SURVEY REPORT

BROWSER CHOICE ALLIANCE

Key Survey Themes & Supporting Data

Savanta, on behalf of Browser Choice Alliance, conducted **a poll of 2,000 U.S. adults aged 18 and older** who use a desktop or laptop computer weekly or more often and report Microsoft Windows as the primary operating system on that device.

While discussions about browser competition often focus on technology companies and regulation, comparatively little research has examined the issue from a consumer perspective. These findings tell a consistent story: **more than 85% of Windows users want meaningful control over their browser experience**, yet more than 2 in 3 report obstacles that make exercising their browser choice more difficult than it should be.

The Importance of PCs

Despite the prevalence of mobile, consumers still rely on PCs for connectivity, and report using it for a variety of purposes in their day-to-day lives.

SUPPORTING DATA

73%

of Windows users use a desktop or laptop at least weekly, while 46% use one daily.

87%

use their PC for personal activities, while 54% also use one for work.

40%

(2-in-5) of Windows users use their desktop or laptop computer regularly to access AI tools (e.g., chatbots, content generators).

51%

(1-in-2) users under age 44 and those who identify as highly tech-savvy (50%) use their desktop or laptop computer regularly to access AI tools.

The Browser Choice Gap

Windows users demonstrate a clear preference for choosing and controlling their default browser settings. However, tactics deployed by Microsoft on Windows PCs continue to shape outcomes in ways that do not reflect users' stated preferences.

SUPPORTING DATA

86% (9-in-10) of those who use their Windows desktop or laptop computer for personal use believe that they should have the primary control over default browser choice.

80% (8-in-10) of those who use their Windows desktop or laptop computer for personal use agree that the operating system should automatically set their browser of choice (e.g., Chrome, Firefox) as the default for all relevant file types (including PDFs and web links) without requiring to configure them individually.

19% (1-in-5) when purchasing a brand-new computer, if given a choice, said they would choose Edge even though all Windows users (100%) have Edge immediately available on their laptop or desktop computer, when asked which browser they would download to access the internet.

33% (1-in-3) Windows users who prefer a browser other than Edge say operating system prompts, automatic browser switchbacks, and/or system warnings or alerts discouraging switching browsers are preventing them from using a preferred browser.

The Complexity Barrier

Changing default browsers remains unnecessarily difficult for Windows users, with the majority encountering obstacles and requiring significant effort, even among tech-savvy individuals.

SUPPORTING DATA

72% (nearly 3-in-4) of those who tried changing the default browser in the past 1-2 years, including those highly comfortable with technology (71%), encountered challenges when doing so.

44% (more than 2-in-5) of users attempting to change their default browser in the past 1-2 years experienced their browser switching back automatically, links opening in the wrong browser, or were unable to make the change at all; the change successfully stayed in place in only about half (54%) of the cases.

+ When shown the process for changing default browser settings on Windows, 3-in-5 (61%) users say they would resort to seeking guidance or looking up instructions when completing this process, including 3-in-4 of those age 65+ (77%) or those less comfortable with technology (74%).
+ **Most commonly encountered challenges include**: #1 System recommending or redirecting them back to the pre-installed browser (29%), #2 Some applications or website links still opening in the old browser (26%), #3 Needing to look up instructions, videos, or tutorials online (25%).

Disproportionate Impact on Older Users

When shown the process for changing default browser settings on Windows, older users report higher rates of confusion, perceived complexity, and lower confidence compared to their younger counterparts, highlighting how current browser configuration processes disproportionately burden older demographics.

SUPPORTING DATA

36% (slightly more than 3-in-10) users aged 65+ feel highly comfortable with technology, compared to 6-in-10 (64%) of those aged 45-64 and 8-in-10 (81%) of those aged 18-44 who self-identify as completely or very comfortable with using computers, smartphones, and digital technology.

70% (approximately 7-in-10) of users of all ages when shown the process for changing default browser settings on Windows, found at least one part of the process challenging or unclear.

63% 65+ users were three times more likely to find the process to be confusing rather than intuitive, compared to just 1-in-5 younger users aged 18-44 (21%) who were confused by the process.

+ Half of users (50%) did NOT find the process to be straightforward, and 1-in-4 (23%) thought it was complex.
  - Older 65+ users (44%) were more likely to find the process to be complex, compared to those aged 18-44 (15%).
+ Half of users (49%) thought the process involved more steps than expected. Older 65+ users (75%) were more likely to find the process to take more steps, compared to those aged 18-44 (38%).
+ Half of users (48%) have a complete or high confidence in completing this process without seeking instructions or other guidance, largely driven by younger users aged 18-44 (61%). Meanwhile, most 65+ users (61%) felt slightly or not at all confident in completing this process on their own.

The Reset Trap

Windows users encounter recurring prompts, messages, and automatic changes that undermine their browser preferences and impede their ability to maintain and use their preferred browser settings.

SUPPORTING DATA

29%

of users most commonly cite Windows system updates as the reason for their default browser setting on their Windows PC changing.

~66%

(2-in-3) of Windows users who set a non-Edge browser as their default claim they have experienced prompts or pop-up messages discouraging the use of their chosen default browser at least once; 1-in-3 report seeing them every few weeks or more often.

Detailed Practices

+ **Pop-up messages or warnings discouraging the use of other browsers:** 34% report seeing every few weeks or more; among those users, 70% believe it has a significant/moderate impact on browser choice.
+ **Banner ads blocking or obscuring other browser content:** 39% report seeing every few weeks or more; among those users, 71% believe it has a significant/moderate impact on browser choice.

Emotional Toll

Browser-related friction creates significant negative emotions among Windows users from frustration and annoyance to feelings of manipulation and loss of control.

SUPPORTING DATA

+ Nearly half of Windows users report at least moderately negative experiences with browser-related settings and messages, with 1-in-4 reporting very or extremely negative perceptions.

57% (3-in-5) of users felt moderately or more upset about browser changes made without their consent, with more than 1-in-3 (37%) report feeling very or extremely upset.

49% (1-in-2) of users felt moderately or more manipulated to make a specific browser choice, with more than 1-in-4 (29%) report feeling very or extremely manipulated.

48% (1-in-2) of users felt moderate or higher levels of frustration with the process of changing browsers, with more than 1-in-4 (28%) reporting very or extremely high levels of frustration.

48% (1-in-2) of users experienced moderate or higher levels of concern with their ability to control browser settings, with more than 1-in-4 (26%) reporting very or extremely high levels of concern.

The survey was conducted online between April 1-20, 2026. Results have been weighted to align with the known demographic profile of the target population. The overall margin of error is ±2.2% at the 95% confidence level; margin of error varies across subgroups.