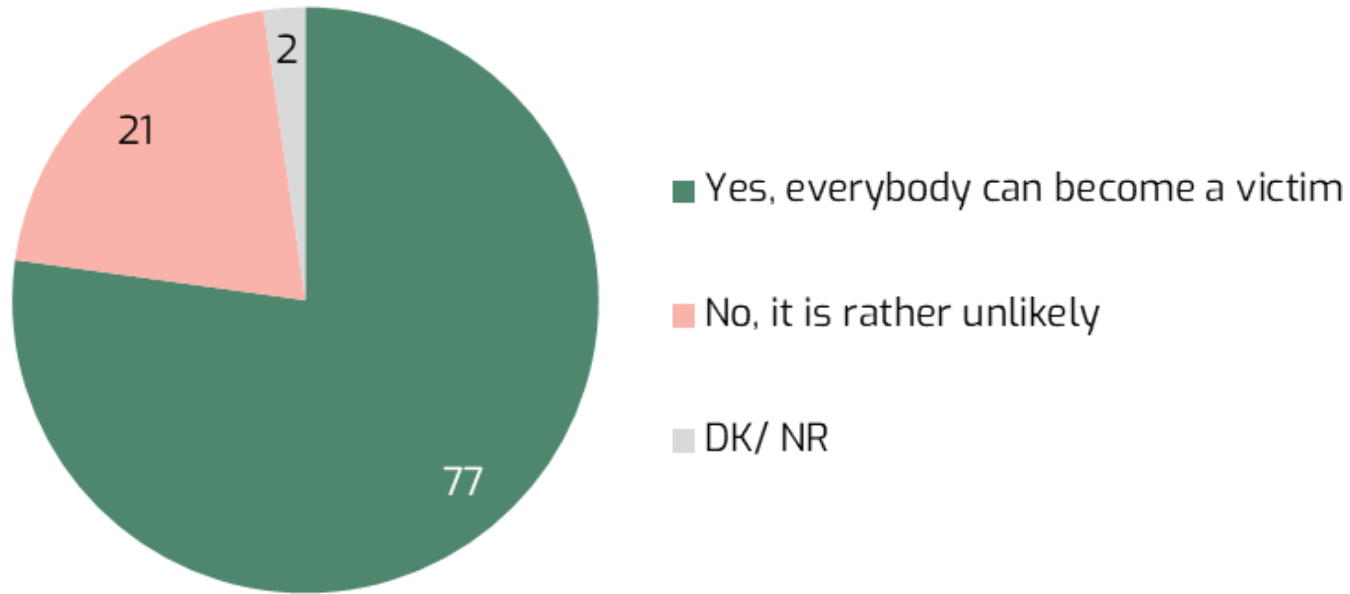
TOTAL, N=1084



The majority of respondents believe that cybercrime is more widespread than most people think (69%). However, a notable minority (21%) holds the opinion that cybercrime is rather rare and occurs to only a few specific individuals or businesses.

**Q28. Do you think you can become a victim of online fraud, cyber-attacks or cyber criminals? (one answer), % of those who use the internet**

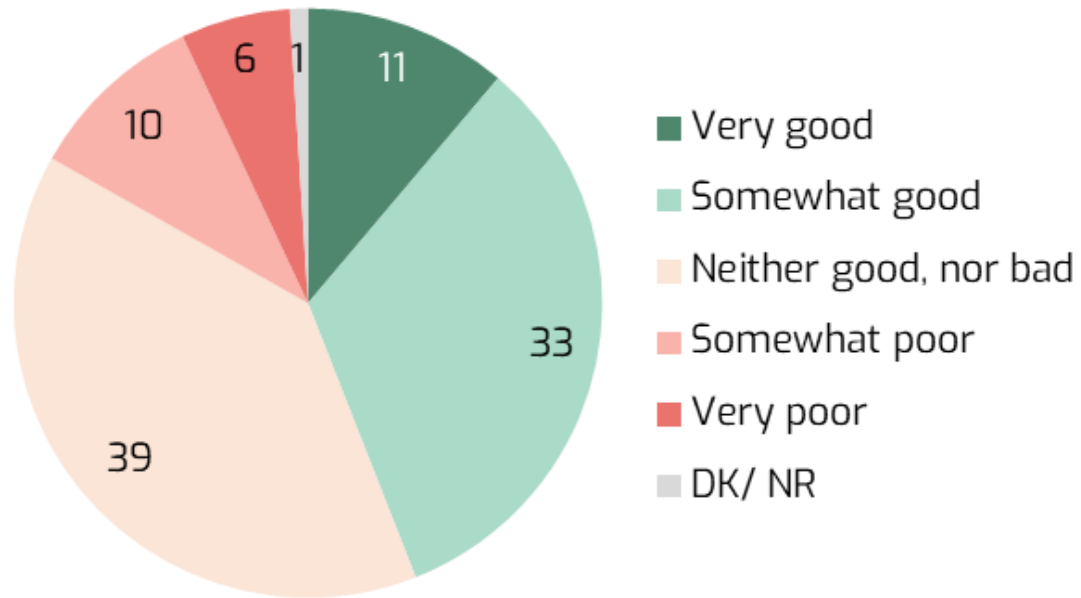
**TOTAL, N=1084**



77% believe that anyone can become a victim of online fraud, cyber-attacks, or cybercriminals. Conversely, 21% hold the view that it is rather unlikely for them to become a victim.

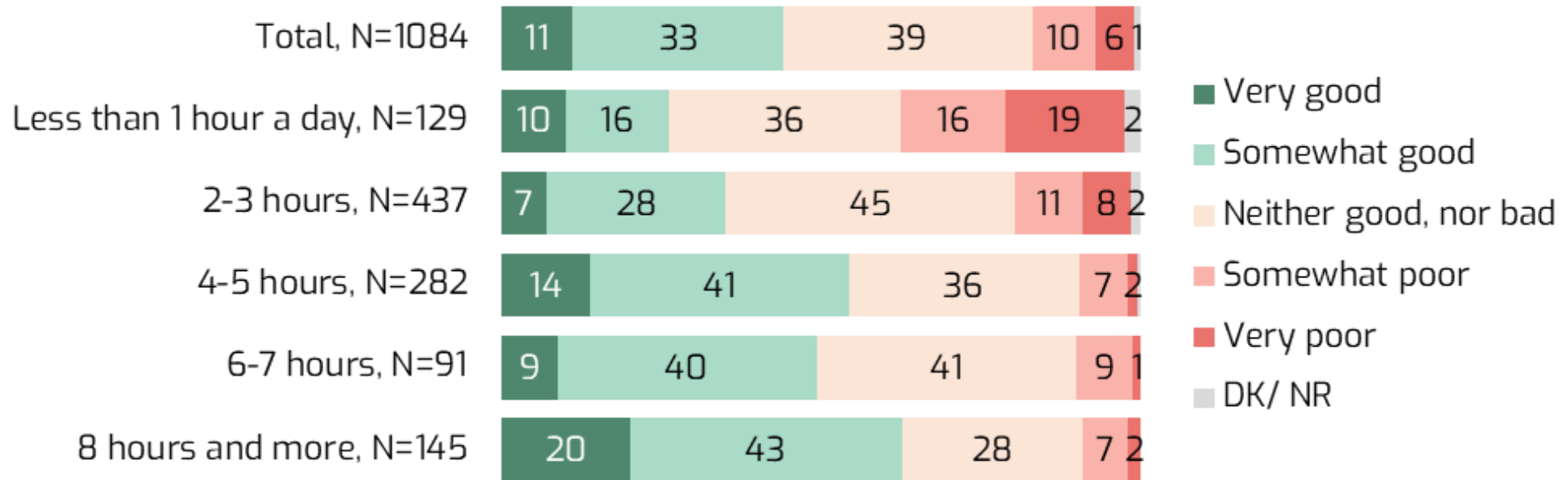
Q29. How would you rate your general knowledge about online safety? (one answer), % of those who use the internet

TOTAL, N=1084



44% of those interviewed believe that they have good knowledge about online safety. 39% fall in the middle, rating their knowledge as neither good nor bad, suggesting a balanced perception of their online safety awareness.

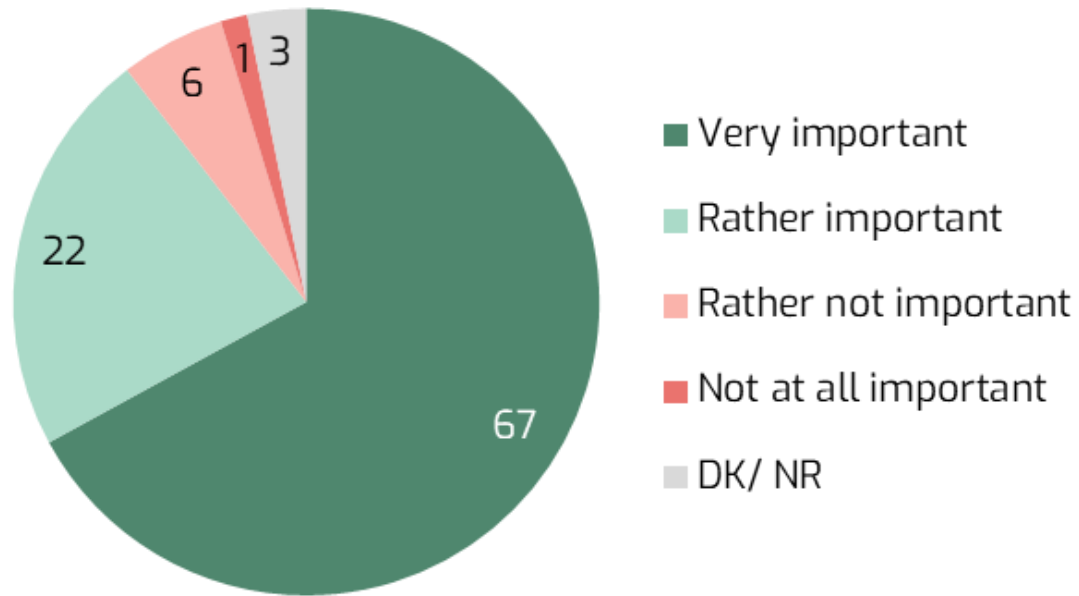
**Q29. How would you rate your general knowledge about online safety? (one answer), % of those who use the internet, disaggregated by the time spent online**



Respondents who spend less time on the internet tend to perceive themselves as less informed about online safety. In contrast, 56% of participants who spend 4-5 hours and 63% of those who spend 8 hours or more online express confidence in their knowledge of online safety.

### Q30. How important is cybersecurity for the Republic of Moldova as a country? (one answer), %

TOTAL, N=1151

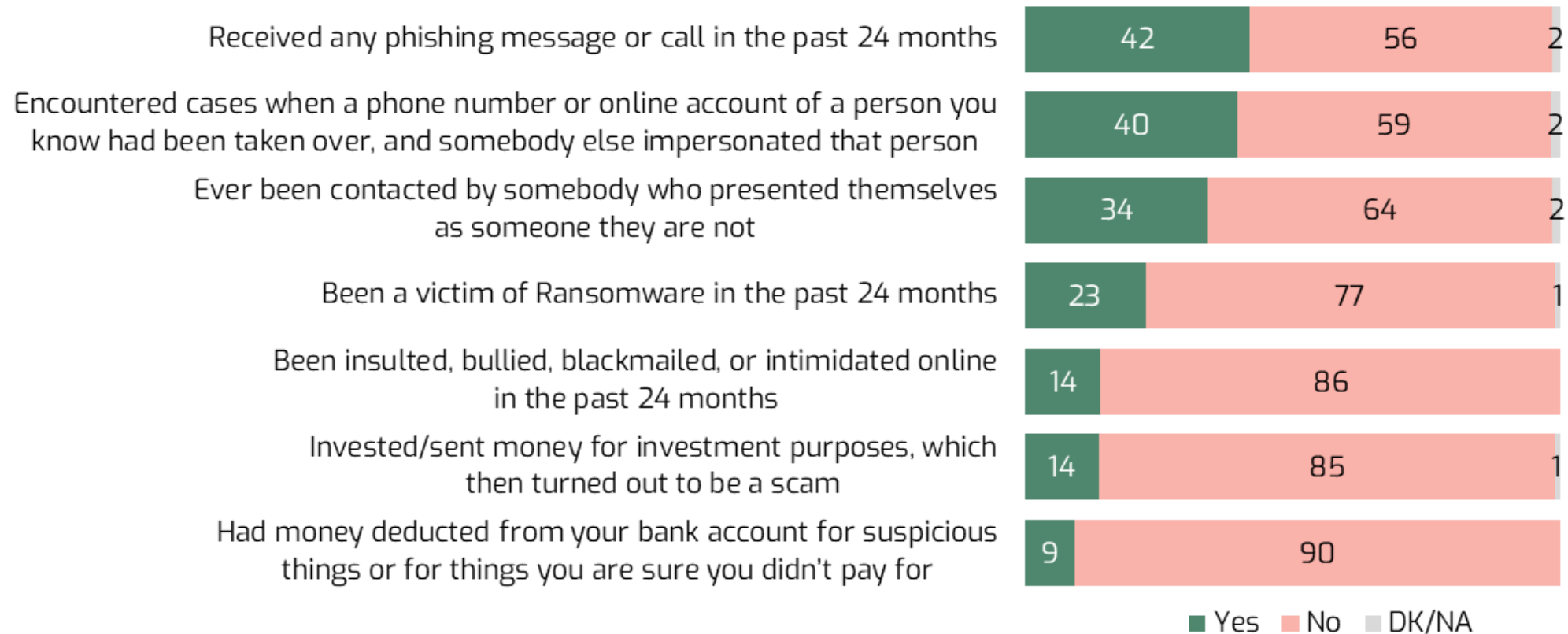


A vast majority considers cybersecurity to be very or rather important for the Republic of Moldova as a country, highlighting a widespread recognition of its critical role in safeguarding the nation's digital infrastructure and information – 89%.

**Specific types of online frauds / cyber-attacks – among internet users**

## Q31-37. Have you or somebody you personally know ..., % of those who use the internet

**TOTAL, N=1084**



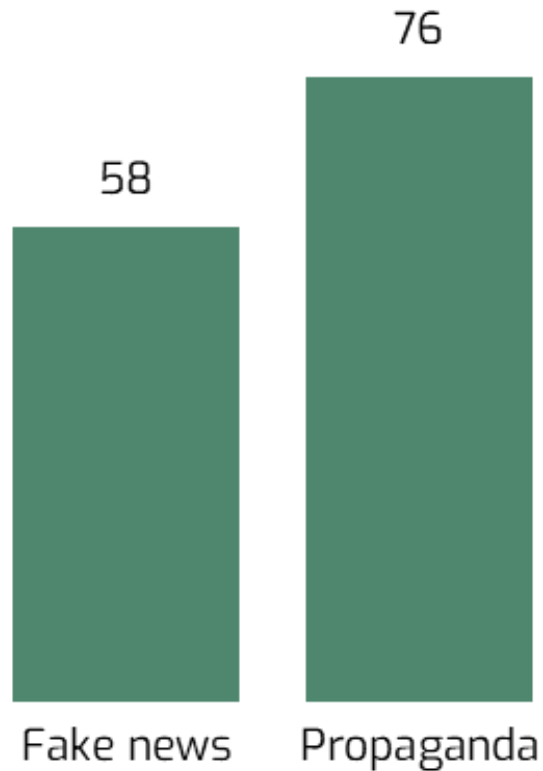
The majority of respondents did not encounter any form of online fraud. Still, four out of ten participants received a phishing message or call (42%) and encountered cases when a phone number or online account of a person has been taken over (40%).

# Media literacy



Q38. Are you familiar with these words? (one answer per row), %

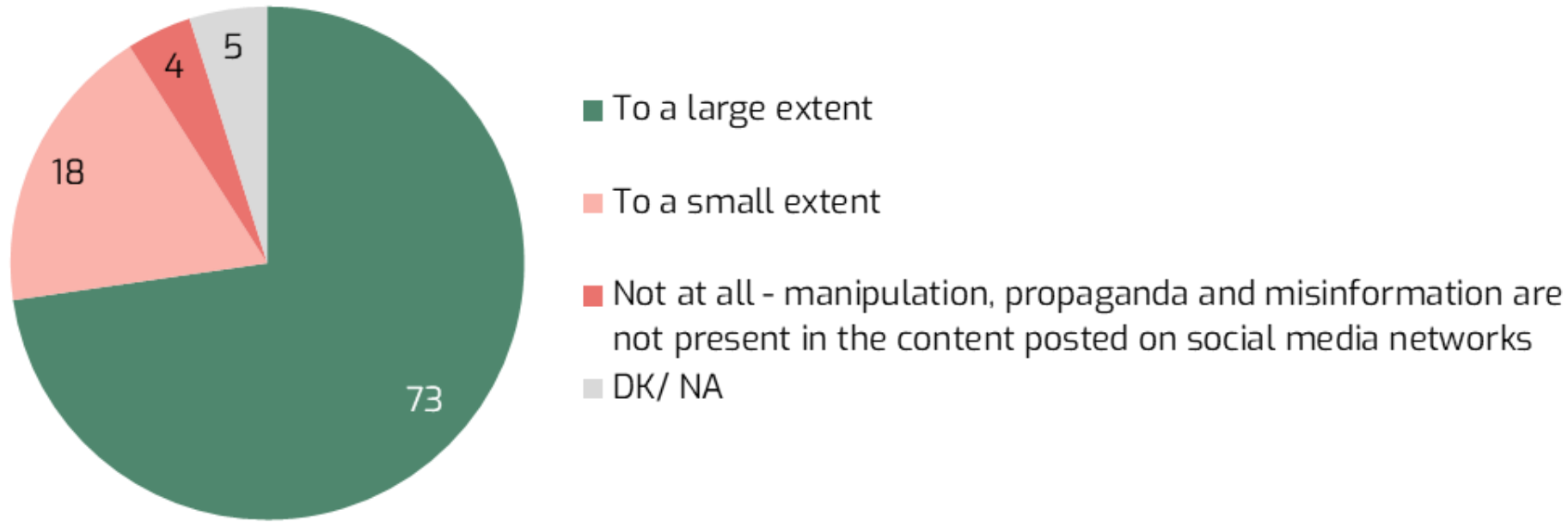
TOTAL, N=1151



Most of the respondents are familiar with the term "propaganda," with 76% recognizing its meaning. Additionally, "fake news" is known by 58% of respondents, reflecting a noteworthy level of awareness regarding this term.

**Q39. To what extent do you think that manipulation, propaganda and misinformation are present in the content posted on social media networks? (one answer), % of those who use the internet**

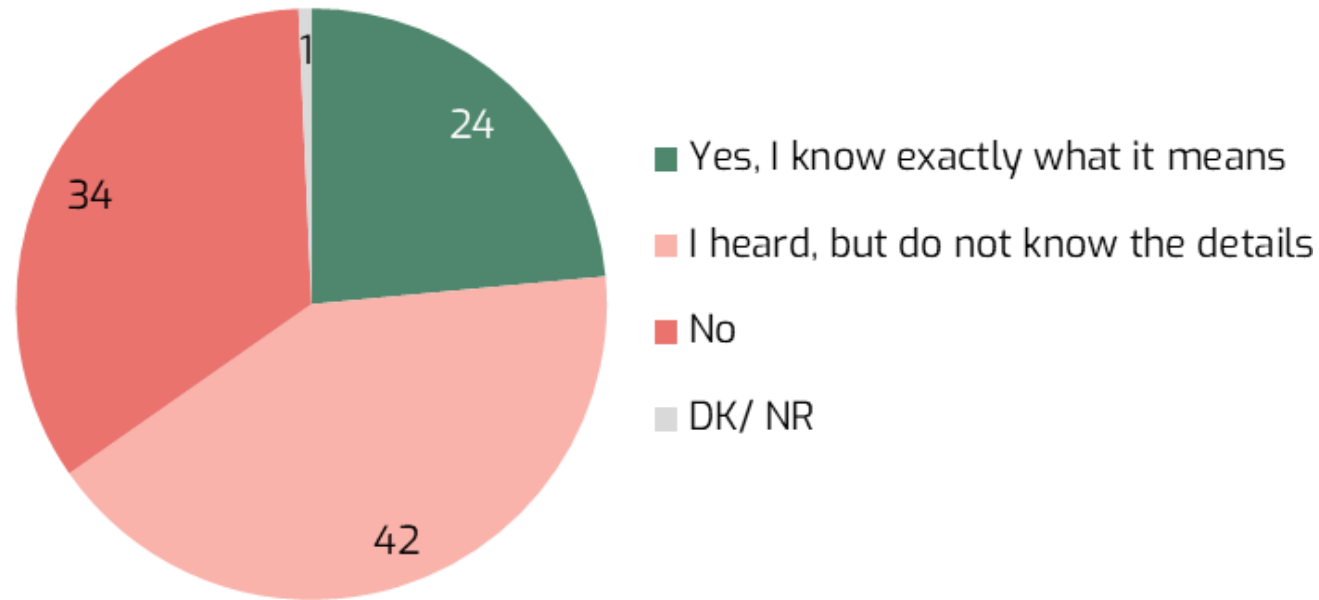
**TOTAL, N=1084**



73%, believe that manipulation, propaganda, and misinformation are present to a large extent in the content posted on social media networks. Another 18% perceive them to be present to a small extent, suggesting some recognition of the problem but with a lesser impact.

### Q40. Are you familiar with the meaning of the word "hybrid war"? (one response), %

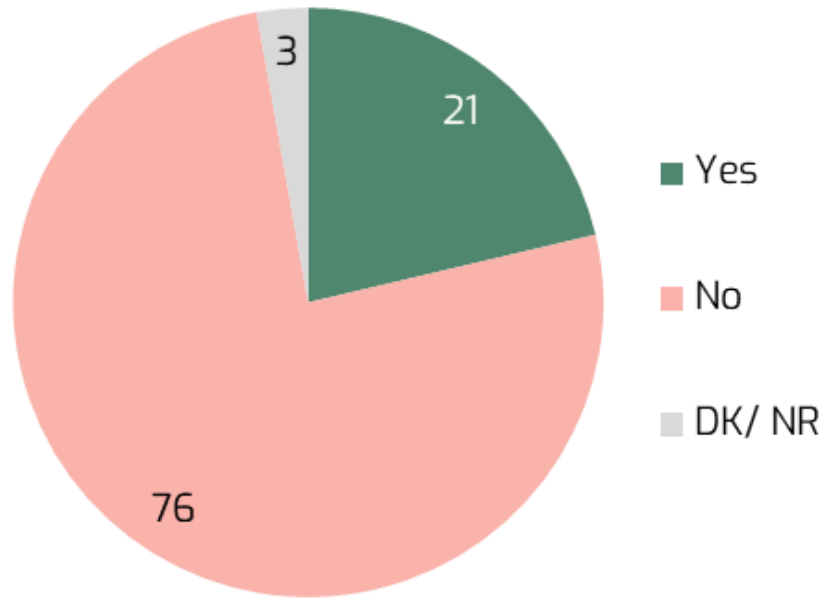
TOTAL, N=1151



A quarter of those interviewed claims to have a precise understanding of the concept (24%), while a larger portion has heard of the term but lacks detailed knowledge – 42%. In contrast, 34% of respondents are not familiar with the term "hybrid war" at all.

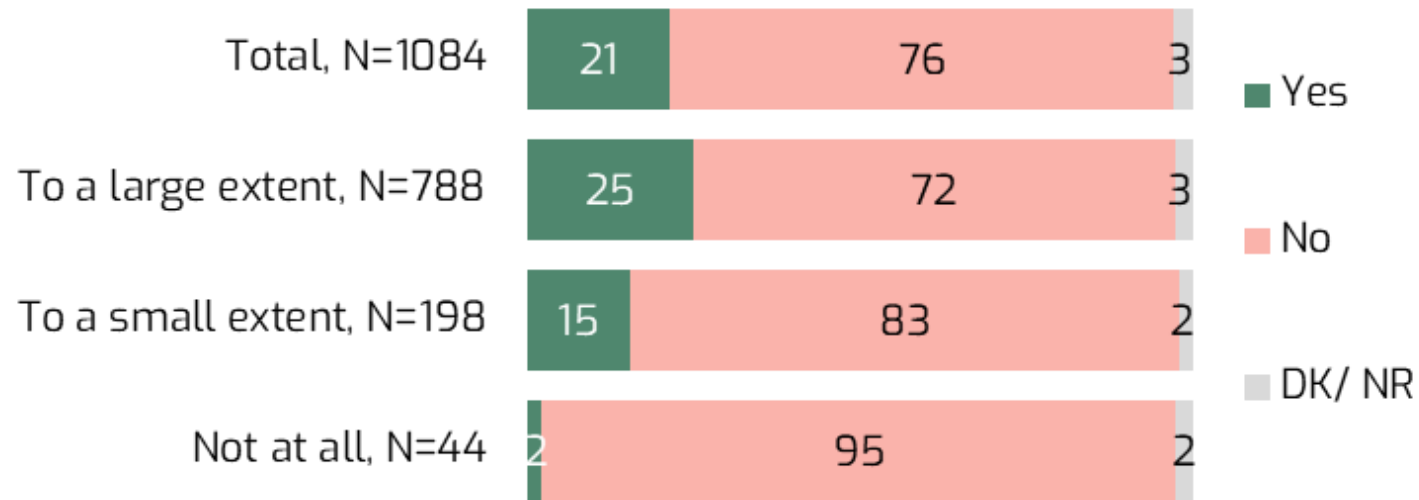
Q41. Have you ever shared an article or news on social media and then discovered that it was fake / not true/ not accurate? (one answer), % of those who use the internet

TOTAL, N=1084



Most of the respondents did not share an article or news on social media that were fake – 76%.

**Q41. Have you ever shared an article or news on social media and then discovered that it was fake / not true/ not accurate? (one answer), % of those who use the internet, disaggregated by opinion about the presence of manipulation on social media**

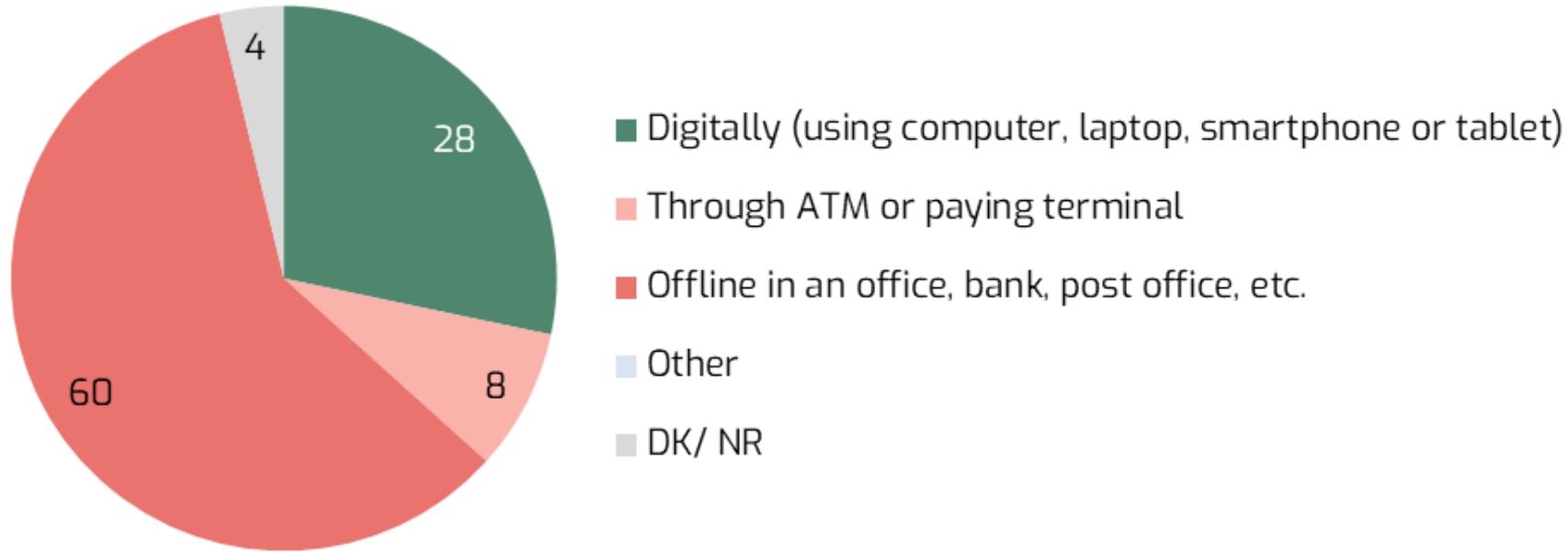


A quarter of respondents who believe that manipulation is present on social media say they have shared a fake article (25%).

## Online services

Q42. How do you usually pay utility bills (such as electricity, heating, water, internet. Etc.)? (one answer), %

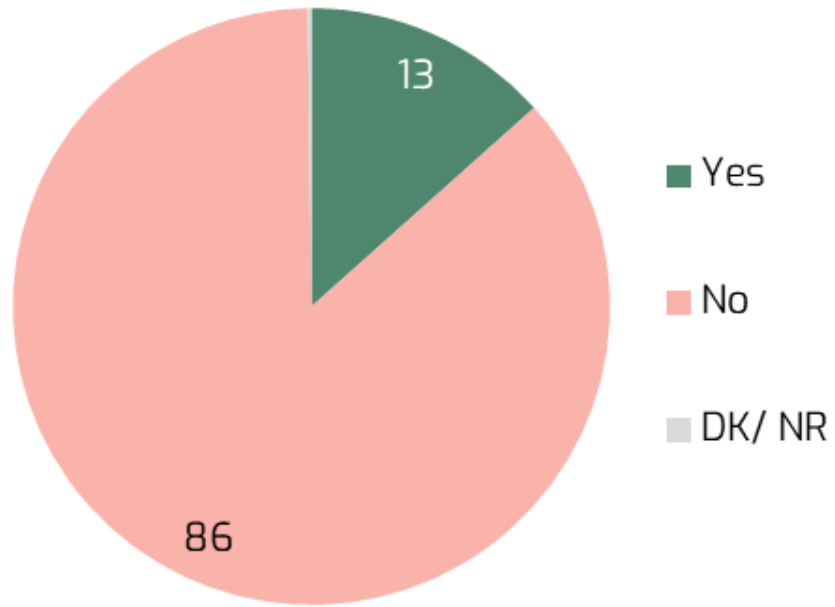
TOTAL, N=1151



While 28% opt for the convenience of digital payments for bills through devices like computers or smartphones, 8% favor the use of ATMs or payment terminals for a more automated approach. Interestingly, a majority of 60% still prefer to handle their utility bill payments offline, choosing to visit physical offices, banks, or post offices for these transactions.

Q43. Do you have a digital signature? (one answer), %

TOTAL, N=1151

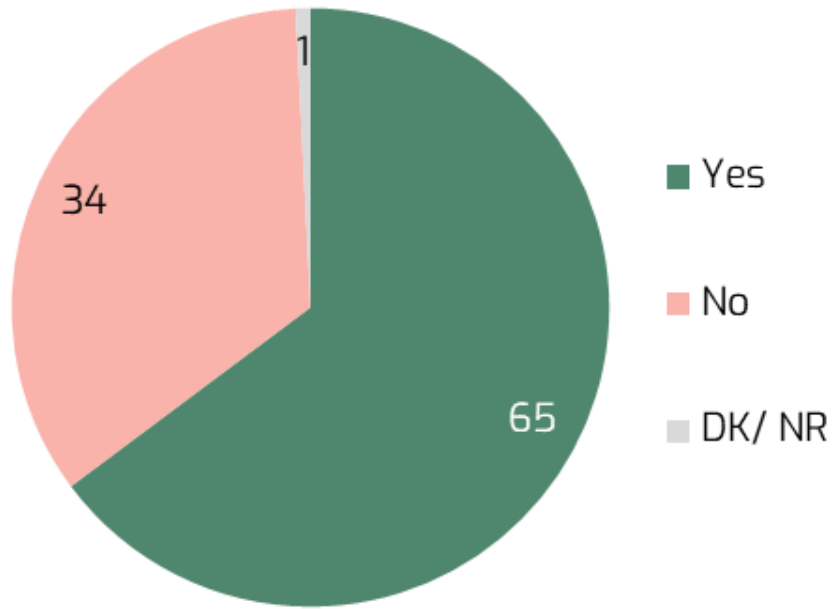


The majority of respondents do not have a digital signature – 86%.



Q44. Do you have a debit/credit/social bank card from which you can make cashless transactions? (one answer), %

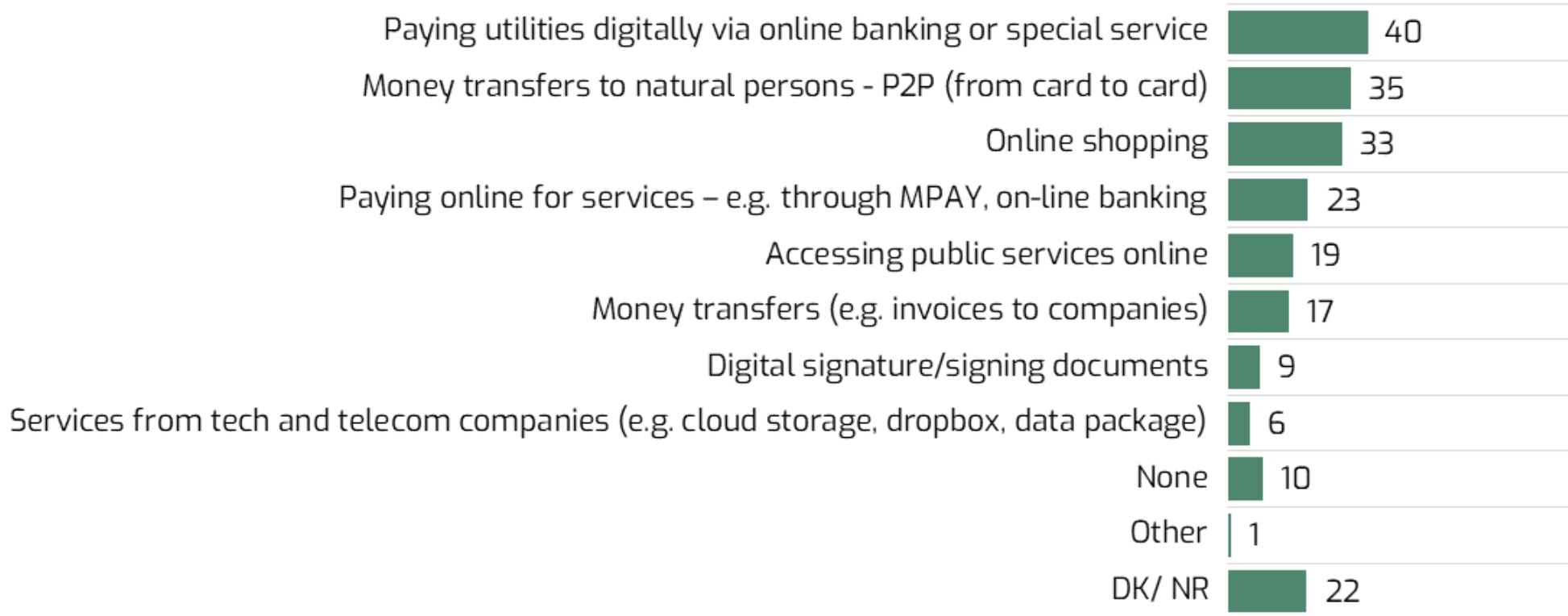
TOTAL, N=1151



Two thirds of those surveyed state that they have a debit/credit/social bank card from which they make cashless transactions (65%).

**Q45. Which online digital services have you used at least once during the last two years? (one answer per row), % of those who use the internet**

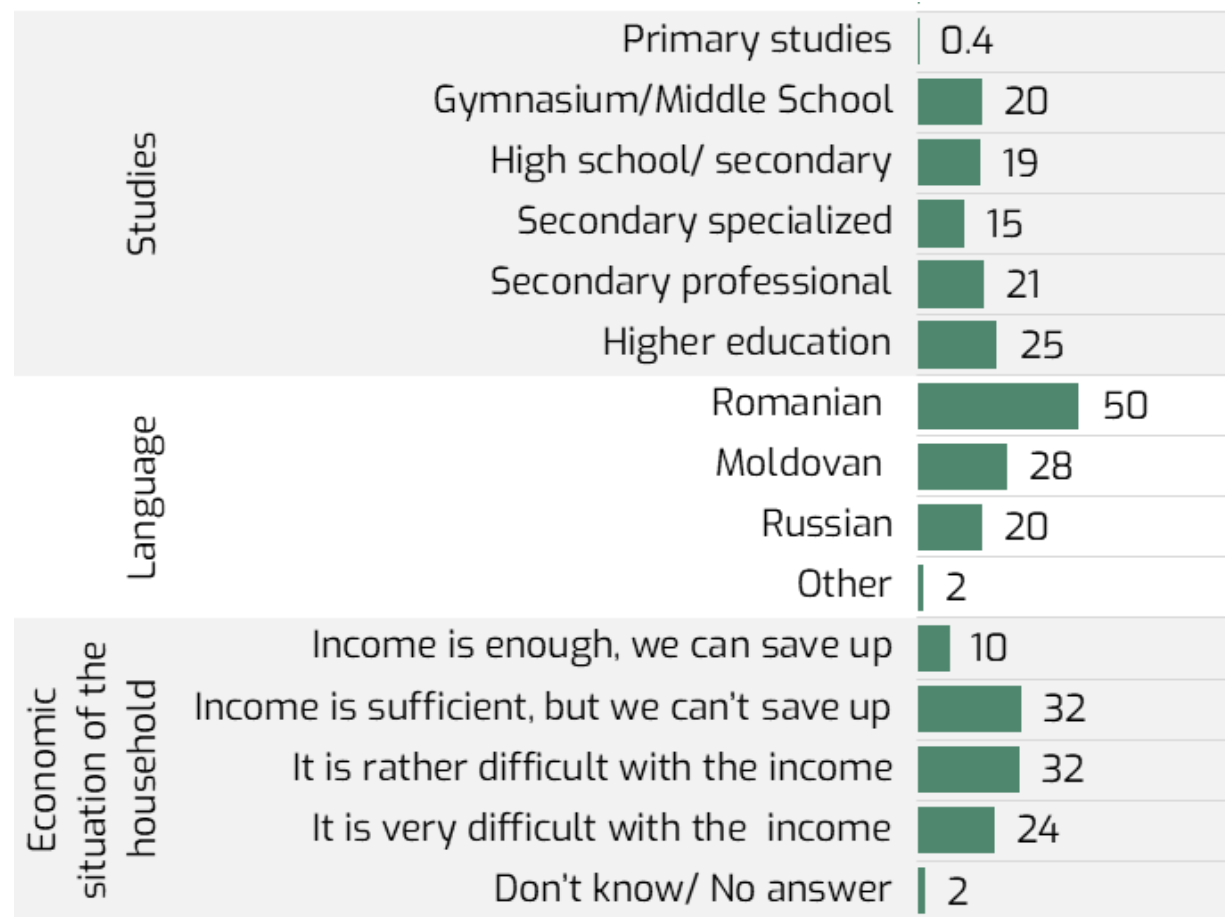
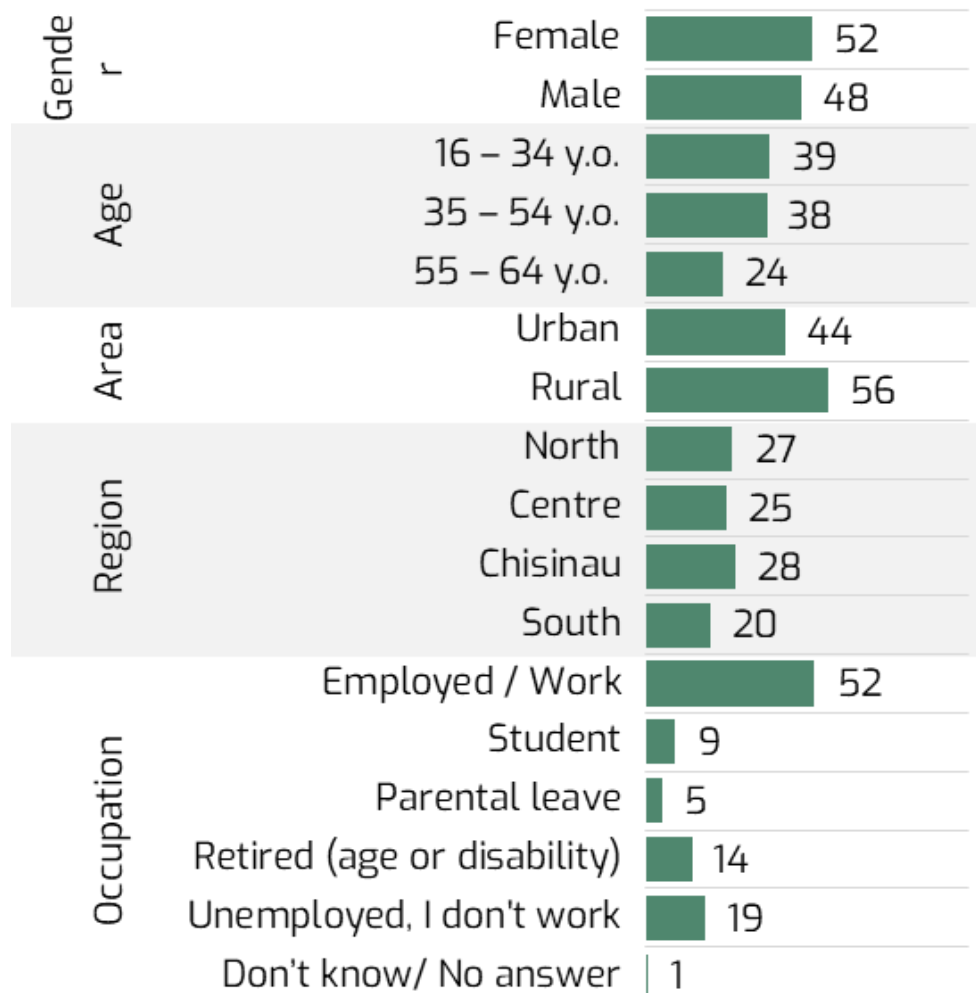
**TOTAL, N=1084**



Top three digital services that were used at least once during the last two years are: paying utilities digitally via online banking or special services (40%), money transfers to natural persons (35%) and online shopping (33%). One in ten respondents didn't use any of the digital services mentioned – 10%.

## **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

# SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS, % per column, N=1151



**ANNEX**

- Smartphones emerge as the most widely owned personal devices (91%), followed by smart TVs. The primary obstacle to smartphone adoption is the perceived cost. Additionally, a bigger proportion of those that don't own a smartphone, have no immediate plans to acquire one.
- The top 3 online activities mentioned by respondents, that they engage in at least 2-3 times a week are phone calls (94%), social media (87%) and online chats with friends and relatives (89%). Nearly half use their smartphone for work-related tasks (48%).
- Privacy and exclusivity are valued, with most respondents being exclusive users of their smartphones. In terms of internet usage, the majority allocate between 2 and 5 hours of their daily time for online activities. Mobile data remains the primary means of internet access for most respondents, complemented by public Wi-Fi networks.
- The majority of respondents prioritize mobile phone privacy by not sharing their access information. When it comes to online security, the most common approach is to use multiple passwords across different accounts, followed by a third that consistently use the same password everywhere.
- Most of the participants claim to possess an understanding of strong password characteristics. Password change habits vary, with almost half never changing their passwords. While 22% of individuals prioritize online security by using unique and different passwords for various online services, 39% opt for the use of several passwords across their accounts. A third uses the exact same password everywhere (33%),
- 19% reported changing their password once a year, while 14% do so several times a year. Most state that they never change their passwords (42%).

- More than a quarter of respondents opt for the convenience of automatic updates, ensuring that their software and apps are regularly kept up to date without manual intervention (27%). Conversely, 8% take a proactive approach, updating once a week, while 18% do so on a monthly basis. On the other hand, 27% update less frequently and 17% reported not updating their software or apps at all.
- While a majority of participants are aware of the term "cybercrime," there is still a portion that remains unfamiliar with it. "Identity theft" enjoys relatively higher recognition, whereas terms like "cyberbullying," "phishing," and "ransomware" are less widely understood. Opinions regarding the prevalence of cybercrime vary, with most acknowledging its widespread nature. A bigger portion of respondents believes that anyone can fall victim to online threats.
- Participants also show diverse levels of confidence in their own online safety knowledge, with some considering themselves well-informed and others having a more neutral stance.
- A vast majority considers cybersecurity to be very or rather important for the Republic of Moldova as a country, highlighting a widespread recognition of its critical role in safeguard the nation's digital infrastructure and information – 89%.
- In general, most of the respondents did not have direct or known experiences with various cyber threats over the past 24 months.
- 73% believe that manipulations, propaganda and misinformation are present to a large extent in the content posted on social media networks. Another 18% perceive them to be present to a small extent, suggesting some recognition of the problem with a lesser impact..

- While 28% opt for the convenience of digital payments for bills through devices like computers or smartphones, 8% favor the use of ATMs or payment terminals for a more automated approach. Interestingly, a majority of 60% still prefer to handle their utility bill payments offline, choosing to visit physical offices, banks, or post offices for these transactions..
- In terms of safety perception, the majority feel secure when using public online services, but there is a minority who express some level of concern. Regarding recommendations, almost half of the respondents is open to promoting the use of online public services.
- 87% of those interviewed feel completely or somewhat safe when using public online services. One in ten feels somewhat or not safe at all – 10%.
- Another noteworthy conclusion is the fact that even though the younger respondents seem to be more informed about online frauds, they also are the ones that tend to share articles that are fake without knowing.



**THANK YOU!**

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