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Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information

Majorities think their personal data is less secure now, that data collection poses more risks than benefits, and believe it is not possible to go through daily life without being tracked

BY *Brooke Auxier, Lee Rainie, Monica Anderson, Andrew Perrin, Madhu Kumar and Erica Turner*

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Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information

Majorities think their personal data is less secure now, that data collection poses more risks than benefits, and believe it is not possible to go through daily life without being tracked

A majority of Americans believe their online and offline activities are being tracked and monitored by companies and the government with some regularity. It is such a common condition of modern life that roughly six-in-ten U.S. adults say they do not think it is possible to go through daily life *without having data collected about them* by companies or the government.

Data-driven products and services are often marketed with the potential to save users time and money or even lead to better health and well-being. Still, large shares of U.S. adults are not convinced they benefit from this system of widespread data gathering. Some 81% of the public say that the potential risks they face because of data collection by companies outweigh the benefits, and 66% say the same about government data collection.

At the same time, a majority of Americans report being concerned about the way their data is being used by companies (79%) or the government (64%). Most also feel they have little or no control over how these entities use their personal information, according to a new survey of U.S. adults by Pew Research Center that explores how Americans feel about the state of privacy in the nation.

Roughly six-in-ten Americans believe it is not possible to go through daily life without having their data collected

% of U.S. adults who say …

COMPANIES

It is not possible to go through daily life without companies collecting data about them — **62%** 38% It is possible
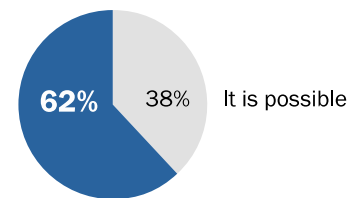
THE GOVERNMENT

It is not possible to go through daily life without the government collecting data about them — **63%** 36% It is possible — 1% No answer
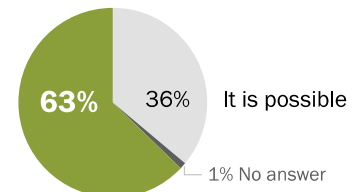
Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer a question about whether they think it is possible to go about daily life without having personal information collected from them by "companies" or "the government."
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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What personal data does government collect and access?

Several of the queries of this survey focus on public perceptions of what "the government" does related to personal data. For instance, respondents were asked: "As far as you know, how much of what you do online or on your cellphone is being tracked by the government?" Related questions focused on people's attitudes about the data the government collects about them.

It is difficult to determine how much personal data the government collects and otherwise can access through private company records. Administrative government agencies like the IRS, Census Bureau, Postal Service and social welfare departments gather various personal details about people. That includes their tax- and employment-related information, physical attributes if they get a government ID, financial circumstances if they get benefits from social, housing and employment training programs, health information if they participate in government health-insurance programs, addresses, household composition, property ownership if they own houses or cars and educational details if they get student loan or grant, for example. This list is not exhaustive.

Beyond that, national security organizations like the National Security Agency have authority to monitor phone traffic and people's movements. With subpoenas or court orders and warrants, law enforcement organizations can typically access and monitor people's phone and traffic records, health records (including genetic records), online and app browsing, search queries, texts and emails. Users' social media activities and their tech-based social networks are at least at times examined in investigations, according to "transparency reports" released by the companies.

It is important to note, that there are often limitations on the ways government agencies can share what they know with others, including those in other parts of the government.

Americans' concerns about digital privacy extend to those who collect, store and use their personal information. Additionally, majorities of the public are not confident that corporations are good stewards of the data they collect. For example, 79% of Americans say they are not too or not at all confident that companies will admit mistakes and take responsibility if they misuse or compromise personal information, and 69% report having this same lack of confidence that firms will use their personal information in ways they will be comfortable with.

There is also a collective sentiment that data security is more elusive today than in the past. When asked whether they think their personal data is less secure, more secure or about the same as it was five years ago, 70% of adults say their personal data is less secure. Only 6% report that they believe their data is more secure today than it was in the past.

CORRECTION: In the chart, "Majority of Americans feel as if they have little control over data collected about them by companies and the government," the explanatory text for the findings related to "Risks outweigh benefits" was transcribed incorrectly. The correct text is, "Potential risks of _____ (companies or the government) collecting data about them outweigh the benefits."

Majority of Americans feel as if they have little control over data collected about them by companies and the government

% of U.S. adults who say …

		Companies	The government
Lack of control	They have very little/no control over the data __ collect(s)	**81%**	**84%**
Risks outweigh benefits	Potential risks of __ collecting data about them outweigh the benefits	**81%**	**66%**
Concern over data use	They are very/somewhat concerned about how __ use(s) the data collected	**79%**	**64%**
Lack of understanding about data use	They have very little/no understanding about what __ do/does with the data collected	**59%**	**78%**

Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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But even as the public expresses worry about various aspects of their digital privacy, many Americans acknowledge that they are not always diligent about paying attention to the privacy policies and terms of service they regularly encounter. Fully 97% of Americans say they are ever asked to approve privacy policies, yet only about one-in-five adults overall say they always (9%) or often (13%) read a company's privacy policy before agreeing to it. Some 38% of all adults maintain they sometimes read such policies, but 36% say they never read a company's privacy policy before agreeing to it.

About eight-in-ten Americans say they are asked to agree to a privacy policy at least monthly, including one-quarter who say this happens almost every day

% of U.S. adults who say they are asked to agree to the terms and conditions of a company's privacy policy …

Almost daily	About once a week	About once a month	Less frequently	Never
25	32	24	15	3

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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Moreover, the practice of reading privacy policies doesn't necessarily guarantee thoroughness. Among adults who say they ever read privacy policies before agreeing to their terms and conditions, only a minority – 22% – say they read them all the way through before agreeing to their terms and conditions.

There is also a general lack of understanding about data privacy laws among the general public: 63% of Americans say they understand very little or nothing at all about the laws and regulations that are currently in place to protect their data privacy.

These findings point to an overall wariness about the state of privacy these days, but there are some circumstances where the public sees value in this type of data-driven environment. For example, pluralities of adults say it is acceptable for poorly performing schools to share data about their students with a nonprofit group seeking to help improve educational outcomes or for the

government to collect data about all Americans to assess who might be a potential terrorist.

These findings come from a survey of 4,272 U.S. adults conducted on Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel between June 3-17, 2019.

Here are some of the key takeaways:

Prevalence of tracking: 72% of Americans report feeling that all, almost all or most of what they do online or while using their cellphone is being tracked by advertisers, technology firms or other companies. Another 19% think some of what they do is being tracked. Close to half (47%) of adults believe at least most of their online activities are being tracked by the government.
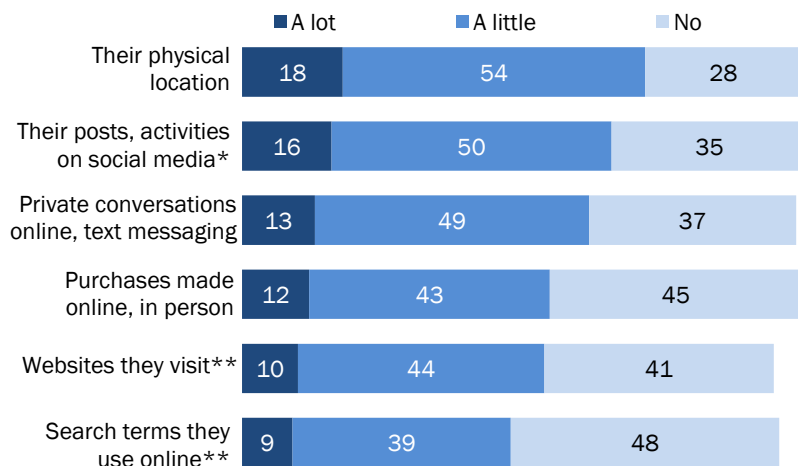
When it comes to their offline behavior such as where they are or whom they talk with, 69% believe companies are tracking at least some of that activity. And 56% of Americans think the government is tracking at least some of their activities, like who they are talking to or their whereabouts.

Not feeling in control of personal data: Roughly eight-in-ten or more U.S. adults say they have very little or no control over the data that government (84%) or companies (81%) collect about them.

About half of Americans feel as if they have no control over who can access their online searches

% who say they feel ___ control over who can access the following types of their information

■ A lot   ■ A little   ■ No

	A lot	A little	No
Their physical location	18	54	28
Their posts, activities on social media*	16	50	35
Private conversations online, text messaging	13	49	37
Purchases made online, in person	12	43	45
Websites they visit**	10	44	41
Search terms they use online**	9	39	48

* Based on social media users.
** Based on internet users.
Note: Respondents were randomly assigned questions about how much control they feel they have over who can access different types of their information. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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When it comes to different kinds of information, the picture varies by the specific type. While relatively few Americans feel as if they have a lot of control over who has access to everything from

their physical location to their social media posts, there are experiences in which some Americans especially feel a lack of control. Roughly half of Americans (48%) say they feel as if they have no control over who can access the search terms they use, and 41% say the same about the websites they visit. By comparison, a smaller share of the public feels as if they do not have control over who can access their physical location.

Risks vs. rewards of data collection and profiling: 81% of Americans think the potential risks of data collection by companies about them outweigh the benefits, and 66% say the same about government data collection about them. Relatedly, 72% of adults say they personally benefit very little or none from company data collection about them, and 76% say this about the benefits they might get from government data collection.

One aim of the data collection done by companies is for the purpose of profiling customers and potentially targeting the sale of goods and services to them based on their traits and habits. This survey finds that 77% of Americans say they have heard or read at least a bit about how companies and other organizations use personal data to offer targeted advertisements or special deals, or to assess how risky people might be as customers. About 64% of all adults say they have seen ads or solicitations based on their personal data. And 61% of those who have seen ads based on their personal data say the ads accurately reflect their interests and characteristics at least somewhat well. (That amounts to 39% of all adults.)
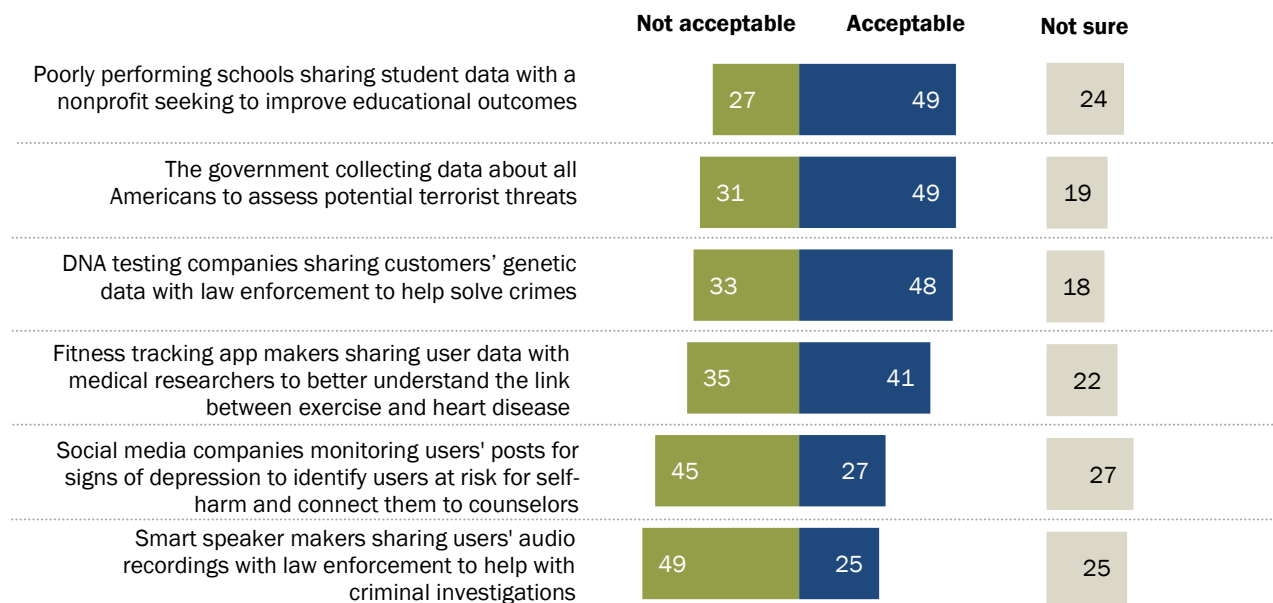
Data collection and sharing for specific purposes: Despite their broad concerns about data collection and use by companies and the government, pluralities of U.S. adults say it is acceptable for data to be used in some ways. For instance, by a 49%-27% margin, more Americans find it acceptable than unacceptable for poorly performing schools to share data about their students with a nonprofit group seeking to help improve educational outcomes. Similarly, 49% say it is acceptable for government to collect data about all Americans to assess who might be a potential terrorist threat. That compares with 31% who feel it is unacceptable to collect data from all Americans for that purpose.

On the other hand, more find it unacceptable than acceptable for social media companies to monitor users' posts for signs of depression so they can identify people who are at risk of self-harm and connect them to counseling services (45% vs. 27%). The same pattern arises when it comes to companies that make smart speakers sharing audio recordings of customers with law enforcement to help with criminal investigations: 49% say this it is unacceptable, while 25% find it acceptable.

The public is more evenly divided when it comes to the acceptability of fitness tracking app makers sharing user data with medical researchers to better understand the link between exercise and heart disease.

Americans are more accepting of using personal data to help improve schools or assess potential terrorist threats, but are more wary of some other data uses

% of U.S. adults who say the following uses of data or personal information are ...

	Not acceptable	Acceptable	Not sure
Poorly performing schools sharing student data with a nonprofit seeking to improve educational outcomes	27	49	24
The government collecting data about all Americans to assess potential terrorist threats	31	49	19
DNA testing companies sharing customers' genetic data with law enforcement to help solve crimes	33	48	18
Fitness tracking app makers sharing user data with medical researchers to better understand the link between exercise and heart disease	35	41	22
Social media companies monitoring users' posts for signs of depression to identify users at risk for self-harm and connect them to counselors	45	27	27
Smart speaker makers sharing users' audio recordings with law enforcement to help with criminal investigations	49	25	25

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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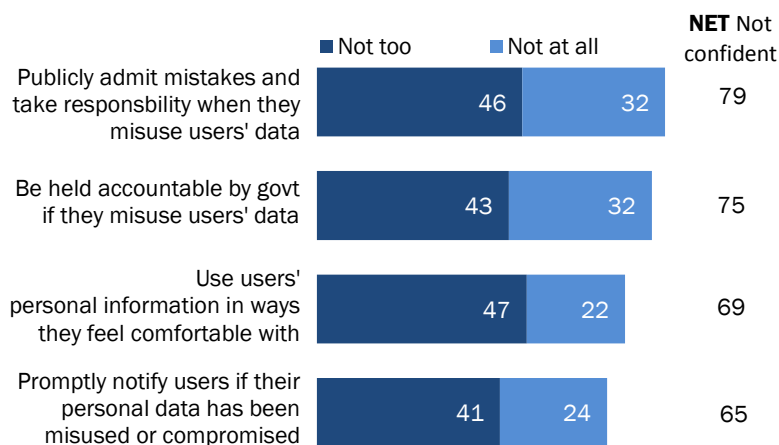
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Concern about how data is used: 79% of adults assert they are very or somewhat concerned about how companies are using the data they collect about them, while 64% say they have the same level of concern about government data collection.

Separately, Americans have mixed views about which groups concern them in getting access to their data: About four-in-ten are concerned a lot about the personal information social media sites (40%) or advertisers might know about them (39%). But only 9% of Americans worry a lot about the information family and friends might know and 19% have similar concerns about what their employers might know.

Still, the majority of Americans are not confident about the way companies will behave when it comes to using and protecting their personal data. Roughly seven-in-ten or more say they are not too or not at all confident that companies will admit mistakes and take responsibility when they misuse or compromise data (79%), will be held accountable by government if they misuse data (75%), or will use customers' data in ways that people would feel comfortable with (69%).

Most Americans are not confident that companies would publicly admit to misusing consumers' data

% of U.S. adults who say they are ___ confident that companies will ...

Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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When it comes to data use for specific purposes, Americans have varying views depending on the purpose for the data use. For example, 57% of adults say they are very or somewhat comfortable with companies using their personal data to help companies improve their fraud prevention systems. But they are evenly split when the issue is their comfort with companies using their personal data in developing new products. About a third (36%) of adults say they are at least somewhat comfortable with companies sharing their personal data with outside groups doing research that might help them improve society, but a larger share (64%) say they would be uncomfortable with this practice.

Lack of understanding: 78% of U.S. adults say they understand very little or nothing about what the government does with the data it collects, and 59% say the same about the data companies collect. Only 6% of adults say they understand a great deal what companies do with the data collected, and a similar share (4%) say they know a great deal about what the government does with the data.

Some Americans also admit they struggle to understand the privacy laws that govern use of their data. Roughly six-in-ten Americans (63%) say they have very little or no understanding of the laws and regulations that are currently in place to protect their privacy. Only 3% of adults say they understand these laws a great deal, and 33% say they have some understanding.

How Americans handle privacy policies: Core parts of the current system of data collection and privacy protection are built on the idea that consumers are given notice about how firms collect and use data and ask for their consent to having their data used that way. Fully 97% say they are ever asked to approve privacy policies, yet only one-in-five of adults overall say they always (9%) or often (13%) read these policies. Some 38% of U.S. adults maintain they sometimes read such policies, and 36% say they never read a company's privacy policy before agreeing to it. In all, about four-in-ten adults say they understand privacy policies great deal (8%) or some (33%).

In addition to the concerns cited above about how companies handle personal data, a majority of Americans (57%) say they are not too confident (40%) or not at all confident (17%) companies follow what their privacy policies say they will do with users' personal data.

Several other key findings in the survey:

- Roughly three-in-ten Americans (28%) say they have suffered at least one of three kinds of major identity theft problems in the previous 12 months at the time of the survey: 21% have had someone put fraudulent charges on their credit or debit card; 8% have had someone take over their social media or email accounts without their permission; and 6% have had someone try to open a credit line or get a loan using their name.
- A majority of U.S. adults (57%) say they follow privacy news very closely (11%) or somewhat closely (46%).

There are some differences by age on some privacy issues: People in different age groups have varying views on some key privacy and surveillance issues. Americans ages 65 and older are less likely than those ages 18 to 29 to feel they have control over who can access things like their physical location, purchases made both online and offline and their private conversations. At the same time, older Americans are less likely to think they benefit from data collection: Just 17% of

those 65 and older believing they benefit from the data government collects about them, and only 19% think the same about data collected by companies.

There are also age differences on the issue of how data gets used once obtained. Americans ages 65 and older are more likely than younger adults to say it is acceptable for law enforcement to use customers' genetic data to help solve crimes, approve data collection to assess terrorist threats, and have smart speaker makers share users' audio recordings in investigations. By contrast, young adults ages 18 to 29 are more likely than older adults to find acceptable the idea that social media companies monitor users for signs of depression and to allow fitness tracking user data to be shared with medical researchers.

In addition, two-thirds of adults ages 65 and older say they follow privacy news at least somewhat closely, compared with just 45% of those 18 to 29 who do the same.

There are differences by race and ethnicity on some privacy issues: Black Americans are more likely than white Americans to say they believe the government is tracking all or most of what they do online or on their cellphone (60% vs. 43%). Similar gaps are present in views about offline activities: 47% of black adults think all or most of their offline activities are tracked by the government, compared with just 19% of white adults.

In addition, black and Hispanic adults are more likely than white adults to say they are concerned to some degree about what law enforcement officials, employers and family and friends know about them.

When it comes to identity-theft issues, black adults (20%) are roughly three times as likely as their Hispanic (7%) or white counterparts (6%) to say someone has taken over their social media or email account in the past year. Black Americans are also more likely than white and Hispanic adults to say someone attempted to open a line of credit or applied for a loan using their name in the past 12 months.

At the same time, white adults also report feeling less control across several information types when compared with black and Hispanic adults. For example, 50% of white Americans feel they have control over who can access information about their on- and offline purchases, compared with 69% of black adults and 66% of Hispanic adults.

1. How Americans think about privacy and the vulnerability of their personal data

Americans have had a variety of ways of thinking about privacy over the centuries. Though the word "privacy" is not used in the Constitution, the idea that citizens are "to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures" is enshrined in the Fourth Amendment. Before he was a Supreme Court justice, Louis Brandeis proclaimed in a 1890 Harvard Law Review article that Americans enjoyed a "right to privacy," which he argued was the "right to be let alone." In a landmark birth control case in 1965, the Supreme Court embraced the Brandeis view, ruling that the right to privacy can be inferred from the First, Third, Fourth, Fifth and 14th Amendments. More modern concepts have focused on Americans' views that they ought to be able to control their identity and their personal information.

This new survey asked Americans for their own definitions of the words "privacy" and "digital privacy." Their written answers were coded into broad categories, and they reveal that across both questions, participants most often mention their concerns about the role other people and organizations can play in learning about them, their desire to shield their personal activities and possessions, and their interest in controlling who is given access to their personal information. By comparison, fewer participants mention third parties and the selling of their information, tracking or monitoring, crime and other threats of illicit activity, or interference from the government.

In their words: What does privacy mean to you?

% of U.S. adults who mention the following themes when asked "what does privacy mean to you?"

Other people and organizations not being able to access their possessions or private life	28%
Control over information, possessions, self; deciding what's accessible to others	26
Themselves, their personal information and possessions, the desire to keep things to themselves	15
Having their information sold, third party involvement	4
General security references, i.e. "secure," "guarded," "protective"	3
Tracking, surveillance, monitoring, spying	2
Privacy is a myth/means nothing/doesn't exist	2
Crime, hacking, fraud, any threats of illicit activity	2
Threat from the government regarding themselves, possessions or private life	2
Personal information is only accessible with the person's knowledge or consent	1
Spam, unwanted calls or solicitations	<1
Other	4
Did not answer	17

Note: Verbatim responses have been coded into categories. Results may add to more than 100% because each response could have up to three codes.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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When asked what privacy means to them, 28% of respondents mention other people or organizations. These quotes are illustrative:

> *"Keeping my personal information out of the hands of the big data companies." – Man, 34*

> *"My personal information is secure. No one knows my credit card numbers, address info, where I have been, my banking info, my health info, etc. People don't know anything about me I do not intend to share." – Woman, 51*

Around one-quarter (26%) mention control or their ability to decide what aspects of their lives are accessible to others:

> *"I have control of all my personal and financial information, no one else can access without my permission." – Man, 50*

> *"Personal privacy means everything about me personally is private unless I personally opt-in to allow it to be public. Opt-in means not by default or convoluted user agreement that circumvents the purpose of privacy laws." – Man, 57*

Another 15% of respondents focus on themselves and their personal possessions, without referring to outside organizations or people.

> *"Privacy is being able to feel like your personal information is safe." – Woman, 18*

> *"That I am in complete control of my personal information." – Woman, 29*

When asked about "digital privacy," respondents again focused on similar topics as when they were asked about "privacy:" control, the role of other people and organizations, and themselves and their personal possessions. Some 17% mention only themselves and the protection of their own personal information, making no reference to other people or organizations:

> *"Personal information such as [Social Security numbers], banking information, medical records remain private and secure." – Man, 59*

> *"I should be able to surf the web and do it anonymously." – Woman, 55*

And 14% of respondents mention control and the desire to decide which aspects of their lives are accessible to others:

> *"Digital privacy would mean that you could use digital technology without the fear of your information or messages being vulnerable to someone gaining access to it that was not your intended receiver." – Woman, 72*

> *"Having control and ownership of my online data. Have control and the ability to delete information I have not explicitly given the right to use or disseminate." – Man, 60*

Another 13% mention the role other people or organizations play in their digital privacy:

> *"Security and lack of ability to easily find information put into the digital world like on the internet (passwords, ability to find social media posts), via phone/tablet, etc." – Woman, 34*

> *"Activity/data about me and from my interactions with websites and digital services being unavailable to other people." – Man, 22*

In their words: What does digital privacy mean to you?

% of U.S. adults who mention the following themes when asked "What does digital privacy mean to you?"

Themselves, their personal information and possessions, the desire to keep things to themselves	17%
Control over information, possessions, self; deciding what aspects of their lives are accessible to others	14
Other people and organizations not being able to access their possessions or private life	13
Privacy is a myth/means nothing/doesn't exist	9
Having their information sold, third party involvement	6
Crime, hacking, fraud, any threats of illicit activity	5
General security references, i.e. "secure," "guarded," "protective"	4
Tracking, surveillance, monitoring, spying	3
Company measures, how websites/companies should secure data, terms of service, privacy settings	2
Personal information is only accessible with the person's knowledge or consent	2
Threat from the government regarding themselves, possessions or private life	1
Other	4
Did not answer	31

Note: Verbatim responses have been coded into categories. Results may add to more than 100% because each response could have up to three codes.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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A smaller share of respondents (9%) believe that "digital privacy" is a myth and doesn't actually exist:

> *"Digital privacy does not exist, in my opinion. Once one puts something on a computer that is connected to the internet, privacy is compromised and no longer 'private.'" – Woman, 75*

"Nothing…. No matter what type of security you think you have, any hacker that wants in will get in. Just a matter of time in my opinion." – Man, 49

Many of respondents' written answers about their definitions of "digital privacy" repeated thoughts that were in answers about "privacy." At the same time, words like "social media," "online," "internet" and "data" were more common when respondents described "digital privacy."

Seven-in-ten Americans say they feel as if their data is less secure today than it was five years ago

Large data breaches have become a regular feature of modern life – affecting companies like Capital One, Facebook, Equifax and Uber. To that end, Pew Research Center surveyed Americans about how they feel about their own personal data. This survey finds that seven-in-ten Americans feel their personal information is less secure than it was five years ago, only 6% say their

Seven-in-ten Americans say their personal information is less secure than it was five years ago

% of U.S. adults who say they feel as if their personal information is ___ than it was five years ago

More secure	About the same	Less secure
6	24	70

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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information is more secure, and about a quarter (24%) feel the situation has not changed.

Majorities across demographic groups believe their personal data is less secure than it was in the past, but some groups are more likely to feel this than others. Those with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to believe things are worse. Fully 78% of those with a bachelor's or advanced degree say their personal information is less secure, compared with 64% of those with a high school education or less. Those over age 50 are also more likely to think their data is less secure, compared with those ages 18 to 49.

Majorities of Americans think their personal information is less secure today than in the past

*% of U.S. adults who say they feel as if their personal information is **less secure** than it was five years ago*

Group	%
U.S. adults	70
Men	70
Women	70
White	73
Black	61
Hispanic	65
18-49	67
50+	73
HS or less	64
Some college	69
College+	78
Less than $30,000	62
$30,000-$74,999	70
$75,000+	75

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
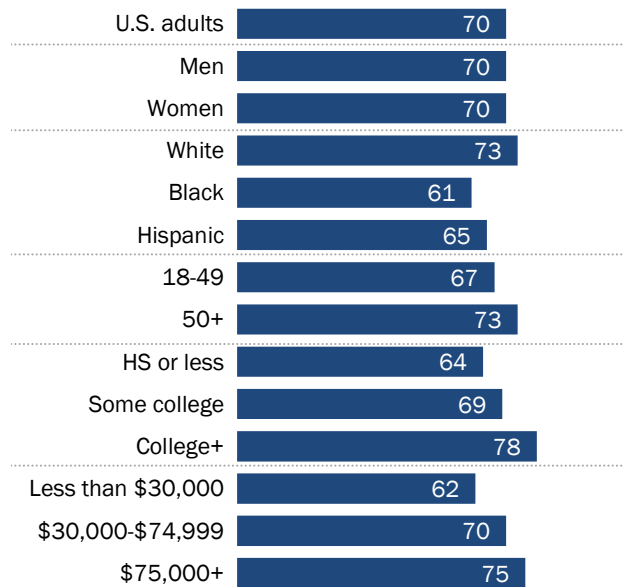Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"
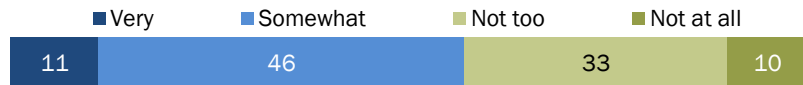
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More than half of the public say they follow privacy news at least somewhat closely

In the midst of this concern, how much attention are Americans paying to privacy issues? Some 57% of Americans say they follow news about privacy very (11%) or somewhat (46%) closely, while 43% say they don't follow it too closely, or at all.

Two-thirds of adults ages 65 and older say they follow privacy news at least somewhat closely, compared with just 45% of those 18 to 29 who do the same. Those living in households earning $75,000 or more a year are also more likely to follow privacy news at the same rate – with 60% saying they do so – compared with 53% of those with a household income less than $30,000 saying the same.

About six-in-ten Americans say they follow privacy news at least somewhat closely

% of U.S. adults who say they follow privacy news ___ closely

■ Very ■ Somewhat ■ Not too ■ Not at all

11	46	33	10

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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Older adults are more likely than younger adults to say they pay attention to privacy-related news

% of U.S. adults who say they follow privacy news very or somewhat closely

U.S. adults	57
Men	60
Women	54
White	58
Black	55
Hispanic	53
18-29	45
30-49	53
50-64	63
65+	66
HS or less	53
Some college	57
College+	60
Less than $30,000	53
$30,000-$74,000	56
$75,000+	60

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
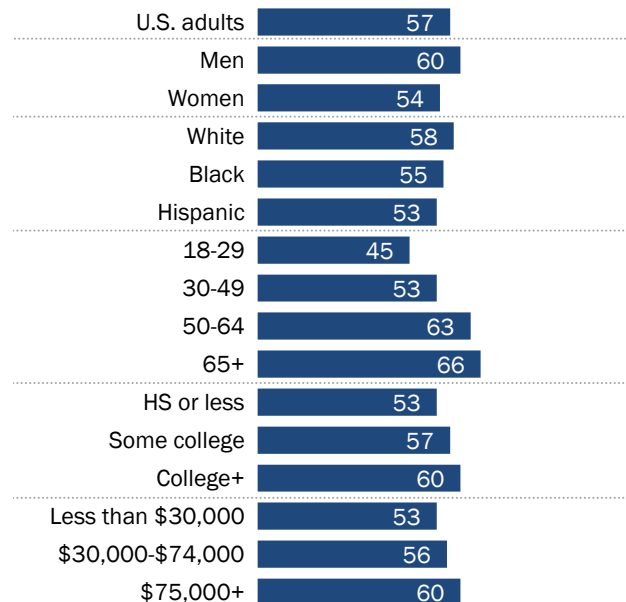Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"
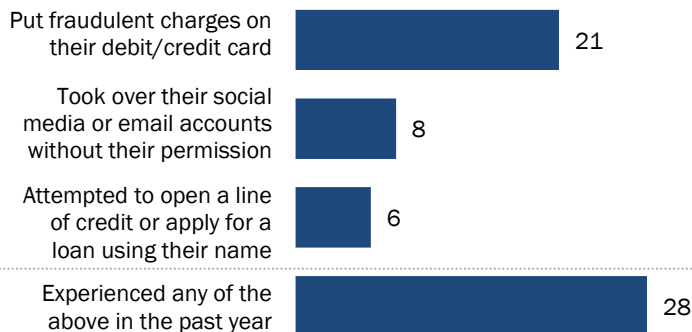
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There is little difference, however, between those who follow news about privacy issues and those who do not when it comes to expressing concern about the way things are trending. Some 74% of those who follow privacy news at least somewhat closely believe their data is less secure than it was five years ago and 64% of those who do not follow privacy news too closely also feel the same way.

Roughly three-in-ten Americans have experienced some kind of data breach in past 12 months

When asked about three different types of data breaches or identity theft, 28% of Americans say they have experienced at least one of them in the past 12 months. About one-in-five adults (21%) say someone has put fraudulent charges on their debit or credit card in the past year, while smaller shares say someone has taken over their social media or email account without their permission, or attempted to open a line of credit or apply for a loan using their name.

21% of Americans have had fraudulent charges on their debit or credit cards in the past year

% of U.S. adults who say that someone has done the following to them in the last 12 months

Put fraudulent charges on their debit/credit card	21
Took over their social media or email accounts without their permission	8
Attempted to open a line of credit or apply for a loan using their name	6
Experienced any of the above in the past year	28

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
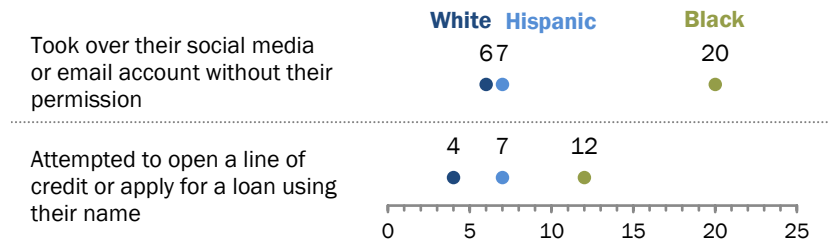Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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Black adults (20%) are roughly three times as likely as their Hispanic (7%) or white counterparts (6%) to say someone has taken over their social media or email account in the past year. Black Americans are also more likely to say someone attempted to open a line of credit or applied for a loan using their name in the past 12 months, compared with smaller shares of white and Hispanic adults who say the same.

Black Americans are more likely to experience social media, email breaches

% of U.S. adults, by race and ethnicity, who say that someone has done the following to them in the last 12 months

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Little Control Over Their Personal Information"

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2. Americans concerned, feel lack of control over personal data collected by both companies and the government

Americans [leave traces](#) of their activities, preferences and personal information in many places, both online and off. And this personal data can be fodder for both companies and the government alike. This chapter explores the public's own experiences and attitudes about their personal data and finds that large shares are worried about the amount of information that entities, like social media companies or advertisers, have about them. At the same time, Americans feel as if they have little to no control over what information is being gathered and are not sold on the benefits that this type of data collection brings to their life.

Most Americans are concerned about how companies are using their personal data

Majority of Americans are concerned about how their personal data is being used by companies and the government

% of U.S adults who say they are ___ concerned about how data collected about them is used by …

	Very	Somewhat	Not too	Not at all
Companies	36	43	17	4
Government	25	39	26	10
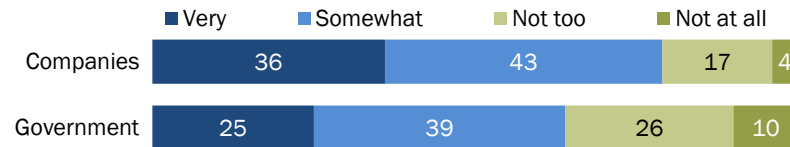
Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer a question about how concerned they are about how data collected about them is used by "companies" or "the government." Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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More than eight-in-ten Americans are concerned about the amount of personal information social media sites and advertisers know about them

% who say they are concerned a lot or a little about how much personal information ___ might know about them

	A lot	A little	NET
The social media sites they use*	40	46	85
Advertisers	39	44	84
The companies they buy things from	30	50	80
Law enforcement	26	36	61
Their employer**	19	39	58
Their friends and family	9	34	43

* Based on social media users.
** Based on those who are employed.
Note: Respondents were randomly assigned questions about how concerned they are about how much information different groups have about them. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 3-17, 2019.
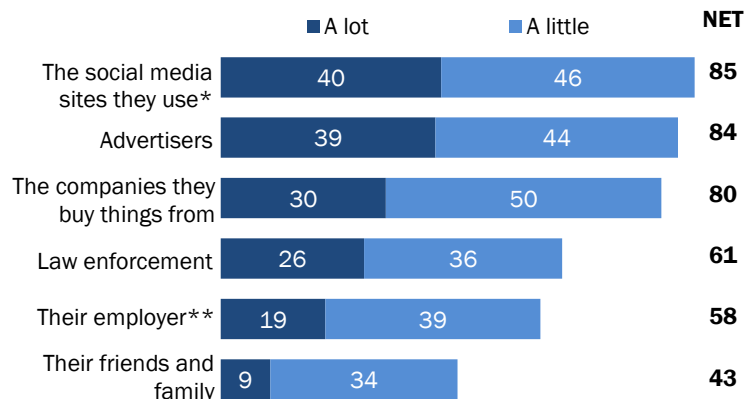"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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There is widespread concern among the general public about how companies – and the government – are using their personal data. Fully 79% of adults say they are at least somewhat concerned about how companies are using the data it collects about them, including 36% who say they are very concerned about this issue. At the same time, 64% of Americans report they feel very or somewhat concerned about how the government is using the data it collects about them.

But even as the public has general concerns about data collection, Americans are more wary of certain groups having access to their data than others. At least eight-in-ten adults say they are at least a little concerned about how much personal information social media sites (85%), advertisers (84%), or companies they buy things from (80%) might know about them. The level of concern is felt most acutely when asked about social media sites or advertisers: About four-in-ten Americans say they have *a lot* of concern about how much personal information these respective groups have about them.

Smaller shares – though still a majority – of the public say they are concerned about how much information law enforcement (61%) or their employer (58%) know about them. And 43% of Americans feel this way about their friends and family.

There are some worries that are prevalent among black Americans. For example, black adults are far more likely than their white counterparts to say they are at least a little concerned about the information that their friends or family (61% vs. 35%), employer (71% vs. 51%) or law enforcement (73% vs. 56%) know about them.

Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely to be concerned about what law enforcement may know about them

% of U.S. adults who say they are concerned a lot or a little about how much information the following groups may know about them
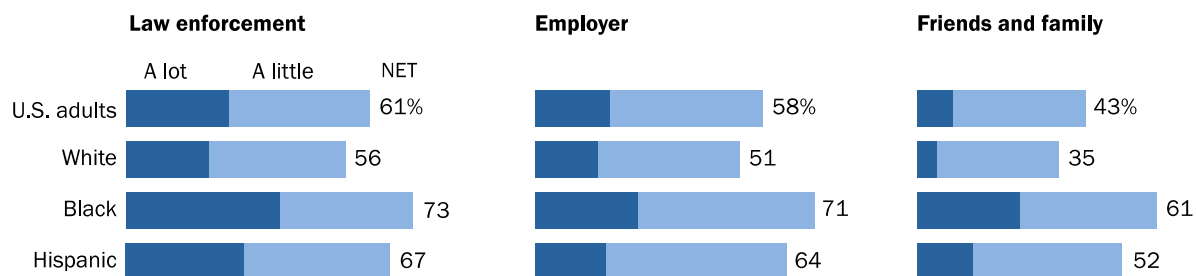
Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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Relatively few Americans think they have a lot of control over their personal data

The broader conversation of data collection often centers around an individual's ability to safeguard and manage who gets access to their personal information, as well as how certain groups use it. This survey – along with previous Center surveys – finds that relatively few Americans feel as if they are in control of the information that is gathered about them. Only 19% of adults say they have a great deal or some control over the data that companies collect about them. And 16% express similar sentiments

Majority of Americans say they have little to no control over the data that companies or the government collect about them

% of U.S. adults who say they have ___ control over data collected about them by …

Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer a question about how much control they feel they have over data collected about them by "companies" or "the government." Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

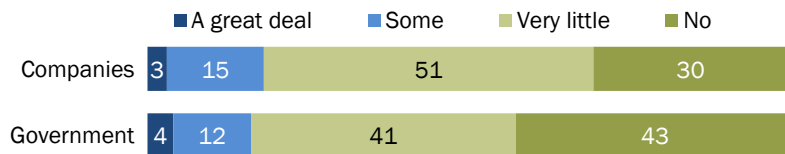**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

when asked about the personal data that the government gathers. Put another way, eight-in-ten Americans say they have very little or no control over the data collected about them by the government (84%) or by companies (81%).

Only small shares of Americans feel as if they have a lot of control over who can access their personal information or data. Indeed, only about one-in-five or fewer believe they have a lot of control over any of the six forms of personal information measured in this survey.

At the same time, there are some types of information over which notable shares feel as if they have no control. For example, roughly half of Americans (48%) say they feel they have no control over who can access their online search terms.

About half of Americans feel as if they have no control over who can access their online search terms

% who say they feel ___ control over who can access the following types of their information

	■ A lot	■ A little	■ No
Their physical location	18	54	28
Their posts, activities on social media*	16	50	35
Private conversations online, text messaging	13	49	37
Purchases made online, in person	12	43	45
Websites they visit**	10	44	41
Search terms they use online**	9	39	48

* Based on social media users.
** Based on internet users.
Note: Respondents were randomly assigned questions about how much control they feel they have over who can access different types of their information. Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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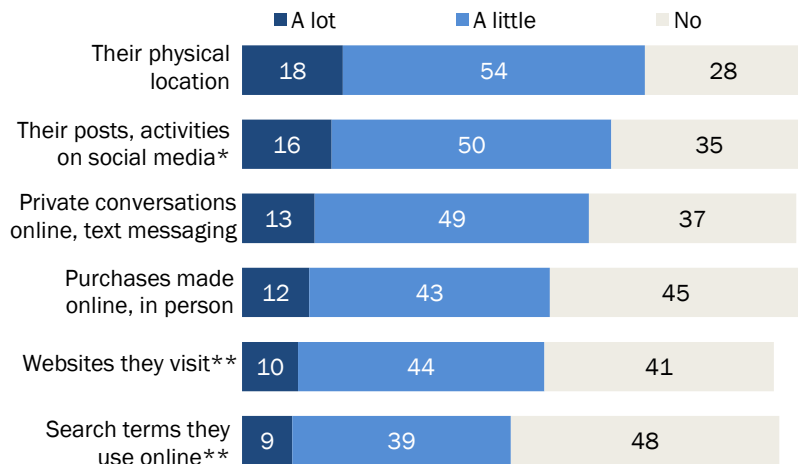
Older Americans feel less control across all six information types when compared with younger groups. When considering how much control they have over who has access to the websites they visit, 37% of Americans ages 65 and older say they have a lot or a little control, compared with 67% of those 18 to 29. Adults 65 and older are also less likely than adults under 30 to say they have control over who knows their physical location or has access to their private online or text conversations, for example.

White adults also report feeling less control across all information types when compared with black and Hispanic adults. For example, only 50% of white Americans feel control over who can access information about their on- and offline purchases, compared with 69% of black adults and 66% of Hispanic adults who agree.

Older and younger adults differ on how much control they have over who can access their personal information

% who say they have a lot or a little control over who can access the following types of information

	65+	50-64	30-49	18-29	Youngest to oldest DIFF
Websites they visit**	37			67	30
Their physical location		60		83	23
Search terms they use online**	37			59	22
Private conversations online, text messaging		52		73	21
Purchases made online, in person	44			64	20
Their posts, activities on social media*		56		74	18

0   20   40   60   80   100

* Based on social media users.
** Based on internet users.
Note: Respondents were randomly assigned questions about how much control they feel they have over who can access different types of their information. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"
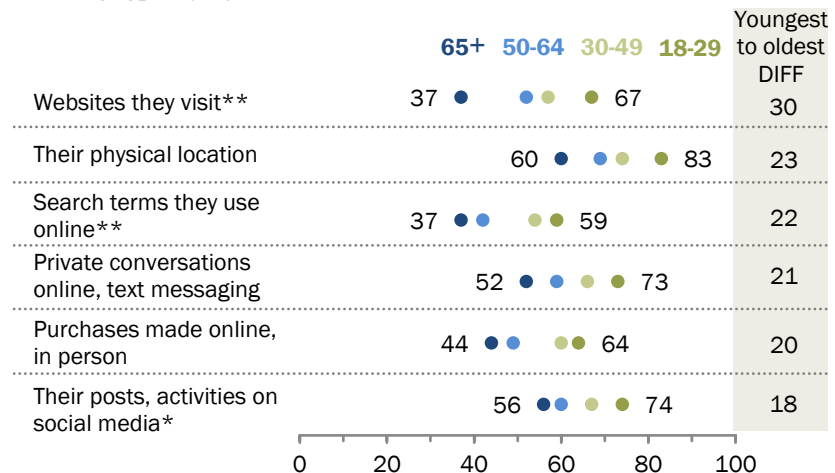
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Roughly three-quarters of adults think companies are tracking all or most of what they do online or on their cellphone

A majority of Americans (72%) believe all or most of what they do online or on their cellphone is being tracked by companies, but far fewer (31%) think all or most of their offline activities, like where they go or who they talk to, are being tracked by the same entities. Americans are less likely to think the government is tracking them, both online and off: 47% believe all or most of their online and cellphone activities are being tracked, but only around a quarter (24%) of adults think the same of their offline activities.

Roughly seven-in-ten Americans think all or most of what they do online is tracked by companies; about half say the same about government

% of U.S. adults who say ___ of what they do online or on their cellphone, or offline (like where they go and who they talk to), is being tracked by …

Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer questions about how much of what they do online and on their cellphone, and offline (like where they go and who they talk to) is being tracked by "companies" or "the government." Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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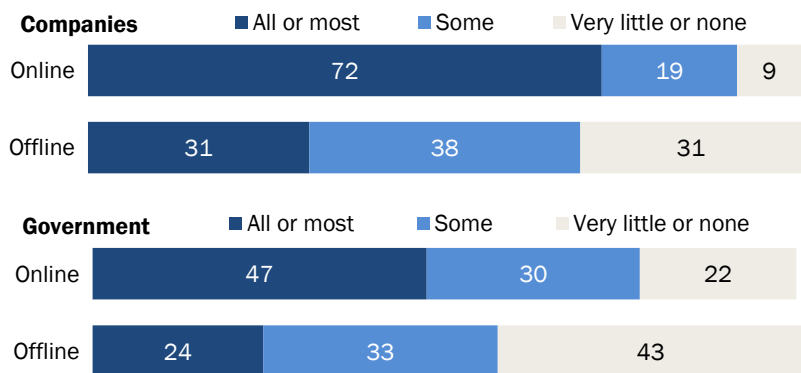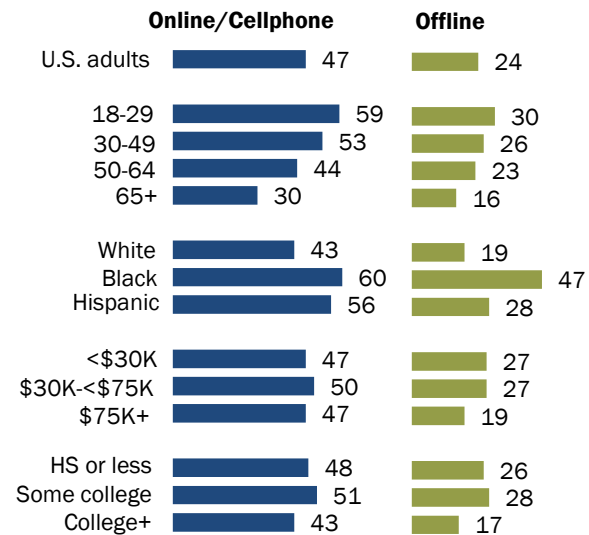
When it comes to Americans' beliefs about whether the government is tracking them, there are differences by race and ethnicity, as well as by age.

For example, black Americans are more likely than white Americans to say they believe the government is tracking all or most of what they do online or on their cellphone (60% vs. 43%). Similar gaps are present in views about offline activities: 47% of black adults think their offline activities are tracked by the government, compared with 19% of white adults.

Younger adults are also more likely than older adults to believe they are being tracked, online and off, by the government. Around 60% of those 18 to 29 believe their online and cellphone activities are being tracked, compared with a smaller share (30%) of those 65 and older. A similar gap exists for offline activities: While 30% of those 18 to 29 think offline activities are being tracked by the government, only 16% of those 65 and older agree. These numbers increase significantly, but follow a similar pattern, when online and offline tracking by companies is considered.

A majority of black and Hispanic adults believe the government is tracking their online and cellphone activity

% of U.S. adults who say they believe the government is tracking all or most of their activities ...

	Online/Cellphone	Offline
U.S. adults	47	24
18-29	59	30
30-49	53	26
50-64	44	23
65+	30	16
White	43	19
Black	60	47
Hispanic	56	28
<$30K	47	27
$30K-<$75K	50	27
$75K+	47	19
HS or less	48	26
Some college	51	28
College+	43	17

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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Relatively small shares of the public say they understand what is being done with the data collected about them

Though many Americans feel their activities are being tracked, online and off, by both companies and the government, very few believe they understand what these entities are doing with the data being collected. Only 6% of adults say they understand a great deal what companies do with the data collected, and a similar share (4%) say they know a great deal about what the government does with the data. In contrast, 78% say they understand very little or nothing about what is being done with their data by the government, and 59% say this about the things companies do.

There are moderate differences in understanding by educational attainment. Those with some college experience are more likely to say they understand what is being done with the data collected about them by both the government and companies. While 46% of those with some college education say they understand at least some about what is being done with the data collected about them by companies, just 38% of those with a college degree or higher and 37% of those with a high school education or less agree. A similar trend follows for understanding of data the government collects.

Only a minority of the public say they understand what companies or the government do with the data collected about them

% of U.S. adults who say they understand ___ about what is being done with the data collected about them by …
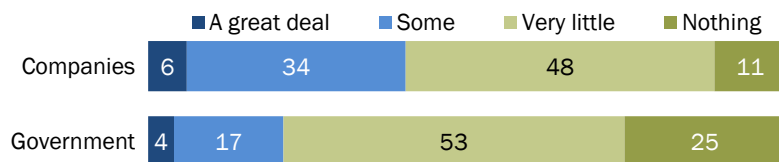
	A great deal	Some	Very little	Nothing
Companies	6	34	48	11
Government	4	17	53	25

Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer a question about how much they understand about what is being done with the data collected about them by "companies" or "the government." Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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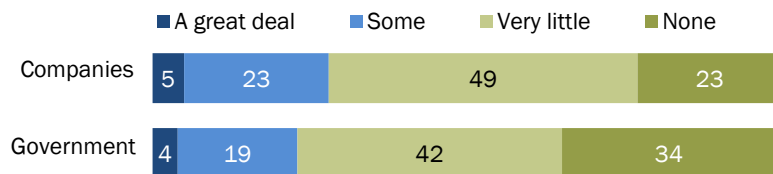# Roughly 80% of Americans think the risks of companies collecting data about them outweigh the benefits

Significant shares of Americans are not convinced they benefit from this level of tracking and data collection. Roughly three-quarters of adults say they benefit very little or none from the data that companies (72%) or the government (76%) collect about them. On the other hand, about three-in-ten Americans (28%) say they get a great deal or some personal benefit from companies' collecting data, and 23% say the same about the government's efforts.

When asked which of the following statements best described how they feel, 81% of of adults say that the "potential risks of companies collecting data about them outweigh the benefits," and just 17% say the benefits they get from companies outweigh the risks.

A similar pattern is seen when asked about the government. Two-thirds of Americans say the potential risks from data collection outweigh the benefits, while about one-third (31%) say the benefits outweigh the risks.

Relatively few Americans say they personally benefit a lot from the data companies or the government collect about them

% of U.S. adults who say they benefit ___ from the data collected about them by ...

Legend: ■ A great deal ■ Some Very little None

	A great deal	Some	Very little	None
Companies	5	23	49	23
Government	4	19	42	34

... And a majority think the potential risks of data collection outweigh the benefits

% of U.S. adults who say the ___ when it comes to data collection by ...
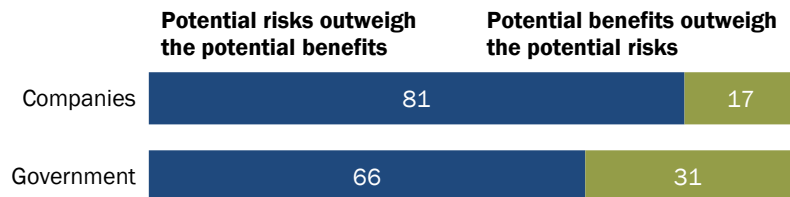
	Potential risks outweigh the potential benefits	Potential benefits outweigh the potential risks
Companies	81	17
Government	66	31

Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer a question about how much they feel they benefit from the data collected about them by "companies" or "the government." Respondents were also randomly assigned to answer a question about whether the potential risks outweigh the potential benefits of data collection, or vice versa, by "companies" or "the government." Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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White Americans are less likely to feel they benefit from the collection of data. Only 19% of white adults say they benefit from data collected by the government, and 23% say they benefit from company-collected data. Slightly larger shares of black and Hispanic Americans find more benefit in both: 32% of black adults and 29% of Hispanic adults find data collected by the government

beneficial, and 38% of black adults and 39% of Hispanic adults find benefit in company-collected data.

Older Americans also feel they benefit very little from government and corporate collection of data, with just 17% of those 65 and older believing they benefit from the data government collects about them and only 19% thinking the same about data collected by companies.

Younger adults are more likely to say they benefit from the data collected about them

% of U.S. adults who say they benefit a great deal or some from the data collected about them by …

	Government	Companies
U.S. adults	23	28
18-29	32	29
30-49	24	31
50-64	20	29
65+	17	19

Note: Respondents were randomly assigned to answer a question about how much they feel they benefit from the data collected about them by "companies" or "the government." Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"
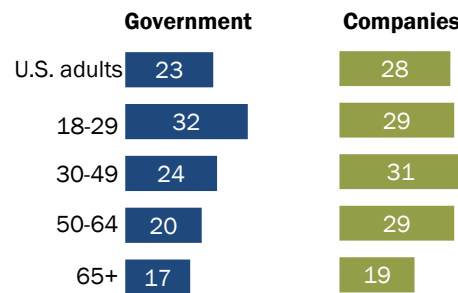
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About six-in-ten Americans do not think it is possible to go about daily life without having companies or government collect personal data

A majority of adults (62%) say they do not think it is possible to go through daily life without having their data collected by companies, and 63% think the same about government data collection. Still, 38% of Americans think it is possible to go about daily life without having their data collected by companies, and 36% say the same about having their data collected by the government.

There are some differences by age, with older adults being more skeptical than their younger counterparts about the possibility of anonymity. While 27% of adults ages 65 and older say it is possible to go about daily life and remain anonymous to companies, that share rises to around 40% among adults under the age of 65.

When considering the idea of anonymity from the government, only 33% of adults in both older demographics (50 to 64 and 65 and older) believe it's possible, compared with a larger share (41%) of those 30 to 49.

Older Americans less likely to say they can go about life without having their data collected by companies

% of U.S. adults who say it is possible to go about daily life being anonymous to companies
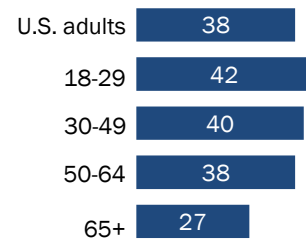
U.S. adults	38
18-29	42
30-49	40
50-64	38
65+	27

Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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3. Public knowledge and experiences with data-driven ads

Today, it is possible for companies, advertisers and other organizations to take users' personal data from a [variety of sources](#) to create detailed profiles based on someone's likes, preferences and other characteristics. This survey finds the majority of Americans have heard or read about this concept, and those who have think all or most companies are using profiles to better understand their customers. Among those who are familiar with profiles, a majority reports seeing these ads on a somewhat regular basis.

Americans have a broad awareness of data profiles, and it's common for them to see ads based on their personal data

Overall, the public is familiar with the practice of companies

A majority of Americans have heard about companies creating data profiles, and it's common for those who have to see ads based on their personal data

% of U.S. adults who say they have heard ___ about companies and other organizations using data profiles to offer targeted ads, special deals, or to assess how risky people might be as customers

Nothing at all 22%

1% No answer

A lot 27%

A little 50%

77% have heard about personal profiles
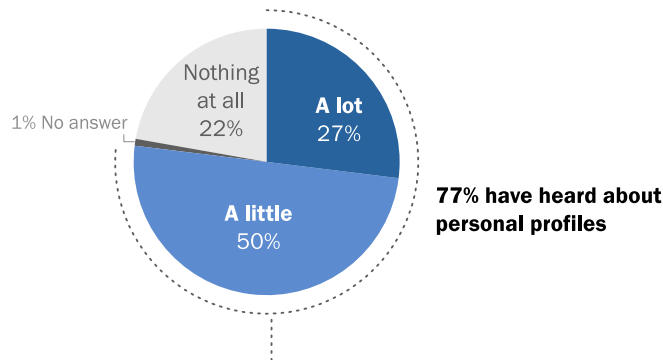
Among that 77%, percent who say the following

	All	Most	Some/ only a few
That ___ companies use these types of profiles to understand their customers	17	57	21

	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
They ___ see ads or solicitations that appear to be based of profiles made using their personal data	49	34	16

Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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and organizations using an individual's experiences and personal data to create detailed user profiles. Most Americans – 77% in total – say they have heard at least a little about how companies and other organizations use personal data to offer things like targeted advertisements, special deals, or to assess how risky people might be as customers, including 27% who say they have heard

a lot about this concept. About one-in-five adults say they have heard nothing at all about this practice.

> **Detailed data profiles: How Pew Research Center asked about targeted ads**
>
> Survey respondents were shown the following prompt: "Today it is possible to take personal data about people from many different sources – such as their purchasing and credit histories, their online browsing or search behaviors, or their public voting records – and combine them together to create detailed profiles of people's potential interests and characteristics. Companies and other organizations use these profiles to offer targeted advertisements or special deals, or to assess how risky people might be as customers."

Not only are most Americans aware of this concept, they routinely see them in practice. Roughly eight-in-ten adults who are familiar with these profiles say they occasionally (34%) or frequently (49%) see ads or solicitations that appear to be based on a profile made of them using personal data. Put another way, 64% of all U.S. adults report seeing these types of ads or solicitations.

There is also a general belief that use of personal profiles is fairly common among companies. Among adults who have heard of these profiles, 75% believe that all or most companies use these profiles to help understand their customers. More than half of all adults (57%), regardless of their familiarity with the concept of profiles, say they think all or most companies use this tactic.

Awareness of these data-driven profiles is relatively widespread across a range of demographic groups, but college graduates and more affluent adults are especially likely to be familiar with both the concept of profiling and the outcome – advertisements apparently targeted at them. Adults with a bachelor's degree or higher are more likely than those with a high school education or less to

About six-in-ten Americans who see ads based on their personal data say they reflect their interests

Among the 83% of U.S. adults who say they frequently or on occasion see ads or solicitations that appear to be based off profiles made using their personal data, the % who say they understand ___ about what data is being used to create these ads
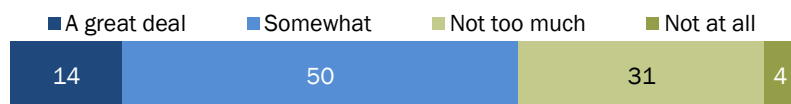
■ A great deal	■ Somewhat	■ Not too much	■ Not at all

| 14 | 50 | 31 | 4 |

Among the 83% of U.S. adults who say they frequently or on occasion see ads or solicitations that appear to be based off profiles made using their personal data, the % who say these ads accurately reflect their actual interests and characteristics …
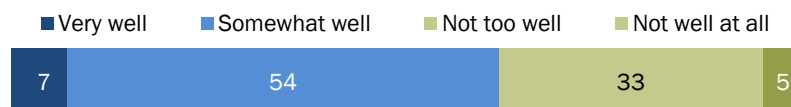
■ Very well	■ Somewhat well	■ Not too well	■ Not well at all

| 7 | 54 | 33 | 5 |

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

say they have heard about personal profiles (87% vs. 69%) or to say they see advertisements that appear to be based off their personal data (93% vs. 73%). Similar patterns are present by household income, with those living in higher-income households being more likely to say they are familiar with the term and that they see these types of ads than those living in lower-income households.

A majority of Americans who see ads that appear to be based on their personal data say those ads mirror their interests, characteristics

Respondents who say they have seen ads based on their personal data were asked a follow-up question about how much they understood about the data collection associated with such targeted advertising.

Fully 64% of adults who have ever seen ads that appear to be based on their personal data say they at least somewhat understand what personal data is being used to create targeted advertisements, with 14% saying they understand a great deal. Still, some ad-seers are less sure about the concept: 35% say they understand not much or at all the type of personal data being used to create these ads. When all American adults are considered, 41% say they understand what data is used to create these ads.

Additionally, a majority of ad-seers think these types of ads accurately reflect who they are. Around six-in-ten adults who see these ads (61%) say they accurately reflect their interests and characteristics. Still, relatively few in this group – just 7% – say these ads accurately reflect who they are very well. (The share who say these ads reflect them at least somewhat well is 39% among all U.S. adults.)

Roughly half think it's acceptable for the government to collect data to assess terrorist threats, but fewer say it's appropriate for social media sites to monitor users for signs of depression

Personal data is used for a range of purposes by companies and the government. The findings reported in Chapter 2 show that Americans express general concern about the data collected but that the public finds some uses more acceptable than others. This diversity of thought is evident when adults consider some of the purposes of the data collection.

When asked whether it was acceptable or not for a poorly

Americans more supportive of certain types of data uses than others

% of U.S. adults who say the following uses of data or personal information are acceptable

The government collecting data about all Americans to assess potential terrorist threats	49
Poorly performing schools sharing student data with a nonprofit seeking to improve educational outcomes	49
DNA testing companies sharing customers' genetic data with law enforcement to help solve crimes	48
Fitness tracking app makers sharing user data with medical researchers to better understand the link between exercise and heart disease	41
Social media companies monitoring users' posts for signs of depression to identify users at risk for self-harm and connect them to counselors	27
Smart speaker makers sharing users' audio recordings with law enforcement to help with criminal investigations	25

Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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performing school to share student data with a nonprofit group in an effort to improve educational outcomes, roughly half of Americans (49%) say they consider this to be an acceptable form of data sharing. The same share of the public also believes it's acceptable for the government to collect Americans' data to asses who might be a potential terrorist threat.

Additionally, a similar share of Americans (48%) think it's acceptable for DNA testing companies, like AncestryDNA and 23andMe, to share their customers' genetic data with law enforcement agencies in order to help solves crimes.

Still, other forms of data collection are deemed less acceptable by the public.

About four-in-ten adults (41%) find it acceptable for makers of fitness tracking apps to share user data with medical researchers to better understand the link between exercise and heart disease, compared with 35% who say this is unacceptable.

And just 25% of Americans find it acceptable for the makers of smart speakers to share audio recordings of their customers with law enforcement to help with criminal investigations. A similar share (27%) finds it acceptable for a social media company to monitor users' posts for signs of depression in order to identify individuals at risk of self-harm and connect them to counseling services. In these scenarios, 49% and 45% respectively say they are unacceptable forms of data use.

But even as Americans' assessments of these practices tend to differ by the type of data being collected and the purpose of its use, at least 20% of adults say they are unsure about their acceptability in each of these specific scenarios. For example, 27% of adults say they are unsure if social media companies checking users for signs of depression in order to get them help is acceptable or not, and 24% say the same about low-performing schools sharing student data with nonprofits.

Older and younger Americans tend to differ over the appropriateness of certain corporate and government uses of people's personal data

The public's views on whether certain types of data use are appropriate tend to differ by age. Adults ages 18 to 29 are more likely than those 65 and older to say it is acceptable for makers of fitness tracking apps to share data with medical researchers to better understand the link between exercise and heart disease (52% vs. 35%) or for social media companies to monitor user posts for signs of depression so they can identify people at risk of self-harm and connect them to counseling services (42% vs. 18%).

Older and younger adults differ on the acceptability of certain data sharing practices by companies, the government

% of U.S. adults, by age group, who say the following uses of data or personal information are acceptable

	65+	50-64	30-49	18-29	Youngest to oldest DIFF
Social media companies monitoring users' posts for signs of depression to identify users at risk for self-harm and connect them to counselors	18 ●●	●	● 42		+24
Fitness tracking app makers sharing user data with medical researchers to better understand the link between exercise and heart disease		35 ●●	●	● 52	+17
Poorly performing schools sharing student data with a nonprofit seeking to improve educational outcomes		44 ● ●● 47 ●			+3
DNA testing companies sharing customers' genetic data with law enforcement to help solve crimes		39 ● ●	● ● 58		-19
The government collecting data about all Americans to assess potential terrorist threats		42 ● ●	●● 54		-12
Smart speaker makers sharing users' audio recordings with law enforcement to help with criminal investigations	22 ●● ● ● 32				-10

0   20   40   60

Notes: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other answers are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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But there are other instances in which older groups are more supportive of data sharing. Roughly six-in-ten adults ages 65 and older (58%) say it's acceptable for DNA testing companies to share customers' genetic data with law enforcement to help solve crimes, compared with 39% of those ages 18 to 29. Older adults are also more likely than younger adults to believe that the government collecting Americans' data to assess terrorist threats or makers of smart speakers sharing audio recordings with law enforcement to help with investigations is an acceptable form of data use. However, attitudes about schools sharing student data with a nonprofit are relatively similar, with 44% of those 65 and older finding this acceptable, compared with 47% of those 18 to 29 who say the same.

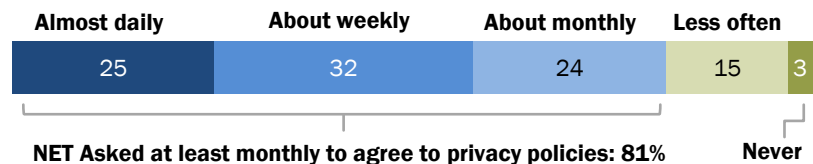# 4. Americans' attitudes and experiences with privacy policies and laws

Many Americans have little to no understanding of what companies are doing with the data that is collected about them. At the same time, nearly all Americans encounter companies' privacy policies at some point. This survey explores whether they fully read them and how much they understand about these policies.

Most Americans have been asked to agree to a privacy policy; while many read them, relatively few read these policies regularly

Privacy policies have become a common feature of public life. One-quarter of adults say they are asked to agree to the terms and conditions of a company's privacy policy on an almost daily basis, while 32% say this happens about once a week; another 24% say they are asked for this roughly once a month. In total, 97% of Americans say they have ever been asked to agree to the terms and conditions of a company's privacy policy.

A majority of Americans are asked to agree to privacy policies at least monthly, including a quarter who say this happens daily

% of U.S. adults who say they are asked to agree to the terms and conditions of a company's privacy policy …

Almost daily	About weekly	About monthly	Less often	
25	32	24	15	3

NET Asked at least monthly to agree to privacy policies: 81%   Never

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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While nearly all Americans are asked to agree to terms and conditions of a company's privacy policy, relatively few report reading these policies on a regular basis.

Just 9% of adults say they always read a company's privacy policy before agreeing to the terms and conditions, while an additional 13% say they do this often. And additionally, 38% of Americans say they sometimes read these policies. There is also a segment of the population who forgo reading these policies altogether: More than a third of adults (36%) say they never read a privacy policy before agreeing to it.

There are some demographic differences in reading privacy policies. Fully 68% of adults living in households with an annual income of $30,000 or less say they ever read privacy policies, compared with 52% of those whose family income is $75,000 or more a year. Women are more likely than men to say they ever read a company's privacy policy before agreeing to it (65% vs. 55%). And adults ages 50 and older are more likely than those under 50 to ever read privacy policies (65% vs. 56%).

About one-in-five Americans say they always or often read privacy policies before agreeing to them

% of U.S. adults who say they ___ read before agreeing to a company's privacy policy when they are asked to

Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
9	13	38	36

NET Always or often reads privacy policies: 22%

Note: Those who did not give an answer or who have never been asked to agree to a privacy policy are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"
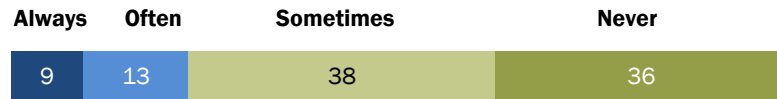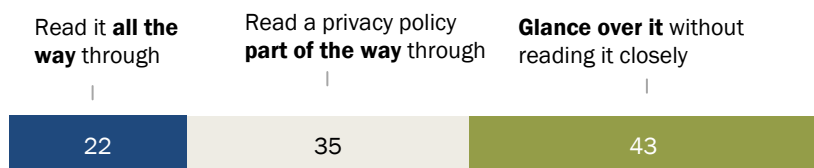
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But the practice of reading privacy policies doesn't necessarily guarantee thoroughness. Among adults who say they ever read privacy policies before agreeing to their terms and conditions, only a minority (22%) say they read them all the way through before agreeing to their terms and conditions. It's more common for these readers to say they either glance over it without it reading closely (43%) or say they only read it part of the way through. Among all U.S. adults, 13% say they read privacy policies all the way through, 21% read part of the way through and 26% glance over them.

Only a minority of Americans who read privacy policies say they read them all the way through

Among the 60% of U.S. adults who say they ever read privacy policies before agreeing to them, the % who say they typically …

Read it **all the way** through	Read a privacy policy **part of the way** through	**Glance over it** without reading it closely
22	35	43

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
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There are few demographic differences among adults who read privacy policies in full. For example, those living in households with an annual income of $30,000 or less are twice as likely as

those in households with an annual income of $75,000 or more to say they read all the way through (30% vs. 15%). And while 26% of adults ages 65 and older say they read privacy policies all the way through, that share falls to 15% among those ages 18 to 29.

A majority of adults who read privacy policies say they typically understand them

Roughly two-thirds of adults who read privacy policies say they typically understand a great deal (13%) or some (55%) of the policies that they read. Still, about one-third of this group has a lesser grasp of the privacy policies they read, including 29% who say they understand very little and 3% who do not understand at all. Among all U.S. adults,

About two-thirds of U.S. adults who read privacy policies say they understand at least some of them

Among the 60% of U.S. adults who say they read privacy policies before agreeing to them, the % of who say they typically understand ___ of them
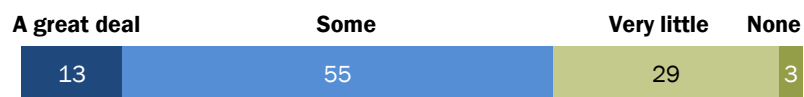
A great deal	Some	Very little	None
13	55	29	3

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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8% say they understand privacy policies a great deal, 33% understand some, 18% understand very little and 2% do not understand them at all.

Americans have little confidence in companies' accountability with their data

When asked how confident they are that companies will do certain things to protect them, relatively few Americans feel assured. In fact, clear majorities of adults show little to no confidence that companies will follow through with certain actions.

Just 21% of adults say they are very (3%) or somewhat (18%) confident that companies will publicly admit mistakes and take responsibility when they misuse or compromise their users' personal data, while 79% of adults are "not too confident" or "not confident at all" about this. A similar share (24%) are confident that a company will be held accountable by the government if they misuse or compromise their data, while 75% are not confident about this.

Even though majorities still have little confidence in companies, about one-third of adults or more are at least somewhat confident in companies to use personal information in ways they feel comfortable with (31%), promptly notify them if personal data has been misused or compromised (35%) or follow what their privacy policies say they will do with personal information (42%).

Americans have varying levels of comfort with companies using their personal data in different ways

Most Americans are not confident that companies would publicly admit to misusing consumers' data

% of U.S. adults who say they are ___ confident that companies will do the following things

	Very	Somewhat	Not too	Not at all
Publicly admit mistakes and take responsibility if they misuse or compromise users' personal data	3	18	46	32
Be held accountable by govt if they misuse users' personal data	4	21	43	32
Use users' personal info in ways they feel comfortable with	4	27	47	22
Promptly notify users if their personal data has been misused or compromised	5	30	41	24
Follow what their privacy policies say they will do with users' personal data	5	37	40	17
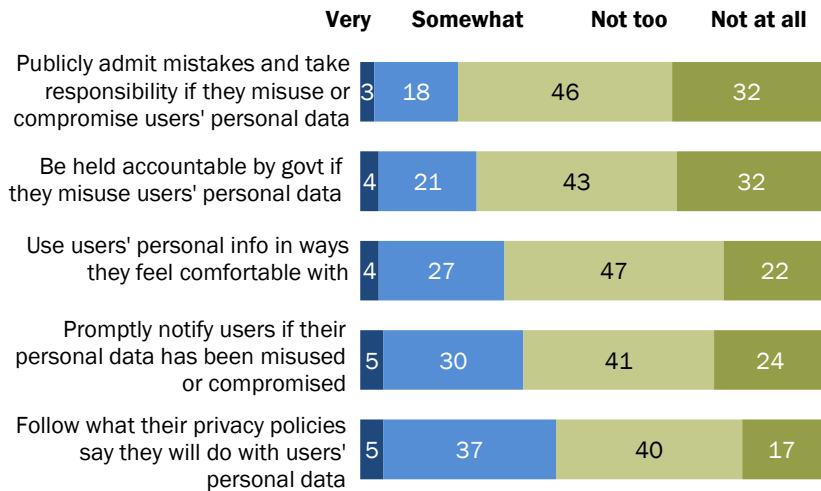
Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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As a whole, the public feels more comfortable with companies using their personal information for certain purposes than others. For example, 57% of adults say they are very or somewhat comfortable with companies using their personal data to help companies improve their fraud prevention systems. Americans' views are split on companies using their personal data to help them develop new products: 50% are at least somewhat comfortable, and 49% are not too comfortable or not comfortable at all.

Adults are less positive toward other ways that companies may use their data. About a third of adults (36%) say they are at least somewhat comfortable with companies sharing their personal data with outside groups doing research that might help them improve society, but a larger share (64%) say they would be uncomfortable with this practice.

Younger adults are generally more comfortable with these uses of their private data, while older adults are less comfortable. Adults under 50 years old are more likely than those who are 50 and older to be at least somewhat comfortable with their personal data being shared with outside

groups doing research that might help improve society (42% vs. 29%). By comparison, adults ages 50 and older are more likely than those under 50 to not be comfortable with this (70% vs. 58%).

There are partisan differences on some of these companies' uses of personal data. Democrats, including independents who lean to the Democratic Party, are mor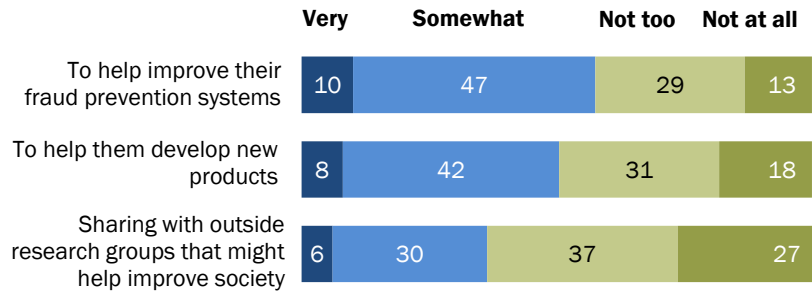e likely than Republicans and Republican-leaning independents to be comfortable with companies sharing their personal data with outside groups doing research that might help improve society (42% vs. 28%) and using their data to help improve their fraud prevention systems (61% vs. 54%).

The public has varying levels of comfort when it comes to how companies' use their personal data

% of U.S. adults who say they are ___comfortable with companies using their personal data in the following ways

	Very	Somewhat	Not too	Not at all
To help improve their fraud prevention systems	10	47	29	13
To help them develop new products	8	42	31	18
Sharing with outside research groups that might help improve society	6	30	37	27

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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Only about one-third of adults say they understand current data protection laws

Americans were asked how much they understand the laws and regulations that are currently in place to protect their data privacy. Some 37% say they understand the laws and regulations some (33%) or a great deal (3%). Nearly two-thirds (63%) of adults say they do not understand the laws and regulations that are currently in place to protect their data privacy.

A majority of Americans say they have little to no understanding of existing data protection laws

% of U.S. adults who say they feel they understand the laws and regulations that are currently in place to protect their data privacy ...

A great deal	Some	Very little	Not at all
3	33	49	14

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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This includes 49% who say they understand the laws "very little" and 14% who do not understand them at all.

Americans who are more knowledgeable about how their data is being used are more likely to say they understand privacy-related laws and protections. Among adults who have a great deal or some understanding of how companies use their data, 56% say they understand at least some about current data privacy protection laws and regulations; compared with 24% among those who understand very little or nothing about how their data is used by companies.

A similar pattern exists when it comes to government use of data: 59% of those who understand a great deal or some about how their data is used by government say they understand at least some about the data privacy laws and regulations versus 30% among those who understand very little or none about how their data is used. Adults who believe they don't benefit from how companies or the government uses their data are also more likely to have little understanding of these privacy laws.

Americans strongly favor more government regulation of consumer data

When asked how much government regulation there should be around what companies can do with their customers' personal information, 75% of adults say there should be more regulation than there is now. About one-in-ten (8%) feel companies should be regulated less than they are now, while 16% say there should be the about same amount of regulation.

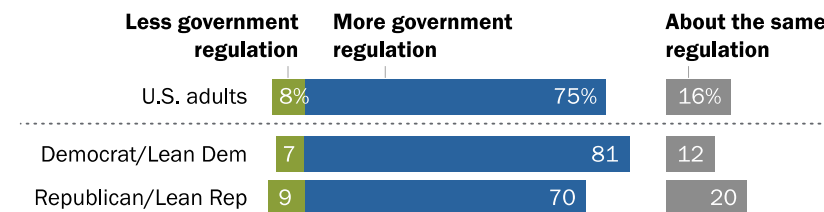Although a majority of both Republicans and Democrats agree that companies use of personal data should be regulated more than they are now, Democrats (including independents who lean towards the Democratic party) are more likely than Republicans and Republican leaners to believe there should be more government regulation of what companies can do with their customers' personal information (81% vs. 70%).

Most Americans think there should be more government regulation of what companies can do with personal data

% of U.S. adults who say they think there should be ___ of what companies can do with their customers' personal information

	Less government regulation	More government regulation	About the same regulation
U.S. adults	8%	75%	16%
Democrat/Lean Dem	7	81	12
Republican/Lean Rep	9	70	20

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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There are also differences by the amount of attention people to privacy-related news. Adults who follow privacy news closely are also more likely than those who don't to say there should be more government regulation (79% vs. 68%).

But when given a choice of whether they favor better tools for consumers or

Americans are somewhat more likely to favor better consumer tools than stronger laws to help safeguard personal data

% of U.S. adults say they think ___ would be a more effective way to safeguard people's personal information
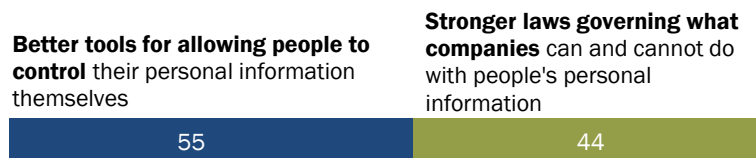
Better tools for allowing people to control their personal information themselves	Stronger laws governing what companies can and cannot do with people's personal information
55	44

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted June 3-17, 2019.
"Americans and Privacy: Concerned, Confused and Feeling Lack of Control Over Their Personal Information"

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stricter laws to safeguard people's personal information, a somewhat higher share of the public favored better consumer tools. Fully 55% of adults say better tools for allowing people to control their personal information themselves would be a more effective way to safeguard people's personal information. On the other hand, 44% of Americans say that stronger laws governing what companies can and cannot do with people's personal information would be the more effective strategy.

Acknowledgments

Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report are drawn from the panel wave conducted June 3 to June 17, 2019. A total of 4,272 panelists responded out of 5,869 who were sampled, for a response rate of 73%. This does not include six panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 5.1%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged onto the survey and completed at least one item is 1.7%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 4,272 respondents is plus or minus 1.9 percentage points.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,503
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,464
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	801
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	8,691
Total		**29,114**	**18,720**	**13,459**

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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The subsample from the ATP was selected by grouping panelists into five strata so demographic groups that are underrepresented in the panel had a higher probability of selection than overrepresented groups:

- Stratum A consists of panelists who are non-internet users. They were sampled at a rate of 100%.

- Stratum B consists of panelists with a high school education or less. They were sampled at a rate of 98.9%.

- Stratum C consists of panelists that are Hispanic, unregistered to vote, or non-volunteers. They were sampled at a rate of 44.8%.

- Stratum D consists of panelists that are black or 18-34 years old. They were sampled at a rate of 18.2%.

- Stratum E consists of the remaining panelists. They were sampled at a rate of 13.5%.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 18,720 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,459 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.[1]

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[1] AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."

Weighting

The ATP data were weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 and 2017 some respondents were subsampled for invitation to the panel. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table.

Sampling errors and test of statistical-significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the American Trends Panel's Hispanic sample is predominantly U.S. born and English speaking.

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.

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:

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2017 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	
Hispanic nativity	
Home internet access	
Region x Metropolitan status	2018 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering and Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total US adult population.

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Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus …
Total sample	4,272	1.9 percentage points
Form 1	2,140	2.6 percentage points
Form 2	2,132	2.6 percentage points
Men	1,875	2.9 percentage points
Women	2,397	2.4 percentage points
White, Non-Hispanic	2,887	2.2 percentage points
Black, Non-Hispanic	445	5.8 percentage points
Hispanic	611	5.5 percentage points
Ages 18-29	671	4.8 percentage points
30-49	1,314	3.3 percentage points
50-64	1,308	3.4 percentage points
65+	977	3.8 percentage points

HS or less	1,483	3.3 percentage points
Some college	1,182	3.4 percentage points
College+	1,600	2.9 percentage points
Less than $30,000	1,107	3.8 percentage points
$30,000-$74,999	1,469	3.2 percentage points
$75,000+	1,496	3.0 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	1,823	2.8 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	2,296	2.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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Topline questionnaire

2019 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 49 JUNE 2019
FINAL TOPLINE
JUNE 3-17, 2019
TOTAL N=4,272

THE QUESTIONS PRESENTED BELOW ARE PART OF A LARGER SURVEY CONDUCTED ON THE AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL. OTHER QUESTIONS ON THIS SURVEY HAVE EITHER BEEN PREVIOUSLY RELEASED OR HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE.

ASK ALL:
SECUR1   Compared with five years ago, do you feel your personal information is…
                        [REVERSE ORDER OF OPTIONS 1 AND 2 FOR HALF OF RESPONDENTS]

June 3-17, 2019	
6	More secure
70	Less secure
24	About the same
*	No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:
PRIVACYOPENa   In your own words, what does "privacy" mean to you?

June 3-17, 2019	
28	Other people and organizations not being able to access their possessions or private life
26	Control over information, possessions, self; deciding what's accessible to others
15	Themselves, their personal information and possessions, the desire to keep things to themselves
4	Having their information sold, third party involvement
3	General security references, i.e. "secure," "guarded," "protective"
2	Tracking, surveillance, monitoring, spying
2	Privacy is a myth/means nothing/doesn't exist
2	Crime, hacking, fraud, any threats of illicit activity
2	Threat from the government regarding themselves, possessions or private life
1	Personal information is only accessible with the person's knowledge or consent
*	Spam, unwanted calls or solicitations
4	Other
17	Did not answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
PRIVACYOPENb   In your own words, what does "digital privacy" mean to you?

June 3-17,
2019

17	Themselves, their personal information and possessions, the desire to keep things to themselves
14	Control over information, possessions, self; deciding what's accessible to others
13	Other people and organizations not being able to access their possessions or private life
9	Privacy is a myth/means nothing/doesn't exist
6	Having their information sold, third party involvement
5	Crime, hacking, fraud, any threats of illicit activity
4	General security references, i.e. "secure," "guarded," "protective"
3	Tracking, surveillance, monitoring, spying
2	Company measures, how websites/companies should secure data, terms of service, privacy settings
2	Personal information is only accessible with the person's knowledge or consent
1	Threat from the government regarding themselves, possessions or private life
4	Other
31	Did not answer

Threat from the government regarding themselves, possessions or private life

ASK ALL:

PRIVACYNEWS1   How closely, if at all, do you follow news about privacy issues?

June 3-17,
2019
11	Very closely
46	Somewhat closely
33	Not too closely
10	Not at all closely
*	No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF TRACKCO1a AND TRACKCO1b]

TRACKCO1a   As far as you know, how much of what you do ONLINE or on your cellphone is being tracked by advertisers, technology firms or other companies? **[RANDOMIZE]**

June 3-17,
2019
41	All or almost all of it
31	Most of it
19	Some of it
4	Very little of it
4	None of it
1	No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:

TRACKCO1b   As far as you know, how much of what you do OFFLINE – like where you are or who you are talking to – is being tracked by advertisers, technology firms or other companies? **[RANDOMIZE]**

June 3-17,
2019
12   All or almost all of it
19   Most of it
38   Some of it
20   Very little of it
11   None of it
*   No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF CONCERNCO AND BENEFITCO]
CONCERNCO   How concerned are you, if at all, about how companies are using the data they
collect about you?

June 3-17,
2019
36   Very concerned
43   Somewhat concerned
17   Not too concerned
4   Not at all concerned
*   No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:
BENEFITCO   How much do you feel you personally benefit from the data that companies
collect about you?

June 3-17,
2019
5   A great deal
23   Some
49   Very little
23   None
*   No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:
CONTROLCO   How much control do you think you have over the data that companies collect
about you?

June 3-17,
2019
3   A great deal of control
15   Some control
51   Very little control
30   No control
*   No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:
UNDERSTANDCO   How much do you feel you understand what companies are doing with the data
they collect about you?

June 3-17, 2019	
6	A great deal
34	Some
48	Very little
11	Nothing
1	No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:

POSNEGCO On balance, which would you say most accurately describes how you feel? **[RANDOMIZE]**

June 3-17, 2019	
17	The benefits I get from companies collecting data about me outweigh the potential risks
81	The potential risks of companies collecting data about me outweigh the benefits I get
2	No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:

ANONYMOUS1CO Do you think it is possible to go about daily life today without having companies collect data about you?

June 3-17, 2019	
38	Yes, it is possible
62	No, it is not possible
*	No Answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF TRACKGOV1a AND TRACKGOV1b]
TRACKGOV1a   As far as you know, how much of what you do ONLINE or on your cellphone is
                    being tracked by the government?

        June 3-17,
          2019
          24   All or almost all of it
          23   Most of it
          30   Some of it
          14   Very little of it
          9   None of it
          *   No answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
TRACKGOV1b   As far as you know, how much of what you do OFFLINE – like where you are or
                    who you are talking to – is being tracked by the government?

        June 3-17,
          2019
          11   All or almost all of it
          13   Most of it
          33   Some of it
          27   Very little of it
          16   None of it
          *   No answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF CONCERNGOV AND BENEFITGOV]
CONCERNGOV   How concerned are you, if at all, about how the government is using the data it
                    collects about you?

        June 3-17,
          2019
          25   Very concerned
          39   Somewhat concerned
          26   Not too concerned
          10   Not at all concerned
          *   No Answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
BENEFITGOV   How much do you feel you personally benefit from the data the government
                    collects about you?

        June 3-17,
          2019
          4   A great deal
          19   Some
          42   Very little
          34   None
          1   No Answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
CONTROLGOV   How much control do you think you have over the data the government collects about you?

June 3-17,
  2019
   4   A great deal of control
  12   Some control
  41   Very little control
  43   No control
   *   No Answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
UNDERSTANDGOV   How much do you feel you understand what the government is doing with the data they collect about you?

June 3-17,
  2019
   4   A great deal
  17   Some
  53   Very little
  25   Nothing
   *   No Answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
POSNEGGOV   On balance, which would you say most accurately describes how you feel?
                  [RANDOMIZE]

June 3-17,
  2019
            The benefits the government can provide by collecting data about me
  31   and others outweigh the potential risks
            The potential risks of the government collecting data about me and
  66   others outweigh the benefits it can provide
   4   No Answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
ANONYMOUS1GOV   Do you think it is possible to go about daily life today without having the government collect data about you?

June 3-17,
  2019
  36   Yes, it is possible
  63   No, it is not possible
   1   No Answer

ASK ALL:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF QUESTIONS A-F]
CONCERNGRP   Now thinking about specific people or groups who might have access to your personal information… How concerned are you, if at all, about how much personal information the following people or groups might know about you?

		Concerned a lot	Concerned a little	Not concerned	No Answer
a.	**[FORM 1 [N=2,140]]** Law enforcement agencies				
	June 3-17, 2019	26	36	39	*
b.	**[FORM 1 [N=2,140]]** Advertisers				
	June 3-17, 2019	39	44	16	*
c.	**[FORM 1 AND EMPLOYED [N=1,313]]** Your employer				
	June 3-17, 2019	19	39	42	1
d.	**[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** The companies you buy things from				
	June 3-17, 2019	30	50	20	*
e.	**[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** Your friends and family				
	June 3-17, 2019	9	34	57	*
f.	**[FORM 2 AND SOCIAL MEDIA USER [N=1,778]]** The social media sites you use				
	June 3-17, 2019	40	46	14	*

ASK ALL:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF QUESTIONS A-F]
CONTROLGRP   Now thinking about specific types of information that different entities might want to know about you… How much control, if any, do you think you have over who can access the following types of information about you?

		A lot of control	A little control	No control	No Answer
a.	**[FORM 1 AND SOCIAL MEDIA USER [N=1,800]]** Your posts and activities on social media				
	June 3-17, 2019	16	50	35	*
b.	**[FORM 1[N=2,140]]** The search terms you use online				
	June 3-17, 2019	9	39	48	*
c.	**[FORM 1 [N=2,140]]** The purchases you've made, either online or in person				
	June 3-17, 2019	12	43	45	*

d. **[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** Your
    physical location

June 3-17, 2019	18	54	28	1

e. **[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** The
    websites you visit

June 3-17, 2019	10	44	41	*

f. **[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** The private
    conversations you've had online or
    using text messaging

June 3-17, 2019	13	49	37	*

ASK ALL:
PP1   How often are you asked to agree to the terms and conditions of a company's
                   privacy policy?

June 3-17,
  2019
  25   Almost daily
  32   About once a week
  24   About once a month
  15   Less frequently
   3   Never
   *   No answer

ASK IF EVER ASKED TO AGREE TO PRIVACY POLICY (PP1=1-4) [N=4,170]:
PP2   When you are asked to agree to a company's privacy policy, how often do you
                   read it before agreeing to it?

June 3-17,
  2019
   9   Always
  14   Often
  39   Sometimes
  37   Never
   1   No answer

ASK IF READ PRIVACY POLICIES BEFORE AGREEING (PP2=1,2,3) [N=2,571]:
PP3   When you read a privacy policy, what do you typically do? **[REVERSE ORDER
                   OF RESPONSE OPTIONS FOR ½ OF RESPONDENTS]**

June 3-17,
  2019
  22   Read it all the way through
  35   Read it part of the way through
  43   Glance over it without reading it closely
   *   No answer

ASK IF EVER READS PRIVACY POLICIES (PP2=1,2,3) [N=2,571]:
PP4   How much do you typically understand the privacy policies you read?

June 3-17, 2019	
13	A great deal
55	Some
29	Very little
3	Not at all
*	No Answer

ASK ALL:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF QUESTION A-E]
PP5   How confident are you, if at all, that companies will do the following things?

	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not too confident	Not confident at all	No Answer
a. Follow what their privacy policies say they will do with your personal information					
June 3-17, 2019	5	37	40	17	1
b. Promptly notify you if your personal data has been misused or compromised					
June 3-17, 2019	5	30	41	24	1
c. Publicly admit mistakes and take responsibility when they misuse or compromise their users' personal data					
June 3-17, 2019	3	18	46	32	*
d. Use your personal information in ways you will feel comfortable with					
June 3-17, 2019	4	27	47	22	1
e. Be held accountable by the government if they misuse or compromise your data					
June 3-17, 2019	4	21	43	32	*

ASK ALL:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF QUESTIONS A-C]
PP6   How comfortable are you, if at all, with companies using your personal data in the following ways?

	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Not too comfortable	Not comfortable at all	No Answer

a. To help improve their fraud prevention systems					
June 3-17, 2019	10	47	29	13	1
b. Sharing it with outside groups doing research that might help improve society					
June 3-17, 2019	6	30	37	27	*
c. To help them develop new products					
June 3-17, 2019	8	42	31	18	*

ASK ALL:
PRIVACYREG   How much do you feel you understand the laws and regulations that are currently in place to protect your data privacy?

June 3-17, 2019
3   A great deal
33   Some
49   Very little
14   Not at all
*   No Answer

ASK FORM 1 [N=2,140]:
GOVREGV1   How much government regulation of what companies can do with their customers' personal information do you think there should be? **[RANDOMIZE]**

June 3-17, 2019
75   More regulation
8   Less regulation
16   About the same amount
1   No Answer

ASK FORM 2 [N=2,132]:
GOVREGV2   Which of the following do you think would be a more effective way to safeguard people's personal information? **[RANDOMIZE]**

June 3-17, 2019
55   Better tools for allowing people to control their personal information themselves
44   Stronger laws governing what companies can and cannot do with people's personal information
1   No Answer

ASK ALL:
PROFILE1   Today it is possible to take personal data about people from many different sources – such as their purchasing and credit histories, their online browsing or search behaviors, or their public voting records – and combine them together to create detailed profiles of people's potential interests and characteristics. Companies and other organizations use these profiles to offer targeted advertisements or special deals, or to assess how risky people might be as customers.

Prior to today, how much had you heard or read about this concept?

June 3-17, 2019	
27	A lot
50	A little
22	Nothing at all
1	No Answer

ASK IF HAVE HEARD OF DATA PROFILES (PROFILE1=1-2) [N=3,361]:
PROFILE2   How many companies do you think use these types of profiles to help understand their customers?

June 3-17, 2019	
17	All of them
57	Most of them
18	Some of them
2	Only a few of them
4	Not sure
*	No Answer

ASK IF HAVE HEARD OF DATA PROFILES (PROFILE1=1-2) [N=3,361]:
PROFILE3   Do you ever see advertisements or solicitations that appear to be based on a profile that has been made of you using your personal data?

June 3-17, 2019	
49	Yes, frequently
34	Yes, on occasion
9	No
7	Not sure
*	No Answer

ASK IF EVER SEE ADS BASED ON PERSONAL DATA (PROFILE3=1,2) [N=2,816]:
PROFILE4   How much, if at all, do you understand what data about you is being used to create these advertisements?

June 3-17, 2019	
14	A great deal
50	Somewhat
31	Not too much
4	Not at all
*	No Answer

ASK IF EVER SEE ADS BASED ON PERSONAL DATA (PROFILE3=1,2) [N=2,816]:
PROFILE5   In general, how well do these advertisements accurately reflect your actual
                            interests and characteristics?

June 3-17, 2019	
7	Very well
54	Somewhat well
33	Not too well
5	Not well at all
*	No Answer

ASK ALL:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF QUESTIONS A-F]
DATAUSE   Now thinking about other ways that private companies and government agencies
                            might use data or information they collect about people…

                            In your opinion, do you think the following uses of data or information are
                            acceptable or unacceptable?

	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Not sure	No Answer
a. **[FORM 1 [N=2,140]** The government collecting data about all Americans to assess who might be a potential terrorist threat				
June 3-17, 2019	49	31	19	*
b. **[FORM 1 [N=2,140]]** Poorly performing schools sharing data about their students with a nonprofit group seeking to help improve educational outcomes				
June 3-17, 2019	49	27	24	*
c. **[FORM 1 [N=2,140]]** DNA testing companies sharing their customers' genetic data with law enforcement agencies in order to help solve crimes				
June 3-17, 2019	48	33	18	1
d. **[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** Makers of a fitness tracking app sharing their users' data with medical researchers seeking to better understand the link between exercise and heart disease				
June 3-17, 2019	41	35	22	1

e.   **[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** A social
    media company monitoring its
    users' posts for signs of
    depression, so they can identify
    people who are at risk of self-harm
    and connect them to counseling
    services
    June 3-17, 2019   27   45   27   1

f.   **[FORM 2 [N=2,132]]** Makers of
    smart speakers sharing audio
    recordings of their customers with
    law enforcement to help with
    criminal investigations
    June 3-17, 2019   25   49   25   1

ASK ALL:
[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF QUESTIONS A-C]
DB1   In the last 12 months, have you had someone… **[RANDOMIZE]**

		Yes	No	No Answer
a.	Put fraudulent charges on your debit or credit card			
	June 3-17, 2019	21	78	1
b.	Take over your social media or email account without your permission			
	June 3-17, 2019	8	91	1
c.	Attempt to open a line of credit or apply for a loan using your name			
	June 3-17, 2019	6	93	1