



Readiness for a cookieless future, then and now.

How marketers are planning for a world without third-party cookies.



With the deprecation of third-party cookies, the marketing industry is facing a catch-22. Audiences still want personalization, but the main tool used to create it is becoming obsolete.

As the list of consumer-driven privacy directives continues to grow, browser policies have evolved without a clear path for marketers to resolve identity, replace pseudonymous data sources, or test best practices for capturing consent. Many marketers still don't know what their strategy will look like without third-party cookies, or how to prepare for a world without them.

Today's consumers are more aware of their digital privacy—and increasingly, their concerns have become legislation. With companies like Apple and Google adjusting their policies to comply, a cookieless world is getting closer.

While people expect personalized online experiences, they also know brands monitor their personal data to create them. They want a say in how that data is used, collected, and tracked.

NEW FEATURE



Approaching a cookieless future.

2018

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) limits personal data tracking in Europe.

2020

California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) comes into effect.

2021

Apple delivers on its promise of consumer consent for mobile app tracking with iOS 14.5.

2024

Google plans to deprecate third-party cookies in its ultra-popular Chrome browser.

Adobe wanted to understand how marketing and customer experience (CX) leaders felt about their journey toward a cookieless future—so we asked them.

In 2022, Adobe surveyed over 2,500 global marketing and CX leaders about their readiness for a cookieless future. Here we explore the trends and changes since 2021, when we last studied this topic in partnership with market and social research firm Advanis.

By comparing the two datasets, we've uncovered four key insights that reveal how attitudes toward a cookieless future have changed in the past year.

Between 2021 and 2022, here's how consumers and professionals felt about a cookieless future and what steps they've taken to prepare.



NEW ITEM IN STOCK



1

Marketers are feeling more prepared for a cookieless future—but many still aren't sure where to start.

2021

33%

of marketers felt ready for a cookieless future.

75%

saw preparing as urgent.

2022

77%

claimed they were prepared for the loss of third-party cookies.

59%

weren't investing in first-party data.

Compared to the previous year, marketers were more confident about thriving in a cookieless world. But we observed a concerning trend—despite that increased optimism, 40% of respondents hadn't set a clear cookieless strategy, whether due to confusion, a lack of motivation, or slow policy rollouts.

Of those, 20% were waiting to act because they were unsure whether the situation was urgent. This is a drastic change from 2021, when 75% saw the urgency in preparing for a cookieless future.

Even more tellingly, over half of marketers (59%) haven't invested in one of the most promising ways to adapt to the loss of third-party cookies—first-party data, like emails and usernames.

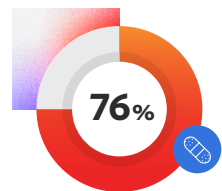
First-party data is shared willingly by the consumer, and it's one of the most powerful ways to create personalized experiences and strong, long-lasting customer relationships. To prepare for a cookieless future, marketers must actively embrace it, or at least start making plans to do so.

The takeaway?

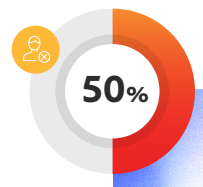
Despite increased confidence, marketers aren't taking widespread action—and with a cookieless future approaching, inaction comes at a cost.

New personalization strategies, such as those using first-party data, will take time to implement, test, and refine. Marketers need to act now—by relying on third-party cookies, they're already leaving money on the table.

As of 2021, 76% of marketers said the loss of third-party cookies would hurt their business and that cookieless “walled gardens” like Apple's operating system put 50% of potential customers out of reach. One year later, those who still aren't testing out alternative strategies will struggle to keep up with these industry changes.



76% of marketers said the loss of third-party cookies would hurt their business.



50% of potential customers are put out of reach by cookieless operating systems.



2

Despite the drawbacks, marketers still rely on third-party cookies.

2021

41%

of marketers shared that half of their marketing efforts were dependent on cookies.

56%

ranked that spending as important.

2022

75%

claimed they were prepared for the loss of third-party cookies.

45%

weren't investing in first-party data.

Marketers have struggled to move away from third-party cookies—despite knowing they're a fading solution that won't remain useful in the long term. Around half of respondents described them as a “necessary evil,” and another half said they couldn't get the resources needed to develop personalization strategies without them.

That translated into more industry spending on cookies year over year. In 2022, 64% of marketing and CX leaders planned to spend more on cookie-dependent activations, and 45% of leaders spent at least half their marketing budgets on cookie-based activities.

The takeaway?

If you're not as far ahead in your cookieless strategy as you'd like, you're not alone—most marketers are still using third-party cookies.

Cookies were never a perfect solution. They're inaccurate at tracking users across different browsers and devices, and today, that's how nearly all of us browse the web.

But despite these drawbacks, most marketers see third-party cookies as an imperfect tool they're stuck with for now. That creates a big opportunity—to make a cookieless future even better than the one we'll leave behind. One way to get there is zero- and first-party data, collected with consumers' voluntary and informed consent.

Because these strategies focus on that data brands actually own, they lead to deeper understanding of customers, better personalization, and more trusting relationships. Next, we explore the tools marketers are using to leverage first-party data.



3

The standout strategy for data deprecation readiness.

2021

- The most popular preparedness strategy was **data collaboration**.
- Data collaboration was the **standout strategy** for adapting to a cookieless future.

2022

- Using real-time customer data was a priority for **33%** of executives.
- **Onboarding a CDP** is a top preparedness strategy.

These handshake-style agreements allow companies to augment their own first-party data through mutual data exchange with other firms, especially those in the same niche or industry. Added benefits of this strategy include access to governance tools for segmentation and activation along with cross-industry insights based on first-party identities.

But in today's uncertain new landscape, it makes sense to rely on powerful tools to do the heavy lifting. We've observed a trend toward more automated, centralized tools that allow marketers to track and analyze customer data—customer data platforms (CDPs).

Rooted in first-party identifiers, CDPs build dynamic customer profiles with accurate, up-to-the-minute insights. By collecting and unifying data automatically in real time, CDPs offer more accuracy and efficiency than data exchange agreements, with much less hands-on collaboration.

The takeaway?

To adapt to a cookieless future, marketers are choosing CDPs to consolidate first-party data into real-time customer profiles.

Data collaboration is not disappearing, but the results make it clear why brands are choosing CDPs.

Roughly 40% of brands using these platforms are building more direct customer relationships, seeing increased customer loyalty, and achieving better personalization. For over 30% of users, that means more completed transactions and overall higher ROI.

CDPs help brands build a strong, resilient, first-party data strategy, connecting them with the right audiences and adding real-time insights to the customer journey.



REAL-TIME PROFILES



4

Consumers are still willing to share data—they just want knowledge, control, and visibility in exchange.

2021

71%

opted to share data for at least one use case.

2022

81%

of consumers said choice in how companies use their data was important.

79%

were concerned about how companies are using their data.

We weren't surprised to see that consumers still want to take an active role in protecting their digital privacy. They know data tracking is required to create high-touch, personalized experiences with their favorite brands—they just want the ability to make informed choices about when and how it happens.

Overwhelmingly, consumers are telling us that they care how their personal data is being used—and they want a voice. In addition to the figures above, 48% of consumers feel choice around how their data is used is very important, and 34% are very concerned about how companies are using their data.

They also expect assurance that the brands they're sharing their data with can be trusted. That's why [customers ranked trust](#) as the #1 most important factor behind their purchase decisions, ahead of selection, relevance, and even price.

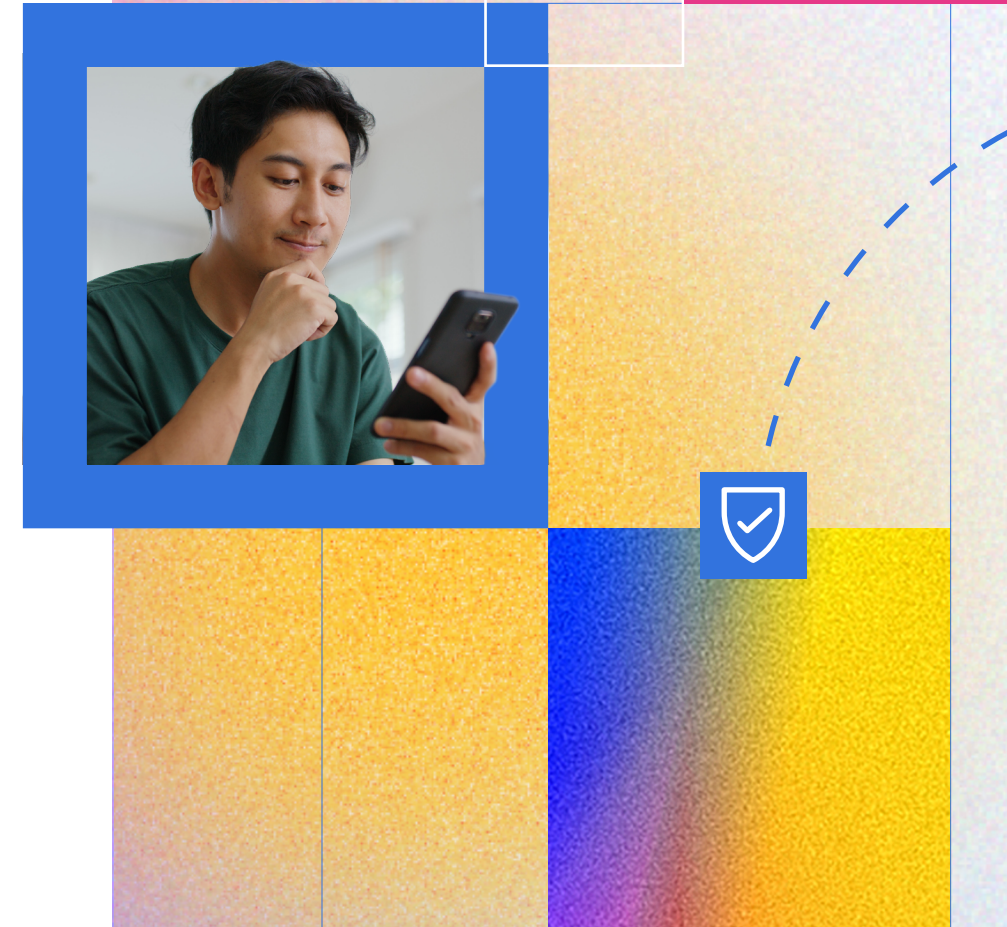
The takeaway?

Build trusting, transparent customer relationships—and your audience will have no problem sharing the data you need to achieve personalization.

Trust isn't just a precursor for voluntary data-sharing. It's a foundation for the strong customer relationships that help all kinds of brands grow and scale.

Customers can tell when companies prioritize data privacy and are transparent about their data collection practices. One way to do that is through authentication—for example, asking customers to share a verifiable piece of identity data by signing up for a newsletter or logging into a website with a username and password.

The right tools, like CDPs, bring together first-party web, app, and media data, giving marketers a more complete view of who their customers are.

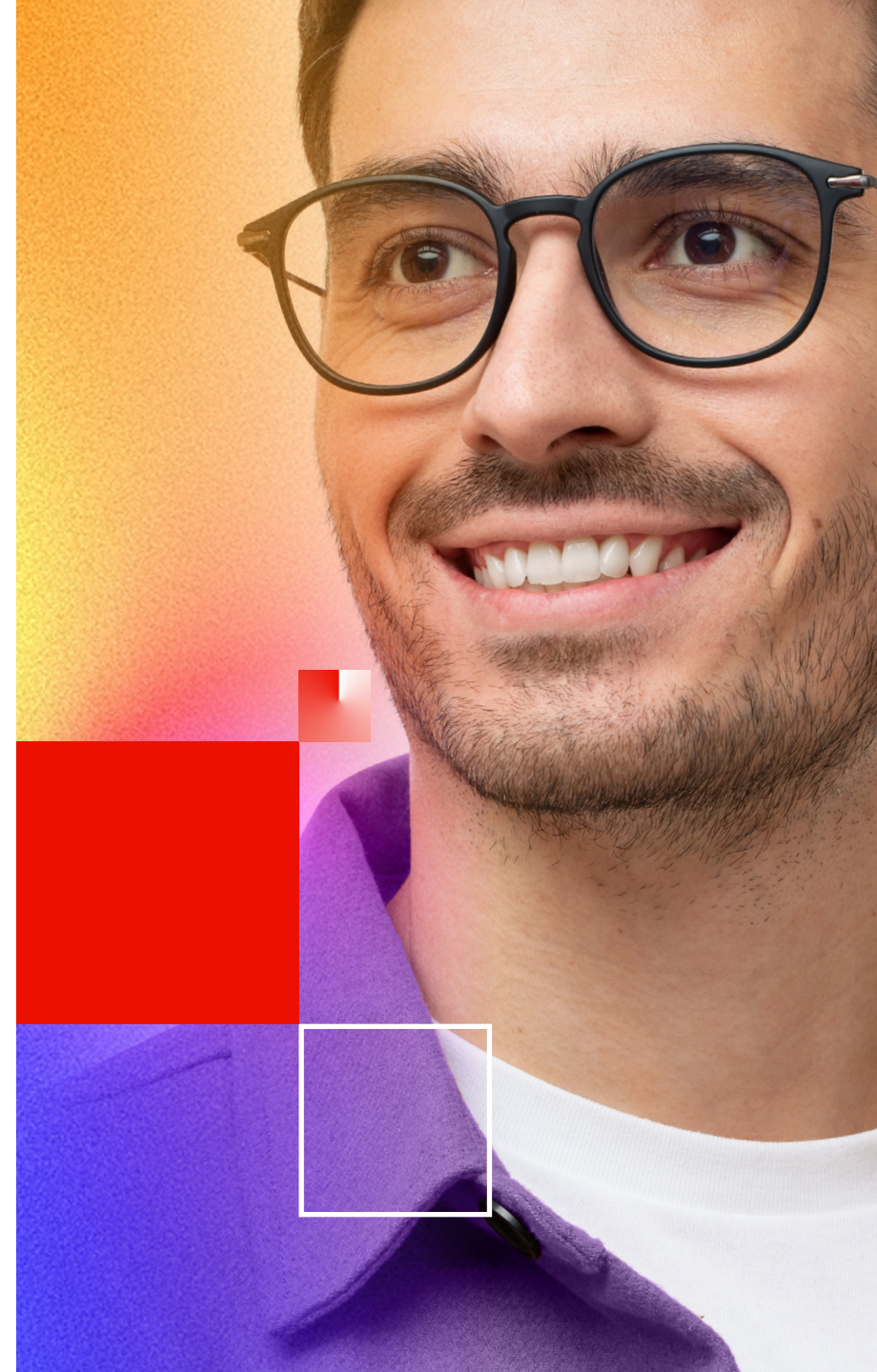


Preparing for a cookieless future may seem like an insurmountable challenge, but we're here to help.

Wherever you are in your journey, Adobe can help you build strong customer relationships without third-party cookies. Marketing and CX leaders are thinking boldly, testing new strategies, and planning for how they'll keep offering personalized experiences in a cookieless world. With the right knowledge and resources, you can too.

Get informed on how to take action with our complete guide to preparing for a cookieless future.

[Read now](#)



Sources

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Rakhi Patel, "[A Tale of Two Perceptions—Readiness for a Cookieless Future](#)," Adobe, 2022.

"[Thinking Beyond the Third-Party Cookie](#)," Adobe, 2022.

"[Thrive in the Cookieless Future with Smart Data](#)," Adobe, 2022.

