

## **National Survey: Balancing Act—The Public’s Take on Civil Liberties and Security**

As privacy issues are debated, trend survey reveals deep concerns among Americans on key civil liberty and security issues.

**Chicago, September 10, 2013**—[The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) has released the results of a survey exploring the views of Americans on the balance between civil liberties and security. The results reveal deep misgivings about the ways in which the government is protecting the privacy of its citizens and even about the possibility of winning the war on terrorism and the strategy being used to wage it.

The many topics covered in the survey included public views of how well the government is doing in protecting people’s right to privacy and other freedoms, Internet surveillance and mass collection of communication data, justification for leaking, and confidence in government institutions.

“These are issues that the American public is following closely and about which they have strong opinions,” said [Trevor Thompson](#), director of the AP-NORC Center. “We did a similar survey two years ago on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 9-11 attacks so we are able to examine shifting trends in public opinion on the balance of civil liberties and security, as well as understand how Americans feel about recent events that put this balance into question.”

Key findings of the survey include:

- A majority of Americans oppose mass surveillance of people’s Internet and phone usage for use in future investigation (56 and 54 percent respectively) and disapprove of the court process that determines whether and how that data can be collected and used.
- Sixty-eight percent of Americans would moderately or strongly favor the appointment of an attorney to argue against the government in the classified proceedings before the federal court that decides whether the government gets permission to analyze the information it has collected. Levels of support are nearly equal across partisan lines.
- Americans continue to support the installation of surveillance cameras in public places. In 2011, more than seven out of 10 Americans supported this practice to watch for suspicious activity or to capture and track license plates of cars in areas at risk of a terrorist attack, and those numbers remain the same today.
- A majority of Americans feel the government’s goal of protecting the rights and freedoms of U.S. citizens is more important than making sure that citizens are safe from harm by terrorists, but confidence in the government’s ability to protect privacy is declining.

- Younger Americans, those age 18 to 29, are more willing than older Americans to reveal details of intelligence operations to prove they do not violate civil rights; while a majority of Americans feel leaking is justified if it reveals government wrongdoing, the view is more strongly held by younger people.
- While their support is tepid at 24 percent, Americans show much more confidence in the ability of the nation's intelligence agencies than in Congress or the Executive Branch, with nearly half saying they have only some confidence and 26 percent saying they have hardly any confidence at all.
- A solid majority of 56 percent express a great deal of confidence in the military, a view that has held up over time, with another 35 percent expressing some confidence.
- Americans are more pessimistic now than they were two years ago about the possibility of the United States winning the war on terrorism; they feel the government reacts to events rather than having a clear plan for dealing with terrorism.
- Compared to 2011, more Americans say that the terrorist attacks of 9-11 had a great deal of impact on Americans' individual rights and freedoms. Looking to the next decade, 60 percent of Americans say they expect to lose more freedoms than they gain.
- Support for arrest and detention of suspected terrorists for extended periods without charges, even for non-citizens, is falling, standing at 49 percent in 2011 and 44 percent today.

### **About the Survey**

The survey was funded and conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Interviews were completed between August 12 and August 29, 2013. The random-digit-dial survey of the 50 states and the District of Columbia was conducted with 1,008 American adults. Of the total, 599 interviews were conducted on landlines and 409 on cell phones. The overall margin of error for the survey was +/- 4.0 percentage points.

Additional information, including the Associated Press stories based on the survey results and the survey's complete topline findings can be found on the AP-NORC Center's website at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).

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