

Survey Shows Americans Want Law Enforcement Agencies to Use Facial Recognition for Public Safety

January 22, 2019 - The Center for Data Innovation has released the results of a survey on the use of facial recognition software by law enforcement agencies. The results clearly show that Americans want law enforcement agencies to have access to such software by more than 2 to 1 margins.

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According to the survey results, only 26.2% of respondents said that law enforcement agencies should have strict limits placed on their use of facial recognition. That figure dropped to just 18.3% of respondents when public safety issues became involved.

The survey results come as debates about the use of this technology are heating up. A group of Amazon shareholders intends to bring a motion up at the company's next shareholder meeting that would ban the company from selling its Rekognition software to government agencies. That ban would take effect immediately and could only be lifted if the company's board of directors determines that the use of its facial recognition platform didn't adversely impact privacy and civil rights.

And legislators in the State of Washington are currently debating a bill that would place strict limits on the use of facial recognition software in both the private and government sectors; including for law enforcement.

It should be noted that the Washington state law would have absolutely no impact on the collection and use of facial recognition data by the federal government, even in the State of Washington. But it could dramatically impact its use in the private sector and by state law enforcement agencies. Commercial entities would have to clearly post that they were collecting and using facial recognition data in public places. And state law enforcement agencies would need a search warrant before they could use facial recognition.

The first public hearing on the Washington State law is being held today.

by Jim Malmberg

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