

Public's Views on Privacy

New York

A Louis Harris poll reports that Americans are opposed, 68 per cent to 27 per cent, to letting the government wiretap citizens suspected of crimes without a court order.

The other five per cent said they were not sure whether they opposed or favored such wiretaps.

"The Watergate disclosures left an indelible impression on American public opinion that extreme care must be taken in the future against invasion of privacy," Harris said in announcing the poll results yesterday.

Harris said the poll of a cross section of 1495 households showed these results:

- Americans are 81 per cent to 13 per cent against having their phones tapped without court orders.

- They are 77 per cent to 14 per cent against letting the government open their mail without court orders.

- They are 80 per cent to 12 per cent against being spied on by many kind of electronic device, except with a court order.

- By 80 per cent to 12 per cent they oppose allowing the telephone company to give out records of long distance phone calls, except by court order.

- A majority of 66 per cent to 20 per cent is ready to sue the FBI if it publicly releases the transcripts of wiretapped conversations.

In each case, a small per cent of the persons polled said they were not sure if they were for or against the proposal.

Associated Press