

# How Does Standardized Consent for Personal Data Processing Affect Online Tracking?

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## **Abstract**

The Transparency and Consent Framework (TCF), launched by the Interactive Advertising Bureau Europe, aims to build up an industry standard to ensure established legal bases (e.g., consent) for personal data processing more easily. We investigate how TCF participation affects the amount of tracking. Analyzing instances from 261,377 website-tracker connections yields no significant change in the total HTTP requests with tracking. Participants neither gain nor lose tracking from joining TCF. Behind the found effect exists a trade-off between a 19.62% increase in website-tracker instances and a 1.71 decrease in tracking requests per instance. With enhanced certainty of regulatory compliance, TCF participants interact more, driving the increased instances. Reluctance to track aggressively when purposes are publicly available likely drives the decreased tracking intensity. TCF-participating websites work with more small trackers relatively. Promoting TCF may improve market competition.

**Subject Areas:** *Advertising, Information Systems, Marketing Planning and Implementation, Marketing Strategy, Public Policy*

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media