

# Facial Recognition Facts vs. Myths

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# About ITIF

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ITIF is a public policy think tank committed to articulating and advancing a pro-productivity, pro-innovation, and pro-technology public policy agenda internationally, in Washington, and in the states.

ITIF focuses on:

- Innovation processes, policy, and metrics
- Policies to boost and safely implement science and technological advances
- IT and economic productivity

# Concerns About Facial Recognition

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- Numerous assertions about facial recognition have surfaced in the media
  - “The Dangers of Facial Recognition Software” – *The Washington Post*
  - “‘We Are Hurling Towards a Surveillance State’: The Rise of Facial Recognition Technology” – *The Guardian*
  - “Facial Recognition Is Accurate, If You’re a White Guy” – *The New York Times*

- Myth #1
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Facial Analysis is Facial Recognition

- Fact #1

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# Facial Analysis and Facial Recognition Are Different Technologies That Use Different Training Data

Source: Daniel Castro, “Note to Press: Facial Analysis Is Not Facial Recognition,” Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

- Myth #2

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## Facial Recognition Is Inaccurate

- Fact #2

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The Top 50 Algorithms Have Accuracy Levels of At Least 98.75 Percent

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Source: Rank One, "Race and Face Recognition Accuracy: Common Misconceptions"

- Myth #3

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Facial Recognition Does Not Work on People of Color



- Fact #3

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The Top 20 Algorithms Are Most Accurate on Black Males

Source: Rank One, "Race and Face Recognition Accuracy: Common Misconceptions"

- Myth #4

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Facial Recognition Only Has Negative Uses

- Fact #4

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## Facial Recognition Has Helped Find Victims of Human Trafficking, Missing Children, and Identify Violent Criminals

Source: Daniel Castro, "In Attempt to Ban Facial Recognition Technology, Massachusetts Could Inadvertently Ban Facebook, iPhones, and More," Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

- Myth #5

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The Public Opposes the Use of Facial Recognition

- Fact #5

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Only One in Four Americans Think Government  
Should Strictly Limit Its Use

Source: Daniel Castro and Michael McLaughlin, "Survey: Few Americans Want Government to Limit Use of Facial Recognition Technology, Particularly for Public Safety or Airport Screening," Center for Data Innovation

- Myth #6

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Providers Are Storing Millions of Faces in the  
Cloud

- Fact #6

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Major Providers Generally Store Vectors, Not Actual Images

Source: Amazon, "Non-Storage and Storage API Operations"

- Myth #7

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All Facial Recognition Technology Is the Same



- Fact #7

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## Providers Use Different Algorithms and Techniques

Source: Naomi Lachance, "Facebook's Facial Recognition Software Is Different From the FBI's. Here's Why," NPR

- Myth #8

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Facial Recognition Will Lead to a Surveillance State

- Fact #8

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## Policymakers Can Implement Guardrails to Prevent Inappropriate Surveillance

Source: Sen. Chris Coons and Sen. Mike Lee, "Facial Recognition Technology Warrant Act of 2019"

- Myth #9

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No Laws Govern the Use of Facial Recognition

- Fact #9

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# The U.S. Constitution Protects Individuals From Facial Recognition Abuses

Source: Daniel Castro, "In Attempt to Ban Facial Recognition Technology, Massachusetts Could Inadvertently Ban Facebook, iPhones, and More," Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

- Myth #10

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Bans Are the Only Solution for Facial Recognition

- Fact #10

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## Bans Can Have Significant Unintended Consequences

Source: Daniel Castro, "In Attempt to Ban Facial Recognition Technology, Massachusetts Could Inadvertently Ban Facebook, iPhones, and More," Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

# Recommendations

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1. Set Performance Standards for Facial Recognition
2. Develop Best Practices
3. Encourage Pilots
4. Legislate Guardrails to Prohibit Negative Uses
5. Consider Broader Oversight on Appropriate Police Behavior

Source: Daniel Castro, “Statement to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform Regarding Facial Recognition and Civil Liberties,”  
Information Technology and Innovation Foundation



# Thank You!

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