

Learn more about the big data review

The American people are interacting with technology more than ever — when using a cell phone, shopping online, visiting a doctor who uses electronic records, and in countless other everyday acts. These applications of technology and data are enhancing our lives in countless ways — helping us share experiences with distant loved ones, providing us with information at the click of a button, or aiding a job search. As these technologies become more sophisticated, the ways that we think about and protect individual privacy also evolve.

On January 17, President Obama [spoke at the Justice Department](#) about changes in the technology that we use for national security purposes, and what these technologies mean for our privacy broadly. He called on the administration to conduct a broad 90-day review of big data and privacy: how these technologies affect the way we live and the way we work — and how big data is being used by universities, the private sector, and the government.

[Read the Big Data Report](#)

[Big Data Report Fact Sheet](#)

[Read the Announcement Blog Post](#)

Concurrent with this study, the President's Council of Advisors for Science and Technology conducted a review of the technologies underpinning big data.

[Read the study from the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology](#)

[See responses to the Request for Information.](#)

The Big Data and Privacy Review

[What We Heard From You](#)

Big Data Privacy Workshops

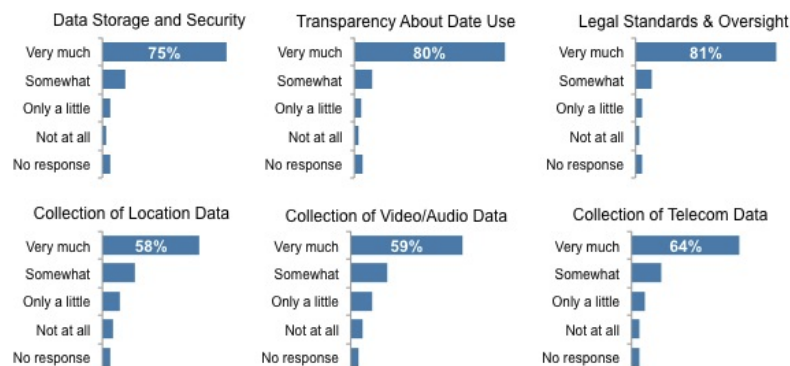
[Read the Report](#)

What We Heard From You

As part of the administration's [90-day review of big data and privacy](#), we sought out public input on these issues through a survey on WhiteHouse.gov. In it, we asked people to tell us how concerned they are with various data practices and how much they trust various institutions to keep their data safe and handle it responsibly. During the four weeks of public input through this form, responses were collected from 24,092 individuals. The White House did not include submission fields for name or contact information. Although this survey is not a statistically representative survey of public opinion, we think it provides an insightful glimpse into how people feel about the collection and use of data, and we'd like to share those insights with you here.

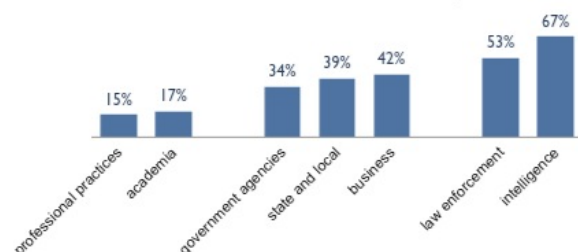
Respondents felt most strongly about data use and collection practices, expressing a great deal of concern about all of the practices described in the survey. Even in the area where respondents expressed the least amount of concern, collection of location data, a sizable majority (61%) were "very much concerned." And they demonstrated particularly strong feelings around ensuring that proper transparency and oversight is in place for data practices — more than 80% of respondents were very concerned with each of these areas.

Concern with data practices

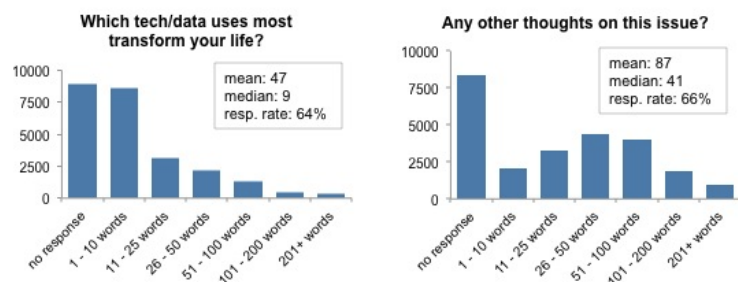


Considerably more nuance was evident in respondents' views towards different entities who collect and use data. Although majorities claimed to trust Intelligence and Law Enforcement Agencies "not at all," their views towards other government agencies (at both federal and local levels) and commercial businesses were far less negative. Further, majorities were generally trusting of how professional practices and academia handle and use their data. The varying degrees of trust expressed in the entities described here may reflect the underlying tension between the privacy concerns and the benefits of these big data practices. Aggregating health data carries the risk of exposure or misuse, but may also allow for the early detection and containment of an outbreak. Similarly, tracked location data from one's cell phone opens up some frightening possibilities, but could also help find it if it is lost or stolen, or could help rescuers locate victims of an earthquake or tornado.

Percent who do not trust each entity at all



Finally, we asked respondents to give us their thoughts on which technologies and data uses were most transforming their lives and if they had any general thoughts they wanted to share on the issue of big data and privacy. About two-thirds of respondents provided an answer to each of these questions, though answers to the latter were generally much more verbose — with a median length of 41 words, compared with just 9 for the first question.



The technologies that people found most transformative focused heavily around the internet, access to information, and communication through email, cell phones, and social media. Overall, respondents' general thoughts on the issue reflected the responses to the specific questions about institutions and data practices described above. These answers focused heavily on government use and collection of data, with many voicing concerns about protecting privacy, respecting personal data, and strengthening data security practices. The word clouds below depict the responses to these questions, with words and phrases weighted by the number of responses that mentioned each term.

Which technologies or uses of data are most transforming your life?



Are there any other thoughts on this issue that you would like to share?



Taken together, the findings from this survey indicate that respondents were most wary of how intelligence and law enforcement agencies are collecting and using data about them, particularly when they have little insight into these practices. Data privacy is an important issue for the President and his administration, and already he has

taken several steps to strengthen the oversight of intelligence agencies' data practices and increase transparency about how, when, and under what circumstances data is collected and used. These steps have included ending the bulk collection of telephone metadata by the NSA, including public interest advocates in FISA Court hearings, and limiting the scope of data that can be collected.

The 90-day review this survey was a part of is part of the foundation for future policies and actions that will help us stay at the forefront of this rapidly evolving sector.

[You can read the full big data report here.](#)

Big Data Privacy Workshops

White House / UC Berkeley School of Information / Berkeley Center for Law and Technology

[PDF of Counselor John Podesta's remarks](#)

[Video of the remarks](#) (via UC Berkeley)

White House / Data & Society Research Institute / NYU Information Law Institute

[Video of Counselor John Podesta's remarks](#) (via Data & Society Research Institute)

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Vice President Joe Biden

First Lady Michelle Obama

Dr. Jill Biden

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Executive Office of the

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