



## A Crisis of Accountability

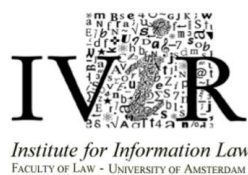
*A global analysis of the impact of the  
Snowden revelations*

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## Executive summary

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## Executive summary

- The Snowden disclosures have triggered a noticeable shift in thinking across the world toward increased awareness of the importance of accountability, transparency and the rule of law with regard to both the activities of security agencies and the value of privacy. This shift - in many parts of the world - has empowered civil society, created a resurgence of interest in legal protections and sensitised media to key issues that have hitherto escaped public scrutiny at any substantial level.
- This shift notwithstanding, the overwhelming majority of countries assessed in this report have not responded in any tangible, measurable way to the Snowden disclosures that began in June 2013. While there has been a notable volume of “activity” in the form of diplomatic representations, parliamentary inquiries, media coverage, campaign strategies, draft legislation and industry initiatives, there has – at the global level – been an insignificant number of tangible reforms adopted to address the concerns raised by the Snowden disclosures. Two thirds of legal professionals and technology experts from 29 countries surveyed for this study reported that they could recall no tangible measure taken by government.
- While obfuscation and denial were reported across most governments, the UK in particular – as America’s principle operational and diplomatic security partner – was singled out because of its almost total disregard for any of the issues raised by the Snowden disclosures.
- The operational relationship between security services, law enforcement agencies and global police organisations such as INTERPOL remains largely unknown and – in terms of data policy – continues to be largely unaccountable. While important new information has been made public about how security agencies collect and exchange data within their own security community, almost nothing is known about the use of that information or the extent to which it is passed to law enforcement agencies.
- The small number of reforms that have been adopted by governments (most notably the US) appear to create no meaningful protections for personal data at the global level. While, for example, President Obama declared an interest in providing some protections for non-US persons, the protections themselves were marginal at best, and have so far failed to materialise. Indeed the available evidence indicates that the US administration has engaged in a global campaign to neutralise attempts by some governments to create reform of international security relationships.
- Despite a perception that the Snowden disclosures have become a global news story, reports from the majority of non-US nations indicate that media

coverage in many countries has been minimal or non-existent. Concern was expressed that the story was “owned” as a proprietary package by the Anglo-American press and was of little direct relevance to most parts of the world. This perception only shifted at the local level when such countries as Pakistan and Mexico were specifically cited in leaked documents.

- Possibly in part because of the predominant US focus in reporting, media coverage of the relevant issues has declined globally to less than two percent of the initial traffic of a year ago - and continues to diminish. As a consequence, public concern about the issues raised by the disclosures has – at best – reached a plateau. This drop-off is particularly steep in non-US and non-English language media.
- A significant number of corporations have responded to the disclosures by introducing a range of accountability and security measures (transparency reports, end-to-end encryption etc). Nonetheless, while acknowledging that these reforms are “a promising start” nearly sixty percent of legal and IT professionals surveyed for this report believe that they do not go far enough, with more than a third of respondents reporting that they felt the measures were “little more than window dressing” or are of “little value” outside the US.
- Civil society and the tech community have not adequately adapted to the challenges raised by the Snowden revelations. For example, the interface and the communications between policy reform (e.g. efforts to create greater accountability measures, privacy regulations) and technical privacy solutions (e.g. designing stronger embedded security) is worryingly inconsistent and patchy. Few channels of communication and information exchange exist between these disparate communities.