

OTHERS SAY: Big Brother is watching, or will be soon

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The Fourth Amendment protects Americans from "unreasonable searches and seizures" by the government, acknowledging the "right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects." It is a bedrock principle of the Bill of Rights.

But a survey released this month reveals that an astonishing number of Americans, particularly younger Americans, would be comfortable throwing this fundamental protection on the ash heap of history.

The Cato Institute recently conducted a poll of 2,000 adults and included the question: "Would you favor or oppose the government installing surveillance cameras in every household to reduce domestic violence, abuse and other illegal activity?"

Seventy-five percent of respondents were against such an outrageous intrusion. But 14 percent approved and 10 percent "didn't know."

Holy George Orwell. It gets worse.

Breaking down the responses, Cato discovered that 29 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 29 and 20 percent of those aged 30 to 44 gave a thumbs-up to the concept of the government putting cameras in private residences to monitor potential wrongdoing.

Perhaps this isn't surprising, given the intolerance many younger Americans today show for the First Amendment and the concept of free speech. Those ubiquitous electronic devices have also eroded privacy expectations. Yet it's nevertheless horrifically distressing that a significant number of those in Gen Z demonstrate such an utter lack of appreciation for individual liberty and freedom.

"We don't know how much of this preference for security over privacy or freedom is something unique to this generation (a cohort effect) or simply the result of youth (age effect)," the authors of the Cato study write. "However, there is reason to think part of this is generational. Americans over age 45 have vastly different attitudes on in-home surveillance cameras than those who are younger."

At the same time, the U.S. Department of Education announced last month that eighth-grade test scores in U.S. history and civics fell to their lowest level on record in 2022.

Might that help explain why so many young adults would happily escort their government overlords inside their own homes to install the surveillance cameras?

"Without explicitly telling younger generations about the risks and dangers of government surveillance," the Cato survey concludes, "they will forget these lessons and may find themselves repeating devastating mistakes of the past."

If it isn't already too late.