

JUNE 10, 2013

Public Says Investigate Terrorism, Even If It Intrudes  
on Privacy

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## Majority Views NSA Phone Tracking as Acceptable Anti-Terror Tactic

*A Pew Research Center/Washington Post Survey*

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## Public Says Investigate Terrorism, Even If It Intrudes on Privacy Majority Views NSA Phone Tracking as Acceptable Anti-Terror Tactic

A majority of Americans – 56% – say the National Security Agency’s (NSA) program tracking the telephone records of millions of Americans is an acceptable way for the government to investigate terrorism, though a substantial minority – 41% – say it is unacceptable. And while the public is more evenly divided over the government’s monitoring of email and other online activities to prevent possible terrorism, these views are largely unchanged since 2002, shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center and The Washington Post, conducted June 6-9 among 1,004 adults, finds no indications that last week’s revelations of the government’s collection of phone records and internet data have altered fundamental public views about the tradeoff between investigating possible terrorism and protecting personal privacy.

Currently 62% say it is more important for the federal government to investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy. Just 34% say it is more important for the government not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats.

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### Most Back NSA Phone Monitoring

<i>NSA getting secret court orders to track calls of millions of Americans to investigate terrorism ...</i>	<b>June 6-9</b>	%
Acceptable		56
Not acceptable		41
Don't know		<u>2</u>
		100

<i>Should the gov't be able to monitor everyone's email to prevent possible terrorism?</i>	<b>July 2002</b>	<b>June 7-9 2013</b>
Yes	45	45
No	47	52
Don't know	<u>8</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/  
WASHINGTON POST June 6-9, 2013.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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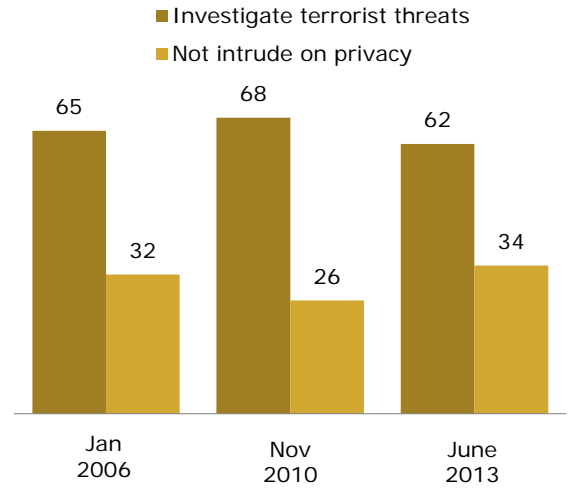
These opinions have changed little since an ABC News/Washington Post survey in January 2006. Currently, there are only modest partisan differences in these opinions: 69% of Democrats say it is more important for the government to investigate terrorist threats, even at the expense of personal privacy, as do 62% of Republicans and 59% of independents.

However, while six-in-ten or more in older age groups say it is more important to investigate terrorism even if it intrudes on privacy, young people are divided: 51% say investigating terrorism is more important while 45% say it is more important for the government not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible threats.

The survey finds that while there are apparent differences between the NSA surveillance programs under the Bush and Obama administrations, overall public reactions to both incidents are similar. Currently, 56% say it is acceptable that the NSA “has been getting secret court orders to track telephone calls of millions of Americans in an effort to investigate terrorism.”

### Public Says Investigate Terrorism, Even if it Intrudes on Privacy

Which is more important?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER/WASHINGTON POST June 6-9, 2013. Jan 2006 and Nov 2010 data from ABC/WP. Don't know responses not shown.

### Public's Views of NSA Surveillance Programs under Obama, Bush

<i>NSA has been getting secret court orders to track calls of millions of Americans to investigate terrorism ...</i>	<b>June 2013</b>
Acceptable	56
Not acceptable	41
Don't know	2
	100
<i>NSA has been investigating people suspected of terrorist involvement by secretly listening in on phone calls &amp; reading emails without court approval...</i>	<b>Jan 2006</b>
Acceptable	51
Not acceptable	47
Don't know	2
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/WASHINGTON POST June 6-9, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Jan. 2006 data from ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST.

In January 2006, a few weeks after initial new reports of the Bush administration's surveillance program, 51% said it was acceptable for the NSA to investigate "people suspected of involvement with terrorism by secretly listening in on telephone calls and reading e-mails between some people in the United States and other countries, without first getting court approval to do so."

However, Republicans and Democrats have had very different views of the two operations. Today, only about half of Republicans (52%) say it is acceptable for the NSA to obtain court orders to track phone call records of millions of Americans to investigate terrorism. In January 2006, fully 75% of Republicans said it was acceptable for the NSA to investigate suspected terrorists by listening in on phone calls and reading emails without court approval.

### Partisan Shifts in Views of NSA Surveillance Programs

*Views of NSA surveillance programs  
(See previous table for differences in question wording)*

	January 2006		June 2013	
	Accept- able %	Un- acceptable %	Accept- able %	Un- acceptable %
Total	51	47	56	41
Republican	75	23	52	47
Democrat	37	61	64	34
Independent	44	55	53	44

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 6-9, 2013. Figures read across. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

Democrats now view the NSA's phone surveillance as acceptable by 64% to 34%. In January 2006, by a similar margin (61% to 36%), Democrats said it was unacceptable for the NSA to scrutinize phone calls and emails of suspected terrorists.

## Public Divided Over Internet Monitoring

The public is divided over the government's monitoring of internet activity in order to prevent possible terrorism: 45% say the government should be able to "monitor everyone's email and other online activities if officials say this might prevent future terrorist attacks." About as many (52%) say the government should not be able to do this.

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### How Partisans View Monitoring of Emails

<i>Should gov't be able to monitor emails if it might prevent future terror attacks?</i>	<i>July 2002</i>		<i>June 2013</i>		<b>Change in 'No'</b>
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Total	45	47	45	52	+5
Republican	53	38	45	51	+13
Democrat	41	51	53	43	-8
Independent	45	49	38	60	+11

PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 6-9, 2013. Question asked Friday through Sunday only. Figures read across. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.

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These views are little changed from a July 2002 Pew Research Center survey. At that time, 45% said the government should be able to monitor everyone's internet activity if the government said it would prevent future attacks; 47% said it should not.

## Young Differ on Principle, but Less on Practice

Younger Americans are more likely than older age groups to prioritize protecting personal privacy over terrorism investigations. Among people ages 18-29, 45% say it is more important for the federal government NOT to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to

investigate possible terrorist threats. That view falls to 35% among those ages 30-49 and just 27% among those ages 50 and older.

There are smaller age differences when it comes to the specific policies in the news this week. When it comes to whether the NSA tracking of phone records is acceptable, nearly the same share of 18 to 29 year olds (55%) say the program is acceptable as those ages 65 and older (61%). Younger Americans are as divided as the nation overall about whether the government should or should not monitor email and online activities in the interest of preventing terrorism.

### Young Place Higher Priority on Privacy, But Most Back NSA Phone Tracking

	Total	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
<i>More important for the federal government...</i>	%	%	%	%	%
To investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy	62	51	63	67	68
Not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats	34	45	35	28	26
Don't know	4	5	2	5	5
	100	100	100	100	100
<i>NSA getting secret court orders to track phone call records of millions of Americans in an effort to investigate terrorism</i>					
Acceptable	56	55	55	56	61
Unacceptable	41	45	42	42	34
Don't know	2	1	3	2	4
	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Do you think the government should be able to monitor everyone's email and other online activities if officials say this might prevent future terrorist attacks?*</i>					
Should	45	46	44	39	55
Should not	52	51	54	56	41
Don't know	3	2	2	5	4
	100	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/WASHINGTON POST June 6-9, 2013. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. \*Asked June 7-9 only.

## One-in-Four Following NSA News ‘Very Closely’

Roughly a quarter (27%) of Americans say they are following news about the government collecting Verizon phone records very closely. This is a relatively modest level of public interest. Only another 21% say they are following this fairly closely, while about half say they are following not too (17%) or not at all (35%) closely.

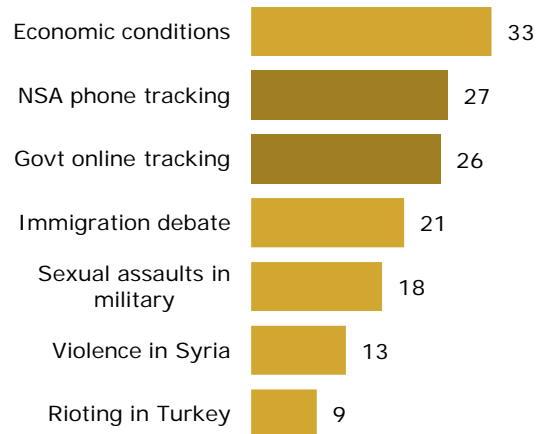
Interest in reports about the government tracking of email and online activities is almost identical: 26% say they are following this story very closely, 33% not closely at all.

As with most news stories, interest is far higher among older Americans than the young: one-in-three (33%) Americans ages 50 and older are following news about the government tracking phone records very closely. Among those ages 18-29, just 12% are following very closely, while 56% say they are not following closely at all.

Attention to these stories is higher among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents: 32% are following reports about the government tracking phone records very closely, compared with 24% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents. The partisan gap in interest is almost identical when it comes to reports about government collecting email and other online information: 30% of Republicans and Republican-leaners are following very closely compared with 20% of Democrats and Democratic-leaners.

### Similar Interest in Phone and Online Stories

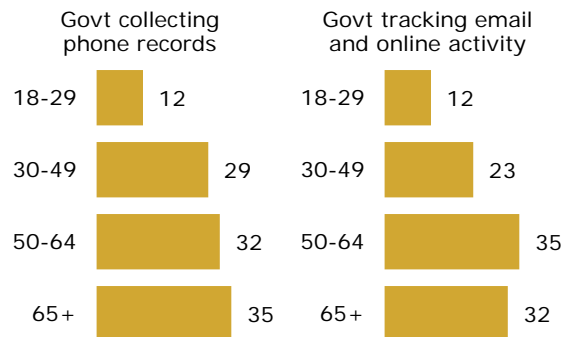
Percent following news about each very closely



PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 6-9, 2013.

### Few Young People Following Reports Very Closely

Percent following news about each very closely



PEW RESEARCH CENTER June 6-9, 2013.

Overall, those who disagree with the government's data monitoring are following the reports somewhat more closely than those who support them. Among those who find the government's tracking of phone records to be unacceptable, 31% are following the story very closely, compared with 21% among those who say it is acceptable. Similarly with respect to reports about government monitoring of email and online activities, 28% of those who say this should not be done are following the news very closely, compared with 23% of those who approve of the practice.



## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted June 6-9, 2013, among a national sample of 1,004 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (501 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 503 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 247 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,004	3.7 percentage points
Republicans	224	7.9 percentage points
Democrats	337	6.4 percentage points
Independents	352	6.3 percentage points
<i>Data from Friday-Sunday interviews only</i>		
Republicans	743	4.3 percentage points
Democrats	165	9.2 percentage points
Independents	238	7.6 percentage points
	273	7.1 percentage points

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

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**  
**June 6-9, 2013 OMNIBUS**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**N=1,004**

**ASK ALL:**

PEW.1 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]**

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a. Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy					
June 6-9, 2013	33	31	15	21	*
May 16-19, 2013	30	31	20	19	*
May 9-12, 2013	28	30	21	20	1
March 28-31, 2013	30	30	17	22	1
March 7-10, 2013	35	30	16	19	*
January 31-February 3, 2013	33	33	16	16	1
January 17-20, 2013	36	32	15	16	*
January 3-6, 2013	34	32	18	16	1
December 6-9, 2012	38	30	16	14	1
November 8-11, 2012	41	31	15	12	1
November 1-4, 2012	38	30	16	14	1
October 25-28, 2012	44	30	14	11	1
October 18-21, 2012	39	36	12	12	1
October 12-14, 2012	42	28	14	15	1
October 4-7, 2012	40	29	13	17	*
September 27-30, 2012	34	37	13	15	1
September 20-23, 2012	36	32	17	15	*
September 13-16, 2012	38	32	17	12	1
September 7-9, 2012	36	31	17	15	2
August 31-September 3, 2012	33	31	20	16	1
August 23-26, 2012	38	30	15	16	1
August 16-19, 2012	33	32	16	19	*
August 9-12, 2012	30	31	20	18	1
August 2-5, 2012	33	29	20	17	1
July 26-29, 2012	32	30	20	19	*
July 19-22, 2012	39	29	16	16	*
July 12-15, 2012	32	33	18	17	1
July 5-8, 2012	34	28	18	19	1
June 28-July 1, 2012	38	28	15	18	1
June 21-24, 2012	33	32	17	17	*
June 14-17, 2012	39	28	15	17	*
June 7-10, 2012	35	32	15	18	*
May 31-June 3, 2012	37	34	13	14	1
May 24-27, 2012	33	31	19	16	1
May 17-20, 2012	35	30	16	19	*
May 10-13, 2012	40	26	16	17	*
May 3-6, 2012	38	29	13	20	*
April 26-29, 2012	34	32	17	16	1
April 19-22, 2012	35	35	13	14	2
April 12-15, 2012	39	28	16	17	1
April 5-8, 2012	37	31	16	16	1
March 29-April 1, 2012	34	33	15	18	1
March 22-25, 2012	36	29	16	18	1
March 15-18, 2012	40	35	11	14	1
March 8-11, 2012	37	32	14	17	*
March 1-4, 2012	41	27	15	17	1
February 23-26, 2012	37	33	14	15	1

## PEW.1 CONTINUED...

	Very <u>closely</u>	Fairly <u>closely</u>	Not too <u>closely</u>	Not at all <u>closely</u>	(VOL.) DK/Ref
February 16-20, 2012	33	32	16	17	1
February 9-12, 2012	42	30	14	13	1
February 2-5, 2012	38	32	16	13	1
January 26-29, 2012	35	31	16	19	*
January 19-22, 2012	35	30	16	19	1
January 12-15, 2012	33	32	14	20	1
January 5-8, 2012	39	31	15	15	*

SEE TREND FOR PREVIOUS YEARS: <http://www.people-press.org/files/2013/01/NII-Economy-trend.pdf>

## b. Debate over immigration policy in the U.S.

June 6-9, 2013	21	28	21	30	1
May 23-26, 2013	17	23	23	37	1
May 9-12, 2013	20	24	25	30	1
April 25-28, 2013	19	25	24	32	*
April 18-21, 2013	21	22	25	31	1
April 4-7, 2013	23	22	22	32	*

**TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:**

January 31-February 3, 2013: <i>Debate in Washington over immigration policy</i>	23	25	22	29	1
June 28-July 1, 2012: <i>The Supreme Court decision on Arizona's immigration law</i>	29	21	19	30	1
April 26-29, 2012: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	21	24	26	27	1
May 12-15, 2011	18	22	27	32	1
September 2-6, 2010	30	31	19	20	1
August 12-15, 2010	27	31	19	21	1
July 29-August 1, 2010: <i>A court ruling that stops most of Arizona's immigration law from going into effect</i>	40	32	17	10	1
July 8-11, 2010: <i>The U.S. Justice Department challenging the legality of Arizona's recent immigration law</i>	30	27	19	23	1
July 1-5, 2010: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	34	30	20	14	1
May 7-10, 2010: <i>A new Arizona law that gives police more authority to question people they suspect might be illegal immigrants</i>	38	27	13	21	1
April 30-May 3, 2010	36	31	13	20	*
October 12-15, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	23	29	19	29	*
June 29-July 2, 2007: <i>The debate in Congress over new immigration policy</i>	26	30	21	23	*
June 22-25, 2007	24	28	22	26	*
June 15-18, 2007	22	32	21	25	*
June 8-11, 2007	24	29	20	26	1
May 24-27, 2007	27	31	22	19	1
April 12-16, 2007: <i>The issue of immigration</i>	21	29	24	26	*
August, 2006	34	40	16	9	1
June, 2006	36	41	15	7	1
May, 2006	44	33	13	9	1
April, 2006	39	34	16	10	1
December, 1994: <i>Passage of Proposition 187, the California law that bars education, health and welfare benefits from illegal immigrants and their children</i>	26	32	22	20	*

PEW.1 CONTINUED...	Very closely	Fairly closely	Not too closely	Not at all closely	(VOL.) DK/Ref
c. Reports about sexual assaults in the military June 6-9, 2013	18	28	19	35	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
March 25-29, 1998: <i>The trial of Army Sergeant Major Gene McKinney on charges of sexual misconduct and obstruction of justice</i>	10	27	36	27	*
May 15-18, 1997: <i>Sexual harassment charges against Army Sergeants</i>	18	43	24	14	1
d. Political protests and rioting in Turkey June 6-9, 2013	9	15	23	53	*
e. Political violence in Syria June 6-9, 2013	13	23	22	42	*
May 9-12, 2013	17	24	25	33	1
<b>TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:</b>					
April 25-28, 2013: <i>Charges that Syria has used chemical weapons against anti- government groups</i>	18	25	24	33	1
March 28-31, 2013: <i>Political violence in Syria</i>	13	22	25	40	1
December 13-16, 2012	14	26	26	33	1
December 6-9, 2012	19	28	23	29	1
November 29-December 2, 2012	15	23	23	39	1
August 16-19, 2012	12	24	26	37	2
July 19-22, 2012	17	24	23	36	1
June 28-July 1, 2012	13	19	26	42	*
June 14-17, 2012	15	24	21	40	1
May 31-June 3, 2012	12	25	25	37	1
April 12-15, 2012: <i>International efforts to stop political violence in Syria</i>	14	23	25	37	1
April 5-8, 2012	15	21	27	37	1
March 15-18, 2012: <i>Political violence in Syria</i>	16	26	27	30	1
March 8-11, 2012	17	23	23	37	1
February 23-26, 2012	18	24	21	35	1
February 9-12, 2012	17	23	23	36	*
January 12-15, 2012	12	17	26	45	1
August 4-7, 2011: <i>Political violence following uprisings in Syria</i>	10	19	26	44	1
June 2-5, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries</i>	18	25	25	32	*
May 5-8, 2011: <i>Political violence following uprisings in Syria</i>	14	27	30	28	1
April 28-May 1, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests and violence in some Middle Eastern countries</i>	18	29	25	27	1
February 3-6, 2011: <i>Anti-government protests in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries</i>	32	35	16	18	*
January 27-30, 2011	17	26	21	35	*
f. The government collecting records about Verizon phone calls for national security purposes June 6-9, 2013	27	21	17	35	*

**PEW.1 CONTINUED...****TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:**

April 27-May 22, 2006: *Reports that the National Security Agency has been collecting telephone records of millions of American citizens*

	<u>Very closely</u>	<u>Fairly closely</u>	<u>Not too closely</u>	<u>Not at all closely</u>	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
	33	28	22	16	1

**ASKED JUNE 7-9, 2013 ONLY [N=743]:**

g. The government collecting emails and other online activities directly from large internet companies to track foreign suspects in terror investigations

June 6-9, 2013

	26	24	17	33	1
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**PEW.2-PEW.3 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****NO PEW.4-PEW.5****PEWWP.1-PEWWP.6 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

WP.1

What do you think is more important right now **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]** – For the federal government to investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy **[OR]** For the federal government not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats?

	Investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy	Not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats	<b>(VOL.)</b> <u>DK/Ref</u>
June 6-9, 2013	62	34	4

**TREND FROM ABC/WP:**

Nov 21, 2010	68	26	6
Jan 12-15, 2010	75	23	2
Dec 7-11, 2006	63	34	3
September 2006	65	32	3
May 15, 2006	67	30	3
May 11, 2006	65	31	4
January, 2006	65	32	3
September 2003 <sup>1</sup>	73	21	5
September 2002	78	18	4
June 2002	79	18	3

**NO QUESTION WP.2**

<sup>1</sup> ABC/WP trends for September 2003 and earlier asked about "FBI" rather than "Federal government."

**ASK ALL:**

WP.3

As you may know, it has been reported that the National Security Agency has been getting secret court orders to track telephone call records of MILLIONS of Americans in an effort to investigate terrorism. Would you consider this access to telephone call records an acceptable or unacceptable way for the federal government to investigate terrorism? **[PROBE: Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?]**

Jun 6-9

2013

56	Acceptable
30	Strongly
26	Somewhat
41	Unacceptable
27	Strongly
14	Somewhat
2	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**ABC/WP TREND FOR COMPARISON:**

*On another subject: as you may know, the National Security Agency has been investigating people suspected of involvement with terrorism by secretly listening in on telephone calls and reading e-mails between some people in the United States and other countries, without first getting court approval to do so. Would you consider this wiretapping of telephone calls and e-mails without court approval as an acceptable or unacceptable way for the federal government to investigate terrorism? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?*

	-----Acceptable-----			-----Unacceptable-----			
	<u>NET</u>	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>NET</u>	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Mar 2006	54	39	15	46	13	32	*
Late Jan 2006	56	38	17	43	10	33	1
Early Jan 2006	51	35	15	47	14	33	2

**ASKED JUNE 7-9, 2013 ONLY [N=743]:**

WP.4

Do you think the U.S. government should be able to monitor everyone's email and other online activities if officials say this might prevent future terrorist attacks?

Jun 6-9

2013

45	Yes, should monitor
52	No, should not monitor
3	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

*PIAL*

Jun 26-Jul 26

2002

45
47
8

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**Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:**

(PIAL)

Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life project

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