JENTIS

Server-side Tracking Report 2026

Adoption trends, industry signals, and strategic implications

1st Edition

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Key findings

Welcome to the first edition of the Server-side Tracking report.

With this publication, we aim to provide transparency and insight into the web tracking market, and specifically into the paradigm shift that has reshaped marketing data and analytics over the past half-decade: server-side tracking.

Drawing on proprietary JENTIS data and market research, we've created the most detailed picture yet of server-side tracking adoption across European and US markets.

Our findings suggest that server-side tracking is heading to mainstream adoption in key European markets, with DACH and the Nordics leading the way. Other regions, particularly Southern and Eastern Europe, are significantly lagging, not yet reaping many of the benefits server-side tracking offers to data-driven businesses. The US, meanwhile, remains a sleeping giant, still reliant on third-party tracking as regulatory pressure and effectiveness both shift rapidly.

Beyond geography, our research also reveals gaps between market segments. Direct-to-consumer (DTC) businesses with an e-commerce focus have recognized the value and are leading the transition. Likewise, larger enterprises with mature marketing operations have been fast to adopt, while small and lower mid-market companies continue to play catch-up.

At an industry level, sectors with higher advertising spend, such as Personal Care and Apparel, are adopting server-side tracking at a faster pace, indicating that first-party customer data and targeting are becoming more central to their digital strategies.

Server-side tracking

A new standard in web tracking emerges

Server-side tracking is a modern approach to data collection where user interactions are sent first to a secure server before being forwarded to analytics, advertising, or other marketing platforms.

Unlike traditional client-side tracking, which runs directly in the browser and is increasingly disrupted by ad blockers, privacy settings, and browser restrictions, server-side tracking offers greater control, data accuracy, and compliance with privacy regulations.

In this report, we focus specifically on server-side tagging with tag managers. This method uses a server-based tag management system to orchestrate data flows, replacing or complementing browser-side tags.

Server-side tagging has become the dominant and most widely adopted form of server-side tracking, as it combines operational flexibility with scalability, making it the preferred solution for organizations aiming to future-proof their marketing and analytics setup.

This report analyzes its advantages, challenges, and practical implications as the industry standard.

Regional adoption of server-side tracking
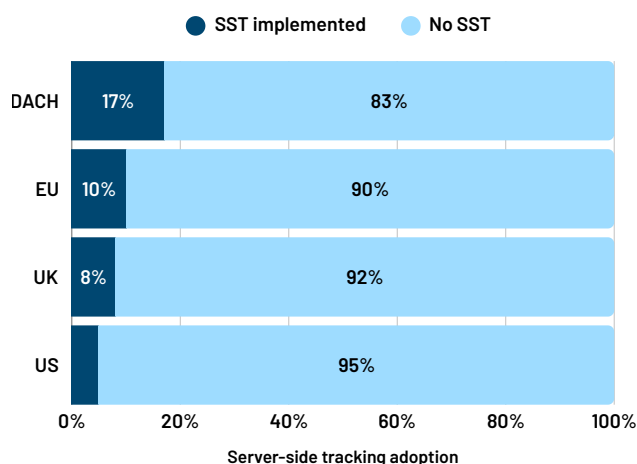
While overall adoption of server-side tracking (SST) is gaining momentum, clear regional disparities are becoming visible.

According to the data collected for this report, the DACH region leads with a 17% adoption rate, significantly ahead of the EU average (10%), the UK (8%), and the US (5%).

These differences highlight how regulatory environments, technological infrastructure, and the strategic importance placed on data governance shape adoption patterns.

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Server-side tracking adoption in the DACH region

A competitive benchmark

These systemic compliance failures highlight the urgent need for more robust tracking infrastructures that align with regulatory demands.

Austria leads the region with an adoption rate of 19%, followed closely by Germany at 18% and Switzerland at 13%. These findings, drawn from the analyzed domain data, reflect how businesses are responding proactively to both regulatory pressures such as GDPR and technical challenges like browser restrictions and third-party cookie deprecation.

Server-side tracking adoption
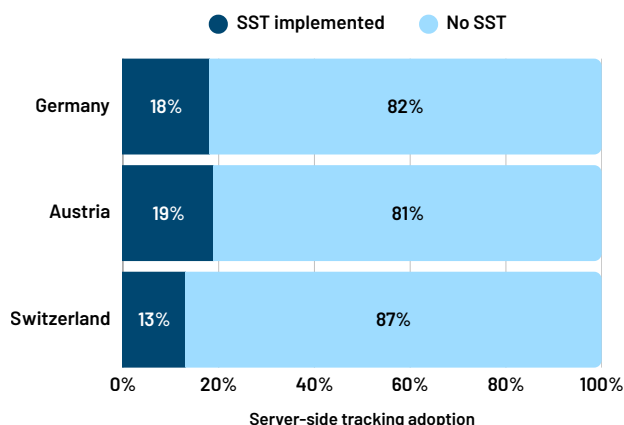
Despite increasing momentum among early adopters in e-commerce, retail, and enterprise sectors, 83% of domains in the DACH region have yet to implement server-side tracking.

This creates a significant opportunity for midmarket businesses to modernize their infrastructure and gain a competitive edge through improved data quality, consent management, and attribution.

The DACH region is setting the pace in Europe for the adoption of server-side tracking, offering valuable insights for companies considering this technology.

Based on the data collected for this study, analysis of the most visited domains reveals that 17% have already implemented SST, marking a clear trend toward privacy-first, future-ready first-party data infrastructures.

This shift is not happening in isolation. Recent GDPR rulings and enforcement actions across DACH underscore why organizations are accelerating their adoption of SST. In Germany alone, authorities recorded over 27,800 data protection violations in 2024, many tied to misconfigured analytics and improper data collection practices.

Europe's tracking landscape

Advanced Nordics, lagging South and East

Public trust in institutions in Scandinavian countries often exceeds 60%, according to global surveys.

Additionally, the region enforces GDPR with robust, country-specific adaptations, such as Finland's child-focused Data Protection Act (1050/2018) and Sweden's early adoption of comprehensive data protection laws, dating back to the world's first national Data Act in 1973.

In contrast, Southern and Eastern European markets are lagging behind. Spain (5%), Portugal (2%), and Romania (1%) continue to report low adoption rates.

Regulatory impact on mid-level adoption rates

Slower investment in digital marketing infrastructure, lower cloud adoption, and weaker GDPR enforcement are key barriers holding back wider deployment of SST in these regions.

Central European countries such as France and Belgium (both 10%) occupy a middle ground. However, rising compliance pressures are reshaping priorities.

Across the European Union, 89% of top websites remain without server-side tracking, underlining both the technology's early stage in many markets and a significant opportunity for businesses to modernize their data infrastructure.

Northern and Western Europe are emerging as clear frontrunners in SST adoption. Sweden (21%), Finland (20%), the Netherlands (18%), and Denmark (17%) lead the charge, benefiting from advanced digital infrastructure and progressive regulatory frameworks.

These dynamics are echoed by a strong cultural commitment to privacy and transparency across the Nordics.

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Server-side tracking adoption rates across Europe

● SST implemented   ● No SST

Country	SST implemented	No SST
Sweden	21%	79%
Finland	20%	80%
Austria	19%	81%
Germany	18%	82%
Netherlands	18%	82%
Denmark	17%	83%
Switzerland	13%	87%
Czech Republic	12%	88%
France	10%	90%
Belgium	10%	90%
Poland	8%	92%
Italy	8%	92%
United Kingdom	8%	92%
Hungary	7%	93%
Ireland	5%	95%
Spain	5%	95%
Portugal		98%
Romania		99%
Greece		99%

Server-side tracking adoption
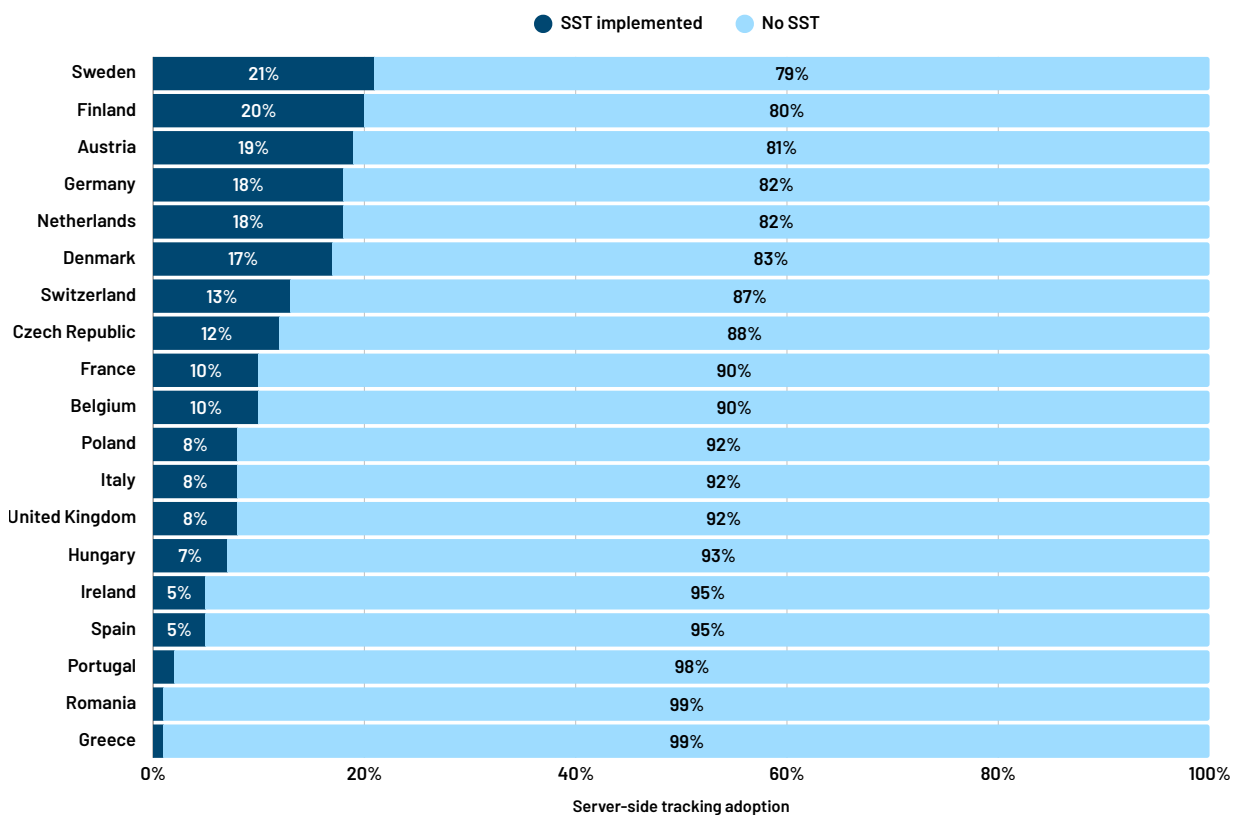
In earlier phases of the SST adoption curve, landmark rulings in France and Austria, declaring Google Analytics non-compliant due to unprotected data transfers to the U.S, played a critical role in accelerating the shift toward privacy-resilient technologies.

Infrastructure and compliance gaps slow broader adoption

While adoption is advancing in digitally mature and highly regulated markets such as the Nordics and DACH, significant gaps persist in regions with weaker enforcement and less developed digital infrastructure.
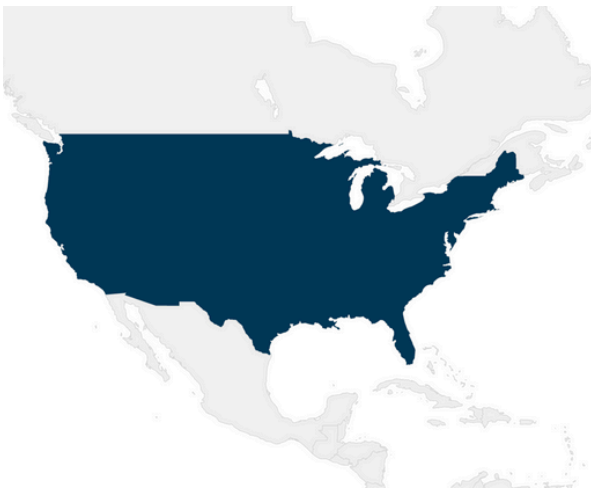
As browser restrictions continue to undermine client-side tracking globally, these disparities highlight how technological readiness and regulatory pressure are shaping the pace of SST adoption across Europe.

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United States

Growing focus on first-party data and performance

With server-side tracking adoption in the United States standing at a modest 5%, the country trails significantly behind Europe's leading markets. This slower start reflects a market historically driven less by regulatory pressures and more by commercial priorities.

However, the momentum is shifting. As third-party cookies are phased out and browser restrictions erode client-side tracking effectiveness, U.S. companies are increasingly recognizing server-side tracking as a critical lever to maintain data quality and marketing performance.

Organizations relying on complex customer journeys and multi-channel attribution are now exploring SST to regain visibility and precision in their analytics pipelines.

In this environment, SST offers a strategic pathway for U.S. companies to enhance data resilience, improve campaign effectiveness, and stay competitive in an ecosystem where first-party data has become a core asset.

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United Kingdom
Balancing reform and oversight

The United Kingdom records an 8% adoption rate, positioning it between the European high-performing Northern markets and the lower-adoption Southern regions. This moderate uptake reflects a combination of data protection reform and regulatory trends.

In mid-2025, the UK enacted the Data Use and Access (DUA) Act, which amends the UK GDPR and ePrivacy regulations to provide greater flexibility for data transfers, including relaxed consent and automated decision-making requirements, ostensibly to reduce compliance burdens on businesses.

While intended to spur innovation, these reforms drew scrutiny from privacy advocates and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), which in December 2024 publicly criticized Google's deployment of digital fingerprinting without sufficient transparency or user choice.
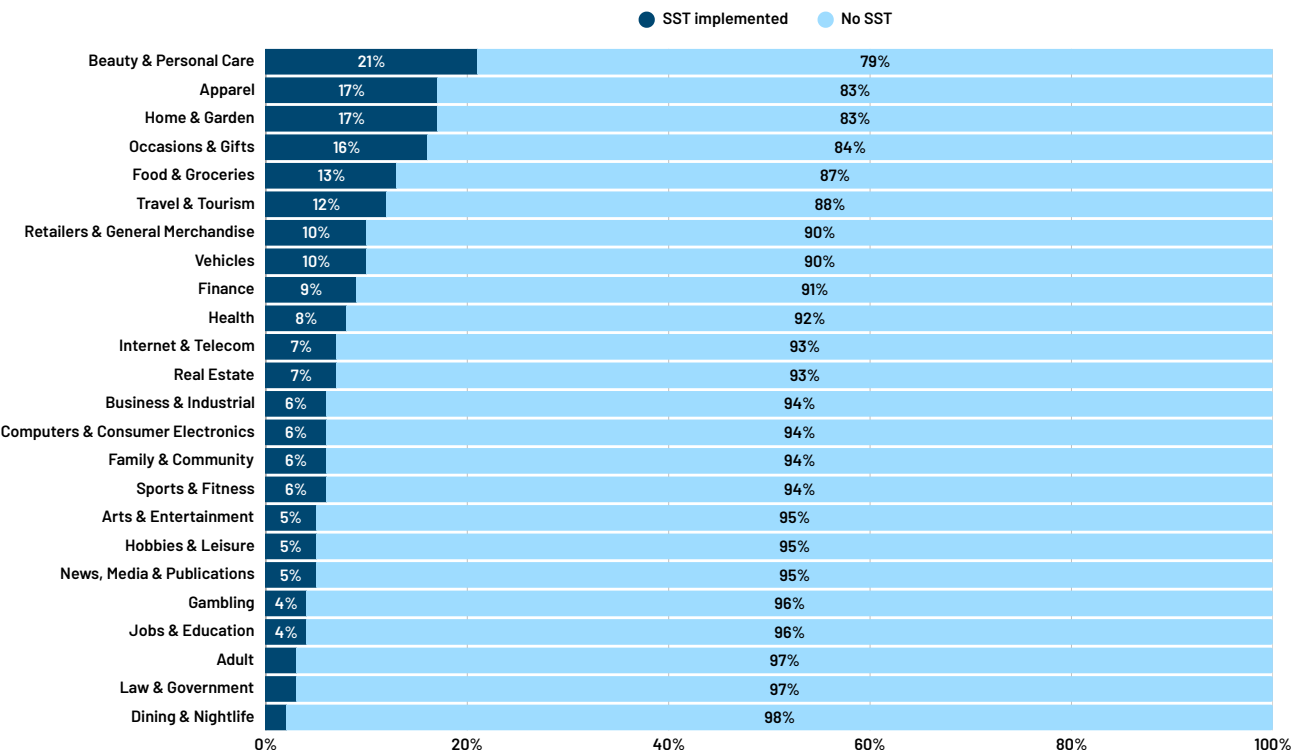
The July 2025 extension of the Online Safety Act requires adult content platforms to verify users' age via credit card or photo ID, raising privacy concerns and prompting a surge in VPN usage.

For brands operating in sensitive or regulated segments such as wellness, fashion, or adult retail, this creates new urgency to invest in privacy-compliant infrastructure. Server-side tracking supports this shift by enabling logged-in tracking, stronger consent enforcement, and secure data handling on owned infrastructure.

More broadly, UK organizations are increasingly embedding SST into their first-party data strategies, beyond CRM and loyalty programs, using it to centralize data governance, personalize user experiences, and maintain measurement accuracy amid stricter rules and signal loss. For data leaders and digital marketers, SST is emerging as a foundational capability in building resilient and future-ready tracking architecture.

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Industry-specific adoption
Beauty, retail, and food in the lead

● SST implemented ● No SST

Industry	SST implemented	No SST
Beauty & Personal Care	21%	79%
Apparel	17%	83%
Home & Garden	17%	83%
Occasions & Gifts	16%	84%
Food & Groceries	13%	87%
Travel & Tourism	12%	88%
Retailers & General Merchandise	10%	90%
Vehicles	10%	90%
Finance	9%	91%
Health	8%	92%
Internet & Telecom	7%	93%
Real Estate	7%	93%
Business & Industrial	6%	94%
Computers & Consumer Electronics	6%	94%
Family & Community	6%	94%
Sports & Fitness	6%	94%
Arts & Entertainment	5%	95%
Hobbies & Leisure	5%	95%
News, Media & Publications	5%	95%
Gambling	4%	96%
Jobs & Education	4%	96%
Adult		97%
Law & Government		97%
Dining & Nightlife		98%

SST adoption varies significantly across industries. The data shows Beauty & Personal Care, Food & Groceries, and Apparel are among the industries with the highest server-side tracking adoption in the JENTIS dataset.

Recent advertising trends point towards a correlation between ad spend and server-side tracking adoption. According to Nielsen Ad Intel data and Statista, retail sectors such as personal care, clothing, and grocery regularly rank among the top spenders in online media.

These categories not only invest heavily in performance marketing, but also operate

with business models highly dependent on digital attribution and campaign effectiveness. These sectors also demonstrate a pattern of early adoption when it comes to new marketing technologies.

From AI-powered personalization to omnichannel attribution tools, industries like beauty, grocery, and fashion have built operational models that reward rapid implementation of data-driven infrastructure. Mid-2024 figures show that beauty category sales rose over 10% globally, with 41% of U.S. beauty and personal care sales occurring online.

Market implications

The global beauty tech market alone is valued at over US$66 billion, with strong projected growth. Meanwhile, retail media spend in Europe grew by 22% in 2024 according to IAB Europe, as performance-heavy categories like grocery and fashion expanded their digital media mix.

Apparel also continues to outperform broader retail benchmarks in terms of digital advertising ROI and media mix experimentation.

This reflects a broader digital maturity and culture of proactive innovation. As browser restrictions continue to degrade traditional client-side tracking methods, companies in high-ad-spend verticals are increasingly turning to SST to maintain control over marketing performance data and preserve accurate measurement across channels.

Regulatory impact on mid-level adoption rates

Industries like Health (8%), Finance (9%), and Travel & Tourism (12%) show moderate uptake. Here, SST adoption is driven by the need to manage consent more effectively and safeguard sensitive user data in response to growing regulatory oversight.

In all three sectors, data sovereignty plays a particularly central role: In Health and Finance, the need to protect highly sensitive personal information is self-evident.

In Travel & Tourism, sovereignty over user data also provides a competitive edge, as weather patterns, seasonal fluctuations, occupancy trends, and dynamic pricing require close control over data quality and accessibility.
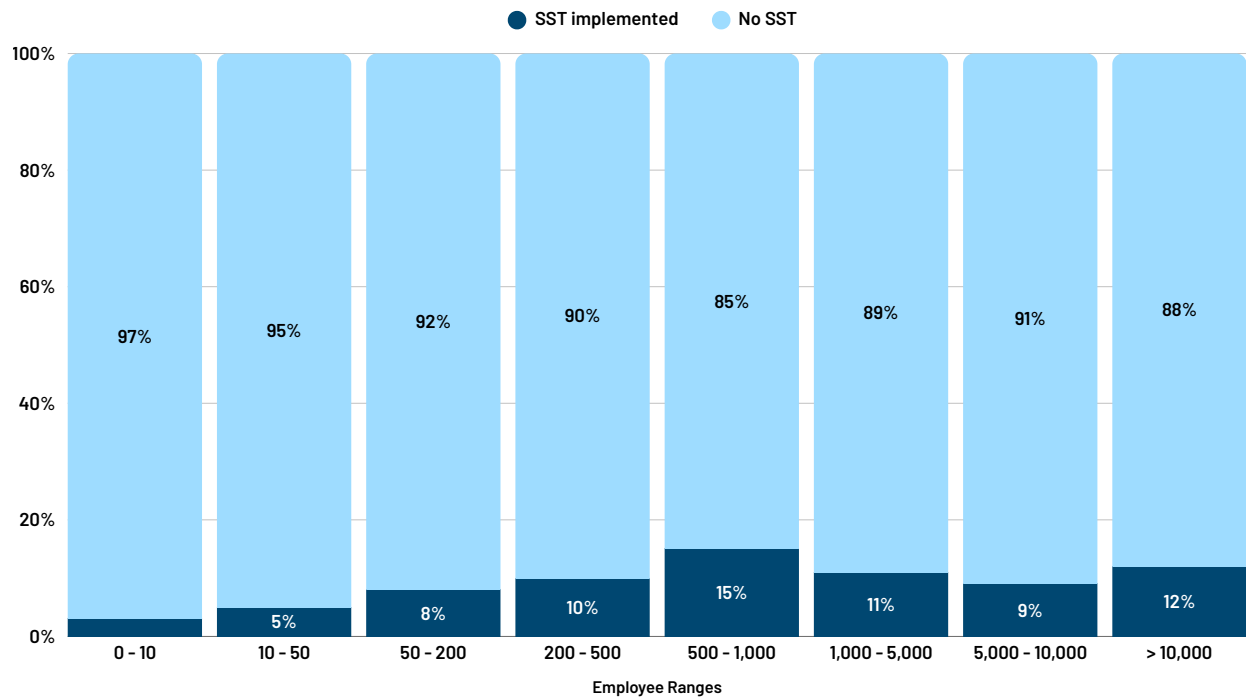
Legacy dependencies and institutional barriers

Sectors such as News, Media & Publications (5%), Business & Industrial (6%), and Gambling (4%) lag behind, often due to legacy systems and heavy reliance on third-party analytics.

In the case of Gambling, regulatory restrictions on advertising and the sector's limited online footprint significantly reduce the need for sophisticated tracking setups, which helps explain the particularly low adoption rate. Law & Government (3%) and Dining & Nightlife (2%) show little visible adoption, reflecting limited demand for advanced tracking or institutional barriers to modernization.

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Adoption by company size

Infrastructure maturity drives SST adoption

● SST implemented ● No SST

Employee Ranges	SST implemented	No SST
0 – 10	3%	97%
10 – 50	5%	95%
50 – 200	8%	92%
200 – 500	10%	90%
500 – 1,000	15%	85%
1,000 – 5,000	11%	89%
5,000 – 10,000	9%	91%
> 10,000	12%	88%

Our analysis shows that server-side tracking adoption is highest among larger organizations. Companies with 500–1,000 employees (15%) and over 10,000 employees (12%) lead the way. Their scale and technical resources allow them to manage complex data environments and comply with regulations like GDPR and CCPA across markets.
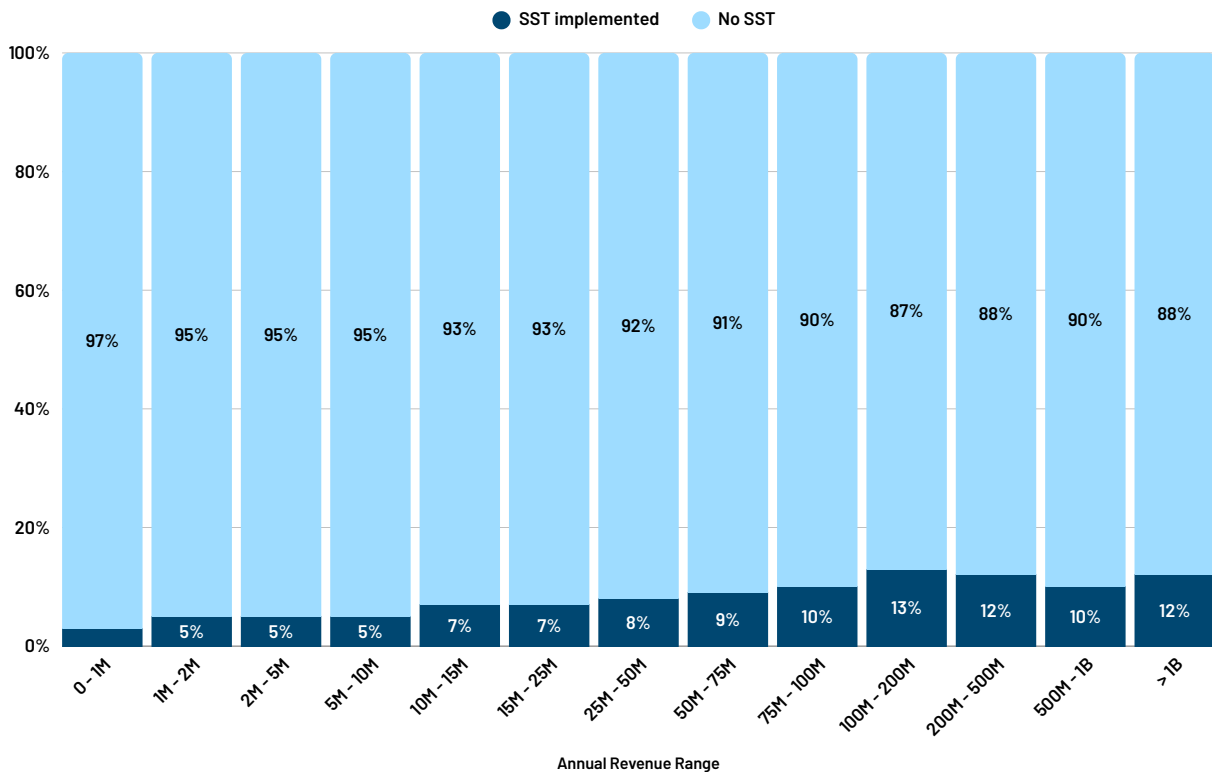
In contrast, smaller businesses, particularly those with 0–10 employees (2%), lag significantly. Budget constraints and reliance on simpler analytics tools imply that SST is often not yet a priority.

The European Data Protection Board notes SMEs tend to focus on basic compliance rather than advanced tracking setups.

Mid-sized companies (50–5,000 employees) show moderate adoption, ranging between 8% and 15%. Here, uptake is uneven: some sectors prioritize privacy-focused infrastructure, while others are slower, potentially linked to resource or ROI considerations.

Growth starts at the top

Cost and complexity challenge smaller businesses

● SST implemented ● No SST

Chart: Percentage of SST implemented vs No SST by Annual Revenue Range

Annual Revenue Range	No SST	SST implemented
0 - 1M	97%	
1M - 2M	95%	5%
2M - 5M	95%	5%
5M - 10M	95%	5%
10M - 15M	93%	7%
15M - 25M	93%	7%
25M - 50M	92%	8%
50M - 75M	91%	9%
75M - 100M	90%	10%
100M - 200M	87%	13%
200M - 500M	88%	12%
500M - 1B	90%	10%
> 1B	88%	12%

Annual Revenue Range

As shown in the graph, companies with annual revenues above 1 billion are adopting SST at a rate nearly four times higher than smaller businesses earning less than 1 million.

In our sample, 10% of organizations in the 500M–1B range and 10% in the 75M–100M range have implemented server-side tracking, compared to just 5% of those below 1 million.

By investing early in first-party data infrastructure and server-side tracking, large companies are able to address challenges like the demise of third-party cookies and rising regulatory demands.

This enables them to secure data reliability, maintain attribution accuracy, and stay ahead of the competition.

For smaller businesses, cost and technical complexity often remain barriers, delaying their shift to server-side setups despite the growing need for improved consent management and data governance.

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Key drivers for adoption

Our analysis identified some of the following factors that lead companies towards a server-based tracking setup.

01 —— Data sensitivity

Industries handling financial, health, or personal data are adopting SST not just for compliance (GDPR, CCPA), but to avoid falling behind competitors who already control their data flows and minimize transfer risks.

02 —— Regulatory enforcement

Recent rulings against client-side analytics (CNIL, Austria's DSB) are forcing high-visibility sectors to rethink tracking strategies. Early adopters gain a strategic edge by building privacy-resilient infrastructures before enforcement actions hit.

03 —— Technical readiness

Companies with strong digital ecosystems and in-house expertise (e.g., retail, finance) are pulling ahead. For others, delays in upgrading infrastructure risk leaving them at a disadvantage as privacy-centric practices become baseline expectations.

04 —— Dependence on digital marketing

E-commerce-heavy industries can no longer afford to rely on client-side tracking. As third-party cookies deprecate and browser restrictions tighten, SST adoption is becoming critical to maintain campaign performance, attribution accuracy, and ultimately competitiveness.

Strategic outlook

SST adoption as the marker of digital maturity

Whether in retail, enterprise, or DACH markets: those ahead in SST adoption tend to share a history of investing early in privacy-resilient and attribution-stable tracking infrastructures.

The findings in this report are based on JENTIS proprietary data, mapping server-side tracking adoption across regions, industries, and company sizes.

The analysis reveals a clear trend: regions, industries, and companies leading in SST adoption are often those that have historically treated technological change as a strategic opportunity rather than a threat.

Whether it's the DACH region, the Nordic countries, or data-sensitive verticals like finance, healthcare, and e-commerce, first-party data access and data quality are emerging as foundational elements of future-proof digital setups.

Organizations that take ownership of their data today are not only building resilience against regulatory pressure and browser restrictions.

They're also securing long-term marketing performance and strategic autonomy in an increasingly fragmented digital environment.

For businesses that rely heavily on data or invest significantly in advertising, the direction is clear: first-party infrastructure is no longer optional.

While large enterprises still dominate adoption, partly due to the complexity of implementation, the ecosystem is evolving.

New tools and technologies are making server-side tracking more accessible, opening the door for smaller and mid-sized companies to catch up and compete on equal footing.

About this sample

This report is based on 30,000 high-traffic domains, identified via Similarweb and attributed to their headquarters country. Countries are weighted by 2024 GDP to reflect economic relevance, and those with insufficient sample size were excluded. Website tracking technologies were scanned by JENTIS during H2 2025 as part of this dataset.

What value could server-side tracking create for your company?

Learn more on jentis.com

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