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Americans' Attitudes About Privacy, Security and Surveillance

Many want control over their personal information and freedom from observation during the activities of their daily lives, but they are not confident that the government agencies or businesses that collect data about them can keep that information private and secure

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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About this Report

This report is the third in a series of studies that examine Americans' digital-privacy-related perceptions and behaviors, following the ongoing revelations of government surveillance activities introduced in 2013 by the ex-National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden. To examine this topic in depth and over an extended period of time, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey of a representative online panel of 498 adults who are members of the GfK Knowledge Panel. These panelists have agreed to respond to four surveys over the course of one year. The findings in this report are based on several surveys, the primary one of which was conducted in English and fielded online between Aug. 5, 2014, and Sept. 2, 2014. In addition, a total of 26 panelists also participated in one of three online focus groups as part of this study during December 2014.

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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Other reports from Pew Research Center project on the topic of privacy and security online can be found at:

<http://www.pewinternet.org/topics/privacy-and-safety/pages/2/>

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Summary of Findings

The cascade of reports following the June 2013 government surveillance revelations by NSA contractor Edward Snowden have brought new attention to debates about how best to preserve Americans' privacy in the digital age. At the same time, the public has been awash with news stories detailing security breaches at major retailers, health insurance companies and financial institutions. These events – and the doubts they inspired – have contributed to a cloud of personal “data insecurity” that now looms over many Americans' daily decisions and activities. Some find these developments deeply troubling and want limits put in place, while others do not feel these issues affect them personally. Others believe that widespread monitoring can bring some societal benefits in safety and security or that innocent people should have “nothing to hide.”

Americans' views about privacy and surveillance are relevant to policymaking on these matters. Key legal decisions about the legitimacy of surveillance or tracking programs have hinged on the question of whether Americans think it is reasonable in certain situations to assume that they will be under observation, or if they expect that their activities will not be monitored. A federal [appeals court recently ruled](#) that a National Security Agency program that collects Americans' phone records is illegal. In striking down the program, Judge Gerald Lynch wrote: “Such expansive development of government repositories of formerly private records would be an unprecedented contraction of the privacy expectations of all Americans. Perhaps such a contraction is required by national security needs in the face of the dangers of contemporary domestic and international terrorism. But we would expect such a momentous decision to be preceded by substantial debate, and expressed in unmistakable language.”

Two new Pew Research Center surveys explore these issues and place them in the wider context of the tracking and profiling that occurs in commercial arenas. The surveys find that Americans feel privacy is important in their daily lives in a number of essential ways. Yet, they have a pervasive sense that they are under surveillance when in public and very few feel they have a great deal of control over the data that is collected about them and how it is used. Adding to earlier Pew Research reports that have documented low levels of trust in sectors that Americans associate with data collection and monitoring, the new findings show Americans also have exceedingly low levels of confidence in the privacy and security of the records that are maintained by a variety of institutions in the digital age.

While some Americans have taken modest steps to stem the tide of data collection, few have adopted advanced privacy-enhancing measures. However, majorities of Americans expect that a wide array of organizations should have limits on the length of time that they can retain records of

their activities and communications. At the same time, Americans continue to express the belief that there should be greater limits on government surveillance programs. Additionally, they say it is important to preserve the ability to be anonymous for certain online activities.

Most Americans hold strong views about the importance of privacy in their everyday lives.

The majority of Americans believe it is important – often “very important” – that they be able to maintain privacy and confidentiality in commonplace activities of their lives. Most strikingly, these views are especially pronounced when it comes to knowing what information about them is being collected and who is doing the collecting. These feelings also extend to their wishes that they be able to maintain privacy in their homes, at work, during social gatherings, at times when they want to be alone and when they are moving around in public.

When they are asked to think about all of their daily interactions – both online and offline – and the extent to which certain privacy-related values are important to them, clear majorities say these dimensions are at least “somewhat important” and many express the view that these aspects of personal information control are “very important.”

Survey results from early 2015 show:

- 93% of adults say that being in control of *who* can get information about them is important; 74% feel this is “very important,” while 19% say it is “somewhat important.”
- 90% say that controlling *what* information is collected about them is important—65% think it is “very important” and 25% say it is “somewhat important.”

At the same time, Americans also value having the ability to share confidential matters with another trusted person. Nine-in-ten (93%) adults say this ability is important to them, with 72% saying it is “very important” and 21% saying it is “somewhat important.”

Permission and publicness are key features that influence views on surveillance.

Americans say they do not wish to be observed without their approval; 88% say it is important that they not have someone watch or listen to them without their permission (67% feel this is “very important” and 20% say it is “somewhat important”).

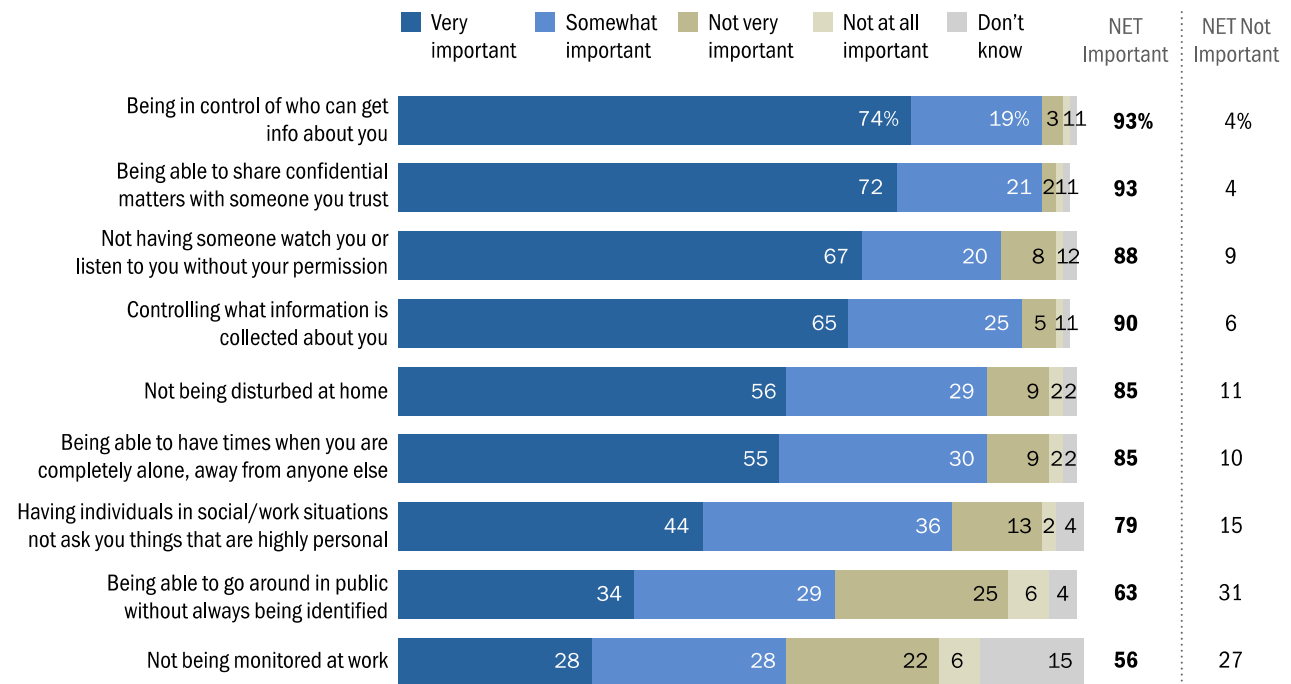
However, far fewer (63%) feel it is important to be able to “go around in public without always being identified.” Only 34% believe being able to go unnoticed in public is “very important” and

29% say it is “somewhat important” to them. In both cases, all adults, regardless of age or gender, express comparable views.

Americans Hold Strong Views About Privacy in Everyday Life

In response to the following question: “Privacy means different things to different people today. In thinking about all of your daily interactions – both online and offline – please tell me how important each of the following are to you . . .”

% of adults who say ...



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #4, Jan. 27, 2015-Feb. 16, 2015 (N=461). Refused responses not shown.

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The findings above come from a survey conducted Jan. 27 to Feb. 16, 2015, among 461 adults on the GfK Knowledge Panel. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 5.8 percentage points. The findings cited below in the Summary section come from a separate survey of 498 adults on the same Knowledge Panel; that survey was conducted between Aug. 5 and Sept. 2, 2014, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 5.6 percentage points.

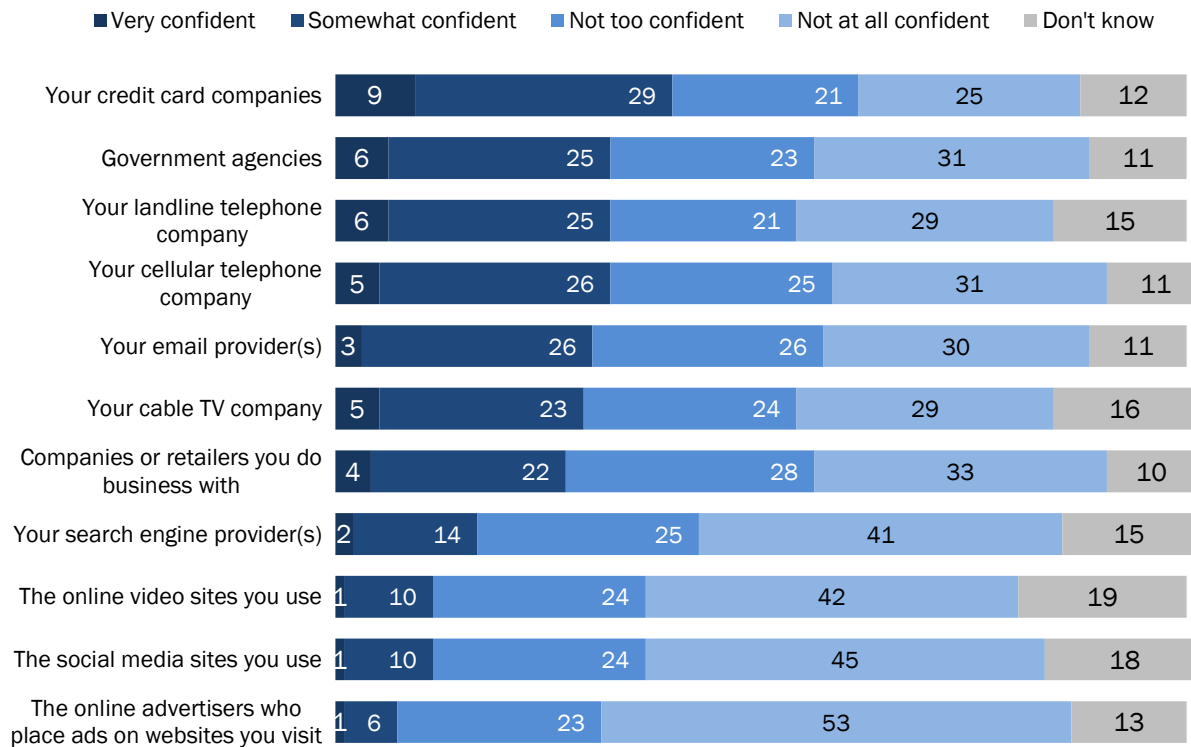
Americans have little confidence that their data will remain private and secure.

For all of the 11 entities we asked about in the fall 2014 survey – from government agencies to credit card companies to social media sites – only small minorities say they are “very confident” the records maintained by these organizations will remain private and secure.

- Just 6% of adults say they are “very confident” that **government agencies** can keep their records private and secure, while another 25% say they are “somewhat confident.”
- Only 6% of respondents say they are “very confident” that **landline telephone companies** will be able to protect their data and 25% say they are “somewhat confident” that the records of their activities will remain private and secure.
- **Credit card companies** appear to instill a marginally higher level of confidence; 9% say they are “very confident” and 29% say they are “somewhat confident” their data will stay private and secure.

Few Express Confidence That Their Records Will Remain Private and Secure

% of adults who say they are ... that the records of their activity maintained by various companies and organizations will remain private and secure



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498). Refused responses not shown.

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Online service providers are among the least trusted entities when it comes to keeping information private and secure. When asked about search engine providers, online video sites, social media sites and online advertisers, the majority felt “not too confident” or “not at all confident” that these entities could protect their data:

- 76% of adults say they are “not too confident” or “not at all confident” that records of their activity maintained by the **online advertisers** who place ads on the websites they visit will remain private and secure.

- 69% of adults say they are not confident that records of their activity maintained by the **social media sites** they use will remain private and secure.
- 66% of adults say they are not confident that records of their activity maintained by **search engine providers** will remain private and secure.
- 66% say they are not confident that records of their activity collected by the **online video sites** they use will remain private and secure.

Few feel they have “a lot” of control over how much information is collected about them in daily life and how it is used.

When asked how much control they feel they have over how much information is collected about them and how it is used in their everyday lives, only a small minority of Americans say they have “a lot” of control over their personal data collection and its use.

When thinking about a range of activities that might take place on a typical day, 9% say they feel they have “a lot” of control over how much information is collected about them and how it is used, while 38% say they have “some control.” Another 37% feel they have “not much control,” and 13% feel they personally have “no control at all” over the way their data is gathered and used.

A very small number say they have changed their behavior to avoid being tracked recently, but many were already engaged in more common or less technical privacy-enhancing measures.

At the time of the mid-2014 survey, the vast majority of respondents – 91% – had not made any changes to their internet or cellphone use to avoid having their activities tracked or noticed. Only 7% reported that they had made these kinds of changes in “recent months.”

At the same time, a much larger group had engaged in some everyday obfuscation tactics and privacy-enhancing measures. These activities were not necessarily in direct response to news of government monitoring programs, but, rather, represent a set of measures that respondents may have engaged in out of broader concerns about their personal info. Some of the more common activities include:

- Clearing cookies or browser history (59% have done this).
- Refusing to provide information about themselves that wasn’t relevant to a transaction (57% have done this).

- Using a temporary username or email address (25% have done this).
- Giving inaccurate or misleading information about themselves (24% have done this).
- Deciding not to use a website because they asked for a real name (23% have done this).

Advanced measures, such as the use of proxy servers and encryption are less common.

This survey included somewhat more expansive questions about advanced privacy-enhancing measures such as the use of proxy servers, virtual private networks and encryption across a variety of communications channels, following up on findings [reported](#) earlier this year. However, even with comparatively broader language, just one-in-ten Americans said they had adopted these more sophisticated steps to shield their information:

- 10% of adults say they have encrypted their phone calls, text messages or email.
- 9% say they have used a service that allows them to browse the Web anonymously, such as a proxy server, Tor software, or a virtual personal network.

Most want limits on the length of time that records of their activity can be retained.

There is wide variation across the length of time that respondents feel is reasonable for businesses and other organizations to store their data. Additionally, there is considerable variance on their views depending on the kind of organization that retains the records of the activity. In general, and even though it may be necessary to provide certain functionality, people are less comfortable with online service providers – such as search engine providers and social media sites – storing records and archives of their activity.

- 50% of adults think that **online advertisers** who place ads on the websites they visit should not save records or archives of their activity for any length of time.
- 44% feel that the **online video sites** they use shouldn't retain records of their activity.
- 40% think that their **search engine** provider shouldn't retain information about their activity.
- 40% think that **social media sites** they use shouldn't save data about their activity.

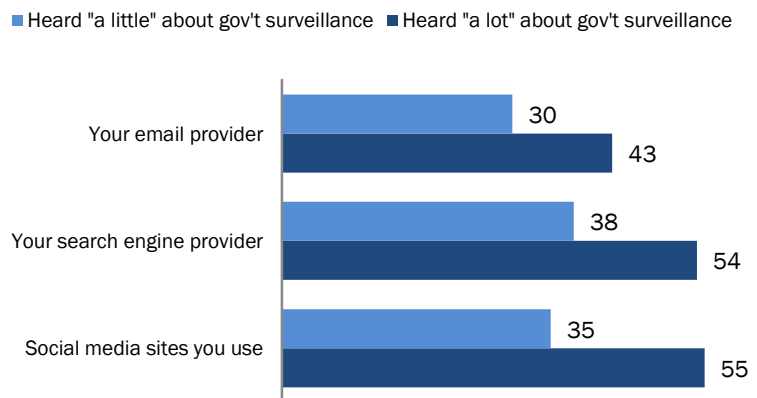
At the other end of the spectrum, the vast majority of adults are comfortable with the idea that credit card companies might retain records or archives of their activity. Just 13% think that credit card companies “shouldn’t save any information.”

Those who have greater awareness of the government monitoring programs are more likely to believe that certain records should not be saved for any length of time.

Those who have had the most exposure to information about the government surveillance programs also have some of the strongest views about data retention limits for certain kinds of organizations. These differences are particularly notable when considering social media sites. Among those who have heard “a lot” about the government collecting communications data as part of anti-terrorism efforts, 55% say that the social media sites they use should not save any information regarding their activity, compared with 35% of those who have heard “a little” about the government monitoring programs.

Those Who Have Heard “a Lot” About Government Surveillance Hold Stronger Views About Certain Data Retention Limits

% of U.S. adults who say the following organizations should not save any information about their activity



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498).

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65% of American adults believe there are not adequate limits on the telephone and internet data that the government collects.

When asked to think about the data the government collects as part of anti-terrorism efforts, 65% of Americans say there are not adequate limits on “what telephone and internet data the government can collect.”¹ Just 31% say they believe that there are adequate limits on the kinds of data gathered for these programs. The majority view that there are not sufficient limits on what data the government gathers is consistent across all demographic groups. Those who are more

¹ Due to differences in the method of survey administration and questionnaire context, these findings are not directly comparable to previous Pew Research telephone surveys that have included [a version of this question](#).

aware of the government surveillance efforts are considerably more likely to believe there are not adequate safeguards in place; 74% of those who have heard “a lot” about the programs say that there are not adequate limits, compared with 62% who have heard only “a little” about the monitoring programs.

55% of Americans support the idea of online anonymity for certain activities, but many are undecided on the issue.

In the current survey, the majority of adults (55%) said that people should have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously for certain kinds of online activities. Another 16% do not think people should be able to remain anonymous when they are online; 27% said they don’t know.

Men are more likely than women to think people should be able to engage in certain online activities anonymously (61% vs. 49%), but support for internet anonymity does not vary by age. Education is a predictor, but income is not; adults with at least some college education are significantly more likely than those who have not attended college to believe that people should have the ability to use the internet anonymously (66% vs. 40%).

Even as they expect online anonymity, most assume that motivated people and organizations could uncover private details.

Many believe they are particularly vulnerable to people or organizations who have a motive to learn private details about their past. When considering how difficult it would be for a *motivated* person or organization to learn private details about their past that they would prefer to keep private, 64% of adults said it would be “not too” or “not at all” difficult for a motivated person or organization to uncover that sensitive information. Just 20% felt it would be “very” or “somewhat” difficult.

Men and women report similar responses, but those ages 50 and older (76%) are significantly more likely to believe it would be “not too” or “not at all difficult” when compared with those under the age of 50 (54%). Similarly, those with a college degree are more likely than those who have not attended college to feel more exposed (70% vs. 58%).

More about these surveys

The majority of the analysis in this report is based on a Pew Research Center survey conducted between Aug. 5, 2014, and Sept. 2, 2014, among a sample of 498 adults ages 18 or older. The survey was conducted by the GfK Group using KnowledgePanel, its nationally representative online research panel. GfK selected a representative sample of 1,537 English-speaking panelists to invite to join the subpanel and take the first survey in January 2014. Of the 935 panelists who

responded to the invitation (60.8%), 607 agreed to join the subpanel and subsequently completed the first survey (64.9%), the results of which were reported in [November 2014](#). This group has agreed to take four online surveys about “current issues, some of which relate to technology” over the course of a year and possibly participate in one or more 45- to 60-minute online focus group chat sessions. For the second survey whose results are reported here, 498 of the original 607 panelists participated. A random subset of the subpanel is occasionally invited to participate in online focus groups. For this report, a total of 26 panelists participated in one of three online focus groups conducted during December 2014. Sampling error for the total sample of 498 respondents is plus or minus 5.6 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

An additional survey related to Americans’ views about the importance of privacy was conducted between Jan. 27 and Feb. 16, 2015, among a sample of 461 adults ages 18 or older. The sample was drawn from the same 607 adults who agreed to participate in the subpanel on privacy. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 5.8 percentage points.

For more information on the Privacy Panel, please see the Methods section at the end of this report.

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While we greatly appreciate all of these contributions, the authors alone bear responsibility for the presentation of these findings, as well as any omissions or errors.

Introduction

As the two-year anniversary of Edward Snowden’s historic leaks of top secret National Security Agency documents approaches, the public debate about government surveillance reform has been reignited. With section 215 of the Patriot Act set to expire on June 1, 2015, policymakers have responded by introducing two new bills currently under consideration in Congress. A Patriot Act reauthorization bill, introduced by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, would primarily seek to [extend](#) the life of the controversial provision until 2020, while the USA Freedom Act, a bill that has already passed the House with bipartisan support, would [effectively end](#) the government’s bulk collection of telephony metadata.

The language of Section 215 has been controversial, in part because it has been used to justify the government’s collection of any “tangible things” that might possibly be relevant to an anti-terrorism investigation. Among the files leaked by NSA contractor Edward Snowden that were published in June 2013 was a previously undisclosed Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISA court) order that demonstrated the government was using an interpretation of Section 215 to authorize the bulk collection of Americans’ telephone records.

Privacy advocates [argue](#) that the law, and this expansive interpretation, allows for an unprecedented and broad reach for government monitoring of citizens in the name of protecting national security. Some supporters of Section 215 and the Patriot Act as a whole [contend](#) that the law supports critical programs to protect Americans’ safety and that the intelligence community already has administrative safeguards in place to address privacy concerns. Earlier this month, a federal appeals court in New York [ruled](#) that the bulk collection of Americans’ phone records through this program was illegal, but the ruling did not include an injunction requiring the program to end.

Last fall, the [first report](#) in this Pew Research Center privacy series showed that the American public is broadly concerned about government surveillance efforts and that, among adults, there is now a near-universal lack of confidence in the security of everyday communications channels when they want to share private information with another trusted party; this is particularly true when it comes to the use of online tools.

The [second report](#) in this series found that among those who have heard about the government monitoring programs, a modest number have been taking some simple steps to more closely manage their digital privacy online and use communication channels that they perceive to be more secure. However, those who have taken more advanced steps (the leading-edge privacy enthusiasts) are still the exception. Despite widespread concern about their privacy and a desire to

[do more](#) to protect it, many Americans are not yet aware of a variety of tools that would help to secure their personal data and communications.²

In addition, recent Pew Research [analysis](#) suggests that some Americans are not taking greater steps to protect their personal information online because they do not think it will be effective in preventing government monitoring. Still others think the use of certain privacy-enhancing tools might actually be a red flag that makes them appear suspicious and invites greater scrutiny.

This third report takes a broad look at other issues that are central to current discussions about privacy: What are the daily activities and scenarios where Americans believe that being free from observation is especially important? To what degree do they feel they have control over how information about them is collected and used? Do they think the data collectors in the government and business can keep their personal information private and secure? This report does not directly examine the issue of “intrusiveness,” and the extent to which Americans perceive certain government information-collection efforts to be an invasion of their privacy in daily life. Instead, it demonstrates the relatively high value Americans place on the privacy of daily activities and the exceedingly low levels of confidence that the American public have in the privacy and security of the records that are maintained by a variety of institutions in the digital age.³ It further documents Americans’ views that a wide array of organizations should have limits on the length of time that they can retain records of their activities and communications.

At the same time, majorities of Americans continue to express the belief that government surveillance programs should be limited and that it is important to preserve the ability to be anonymous for certain online activities. This report sheds light on the reasons people give for feeling that being anonymous online is something people should be able to do, as well as the reasons that a sizable minority find it to be a problematic part of society.

² In addition, other recent studies have suggested that the lack of transparency in how personal information is collected and shared by various institutions and a knowledge gap about the perceived and actual value of various categories of data may contribute to the public’s lack of action on certain privacy-related issues. See: <https://www.staysafeonline.org/about-us/news/results-of-consumer-data-privacy-survey-reveal-critical-need-for-all-digital-citizens-to-participate-in-data-privacy-day>.

³ For a detailed review of the empirical research on privacy attitudes and behavior, see "Privacy and Human Behavior in the Age of Information," by Alessandro Acquisti, Laura Brandimarte, and George Loewenstein, *Science*, Vol. 347 no. 6221 pp. 509-514.

Americans' Views About Data Collection and Security

Contrary to assertions that people “[don't care](#)” about privacy in the digital age, this survey suggests that Americans hold a range of strong views about the importance of control over their personal information and freedom from surveillance in daily life. As earlier studies in this series have illustrated, Americans' [perceptions of privacy](#) are varied in important ways and often overlap with concerns about personal information security and government surveillance. In practice, information scholars [have noted](#) that privacy is not something one can simply “have,” but rather is something people seek to “achieve” through an ongoing process of negotiation of all the ways that information flows across different contexts in daily life.

The data from the new Pew Research surveys suggest that Americans consider a wide array of privacy-related values to be deeply important in their lives, particularly when it comes to having a sense of control over who collects information and when and where activities can be observed.

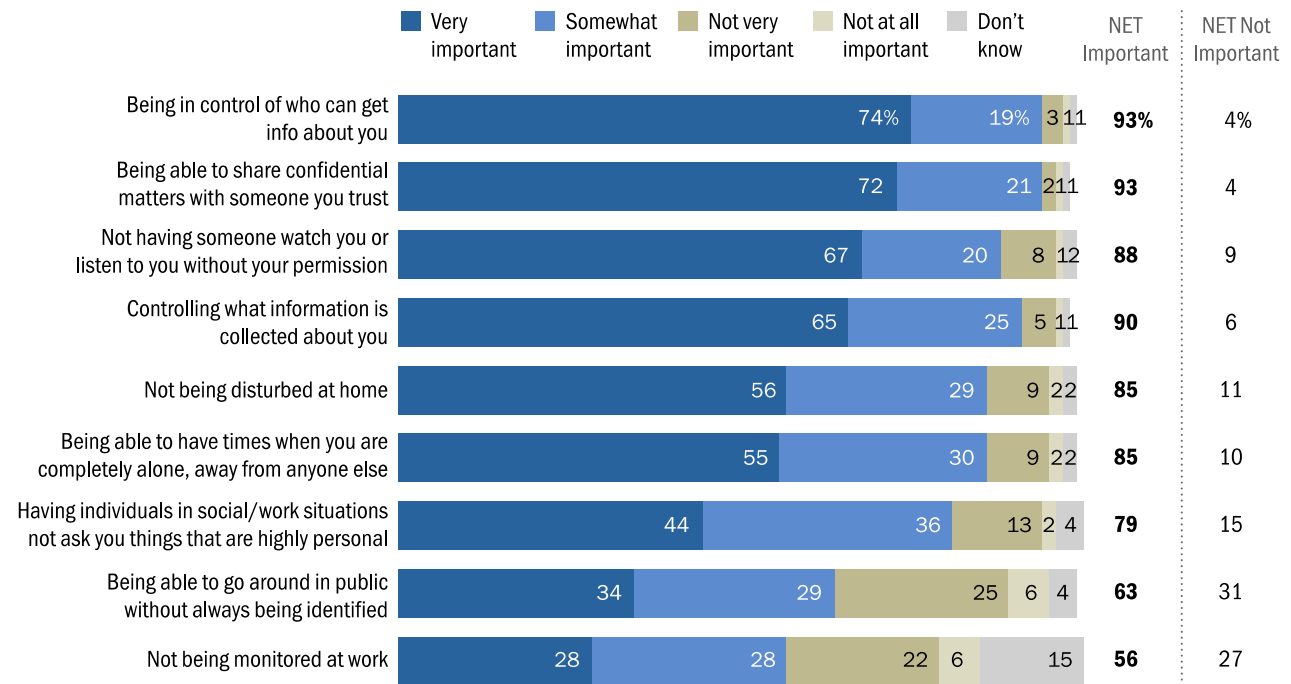
When they are asked to think about all of their daily interactions – both online and offline – and the extent to which certain privacy-related values are important to them, clear majorities believe every dimension below is at least “somewhat important” and many express the view that these aspects of personal information control are “very important.”⁴ The full range of their views is captured in the chart below and more detailed analysis is explored after that.

⁴ This series of questions are modified from trend questions asked in Harris Interactive surveys. Due to differences in the question stem and survey response categories here, direct trend comparisons with earlier surveys cannot be made. For an overview of public opinion survey trends on privacy-related questions, see: Samuel J. Best, Brian S. Krueger and Jeffrey Ladewig, “Privacy in the Information Age.” Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3843987>

Americans Hold Strong Views About Privacy in Everyday Life

In response to the following question: “Privacy means different things to different people today. In thinking about all of your daily interactions – both online and offline – please tell me how important each of the following are to you . . .”

% of adults who say ...



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #4, Jan. 27, 2015-Feb. 16, 2015 (N=461). Refused responses not shown.

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Nine-in-ten adults feel various dimensions of control over personal information collection are “very important” to them.

The issue of *who* is gathering information and *what* information is being gathered is considered to be an important dimension of privacy control by nearly all American adults. In all, 93% of adults say that being in control of *who* can get information about them is important; 74% feel this is “very important,” while 19% say it is “somewhat important.”

At the same time, 90% say that controlling *what* information is collected about them is important— 65% think it is “very important” and 25% say it is “somewhat important.” There are no significant age- or gender-based differences for either of these questions.

As [earlier surveys](#) have demonstrated, the sensitivity level of various types of information varies considerably, with social security numbers topping the list of the most sensitive pieces of information and basic purchasing habits being viewed as the least sensitive kind of data.

Americans value having the ability to share confidential matters with another trusted person.

While public confidence in the security of various communications channels is [low](#), Americans continue to value the ability to share confidential information with others in their lives. Nine-in-ten (93%) adults say that this is important to them, with 72% saying it is “very important” and 21% saying it is “somewhat important” to have this ability to share confidential information with trusted parties. Men, women and adults of all ages are equally likely to hold these views.

Permission and publicness are key features that influence views on surveillance.

Americans say they do not wish to be observed without their approval; 88% say that it is important that they not have someone watch or listen to them without permission (67% feel this is “very important” and 20% say it is “somewhat important” to them).

However, far fewer (63%) feel it is important to be able to “go around in public without always being identified.” Only 34% believe being able to go unnoticed in public is “very important” and 29% say it is “somewhat important.” In both cases, all adults, regardless of age or gender, express comparable views.

For many, homes really are “do not disturb” zones.

Americans do not appreciate being bothered at home. Fully 85% say that not being disturbed at home is important to them. Some 56% say it is very important they not be bothered at home and another 29% say it is “somewhat important” they be free from disturbances at home.

Americans treasure the ability to be alone at times and they do not appreciate intrusive inquiries about personal matters.

Some 85% of adults say it is important to be able to have times when they are completely alone, away from anyone else. Fully 55% say this is “very important” to them and another 30% say this is somewhat important. These with high school educations or less are not as likely as those with at least some college experience or college graduates to say that being alone matters to them. Women and men show no difference in their answer on this question, nor do those in different age groups.

On a separate question, 79% say that it “very” or “somewhat” important to them not to have people at work or social situations ask them about things that are “highly personal.” Some 44% say that avoiding prying acquaintances is “very important” to them and another 36% say this is “somewhat important.”

The ability to avoid “highly personal” questions is an especially important virtue to those over age 50. Some 52% say it is very important to them not to be asked about highly personal matters, compared with 37% of those ages 18-49 who feel that level of sensitivity. In addition, women (84%) are more likely than men (74%) to say that it is important to them not to have people ask them highly personal questions in work and social situations.

By a 2-to-1 margin, people think it is important not to be monitored at work.

Some 56% of Americans say it is important to them not to be monitored at work, compared with 27% who say it is not very or not at all important. Another 15% of adults say they do not know or this issue does not apply to them. Twenty-eight percent say it is “very important” not to be monitored at work and another 28% say it is “somewhat important.”⁵

Even as they value the ability to be free from observation, Americans feel it is hard to avoid surveillance in public.

While the patterns of one’s digital communications and behaviors have been the focus of much of the recent public discussion about surveillance, Americans also have a pervasive sense that their *physical* activities may be recorded when they are moving about their daily lives. In the first survey in this series, Americans were asked whether or not they agree that “it is hard to avoid surveillance cameras when I am out in public.”⁶ The vast majority – 81% – agree that surveillance cameras are hard to avoid; 36% say they “strongly agree” and 45% “agree.”

Majorities of every demographic group said they feel this way, with relatively minor variation in the responses. For instance, the oldest adults in the sample were somewhat more likely than those under the age of 50 to feel that surveillance cameras are hard to avoid when they are out in public; 90% of adults ages 65 and older agree that surveillance cameras are hard to avoid in public, compared with 76% of those ages 18-29 and 80% of those ages 30-49 who feel that way.

Similarly, in online focus groups conducted for this report, respondents were prompted to think about specific examples of the kinds of data and information that might be recorded or collected

⁵ There are no significant differences between those who are employed and those who are not for this question.

⁶ The full topline for Survey #1 and the methods description are available here: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/11/12/public-privacy-perceptions/>

about them. When asked about the kinds of observation that might happen as they are walking down the street, many mentioned the presence of cameras of various kinds. And while most cast these observations in a negative light, some noted that they can be a boon to public safety:

When you are walking down the street, do you ever think that you are being observed in a way that would create a kind of record about where you've been that could be accessed later?

"CCTV Cameras are all over the place plus there [are] satellites. All kind[s of] stuff."

"We are always on video. We leave [an] imprint as soon as we leave our house."

"I'm frightened by high resolution satellite cameras."

"Sites visited, purchases made. You are always being filmed on cameras ... which can be a good thing if you are assaulted."

"Big Bro is always watching."

Few feel they have "a lot" of control over how much information is collected about them in daily life.

While Americans clearly value having control over their personal information, few feel they have the ability to exert that control. Beyond surveillance cameras, there are many other forms of daily data collection and use that they do not feel they can avoid. When asked how much control they feel they have over how much information is collected about them and how it is used in their everyday lives, only a small minority of Americans say they have "a lot" of control.

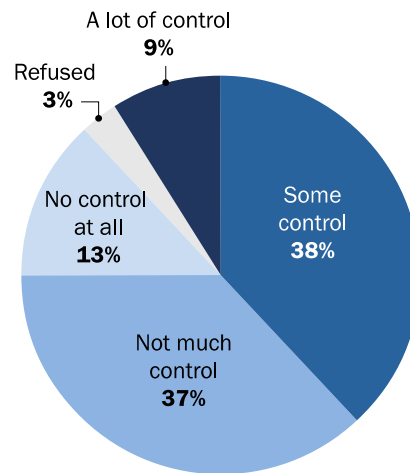
Our question on this subject went as follows: Respondents were asked to think about a typical day in their lives as they spend time at home, outside their home, and getting from place to place. They were asked to consider that they might use their cellphone, landline phones or credit cards. They might go online and buy things, use search engines, watch videos or check in on social media. When thinking about all of these activities that might take place on a typical day, just 9% say they feel they have "a lot" of control over how much information is collected about them and how it is used, while 38% say they have "some control." Another 37% assert they have "not much control," and 13% feel they personally have "no control at all" over the way their data is gathered and used.

While there are some minor variations across socioeconomic groups, men, women and adults of all ages report similar views.

In keeping with other research on technology use and perceptions of control, social media users are *more* likely than non-users to believe they have “a lot” of control over how much information is collected about them and how it is used; 11% feel this way vs. 4% of non-users. However, it is still the case that about half of all social media users feel they have “not much” or “no control at all” over personal data collection and use in daily life.⁷

Few Say They Have “a Lot” of Control Over Information

% of adults who say they have varying degrees of control over the information that is collected about them in daily life



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498).

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Those who are more aware of government surveillance efforts feel they have less control over the way their information is collected and used on a typical day.

At the time of this survey, 81% of adults had at least some low level of awareness about the government collecting information about telephone calls, emails and other online communications. One-in-three (32%) said they had heard “a lot” about the programs and almost half (48%) said they had heard “a little.”⁸ Those who were among the most likely to hear “a lot” about the programs include adults ages 50 and older (40%) and those with a college degree (44%).

Those who are more aware of government surveillance efforts say they have less control over the way their information is collected and used on a typical day; 60% of those who have heard “a lot” about the government collecting information about communications said they feel they have “not

⁷ For a discussion of social media users and perceptions of control over personal information, see: <http://www.heinz.cmu.edu/~acquisti/papers/acquisti-SPPS.pdf>

⁸ Due to differences in the method of survey administration and questionnaire context, these findings are not directly comparable to previous Pew Research telephone surveys that have included [a version of this question](#).

much” or “no control at all” over the way their data is gathered and used compared with 47% of those who have heard only “a little” about the monitoring programs.

Focus group discussions suggest that many want more transparency in who collects information about them, but some don’t care or don’t worry.

In the online focus group discussions, a subset of the survey respondents was asked whether or not they feel as though they “know enough” about who collects data about them and why it is being collected. Among those who felt they *don’t know enough*, respondents noted multiple dimensions of unknowing, including where the data is stored, who has access to it and how it might be used:

Do you feel as though you know enough about who collects information about you and your activities or would you like to know more about who is doing the collecting and the reasons for it?

“No we don't know who is always collecting it and the bigger question is where does it go and who also gets to see it.”

“No. Once it is collected, it has no expiration date ... things collected 10 years ago about my daily patterns are relevant to what I do today? There is a great unknown to it all.”

“I would like to know more. I feel there is too much secrecy and perhaps the government wants there to be secrecy precisely so that they can monitor what people think they are not being monitored for!”

“I would like to know more about who is collecting information and for what reasons.”

“I would like to know everyone who is collecting data on me and what they are doing with it.”

“I know from personal experience that we don't (and probably will never) know enough about who is collecting information and why. If people knew how much the Government knew about their day-to-day activities, we wouldn't be so carefree with our lives.”

“Definitely would like to know who's collecting information about me. What if you're suspected of something unjustly.”

At the same time, another group of participants voiced the view that they “don’t care” or “don’t worry” about who might be collecting data about them and why:

“If I find out, fine. But I’m certainly not going to waste any time on it... too many other things to enjoy in life.”

“I do not care. I feel I don’t do anything wrong so I don’t have to worry.”

“I don’t worry too much about this. But I just wonder if the United States is still a free country that we all are looking for.”

“I lead a very placid life. I don’t know of any activity I could be doing that could track me for anything.”

When asked about the length of time that data should be retained by various institutions, most Americans feel that “a few months” or less is long enough to store most records of their activity.

Various organizations and companies often are required to retain information about customers or users for legal reasons or as part of their business operations. The length of time varies considerably across different organizations and according to the type of information being retained.⁹ Groups that set standards for records management and retention state that one of the core principles of the practice is to determine what is “an appropriate time, taking into account all operational, legal, regulatory and fiscal requirements, and those of all relevant binding authorities.”¹⁰

In this survey there is both wide variation across the *length* of time that respondents feel is reasonable to store their data, and considerable variance depending on *the kind of organization* that retains the records of the activity. In general, and even though it may be necessary to provide certain functionality, people are less comfortable with certain online service providers—such as search engine providers and social media sites—storing records and archives of their activity. For

⁹ Details of practices within an organization can be difficult to obtain. One example surfaced through a FOIA request from the ACLU highlighted wide differences across different cellular providers in the practices of retaining such information such as cell towers used, IP destination information and call detail records. See: http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/threatlevel/2011/09/retentionpolicy.pdf

¹⁰ As stated by ARMA International: <http://www.arma.org/r2/generally-accepted-br-recordkeeping-principles/retention> Of additional note is the stated need to balance risks associated with data retention: “Retention decision makers must be aware that the presence or absence of records can be either helpful or harmful to the organization. Therefore, to minimize risks and costs associated with records retention, it is essential to immediately dispose of records after their retention period expires.”

instance, 50% of adults think that online advertisers who place ads on the websites they visit *should not save any information* about their activity.¹¹

At the other end of the spectrum, the vast majority of adults *are* comfortable with the idea that credit card companies might retain records or archives of their activity. However, the length of time that people feel is reasonable varies significantly. While few think that data about their credit card activity should only be stored for a few weeks (6%) or a few months (14%), many more consider a few years (28%) a reasonable length of time. Another 22% think credit card companies should store the information “as long as they need to” and just 13% think that credit card companies “shouldn’t save any information.”

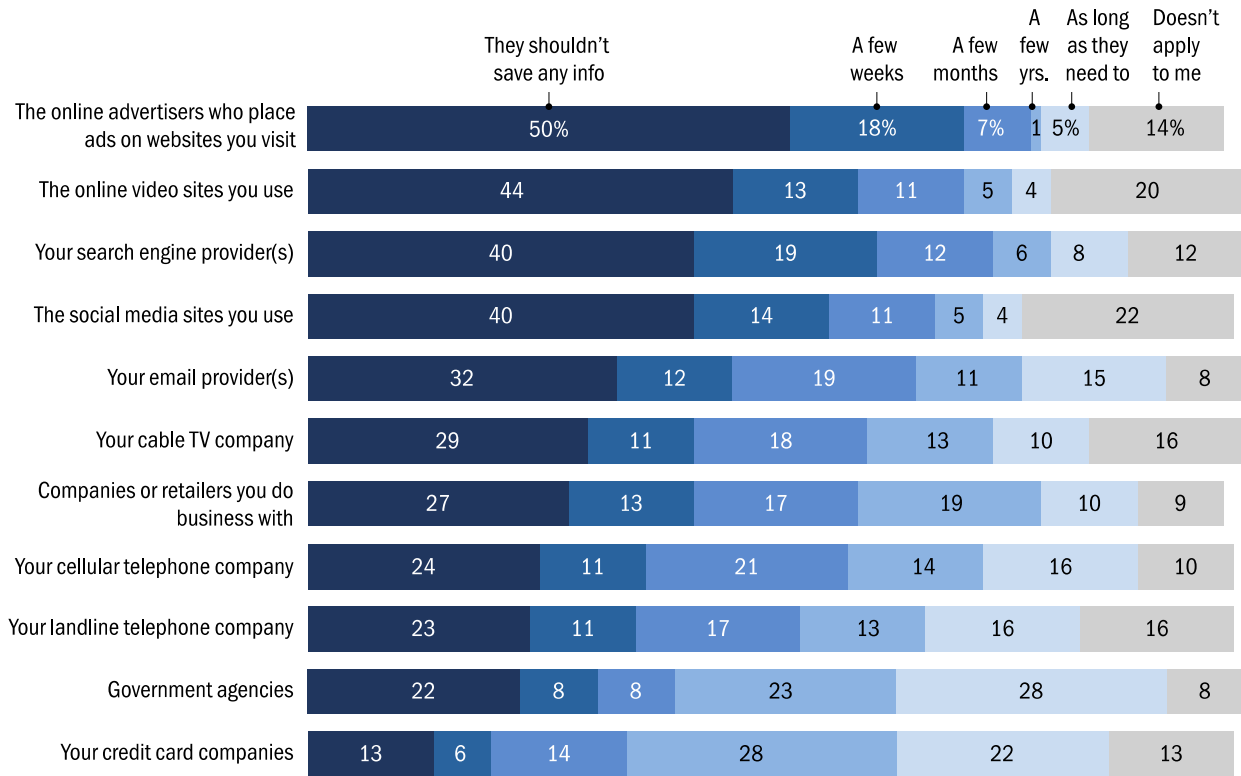
The notable demographic variances across these questions include:

- Women are more likely than men to say that **government agencies** should retain their records “as long as they need to” (34% vs. 23%).
- Women are more likely than men to say that **credit card companies** should retain their records “as long as they need to” (27% vs. 17%).
- Large numbers (24%) of those under age 50 said that the question about **landline telephone companies** did not apply to them. By contrast, large numbers (30%) of those ages 50 and older said that the question about **social media sites** didn't apply to them. A slightly smaller number (26%) of older adults said the same about online video sites.

¹¹ A 2009 study found similarly strong views that advertisers should not retain information about “internet activity” for any length of time. See discussion in: “Alan Westin’s Privacy Homo Economicus” by Chris Jay Hoofnagle and Jennifer M. Urban. Available at: <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3399&context=facpubs>

Most Expect Limits on How Long the Records of Their Activity Are Stored

% of adults who think the following length of time is "reasonable" for different companies or organizations to retain records or archives of their activity



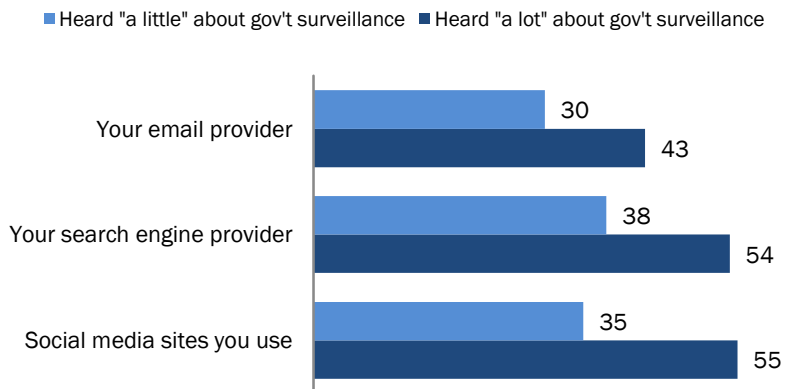
Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498). Refused responses not shown.

Those who have greater awareness of the government monitoring programs are more likely to believe that certain records should not be saved for any length of time.

Those who have had the most exposure to information about the government surveillance programs also have some of the strongest views about data retention limits for certain kinds of organizations. These differences are particularly notable when considering social media sites; among those who have heard “a lot” about the government collecting communications data as part of anti-terrorism efforts, 55% say that the social media sites they use should not save any information regarding their activity, compared with 35% of those who have heard “a little” about the government monitoring programs.

Those Who Have Heard “a Lot” About Government Surveillance Hold Stronger Views About Certain Data Retention Limits

% of U.S. adults who say the following organizations should not save any information about their activity



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498).

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Focus group discussions highlight some of the public's assumptions and concerns about data collection and surveillance in daily life.

In focus group conversations, panelists noted various ways that they assume information might be collected about them. Expansive government data collection efforts were cited by many respondents and several noted the ways in which hackers might access records that were gathered for other purposes.

Just off the top of your head, what kind of information about you and your activities do you think is being collected and who is collecting it?

“Anything digital can record, even a car today tells everything, your cellphone even when it is off is still sending info to the towers.”

“I have a cousin that was involved in the government. I believe that they try collecting as much information as they possibly can, especially after 9/11. They pretty much know when we sleep, eat, watch, t.v., make calls (and to whom), what videos we rent, and what we like to eat.”

“I think the NSA does most of the collecting. What they would get from me is location and site address I am accessing, I guess.”

“I believe that my search and order history on websites is being collected by companies that I order from.”

“Hackers ... are trying to find out your credit card and other identity information.”

“Name, address, everybody in my family, my interests, anything I may want to purchase. I think it is collected by the government, and anybody who has great computer knowledge ... can hack.”

“Web browsing (businesses, govt, hackers), credit card transactions (businesses, govt, hackers), cellphone texts and calls (govt)”

“I’m sure the government has buzz words that they take from texts or emails or blogs that they keep an eye on.”

“I think Facebook can be used as a key tool in getting info by the government & our cellphones.”

“I think even so-called “private” browsing could be explored by the government if they wanted access...not sure about Snap Chats--does anyone know?”

Americans have little confidence that their data will remain private and secure—particularly when it comes to data collected by online advertisers.

When they consider the various companies and organizations that maintain records of their activity, very few express confidence that the data records held by these institutions would remain private and secure. For all of the 11 entities we asked about – from government agencies to credit

card companies to social media sites – only small minorities say they are “very confident” that the records maintained by these organizations will remain private and secure.¹²

However, there are notable variations in Americans’ confidence levels according to the type of organization being considered. For instance, just 6% of adults say they are very confident that government agencies can keep their records private and secure, while another 25% say they are somewhat confident.

Credit card companies appear to instill a marginally higher level of confidence when compared with other entities, but they still garner only 9% of respondents saying they are “very confident” and 29% saying they are “somewhat confident” that their data will stay private and secure.

Landline phone companies and cellphone companies are more trusted than digital communications providers, but neither instills great levels of confidence. For instance, just 6% of respondents say they are “very confident” that landline telephone companies will be able to protect their data and 25% say they are “somewhat confident” that the records of their activities will remain private and secure.

In keeping with the findings about the length of time various organizations might store records and archives of activity, online service providers are among the least trusted entities when it comes to keeping information private and secure. When asked about search engine providers, online video sites, social media sites and online advertisers, the majority felt “not too confident” or “not at all confident” that these entities could protect their data:

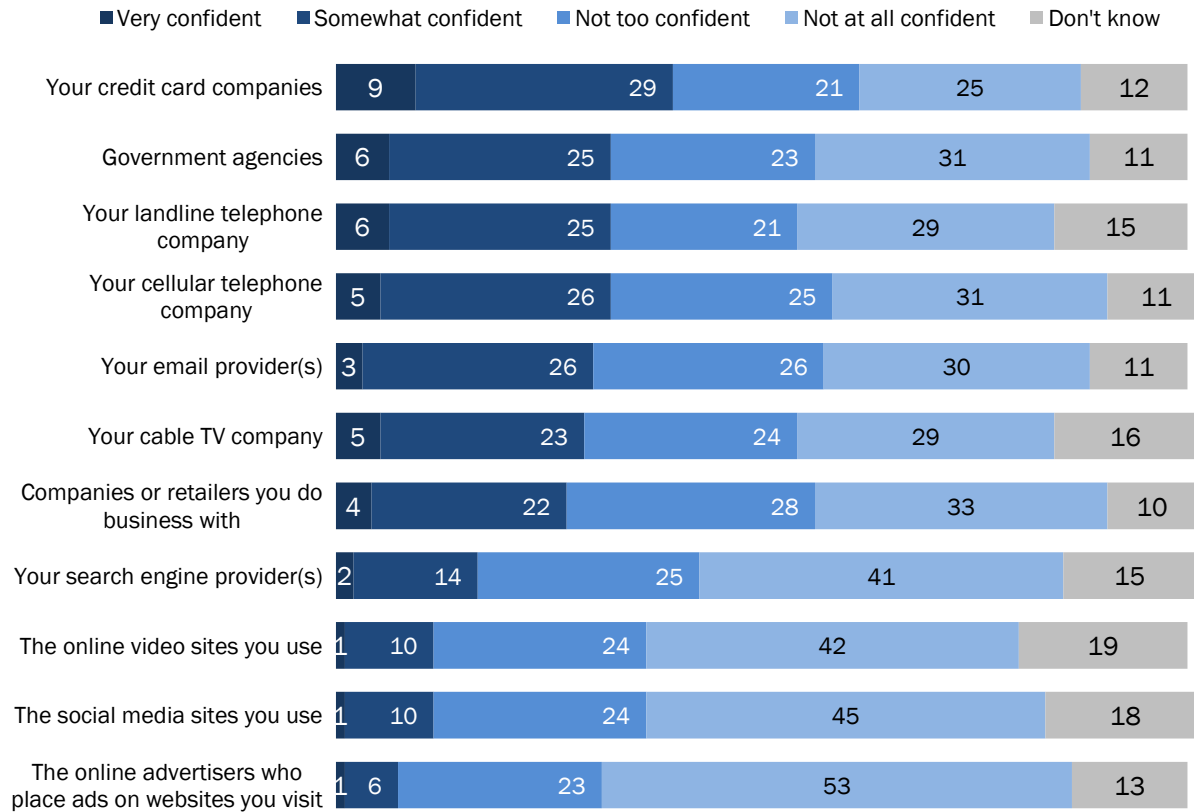
- 76% of adults say they are “not too confident” or “not at all confident” that records of their activity maintained by the **online advertisers** who place ads on the websites they visit will remain private and secure.
- 69% of adults say they are not confident that records of their activity maintained by the **social media sites** they use will remain private and secure.
- 66% of adults say they are not confident that records of their activity maintained by **search engine providers** will remain private and secure.

¹² Despite these low levels of confidence, other studies suggest that consumers may assume greater legal protection than currently exists and may feel they have little ability to effect change in information security practices. See “Alan Westin’s Privacy Homo Economicus” by Chris Jay Hoofnagle and Jennifer M. Urban. On p. 272 the authors note that, consumers “expect protections that do not presently exist in U.S. law” most “have little choice but to trust that the services they use are secure and responsible because they cannot effectively monitor information security practices or police them.”

- 66% say they are not confident that records of their activity collected by the **online video sites** they use will remain private and secure.

Few Express Confidence That Their Records Will Remain Private and Secure

% of adults who say they are ... that the records of their activity maintained by various companies and organizations will remain private and secure



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498). Refused responses not shown.

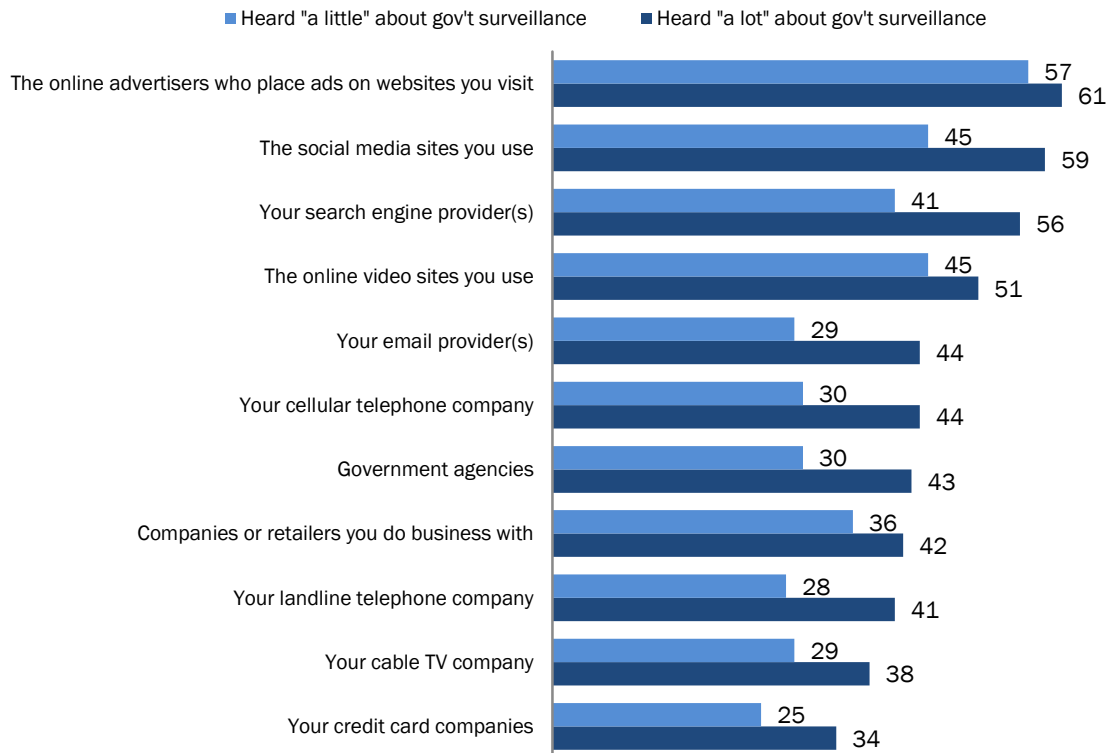
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Those who have heard “a lot” about the government monitoring programs are less confident in the privacy and security of their data.

Those who have heard “a lot” about the government monitoring programs are less confident in the privacy and security of their data across an array of scenarios. This is true when we ask questions about records maintained by a wide variety of institutions including government agencies, communications companies, landline telephone companies and various online service providers.

Greater Awareness of Government Monitoring Ties to Lower Levels of Confidence in Privacy and Security of Personal Data

% of U.S. adults who say they are "not at all confident" that their records will remain private and secure



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498).

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The share of Americans who disapprove of the government collection of telephone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts continues to outweigh the number who approve.

Four-in-ten (40%) adults say they disapprove of the government’s collection of telephone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts, while one-in-three (32%) say they approve. At the same time, more than one-in-four (26%) say they don’t know if they approve or disapprove.¹³ Adults ages 50 and older are considerably more likely to approve of the programs when compared with those under age 50 (42% vs. 24%). Younger adults under age 50 express more uncertainty when compared with older adults; 32% say they “don’t know” if they approve or disapprove of the programs, compared with 19% of those ages 50 and older.

Those who have heard “a lot” about the government monitoring programs are far more likely to disapprove of them: 60% disapprove of the programs compared with just 36% of those who have heard only “a little.”

However, as other surveys have indicated, Americans’ views vary substantially when they consider the idea of monitoring of U.S. citizens vs. foreign citizens. While only a minority of Americans feels it is acceptable for the government to monitor ordinary American citizens, many think it is acceptable to monitor others in a variety of other situations. Americans generally support monitoring foreign citizens and support the use of surveillance to investigate specific scenarios such as those involving criminal activity or suspected involvement with terrorism.¹⁴

65% of American adults believe there are not adequate limits on the telephone and internet data that the government collects.

The survey also reveals a broadly-held view that there should be greater restrictions on the kinds of information that the government is allowed to collect. When asked to think about the data the government collects as part of anti-terrorism efforts, 65% of Americans say there are not adequate limits on “what telephone and internet data the government can collect.” Just 31% say they believe that there are adequate limits on the kinds of data gathered for these programs.¹⁵

The majority view that there are not sufficient limits on what data the government gathers is consistent across all demographic groups with one modest variation. Those in the highest-income

¹³ Due to differences in the method of survey administration and questionnaire context, these findings are not directly comparable to previous Pew Research telephone surveys that have included [a version of this question](#).

¹⁴ See: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/03/16/americans-views-on-government-surveillance-programs/>

¹⁵ Due to differences in the method of survey administration and questionnaire context, these findings are not directly comparable to previous Pew Research telephone surveys that have included [a version of this question](#).

households are somewhat more likely than those in the lowest-income groups to say that the limits on government data collection are sufficient; 36% of adults living in households earning \$75,000 or more per year think the limits on these programs are adequate, compared with 21% of those in households earning \$30,000 or less per year.

Notably, those who are more aware of the government surveillance efforts are more likely to feel there are not adequate safeguards in place; 74% of those who have heard “a lot” about the programs say that there are not adequate limits, compared with 62% who have heard only “a little” about the monitoring programs.

Attempts to Obscure Data Collection and Preserve Anonymity

While most Americans support greater limits on data collection by the government and most express low levels of confidence in the capacity of institutions with which they interact on a daily basis to protect their data, [few are taking advanced steps](#) to change their behavior or cloak their activities online. The adoption of certain privacy-enhancing tech tools such as using proxy servers and adding privacy-enhancing browser plug-ins has been low, and respondents have stated a [variety of reasons](#) for avoiding these measures.

However, other efforts that entail less technical forms of opting-out of data collection are much more widespread. These include activities such as refusing to provide information that isn't relevant to a transaction and creating personal data "noise" by giving misleading or inaccurate information.

A very small number say they have changed their behavior to avoid being tracked recently, but many were already engaged in more common or less technical privacy-enhancing measures.

At the time of the survey, the vast majority of respondents—91%--had not made any changes to their internet or cellphone use to avoid having their activities tracked or noticed. Only 7% reported that they had made these kinds of changes in "recent months."

At the same time, a much larger group had engaged in an array of everyday obfuscation and privacy-enhancing measures. These activities were not necessarily in direct response to news of government monitoring programs, but rather, represent a broad set of measures that respondents may have engaged in. They include:

- Clearing cookies or browser history: 59% have done this.
- Refusing to provide information about themselves that wasn't relevant to the transaction: 57% have done this.
- Set their browser to disable or turn off cookies: 34% have done this.
- Deleted or edited something they posted in the past: 29% have done this.
- Used a temporary username or email address: 25% have done this.

- Given inaccurate or misleading information about themselves: 24% have done this.
- Decided not to use a website because they asked for their real name: 23% have done this.
- Used a public computer to browse anonymously: 12% have done this.
- Asked someone to remove something that was posted about themselves online: 11% have done this.

There are relatively few demographic variations for these questions, with several notable exceptions. Younger adults under the age of 50 are twice as likely as older adults to say they have given misleading or inaccurate information (30% vs. 16%). This younger group is also somewhat more likely to say they have deleted or edited something they posted in the past (36% vs. 21%) or asked someone to remove something posted online (15% vs. 7%). Women are more likely than men to have requested that online information be removed (16% vs. 6%).

Advanced measures, such as the use of proxy servers and encryption are less common.

This survey included somewhat more expansive questions about advanced privacy-enhancing measures such as the use of proxy servers, virtual private networks and encryption across a variety of communications channels, following up on findings [reported](#) earlier this year. However, even with comparatively broader language, just one-in-ten Americans said they had adopted these more sophisticated steps to shield their information:

- 10% of adults say they have encrypted their phone calls, text messages or email
- 9% say they have used a service that allows them to browse the Web anonymously, such as a proxy server, Tor software, or a virtual personal network

Awareness of government monitoring programs is associated with some privacy-enhancing behaviors.

When looking at levels of surveillance awareness, engagement in privacy-enhancing activities does not vary in significant ways for most activities with several exceptions. Americans who have heard “a lot” about the programs are more likely than those who have heard just “a little” to:

- Set their browser to disable cookies (48% vs. 33%)

- Give inaccurate or misleading information (36% vs. 23%)

Americans continue to value ability to be anonymous in certain online activities.

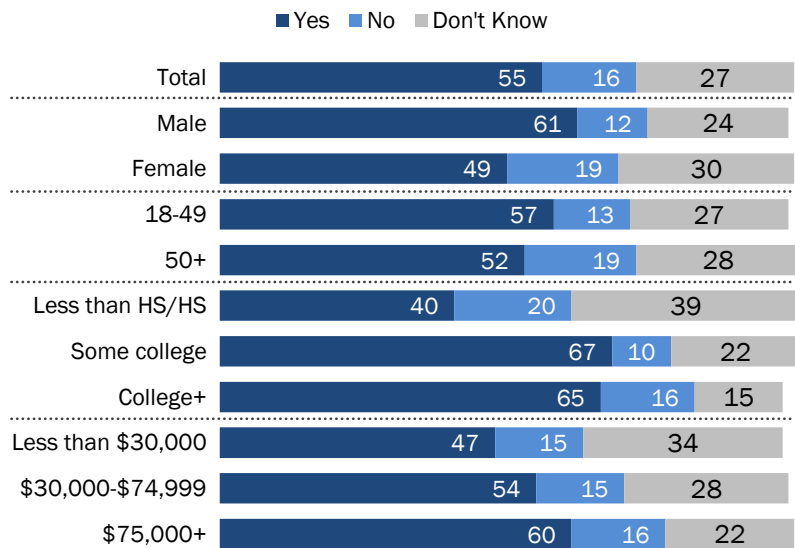
Across multiple [surveys](#), a majority of the public has indicated that the ability to be anonymous online is important to them. In the current survey, the majority of adults (55%) said that people should have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously for certain kinds of online activities. Another 16% do not think people should be able to remain anonymous when they are online, and 27% said they “don’t know.”

Men are more likely than women to think people should be able to engage in certain online activities anonymously (61% vs. 49%), but support for internet anonymity does not vary by age. Education is a predictor, but income is not; adults with at least some college education are significantly more likely than those who have not attended college to believe that people should have the ability to use the internet anonymously (66% vs. 40%).

As a follow-up question, respondents were asked: Could you please tell us briefly why you think that people should or should not have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously? The open-ended responses that followed were varied in both length and substance, but tended to cluster around several recurring threads that are examined below.

Most Support Idea of Online Anonymity for Certain Activities, but Many Are Undecided

% of all adults who think people should or should not have the ability to use the internet anonymously for certain activities



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498).

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Why people support the idea of anonymity for some online activities.

A large share of respondents who support anonymity referred to key phrases associated with privacy that were similar to those discussed in the first report from this series. In their explanation of why anonymity was important to preserve, they noted that people have a “right to privacy” or it’s “no one’s business” what they do online.

Another substantial share cited the idea that as long as a person’s online activity does not present a threat to others, that they should have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously for certain kinds of online activities:

Could you please tell us briefly why you think that people should have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously?

“As long as it’s not an illegal activity, a person should not have to worry about being spied on.”

“There are activities which are not considered socially acceptable in certain circumstances, which create no harm to other people.”

“As long as no criminal activity is involved, why should anyone's browsing history be tracked if they don't want it tracked?”

“There is a basic right to privacy as long as the activity does not endanger others. The trick is to distinguish the activities.”

A range of responses also noted that anonymity is essential to ensure freedom of expression and that certain activities are compromised without the ability to remain anonymous online.

“Anonymity is the first line of protection for free speech.”

“I think that the internet needs to remain free and anonymous for it to be a place where people can exchange ideas and information without fear. If your digital life can be monitored and saved then you are at the mercy of whoever ends up with enough money and power to use that information.”

“People like to research different things. Just because I may look up a topic doesn't mean I am a terrorist.”

“For example, you search for information regarding a medical condition. Within minutes, you are being bombarded with advertising for drugs. Now there are multiple companies that know you are interested in a particular medical condition and they assume you have it. I think you should have the privacy to not have everything you search dumped into an advertising targeting system.”

At the same time, another category of responses presented exceptions to the general idea that people should be able to use the internet anonymously for certain activities:

“I think the ability to track an individual's activity online (but also on phones, etc) creates a real dilemma in the U.S. --we value our freedom and don't want "the government" telling us what to do - and what not to do (e.g. Russia, the Middle East) BUT --having lived through 9/11 terrorism...we understand the value of monitoring activity(...).”

“Freedom is what this country is based on it should be included in what a person looks at on the computer (except for things like child porn because that is not victimless).”

“Some uses are acceptable, not all. (...) Reading news/magazines online is no different than buying the item on the news stand.”

“I think certain kinds of harmless activities should be anonymous, but illegal or grey area activities should be tracked.”

Why some people oppose the idea of online anonymity.

The vast majority of responses in opposition to the idea that people should have anonymity for certain online activities noted either the idea that those who are doing no wrong should “have nothing to hide” or argued that anonymity enables a variety of illegal or objectionable activity. Among the specific concerns noted were: child predators, terrorists, human traffickers and cyberbullies. Others noted a range of concerns and the fact that if and when bad things happen, that the offenders should be able to be identified:

Could you please tell us briefly why you think that people should not have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously?

“There are a lot of crazy people that go on line and do bad things, these people should be able to be found, if they need to be anonymous then maybe they have something to hide.”

“Too much potential for crime. Using the internet anonymously removes responsibility.”

“I guess if there was some sort of illegal or threatening activity involved, I'd want that activity monitored, or the ability to trace it back to the originating person/place.”

“If you are doing something anonymously then you are probably doing something you shouldn't be doing at all.”

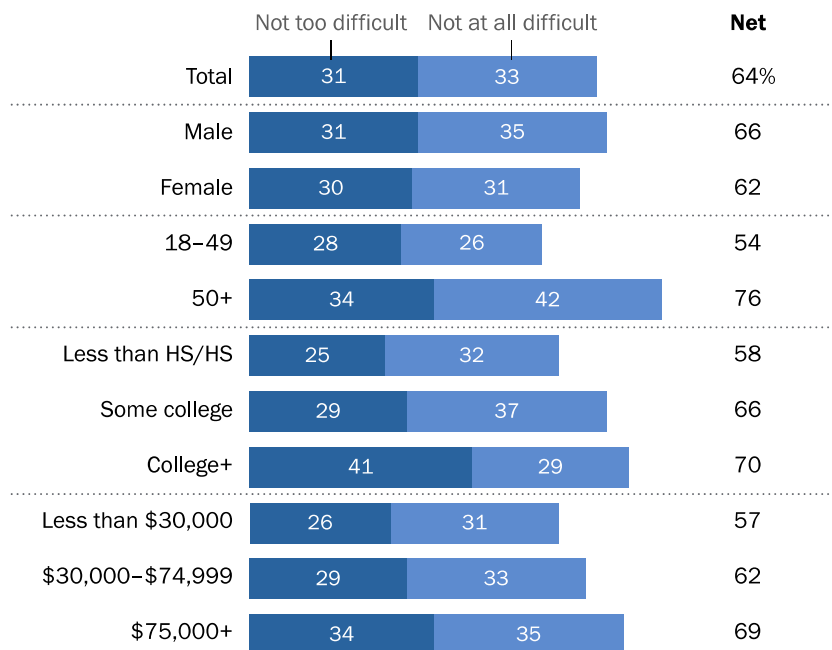
Even as they expect anonymity for certain activities online, most assume that motivated people and organizations could uncover details that they wish to keep private.

When respondents were asked to consider how difficult it would be for a motivated person or organization to learn details about their past that they would prefer to keep private, 64% said it would be “not too” or “not at all” difficult for them to uncover that sensitive information. Just 20% felt it would be “very” or “somewhat” difficult.

Men and women report similar responses, but those ages 50 and older (76%) are significantly more likely to believe it would be “not too” or “not at all difficult” when compared with those under the age of 50 (54%). Similarly, those with a college degree are more likely than those who have not attended college to feel more exposed (70% vs. 58%).

Few Think It Would Be Hard for Others to Uncover Sensitive Information About Them

% of all adults who think it would be not too/not at all difficult to uncover sensitive information



Source: Pew Research Center's Privacy Panel Survey #2, Aug. 5, 2014-Sept. 2, 2014 (N=498). Figures may not add to net due to rounding.

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Methods

About this survey

The majority of analysis in this report is based on a Pew Research Center survey conducted between Aug. 5, 2014, and Sept. 2, 2014, among a sample of 498 adults ages 18 or older. The survey was conducted by the GfK Group using KnowledgePanel, its nationally representative online research panel. GfK selected a representative sample of 1,537 English-speaking panelists to invite to join the subpanel and take the first survey in January 2014. Of the 935 panelists who responded to the invitation (60.8%), 607 agreed to join the subpanel and subsequently completed the first survey (64.9%) whose results were reported in [November 2014](#). This group has agreed to take four online surveys about “current issues, some of which relate to technology” over the course of a year and possibly participate in one or more 45-60-minute online focus group chat sessions. For the second survey whose results are reported here, 498 of the original 607 panelists participated. A random subset of the subpanel receive occasional invitations to participate in online focus groups. For this report, a total of 26 panelists participated in one of three online focus groups conducted during December 2014. Sampling error for the total sample of 498 respondents is plus or minus 5.6 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

An additional survey related to Americans’ views about the importance of privacy was conducted between Jan. 27 and Feb. 16, 2015, among a sample of 461 adults ages 18 or older. The sample was drawn from the same 607 adults who agreed to participate in the subpanel on privacy. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 5.8 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

The detailed discussion that follows is for the primary survey of 498 adults:

KnowledgePanel members are recruited through probability sampling methods and include both those with internet access and those without. KnowledgePanel provides internet access for those who do not have it and, if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel. A combination of random digit dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methodologies have been used to recruit panel members (in 2009 KnowledgePanel switched its sampling methodology for recruiting panel members from RDD to ABS). The panel comprises households with landlines and cellular phones, including those only with cellphones, and those without a phone. Both the RDD and ABS samples were provided by Marketing Systems Group (MSG).

KnowledgePanel continually recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition as people leave the panel. Respondents were selected randomly from eligible adult household members of the panel. All sampled members received an initial email on Aug. 5, 2014,

to notify them of the survey and included a link to the survey questionnaire. One standard follow-up reminder was sent three days later to those who had not yet responded.

The final sample for this survey was weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, household income, metropolitan area or not, and region to parameters from the March 2013 Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS). In addition, the sample is weighted to match current patterns of internet access from the October 2012 CPS survey. This weight is multiplied by an initial base or sampling weight that corrects for differences in the probability of selection of various segments of the sample and by a panel weight that adjusts for any biases due to nonresponse and noncoverage at the panel recruitment stage (using all of the parameters mentioned above as well home ownership status).

Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting at each of these stages. Sampling error for the total sample of 498 respondents is plus or minus 5.6 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
All adults	498	5.6 percentage points
Men	252	7.8 percentage points
Women	246	7.9 percentage points
18-49	256	7.8 percentage points
50+	242	8 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey’s design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization and a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S INTERNET PROJECT/GFK PRIVACY PANEL
SURVEY #2 TOPLINE
AUGUST 5, 2014-SEPTEMBER 2, 2014
TOTAL N=498 ADULTS, AGES 18 AND OLDER
SURVEY CONDUCTED ONLINE**

MARGIN OF ERROR FOR ALL ADULTS IS +/- 5.6 PERCENTAGE POINTS

[INTRO SCREEN DISPLAY]

In this survey, we want to explore some important questions with you about life today.

First, we would like to ask you about your community and some of the things you think about the world.

PROGRAMMING NOTE: PLEASE DISREGARD NUMBERS IN PARENTHESES

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

Q1 Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?

- 29 Satisfied
- 68 Dissatisfied
- 4 Refused

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

QPri6a. (Q2) About how often, if ever, do you visit social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn?

- 27 Several times a day
- 15 About once a day
- 8 3 to 5 days a week
- 8 1 to 2 days a week
- 6 Every few weeks
- 6 Less often
- 3 Refused
- 69 Ever visit social media sites**
- 28 Never visit social media sites**

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

PIAL6 (Q3). Let's think about a typical day in your life as you spend time at home, outside your home, and getting from place to place. You use your cellphone and maybe landline phones. You may use credit cards. You might go online and buy things, use search engines, watch videos, or check in on social media. As you go through a typical day, how much control do you feel you have over how much information is collected about you and how it is being used?

47	A lot / some
9	A lot of control
38	Some control
50	Not much / none
37	Not much control
13	No control at all
3	Refused

[GRID, SP; SPLIT RESPONSE OPTIONS EVENLY ON TWO SCREENS]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

PIAL6A. (Q4) Various companies and organizations sometimes need to keep records of your activity on file for their own purposes or because of legal requirements. How long do you think it is reasonable for the following companies or organizations to retain their records or archives of your activity?

	A few weeks	A few months	A few years	As long as they need to	They shouldn't save any information	Doesn't apply to me	Refused
a. Your landline telephone company	11	17	13	16	23	16	4
b. Your cellular telephone company	11	21	14	16	24	10	4
c. Your cable TV company	11	18	13	10	29	16	4
d. Your search engine provider	19	12	6	8	40	12	4

e.	Your e-mail provider	12	19	11	15	32	8	4
f.	The social media sites you use	14	11	5	4	40	22	4
g.	The online video sites you use	13	11	5	4	44	20	4
h.	Government agencies	8	8	23	28	22	8	4
i.	Your credit card companies	6	14	28	22	13	13	4
j.	The online advertisers who place ads on the websites you visit	18	7	1	5	50	14	4
k.	Companies or retailers you do business with	13	17	19	10	27	9	3

**[GRID, SP; SPLIT RESPONSE OPTIONS EVENLY ON TWO SCREENS]
AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]**

PIAL6B (Q5) Still thinking about some of the companies and organizations that maintain records of your activity, how confident are you that these records will remain private and secure?

		Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not too confident	Not at all confident	Don't know	Refused	Very / somewhat confident	Not too / not at all confident
a.	Your landline telephone company	6	25	21	29	15	4	31	50
b.	Your cellular telephone company	5	26	25	31	11	3	30	56
c.	Your cable TV company	5	23	24	29	16	4	27	53
d.	Your search engine provider	2	14	25	41	15	3	16	66
e.	Your e-mail provider	3	26	26	30	11	3	29	57
f.	The social media sites you use	1	10	24	45	18	3	11	69

g.	The online video sites you use	1	10	24	42	19	3	11	66
h.	Government agencies	6	25	23	31	11	3	32	55
i.	Your credit card companies	9	29	21	25	12	4	38	46
j.	The online advertisers who place ads on the websites you visit	1	6	23	53	13	3	8	76
k.	Companies or retailers you do business with	4	22	28	33	10	3	26	61

PIAL6C (Q6) If a motivated person or organization wanted to learn details about your past that you would prefer to keep private, how difficult do you think it would be for them to uncover that sensitive information?

20	Very / somewhat difficult
4	Very difficult
15	Somewhat difficult
64	Not too / not at all difficult
31	Not too difficult
33	Not at all difficult
11	Don't know
4	Not applicable
2	Refused

[PEOPLE-PRESS]

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

Q17 (Q7) How much, if anything, have you heard about the government collecting information about telephone calls, emails and other online communications as part of efforts to monitor terrorist activity? Have you heard...

32	A lot
48	A little
7	Nothing at all
11	Don't know
2	Refused

[People-Press]

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

Q27 Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the government's collection of telephone and internet data as part of anti-terrorism efforts?

32	Approve
40	Disapprove
26	Don't know
2	Refused

[People-Press]

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

Q28 (Q8) Thinking about the data the government collects as part of anti-terrorism efforts ...Do you think there are adequate limits on what telephone and internet data the government can collect, or not?

31	Yes, there are adequate limits on what government can collect
65	No, there are not adequate limits on what government can collect
4	Refused

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

Q17a (Q9) Have you changed your internet or cellphone use in recent months in any way to avoid having your activities tracked or noticed, or haven't you done this?

7	Yes
91	No
3	Refused

[IF Q17A=1]

[MEDIUM TEXTBOX]

AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE CHANGED INTERNET OR CELLPHONE USE [N=473]

Q17b (Q10) Would you give us a few details about how you have changed your internet and cellphone use?

OPEN-END RESPONSES NOT SHOWN

**[GRID; RANDOMIZE; SPLIT RESPONSE OPTIONS EVENLY ON TWO SCREENS]
AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]**

PIAL7 (Q11) While using the internet, have you ever done any of the following things?

	Yes	No	Does not apply to me	Don't know	Refused
a. Used a temporary username or email address	25	56	9	5	3
b. Added a privacy-enhancing browser plugin like DoNotTrackMe or Privacy Badger	9	72	8	8	3
c. Given inaccurate or misleading information about yourself	24	60	7	6	3
d. Set your browser to disable or turn off cookies	34	43	8	12	3
e. Cleared cookies and browser history	59	22	7	8	3
f. Used a service that allows you to browse the Web anonymously, such as a proxy server, Tor software, or a virtual personal network (VPN)	9	67	9	10	4
g. Encrypted your phone calls, text messages or email	10	68	10	10	3
h. Decided not to use a website because they asked for your real name	23	55	12	7	3
i. Deleted or edited something you posted in the past	29	46	14	8	3
j. Asked someone to remove something that was posted about you online	11	63	15	7	3
k. Used a public computer to browse anonymously	12	68	12	6	3
l. Used a search engine that doesn't keep track of your search history	15	52	11	19	3
m. Refused to provide information about yourself that wasn't relevant to the transaction	57	23	9	8	3

[SP]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

Q17b (Q12) Do you think that people should have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously for certain kinds of online activities?

55	Yes
16	No
27	Don't know
2	Refused

[IF Q17B =1]

AMONG THOSE WHO THINK PEOPLE SHOULD BE ABLE TO USE INTERNET ANONYMOUSLY [N=248]

Q17c (Q13) Could you please tell us briefly why you think that people should have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously?

OPEN-END RESPONSES NOT SHOWN

[IF Q17B=2]

AMONG THOSE WHO THINK PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO USE INTERNET ANONYMOUSLY [N=439]

Q17d (Q14) Could you please tell us briefly why you think that people should not have the ability to use the internet completely anonymously?

OPEN-END RESPONSES NOT SHOWN

[SHOW QF1 BEFORE THE DISPLAY]

[CUSTOM QF1 WORDING]

AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=498]

(Q16) Thinking about the topics related to privacy that were covered in this survey, do you have any additional comments you would like to share?

OPEN-END RESPONSES NOT SHOWN

The excerpt below includes the questions from Survey #4 that are included in this report.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S INTERNET PROJECT/GFK PRIVACY PANEL
SURVEY #4 TOPLINE
JANUARY 27-FEBRUARY 16, 2015
TOTAL N=461 ADULTS, AGES 18 AND OLDER
SURVEY CONDUCTED ONLINE**

MARGIN OF ERROR FOR ALL ADULTS IS +/- 5.8 PERCENTAGE POINTS

**[SP; RANDOMIZE Q1A-Q1I AND SHOW 3 PER PAGE]
AMONG ALL ADULTS [N=461]**

Q1 Privacy means different things to different people today. In thinking about all of your daily interactions—both online and offline—please tell me how important each of the following are to you . . .

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important	Don't know / doesn't apply	Refused	NET Important	NET Not important
a. Being in control of who can get information about you	74	19	3	1	1	2	93	4
b. Not having someone watch you or listen to you without your permission	67	20	8	1	2	2	88	9
c. Controlling what information is collected about you	65	25	5	1	1	3	90	6

d.	Having individuals in social and work situations not ask you things that are highly personal	44	36	13	2	4	2	79	15
e.	Being able to have times when you are completely alone, away from anyone else	55	30	9	2	2	3	85	10
f.	Being able to share confidential matters with someone you trust	72	21	2	1	1	3	93	4
g.	Not being monitored at work	28	28	22	6	15	2	56	27
h.	Not being disturbed at home	56	29	9	2	2	2	85	11
i.	Being able to go around in public without always being identified	34	29	25	6	4	2	63	31