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Majority of Canadians oppose state surveillance, new report says

While 61 per cent of Canadians say they oppose government spying, most say surveillance won't change their Internet or cellphone habits, a new Amnesty International report says.

A majority of Canadians say they are opposed to government surveillance of web and cell phone communications, but most wouldn't change how they use either technology, [a new Amnesty International campaign shows](#).

According to the poll, which [queried 15,000 people in 13 countries around the world](#), 61 per cent of Canadians said they were against the state intercepting its citizens' communications.

But 63 per cent of Canadians said knowing the government was spying on them wouldn't impact what they searched for online, and 67 per cent said it wouldn't make a difference on whether they criticize the government on the Internet.

"I think people don't always realize the impact of a violation of the right to privacy," said Hilary Homes, a campaigner at Amnesty International Canada.

She told the Star that opposition to state surveillance goes up when knowledge of the practice increases, and many Canadians are still unaware of the scope and nature of government surveillance and information-sharing.

"Initially people think, 'What could this have to do with me?'" Homes said. "What they're not thinking about is this big net, and if you're mistakenly connected to something, it's very hard to get out of that."

Globally, 59 per cent of survey respondents said they were against their own government spying, while 71 per cent opposed U.S. spying in their countries. Nearly two-thirds of people also said tech companies should safeguard users' information from governments.

Amnesty released its findings as it launched [the #UnfollowMe campaign](#) urging governments to ban mass surveillance.

In particular, countries belonging to the Five Eyes alliance – U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand – are being asked to reform. A World War II-era spying arrangement, the Five Eyes alliance is vast and allows its members to share information.

Amnesty's campaign also centres on the demand for better oversight and transparency over government surveillance powers.

During a Web chat hosted by the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) in Toronto this month, American whistleblower Edward Snowden warned that ["Canadian intelligence has one of the weakest oversight frameworks out of any western intelligence agency."](#)

Snowden leaked National Security Agency (NSA) documents to journalists in 2013 that exposed the U.S. government's monitoring activities. He has since gone into hiding, first in Hong Kong and now in Russia.

[An archive of Snowden documents](#) was recently created through CJFE and the University of Toronto, to provide direct access to the leaks.

"The main way that I hope it can help is that we can have a public debate about these issues," Andrew Clement, professor in the faculty of information at the University of Toronto, told the Star when the archive was launched.

"We're learning things for the first time that we didn't know before and that haven't been discussed openly. I hope having an archive will make it easy for people to keep following and engage in that kind of debate more deeply."

Source: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/03/23/majority-of-canadians-oppose-state-surveillance-new-report-says.html>