



Fact Sheet

Canadians' opinion on online surveillance

Findings from a national survey conducted between July 24 and July 28, 2013

Government surveillance

- One half (49 per cent) of Canadians find it 'completely unacceptable' for 'governments to monitor everyone's email and other online activities', while 51 per cent say it is either 'acceptable in some circumstances' (47 per cent) or 'completely acceptable' (4 per cent).
- More than three in four (77 per cent) Canadians believe it is 'completely acceptable' (13 per cent) or 'acceptable in some circumstances' (64 per cent) for the Government of Canada to monitor everyone's email and other online activities if officials say this might prevent future terrorist attacks

Online confidentiality

- Only two in 10 (18 per cent) Canadians believe that their Internet activity is confidential, while (61 per cent) don't believe it is. Twenty per cent don't know.
- Two thirds (68 per cent) 'agree' (22 per cent strongly/46 per cent somewhat) that 'as soon as someone conducts an online activity, such as sending an email, makes a purchase, plays a game or participates in social media, they should assume they have lost some of their privacy'. One in three (32 per cent) 'disagrees' (13 per cent strongly/19 per cent somewhat) with this statement.
- Four in 10 (39 per cent) believe the government is tracking their online activity. Fifteen per cent don't think the government is tracking their activity. Almost half (46 per cent) are not sure either way.
- Four in 10 (36 per cent) believe that governments in other countries are tracking their Internet activity. Sixteen per cent don't think this is happening. Half (48 per cent) are unsure either way.
- Two in three (63 per cent) believe that Internet service providers (ISP) are tracking their Internet activity, while just one in 10 (eight per cent) don't think this is happening. Three in 10 (29 per cent) are unsure.
- Two in three (63 per cent) also believe that companies whose websites they visit are tracking their Internet activity. One in 10 (9 per cent) believe this isn't happening. Three in 10 (28 per cent) don't know.
- Two in three (63 per cent) believe the government is 'monitoring who visits certain websites', while four in 10 (40 per cent) think the Government is 'collecting and saving Internet activity records so they could be reviewed in the future'.

- Fifty-three per cent believes the government conducts 'scanning for key words', and four in 10 (43 per cent) thinks that the government is engaged in 'tracking Internet searches'.
- One quarter (23 per cent) believe the government 'reads through emails'. Three per cent don't think the government does any of these things. One quarter (24 per cent) don't know if the government does or does not.
- The most egregious violation, according to Canadians, would be if the government was to read through emails. Six in 10 (61 per cent) believe this is completely unacceptable, while four in 10 (37 per cent) say it is acceptable in some circumstances. Two per cent think it is completely acceptable.
- Nearly half (45 per cent) of Canadians feel it is completely unacceptable for the government to collect and save Internet activity records so they could be reviewed in the future. Half (49 per cent) believe this would be acceptable in some circumstances. Six per cent think it is completely acceptable.
- One in three (34 per cent) believe it is completely unacceptable for the government to track Internet searches. Fifty-eight per cent think it is acceptable in some circumstances. Just 8 per cent think it is a completely acceptable activity for government.
- Three in 10 (28 per cent) are of the opinion that it is completely unacceptable for the government to scan for key words, while a majority (52 per cent) thinks this is acceptable in some circumstances. Nineteen per cent think it is completely acceptable.
- One in four (24 per cent) believe it is completely unacceptable for the Government of Canada to monitor who visits certain websites. Fifty-seven per cent think this is acceptable in some circumstances, and 18 per cent think it's completely acceptable.

Value of privacy online

- One in three (34 per cent) say 'there is no acceptable reason for the government to track my Internet activity under any circumstances'. Sixty-six per cent either say that they would 'prefer the government not track' their Internet activity, but they believe it is acceptable if they have good reason for doing so (59 per cent), or that they 'have no problem' with the government tracking their Internet activity regardless of the circumstances (seven per cent).
- Six in 10 (59 per cent) 'agree' that they would 'be willing to give up their Internet privacy if it would help the government foil terrorist plots'. Four in 10 (41 per cent) 'disagree' (18 per cent strongly/23 per cent somewhat).
- Fifty-five per cent 'agree' (10 per cent strongly/45 per cent somewhat) that 'the benefits of being online outweigh any possible loss of privacy', while a minority (45 per cent) 'disagrees' (18 per cent strongly/27 per cent somewhat).
- Fifty-nine per cent 'would prefer that the Government not review their Internet usage, but they believe it is acceptable if they have a good reason for doing so'.

- Two in 10 (20 per cent) 'agree' (three per cent strongly/17 per cent somewhat) that they would 'be willing to give up their Internet privacy if it would help business they deal with provide them with information about new products or sales they might be interested in'. Most (80 per cent) 'disagree' (48 per cent strongly/32 per cent somewhat) that they would be okay with this type of invasion of their privacy.

Knowledge of the NSA PRISM program

- Two in 10 (20 per cent) say they've heard 'a lot' about this, while a slim majority (51 per cent) of Canadians have heard 'a little' about this issue. Just three in 10 (29 per cent) Canadians 'have not seen, read or heard anything' about the NSA investigation.

These findings are from an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between July 24th and July 28th, 2013, on behalf of the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA).

For this survey, a sample of 1,134 Canadians from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within +/- 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Polls are subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.