



## More Data Is Available to Law Enforcement Than Ever Before

Despite warnings from some law enforcement officials of the risk of “going dark” — that is, losing the ability to access communications and other digital evidence for criminal investigations — the reality is that law enforcement entities in the US and around the world have access to more data than at any previous time in history. As that access continues to rapidly grow, we should instead focus on efforts to help law enforcement process the huge amounts of data they must already manage in today’s investigations.

### Percentage of US Adults Using Social Media

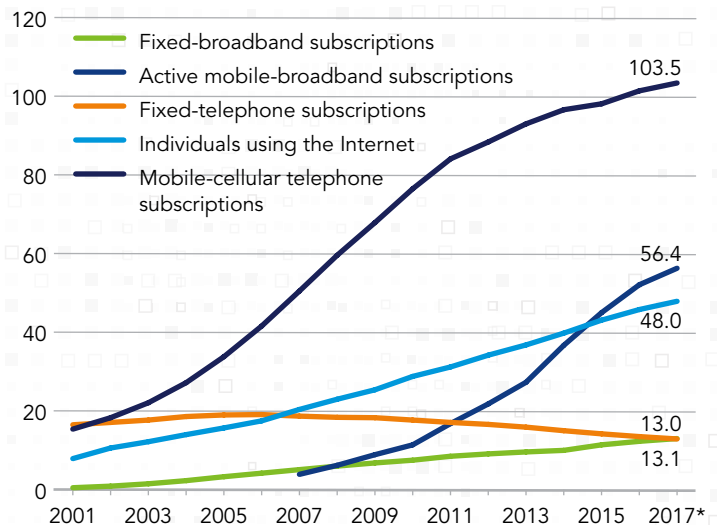


Source: [Pew Forum](#).

During the last 30 years, data sources have exploded. Billions of individuals have moved from difficult-to-access telephone and written communications to digitally transmitted and stored emails, text messages, phone calls, instant messages, social media postings, and other communications. In addition, data is increasingly available to law enforcement officials conveying attributes of individuals’ behavior such as geolocation information, web browsing history, and online financial transactions. This data, in turn, often is accompanied by metadata useful to law enforcement investigators.

In fact, rather than having too little data, law enforcement investigations are often stymied by the availability of *too much* data. The average digital forensic examination conducted by the FBI’s Regional Computer Forensic Laboratory in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, for example, yielded nearly a terabyte of data — equivalent to 250 million pages of typewritten documents — and cases can involve multiple devices and examinations.

### Global ICT Developments, 2001–2017\* (Per 100 Inhabitants)

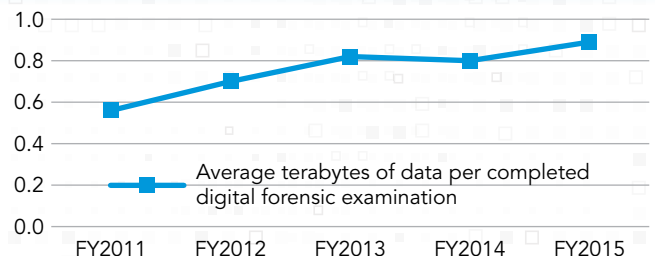


\* Estimate

Source: Statistics, ITU, available at [www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx).

Law enforcement needs help processing this exploding universe of data. More robust digital forensics training, expanded forensics laboratory support, and better tools for triaging, accessing, and analyzing data can help the law enforcement community, instead of “going dark,” to leverage the benefits of emerging technology to more effectively fight crime and protect communities.

### Amount of Data Per Device Examined by FBI Is Rising



Source: FBI Regional Computer Forensic Laboratory FY 2013 and 2015 Annual Reports, available at <https://www.rcfl.gov/downloads/documents/fiscal-year-2013> and <https://www.rcfl.gov/downloads/documents/Fiscal%20Year%202015> respectively.