

# Americans to Advertisers: Stop spying on me!

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Researchers at UC Berkeley and the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication recently [released the results](#) [1] of a large-scale study of consumer attitudes toward behavioral targeting (also known as behavioral advertising). The report's findings were astonishing in their simplicity: the majority of consumers do not want their information collected and used for the purpose of customizing targeted news or advertisements. Consumers also believe they have the right to access and control information that companies have collected about them. Study authors reported a number of significant findings. Among them: If given a choice, 68% of Americans "definitely would not" allow advertisers to follow them online even if their online activities would remain anonymous. 19% "probably" would not allow this tracking. 63% of Americans feel that laws should require advertisers to delete information about their Internet activity immediately. 69% of Americans would like to see a law giving them the right to access all of the information a Web site has collected about them. 62% of respondents believe that "If a website has a privacy policy, it means that the site cannot share information about you with other companies, unless you give the website your permission." As CDT's [Heather West wrote](#) [2] in a piece about privacy concerns amongst young adults, even digital natives object to behavioral targeting. The study authors reported that 86% of young adults reject advertisements that are tailored based on their activities across multiple Web sites. If the advertisements are tailored based on information gathered about their offline behavior, then 90% of young adults want nothing to do with these ads. These findings represent a strong repudiation of many Industry players' refrain. Companies can no longer claim in good faith that most customers want tailored advertisements or that digital natives, who they posit protect personal privacy less vehemently, readily accept this type of targeting. Neither can they claim that posting a link to a (often legalistic) privacy policy is equivalent to notifying consumers about how information about them is being collected and used. These results also support CDT's consistent recommendations for ways to return some control to consumers over their personal information. The survey made clear that consumers recognize the ability to access information that is on file about them and to have that information deleted as important rights. We hope that this study will help change the tenor of discussion about behavioral targeting, for it demonstrates in no uncertain terms that the majority strongly believes being followed is just no fun.

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## Links:

[1] <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/30/business/media/30adco.html?ref=technology>

[2] <http://www.wired.com/geekdad/2009/10/is-online-privacy-a-generational-issue/>