



Consumers don't want faster.



The 2026
Fourthline Fraud
& Authentication
Report

They want safer.

In August 2026, we surveyed
6,000 people across six European
countries to understand their
attitudes towards fraud.

RESPONDENTS TOLD US IT'S OK TO GO SLOWER

6 countries.
6,000 people.
4 themes.

We asked customers what they think, soliciting their actual views instead of monitoring attacker behaviour. Most people would accept a slower checkout or authentication process if it meant greater protection. Fintech's obsession with frictionless and the instant is colliding with a deepening understanding of potential trade-offs.

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Slower, safer, understood

Highlights of the year

78%

would accept a slower, more thorough verification process if it meant significantly less fraud risk

45%

report no frustration with authentication at all

18%

said they had been defrauded, approximately 50 million people

15%

have been targeted by a suspected AI-generated scam

8% in the past 12 months alone

€4.2B

in payment fraud across the EEA in 2024, recorded by the EBA and ECB

up 17%

50%

feel fraud is more sophisticated than ever

down from 57%

73%

trust their bank to handle their money securely

down from 82%

28%

of European fraud victims switched banks afterwards

While the banking and payments industries have spent a decade removing friction, it turns out customers don't actually mind friction. Seventy-eight percent of Europeans say they would accept a slower, more thorough verification process if it meant significantly less fraud risk. Forty-five percent report no frustration with authentication at all.

We also found that fraud's impact is widely felt. Nearly one in five respondents – 18% – said they had been defrauded. Based on recent population data, that is approximately 50 million people. A further 8% reported being given mortgage terms or fees that were never disclosed to them. Separately, the EBA and ECB recorded €4.2 billion in payment fraud across the EEA in 2024, up 17% from the previous year.

Yet despite the danger, Europeans are not shrieking in fear. Instead, respondents feel increasingly aware of the threats posed by fraud. Overall concern around fraud has fallen on every measure year on year. Exactly half of respondents feel fraud is more sophisticated than ever, compared with 57% a year prior. The survey participants take a more pragmatic stance and better understand what can be done in response.

Respondents told us it's OK to go slower. Most people would accept a slower checkout or authentication process if it meant greater protection. Fintech's obsession with frictionless

and the instant is colliding with a deeper understanding of potential trade-offs.

A parallel development is growing awareness of the potential dangers of attacks generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence. Fifteen percent of Europeans have been targeted by a suspected AI-generated scam – a deepfake, a cloned voice, an AI-written message – and 8% of those approaches in the past twelve months alone. More than half the lifetime total arrived in a single year.

The materials are also getting better. Fakes that once carried obvious tells – the flat voice, the hand positioning, the lighting – increasingly do not. The EBA and ECB find the same pattern in the payments data, where the fastest-growing category of loss is fraud when the customer, unaware, mistakenly authorises the payment themselves.

Consumers and businesses both need specialist knowledge to keep up with ever-shifting methods and attack vectors.

More core findings of the report



AI and deepfake worry fell from 49% to 43%. SIM-swap worry fell from 34% to 26%



Trust in GDPR to protect data rights fell from 26% to 19%



France has the highest financial fraud incidence at 26%, Italy the lowest at 11%



The UK and the Netherlands are the most targeted by AI scams, while Italy and Germany are the least

We asked customers what they think.

A total of

6000

adults aged 18 and over
were surveyed online

Across

6

markets: the UK, France,
Germany, Spain, Italy and
The Netherlands

Trust runs high

83%

of UK respondents trust their bank
to handle their money securely

The most impatient users?

18-24

year-olds are least willing to accept
a slower verification process

1

Europeans will trade
speed for safety

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Banks have the trust
required for fraud
prevention

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Repeat identity checks
land best in the markets
that run them most

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Europeans want options in
proving who they are

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France has the highest financial fraud incidence at 26%

Italy the lowest at 11%

	Trust banks with money	Worries fraud is worse	Victim of financial fraud	Accepts slower checks	Trusts AI less than a human
UK	83%	53%	23%	72%	58%
France	76%	47%	26%	79%	62%
Spain	74%	50%	17%	78%	62%
Italy	74%	51%	11%	79%	54%
Germany	68%	49%	16%	78%	59%
Netherlands	64%	50%	16%	80%	69%

A broad consistency extends across countries and age groups: from 80% in the Netherlands to 72% in the UK, and from 74% of 18-24s to 79% of over-55s. Speed is not the paramount concern.

The UK and the Netherlands are the most targeted by AI scam, while Italy and Germany are the least. Italy is the most open market, at 54% trusting AI less, and the Netherlands the most resistant at 69%.

Overall concern around fraud has fallen on every measure

	2025	2026	Change
Victim of financial fraud	19%	18%	-1
Fraud is more sophisticated than ever	57%	50%	-7
Worried about AI fraud and deepfakes	49%	43%	-6
Worried about SIM-swapping or phone hacking	34%	26%	-8
Bank handles my finances securely	82%	73%	-9
Bank acts in my best interests	69%	60%	-9
GDPR protects my data rights	26%	19%	-7
Willing to adopt new security measures	55%	42%	-13
Repeat check made me feel more secure	32%	26%	-6
Repeat check was very annoying	10%	12%	+2
Prefer in-person verification to open an account	52%	54%	+2
Use a digital-only bank	8%	11%	+3

01

Europeans will trade
speed for safety



More than six times as many respondents would accept a slower, more thorough verification process if it significantly reduced fraud risk, with 78% in favour and just 12% not. A nearly identical number of people said they would go through extra steps for additional security.

A broad consistency extends across countries and age groups: from 80% in the Netherlands to 72% in the UK, and from 74% of 18-24s to 79% of over-55s. Speed is not the paramount concern.

Europeans are not particularly bothered about the authentication process. Forty-five percent reported no frustration at all with authentication. Just 7% said the time it takes was their biggest authentication frustration, and 4% say it takes too many steps. This is not an overwhelming mandate for change.

The frustrations people do report are about things failing, not speed. Eleven percent forget a password or PIN. Ten percent say biometric recognition does not always work. Seven percent say one-time codes arrive late or never arrive. Roughly a quarter of Europeans are frustrated by authentication that doesn't work, against roughly one in ten frustrated by authentication that is slow.

There is a limit. All things equal, Europeans still choose the faster method. The cited advantage of their preferred method is that it is quick and easy (25%), ahead of feeling secure (17%).

People will take a slower process when it buys them something. What they will not take is a slower, inscrutable process.

Sixty-two percent want their bank to explain why extra security steps are needed. Where demand is loudest, tolerance is lowest. Seventy-one percent of Germans want an explanation, against 53% in the UK. Germany is also the market most likely to refuse slower checks outright, at 15%.

And they intrinsically understand the need for it. Even if they can't identify every added check under the Instant Payments Regulation, they generally approve of what is being done. An impressive 83% understand why their bank authenticates the way it does.

Regulatory evidence supports this approach: The EBA and ECB found that strong customer authentication demonstrably reduced card fraud, with card fraud running seventeen times higher when the recipient sits outside the EEA and SCA is not required.

Speed still wins when nothing else is at stake – a quarter name quick and easy as the best thing about their preferred method, against 17% who say it feels secure. But that preference collapses when confronted with fraud risk. People will take a slower process when it buys them something; they won't take it for nothing.

Banks and fintechs have spent ten years stripping friction out of onboarding, but customers now say speed is not their top priority.

"European customers say when it comes to security and identity verification, they want a meaningful process they understand. Speed is important but not the top priority. Accessing money securely should not feel like an obstacle, but it's important that banks and financial institutions get these steps right in order to build trust and credibility with their customers, tailored to different market and demographic needs."

Fleur de Roos

Chief Operating Officer of Fourthline

02

Banks

have the trust

required for fraud prevention



Trust in banks fell nine points in a year, which presents an issue. Trust is not finite and while there is still enough left to run a verification programme, there will not be forever.

When money enters the banking system, most consumers feel secure about the safety of their funds. Banks are the most widely trusted institution, with 73% of people trusting their bank to handle their money securely and 60% trust it to act in their best interests. While still a majority, these represent noticeable declines from last year's survey, where 82% said they trusted their bank and 69% trusted it to act in their best interests.

For comparison, just 19% trust GDPR to protect their data rights. Banks are not competing against a well regarded alternative.

Communication is what holds it up. Sixty-nine percent said their bank communicates clearly about how it protects their account, although there was a wide gap between countries. Seventy-seven percent of Spanish respondents felt communication was clear, while just 62% of people in the Netherlands. When the processes change, consumers want to know why: 62%

want their bank to explain why extra security steps are needed, rising to 71% in Germany.

Comfort with existing systems also matters: 86% can complete authentication without help, and 79% feel in control of their current authentication method. Trust gains a monetary value when it is tested. Twenty-eight percent of European fraud victims switched banks afterwards. In the UK, the most trusting market, 18% left. In Spain and Italy, 39% and 37% did. Trust is what stops a fraud event becoming a lost customer. Among those who have never been defrauded, 31% say they would switch, and 42% do not know. For two in five customers, the decision is an open question, tested only when something goes wrong.

Banks have extra motivation. Under the PSR, where a fraudster impersonates the consumer's own bank — spoofing its number, domain, email or app — and manipulates the customer into authorising a payment, the bank must refund in full, provided the customer reports it quickly and files a police report. Passing strong customer authentication no longer counts as evidence the customer was careless.

As liability goes, so does trust. European banks bear more of the burden for fraud, even fraud they did not commit. An explanation that brings customers along can be a much cheaper option.

73%

Trust their banks to handle their money securely

60%

Trust their bank to act in their best interests

19%

Trust GDPR to protect their data rights

28%

of European fraud victims switched banks after wards

"What is most encouraging about this report is how much trust Europeans still place in their banks, nearly three quarters of people trust them to handle their money securely, and 60% believe their bank acts in their best interests. In an era when confidence in institutions is under pressure across the board, that is a remarkable foundation to build on. Banks have earned that trust, and this report shows that consumers are ready to reward it with patience, flexibility, and a genuine willingness to accept stronger security measures when banks take the time to explain why they matter."

Paul Stoddart

Chief Executive Officer of Fourthline

03

Repeat identity checks

land best in the markets
that run them most



If identity checks are rare, customers can treat them as an accusation. The more times they are encountered, the more positively consumers feel towards those checks. Familiarity brings acceptance.

Consider the correlation: France and Spain run the most repeat checks, at 47% and 45%, and customers were most reassured: 35% and 34% felt more secure. Germany and Italy run the fewest, at 31%, and respond least warmly: 21% and 20%.

The frequency of checks is increasingly a legal requirement. Periodic review obligations are built into AMLR (Regulation EU 2024/1624), which applies on 10 July of next year. The new, single EU rulebook lowers the occasional transaction Customer Due Diligence threshold from €15,000 down to €10,000. AMLA, the EU's new anti-money laundering authority, will supervise transaction monitoring adequacy and consistency of risk-based KYC application from 2028 – which is, in practice, a question about how institutions run periodic reviews.

Victims of fraud are six percentage points more likely to respond favourably than non-victims

(31% against 25%). For those who have not been through a repeat verification, 31% have not been through it but would be willing, and 16% would refuse. An asterisk: Sixteen percent of Europeans cannot recall whether they have ever been re-verified, rising to 24% in the Netherlands, which implies a lack of associated trauma.

Another salient fact about the Netherlands: It has the lowest willingness among customers who have never been re-verified (18%) and the highest refusal (23%). Yet among Dutch customers who have been through the process, reassurance still beats irritation by two to one. The Dutch who have done it are fine with it. The Dutch who have not want no part of it.

Institutions hope the unfamiliar will follow the same pattern as people who encountered this earlier: frequent verification checks read as evidence the bank is paying attention.

04

Europeans want options

in proving who they are



The branch is not dead. Fifty-four percent would rather verify in person than on a phone when opening an account, and there was a majority for in-person in every EU market surveyed – 61% in France at the top. The UK is the outlier at 37%. National preferences varied more on this question than on any other in the survey.

A parallel finding was around the continued preference for humans over artificial intelligence to verify documents: 61% trust AI less than a human reviewing the same documents, and just 9% preferred an AI.

The scepticism is real but not uniform. Thirty-six percent trust AI much less than a human, while 24% trust it only somewhat less and 18% trust the two equally. Firm opposition runs to about a third. The rest are either weakly sceptical or indifferent, a potentially persuadable majority. Italy is the most open market, at 54% trusting AI less, and the Netherlands the most resistant, at 69%.

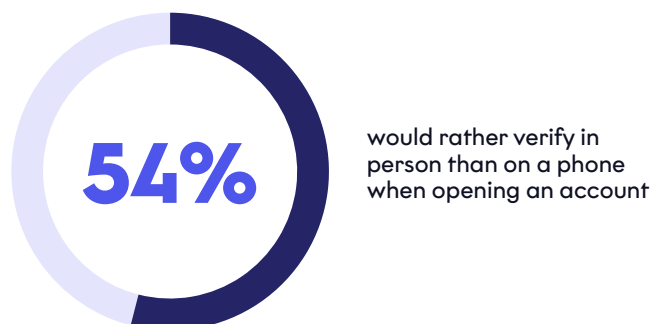
This comes as AI detection methods start to show places where they can outperform humans: a metastudy found humans could correctly identify the real image just 54% of the time, barely more than chance. The preference for human review runs against the evidence on human detection.

A reasonable middle ground would be to include both humans and machines in the identity verification process.

Humans are most comfortable with biometrics as an authentication method, using technology as varied as iris scanners, fingerprints and facial recognition. Use and preference nearly match, as 34% use biometrics and 28% prefer them.

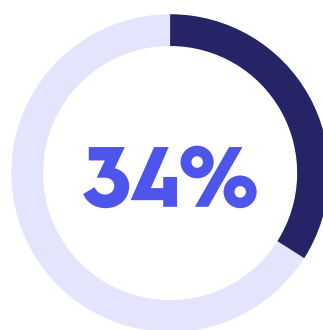
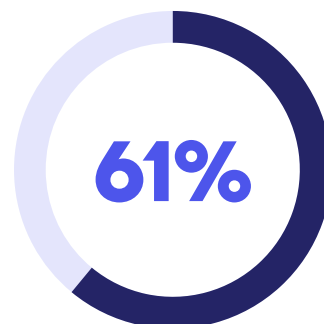
Passwords, however, are not widely appreciated. They are used by 49% but preferred but just 16% of people surveyed.

Preference fragments sharply by country. Biometrics lead in the UK at 35% and Spain at 34%, but fall to 23% in France and the Netherlands. The Dutch prefer a PIN above everything else, at 36%, more than double the British rate. The French are the only ones favouring one-time passcodes by SMS, at 18%. Spain and France are the only markets where more than a fifth actively choose a password. There is no single European authentication habit, only six national ones.



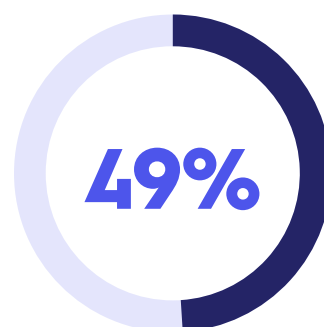
would rather verify in person than on a phone when opening an account

trust AI less than a human reviewing the same documents



use biometrics, and 28% prefer them

use passwords, preferred by just 16%



"Seventy-eight percent of Europeans say they would accept a slower, more thorough verification process if it meaningfully reduced their fraud risk. That is a clear call for better protection. Our industry has an opportunity to make verification simpler while helping consumers understand how it protects them. Biometrics are particularly promising, with consumer preference closely matching actual use."

Ralph Post

Chief Technology Officer of Fourthline

Six national habits

UK

Trusts the banks,
resents the queue

Brits stand apart in several ways: heavily targeted, deeply trusting, and the least tolerant of delay.

One in five has been targeted by an AI-generated scam, the highest rate in Europe. They also trust banks most (83% believe their money is handled securely), yet are least willing to accept slower checks (72%) and most likely to find repeat verification annoying (15%).

Outside the European Union, high trust has bought British banks impatience rather than tolerance.

83%

Trust banks with money

72%

Accepts slower checks

France

The most defrauded
market has made peace
with being checked

France has by far the highest financial fraud incidence in Europe at 26%, and the most repeat verification of existing customers at 47%. The French are also the most reassured by frequent verification, with 35% saying it made them feel more secure. France shows that verification done often can be seen as verification done well.

France runs one of Europe's most developed national identity apps in France Identité, yet has the joint-lowest public awareness of the related forthcoming EU wallet – 54%, level with Spain and the Netherlands.

76%

Trust banks with money

79%

Accepts slower checks

Spain

Adds security,
never subtracts it

Banks in Spain get the highest marks in Europe for clarity. Seventy-seven percent of respondents say their bank explains what it is doing around fraud and verification clearly, and 88% understand why their bank authenticates the way it does – both the best scores in the survey. Spaniards are also the most anxious market about AI fraud and deepfakes, at 49%.

That combination has produced a distinctive habit: Spain adds authentication methods without retiring the old ones. It has the heaviest password use in Europe at 59%, and the second-highest use of biometrics at 41%, behind only the UK. It is also the only market where passwords are genuinely preferred rather than tolerated – 22% name them as their method of choice, against a European average of 16%.

Eighty-two percent of Spaniards say they would go through extra steps for additional security, the highest in Europe, and 45% have already repeated verification as existing customers, with 34% saying it made them feel more secure.

74%

Trust banks with money

78%

Accepts slower checks

Six national habits

Italy

Least exposed,
least sceptical

Italians are the least likely in the survey to be the victims of fraud, with a rate less than half of France. Just 11% have been targeted by AI scams, and the same proportion have been defrauded. That may be why they are the least suspicious of AI verification, at 54% against a European average of 61%. Low exposure has left Italy open-minded and untested.

Wallet awareness through the IT wallet system is one of the most advanced national implementations, which, paired with a willingness to try new methods, could see the country become a natural test case for adoption.

Germany

Wants to be told why

Germans demand answers. They need a bank to explain the reasons behind extra security steps (71%). A video call is more welcome here than anywhere else, 12% name a call with a bank representative as their preferred verification method.

Trust is polarised: a third of respondents give their bank the highest possible marks (complete trust), yet overall trust is the second lowest in Europe at 68%.

Netherlands

A nation of sceptics

The Dutch are displeased. They have the lowest trust (64% to handle money securely, 56% to act in their best interests). They are also the worst served on communication, with just 62% saying their bank explains clearly, compared with a European average of 69% and 77% in Spain. They are sceptical about AI verification (69%) and resistant to repeat verification (23% would refuse it). Speed is not a priority either, as the most willing market in Europe to accept a slower process if it reduces fraud, at 80%.

With strong opinions about what they don't want, Dutch consumers have lost confidence in their banks without losing interest in being protected.

74%

Trust banks with money

79%

Accepts slower checks

68%

Trust banks with money

78%

Accepts slower checks

64%

Trust banks with money

80%

Accepts slower checks

Wallets, generations, and switching

23%

know a lot or a little about it

EU Digital Identity Wallet

23% of EU consumers say they know a lot or a little about it, and 35% have never heard of it at all. On the broader measure of having at least heard the name, awareness is from 67% in Italy to 54% in France, Spain and the Netherlands

30%

of 18-24s have been targeted by AI-generated scams

Generational exposure

30% of 18-24s and 28% of 25-34s have been targeted by AI-generated scams, compared with 8% of over-55s, while only 37% of 18-24s worry fraud is getting more sophisticated, compared with 56% of over-55s

28%

of fraud victims changed banks afterwards

Switching

28% of fraud victims changed banks afterwards, and 31% of those never defrauded say they would. Stated intention and actual behaviour sit unusually close, which makes the switching data more credible than most survey intent measures

Sources and methodology

Methodology

Opinium Research conducted this survey on behalf of Fourthline and Cognito between 15 and 31 August 2026. A total of 6,000 adults aged 18 and over were surveyed online, comprising nationally representative samples of 1,000 respondents in each of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands. Results in each market were weighted to be nationally representative on age and gender.

Where figures are described as European, they refer to the combined six-market sample rather than to Europe as a whole. Year-on-year comparisons are drawn from the equivalent wave conducted in 2025. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding, and questions allowing multiple responses will exceed it.

Opinium Research is a founding member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Under those rules, information including fieldwork dates, methodology, sample size and composition, and data tables showing the full text of questions asked and the answers given is made available on request for survey results that have entered the public domain.

Sources

Opinium, NL00588, six markets, n=6,000, fieldwork to 31 August 2026

EBA and ECB, joint report on payment fraud, 15 December 2025

Instant Payments Regulation (EU) 2024/886, Verification of Payee obligation live 9 October 2025

PSD3 and PSR, provisional agreement 27 November 2025

Regulation (EU) 2024/1183 (eIDAS 2.0), wallet obligation December 2026, private-sector acceptance late 2027

AMLR (EU) 2024/1624, applying 10 July 2027; AMLA operational 1 July 2025, direct supervision from 1 January 2028

EU AI Act high-risk regime, deferred to 2 December 2027 by the Digital Omnibus on AI, in force 27 July 2026

THE 2026 FOURTHLINE FRAUD & AUTHENTICATION REPORT

