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For Your Safety

What Americans Think About Safety and Public Surveillance

After the bombings at the Boston Marathon, many Americans showed their support for surveillance cameras in public areas. When asked if these cameras could help reduce crime, many Americans answered favorably. According to Rasmussen Reports, a recent phone survey they conducted found that less than 20 percent of American adults are against the use of public surveillance and security cameras. About 70 percent supported the idea, and the remaining participants were undecided.

The survey also showed that about 55 percent of participants believed they were safer in public when security cameras were in use. However, more than 25 percent disagree with this idea. More than 50 percent of respondents said that surveillance cameras would reduce crime, and almost 30 percent disagreed with this statement. More than 85 percent of Americans think cameras are at least somewhat important tools for assisting law enforcement officers in solving crimes. Of this number, almost 60 percent felt strongly that cameras were vital for solving crimes. About 10 percent of respondents felt that cameras were unimportant.

More than 85 percent of likely voters said that law enforcement agencies did well at conducting investigations during the Boston bombings. Another 70 percent of respondents felt that another terrorist attack would likely occur within the span of one year. Less than 20 percent of survey participants felt

that the United States would be safe from attacks indefinitely.

In a similar survey conducted in 2011, more than 65 percent of voters were in favor of surveillance cameras in public stadiums, parks and transportation stations. Of the favorable respondents, the majority were elderly individuals and women. Younger participants were less enthused about the idea of public surveillance. More than 80 percent of Democrats showed favor for the cameras, but slightly more than 65 percent of Republicans were in favor. More than 60 percent of participants without a political affiliation were in favor of the idea. While these groups may not agree on whether cameras make citizens safer, they mostly agreed that cameras were helpful for law enforcement officers.

The survey showed that black respondents had more faith in the effectiveness of surveillance systems than white people or other minorities showed. Although Americans claim they value privacy, about half of respondents said they would compromise their privacy for security. Only about 15 percent believe that the United States allows too much freedom. Almost 45 percent of respondents said the American justice system is mostly fair, but 40 percent disagreed. However, Americans generally agree that the justice system's main problem is setting criminals free and arresting innocent people.



THE MCINTYRE GROUP
INSURANCE BROKERS & CONSULTANTS

Woodland Falls Corporate Park

220 Lake Drive East, Suite 210, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

(P) 856-482-9900 • (F) 856-482-1888 • Email: lfunari@mcintyre-group.com



Luanne Funari

Vice President,
Director of Claims Management