

TO: Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF)

FR: Morning Consult

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RE: Flash Survey – Bipartisan Public Demands Human Control of AI, Opposes Warrantless Surveillance

Prepared for ITIF



As the Department of War levels threats and ultimatums against Anthropic, Morning Consult conducted a nationally representative survey of 1,976 U.S. adults to better understand attitudes around the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in military actions, whether technology companies have a responsibility to set limits on their products, and how Americans view mass surveillance. The findings from the survey are as follows:

Americans Want Humans in Control of AI

The Big Picture

Americans are deeply skeptical of AI in military operations. Nearly 8 in 10 (79%) say a **human being should always make the final decision** before any use of lethal force—a view held equally by Democrats (81%) and Republicans (81%). Three-quarters (75%) say AI technology is not yet reliable enough to be trusted with life-or-death military decisions without human oversight (Dem: 77%, Rep: 73%).

Concerns are Intense and Bipartisan

Majorities are “very concerned” about every tested AI scenario, and the pattern holds across party lines:

	% very concerned	Adults	Democrats	Republicans
AI being used to spread misinformation or manipulate public opinion	56%	62%	54%	
AI-controlled weapons that select and fire on targets without human involvement	54%	63%	49%	
AI being used to monitor and track people’s online activity without their knowledge	54%	60%	52%	
AI systems making errors in high-stakes military situations with no human to intervene	54%	61%	51%	
AI being used for mass surveillance of American citizens by the government	53%	59%	48%	
Other nations using AI for military purposes against the U.S.	53%	55%	55%	

Methodology: This poll was conducted February 25th, 2026 among a nationally representative sample of 1,976 U.S. adults. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of U.S. adults based on gender, age, race, educational attainment, region, gender by age, and race by educational attainment. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.



Autonomous Weapons: Research, Don't Deploy

The public draws a clear line between understanding the technology and putting it on the battlefield. Only **21%** support developing and deploying AI-controlled weapons (Dem: 16%, Rep: 35%). The plurality position (**49%**) is to **research but not deploy** (Dem: 54%, Rep: 44%)—with another 13% opposing any research at all.

71% agree the U.S. should still research and develop AI-controlled weapons to understand the technology and defend against enemies who might use them against us, even if we choose not to deploy them (Dem: 72%, Rep: 79%). Republicans are notably divided: while 48% say the U.S. *must* develop these weapons to stay ahead of adversaries, 34% say they should be banned because they are too dangerous and unethical.

Surveillance: Americans Want Legal Process, Not Blank Checks

A majority (**54%**) say AI-powered mass surveillance is too dangerous and violates privacy and civil liberties (Dem: 63%, Rep: 45%), versus 30% who see it as necessary for safety. Even Republicans are more likely to say mass surveillance is too dangerous (45%) than to call it necessary (40%).

But the public isn't reflexively anti-security—**46%** say the government should **only** be able to use AI surveillance **on specific targets with a court-issued warrant** (Dem: 45%, Rep: 51%).

The constitutional principle is clear: **70%** agree that using AI to monitor Americans without a court-issued warrant violates the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable searches (Dem: 74%, Rep: 71%).

Americans Back Companies Setting Limits

Two-thirds (**67%**) believe private technology companies have a responsibility to set limits on how their products can be used, even if the government wants to use them differently (Dem: 73%, Rep: 65%). When the trade-off is explicit, **53%** say private AI companies should be allowed to restrict how their technology is used, including banning its use for domestic surveillance or autonomous weapons (Dem: 58%, Rep: 43%), versus just **29%** who say companies should be required to provide the military with full access to ensure national security.

On the Anthropic dispute specifically, half (**50%**) of those who are aware of the dispute view penalizing the company as government overreach that sets a dangerous precedent (Dem: 57%, Rep: 39%), while 35% call it necessary for national security. Among Republicans who are aware of the dispute, opinion is closely split and many are undecided: 44% say it's necessary, 39% call it overreach, and 16% are unsure.



Important Context: A Public Still Forming Its Views

Most Americans haven't engaged deeply with these issues yet. **56%** have heard "not much" or "nothing at all" about the Anthropic–Department of War dispute; only **12%** have heard "a lot." Opinion on specific policy tools remains unsettled: **30%** are unsure about supply chain risk designations, and **20%** are unsure about using emergency laws to compel company compliance.

The trust landscape is fragmented. No institution commands majority confidence on AI decisions. The most trusted entity is **an independent scientific or ethics review board (22%)**, followed by the military and AI companies (14% each). A quarter of Americans (25%) say they're simply not sure who to trust. Notably, **45%** oppose using emergency laws to force AI company compliance (Dem: 57%, Rep: 29%), versus **35%** who support it (Dem: 28%, Rep: 54%)—but these numbers could shift as awareness grows.

Key Stats

Top-line findings for quick reference:

- 79% say a human should always make the final decision before any use of lethal force
- 75% say AI is not yet reliable enough to be trusted with life-or-death military decisions without human oversight
- 54% say AI-powered mass surveillance is too dangerous and violates privacy and civil liberties
- 70% agree that using AI to monitor Americans without a court-issued warrant violates the Fourth Amendment
- 67% say private tech companies have a responsibility to set limits on how their products can be used, even if the government disagrees
- 53% say AI companies should be allowed to restrict their technology from uses like domestic surveillance or autonomous weapons, vs. just 29% who say companies must give the military full access
- 49% support researching AI-controlled weapons but not deploying them; only 21% favor deployment
- 47% say penalizing Anthropic is government overreach, vs. 29% who say it's necessary for national security
- 45% oppose using emergency laws to force AI company compliance, vs. 35% who support it

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