

For Part 1 of the final project, you will complete the first step listed above, “Understanding the Problem”. This includes both understanding the domain and understanding the users. Your group will submit a document containing the following information.

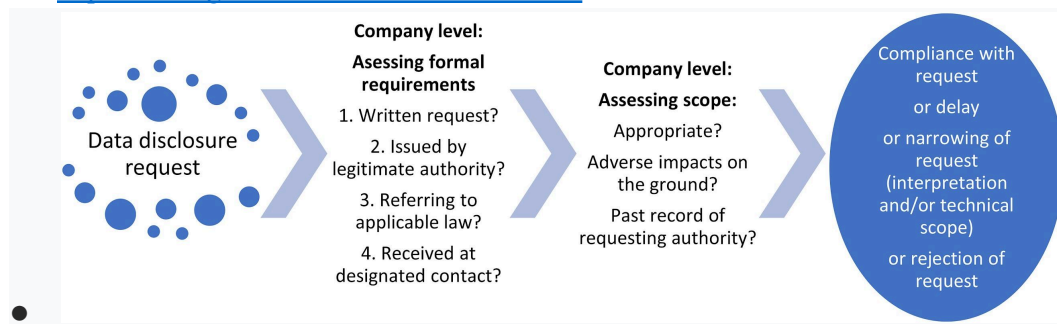
- Understand the domain: list sources that you used, and information that you’ve learned from these sources. This can be written informally, as notes.
- Understand the users: describe your strategy for understanding your users. Did you do surveys or interviews? What questions did you ask? List the information gathered in this step. This can also be written informally, as notes.
- Write a summary of your findings from your domain research and user research. Especially highlight information that will help you design or plan your website.
- Understanding the Problem (Chapter 2). This chapter is geared toward creating a product to sell, and so doesn’t directly translate to this project. However, the principle is essentially the same, and you will need to:
  - Understand the domain. That is, you need to thoroughly research and understand your topic. Your website does not need to (and probably should not) include all of the information you learn, but it is important that you have a thorough understanding of your topic as you begin to make design decisions for your website.
  - Understand the users. For this project, the goal is to create a website that educates a general audience on your topic. So, you need to understand this audience, and what they already know (or think they know) about your topic. Most likely, you will do this by gathering feedback through surveys and/or interviews of potential users.

## Domain:

### Should Tech Companies have to give up personal user data upon US government request?

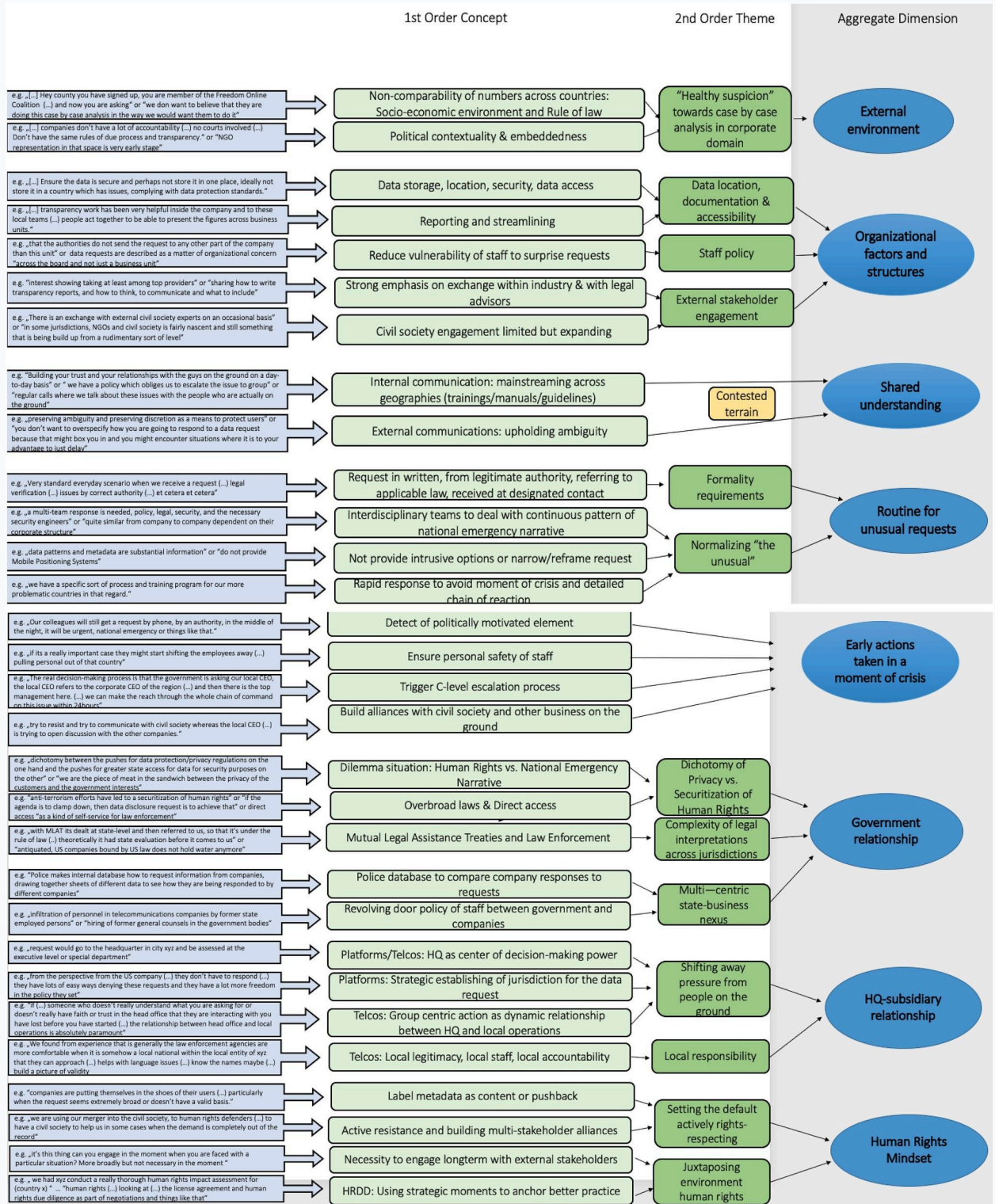
#### Background:

Ebert, I. (2024). Responding to unusual government request for user data: How tech companies make sense of human rights. *Big Data & Society*, 11(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517241232638>



- Government has 2 types of requests
  - Intercepts: “Require disclosure of call content, ‘Traditional surveillance’”
  - User data: “Can require delivery of goods or services, the production of documents or information or compliance with certain directive orders... Usually legally binding”
- There is loop holes on government purchasing data from private companies that sell ‘commercially available information’ (also called CAI)
- Talks about how companies respond to data disclosure requests and Identifies themes
  - External environment: the political context of the request
  - Organizational factors and structures: how the data may be stored affects how the government may ask for data
  - Shared Understanding: Among the company having some sort of policy for dealing with government requests is key
    - Top down approach with human rights policy and senior leadership
  - Emergence of routine procedures: sticking with a policy even with unusual requests from different governments.
  - Early actions taken in a moment of crisis: be fast in identifying “politically motivated” requests and moving fast in next actions
  - Government relationships: knowing relationships between governments is important when dealing with companies of other countries.

- Relationships between headquarters and subsidiaries: having some sort of escalation process for problems arising for lower levels of the company
- Human rights mindset: framing requests using a human rights lens



Office, U.S. Government Accountability. “Protecting Personal Privacy.” *U.S. GAO*,  
[www.gao.gov/protecting-personal-privacy](http://www.gao.gov/protecting-personal-privacy). Accessed 17 Apr. 2024.

- The collection of personal private information by the US government is not allowed by two laws
  - The Privacy Act of 1974
  - The Privacy Provisions of the E-Government Act of 2002.
- No federal law that forces private sector data sales to learn what info about consumers is held and who has access to that data
- Many federal agencies don’t track employee use of systems

“How Can US Law Enforcement Agencies Access Your Data? Let’s Count the Ways.”

*The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 4 Apr. 2022,

[www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/apr/04/us-law-enforcement-agencies-access-your-data-apple-meta](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/apr/04/us-law-enforcement-agencies-access-your-data-apple-meta).

- How can law enforcement get data?
  - Accessing devices:
    - Requests from other companies with gag orders (ei google)
  - Data brokers
    - Collect personal info like public records, social media, etc.
  - Surveillance tech companies:
    - Clearview AI, Voyager collect info from the web and is fed into an alg
  - Data-sharing at local gov level:
    - DMV sharing info with ICE

### Examples:

- (Possibly make a page of news regarding data release to governments)

University, Santa Clara. “Apple vs. FBI Case Study.” *Markkula Center for Applied Ethics*,

[www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/business-ethics/resources/apple-vs-fbi-case-study/](http://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/business-ethics/resources/apple-vs-fbi-case-study/). Accessed 17 Apr. 2024.

- Apple vs FBI 2015
  - The FBI requested Apple refused to comply with a court order to bypass the 4-digit login that erased all information on the phone after 10 attempts.
  - FBI ended up no longer needing Apple and went around them allegedly by using an Israeli Tech firm called Cellebrite to access the information they needed.

Glaser, April. "Long before Snowden, Librarians Were Anti-Surveillance Heroes." *Slate Magazine*, Slate, 3 June 2015, [slate.com/technology/2015/06/usa-freedom-act-before-snowden-librarians-were-the-anti-surveillance-heroes.html](https://www.slate.com/technology/2015/06/usa-freedom-act-before-snowden-librarians-were-the-anti-surveillance-heroes.html).

- Librarians and Patriot Act Section 215
  - Librarians were requested to give over information on users and what they had been searching when at the library
  - 2005 court case between 4 libraries and a National Security Letter demanding patron data

*Push Notifications Can Be Used to Track Who You Contact*, [www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/12/06/push-notifications-surveillance-apple-google/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/12/06/push-notifications-surveillance-apple-google/). Accessed 17 Apr. 2024.

- US government and surveillancing via Push notifications
  - Used in an attempt to gather info on Jan 6 Capitol riots and other criminal suspects.
  - Apple and Google were prohibited from from discussing the technique
  - Tokens revealed who a person was communicating with and what the content of the messages were

"U.S. Government Buys Data on Americans with Little Oversight, Report Finds." *NBCNews.Com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 13 June 2023, [www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/us-government-buys-data-americans-little-oversight-report-find-s-rcna89035](https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/us-government-buys-data-americans-little-oversight-report-find-s-rcna89035).

- Department of Homeland Security using Web of Science, to find non-citizen researchers working in the US who were still tied to their home country military. Other country intelligence agencies have done the same for other countries.

Pelican, Garrett. "Report: DMV Makes Millions Selling Floridians' Personal Information." *WJXT*, WJXT News4JAX, 11 July 2019, [www.news4jax.com/consumer/2019/07/11/report-dmv-makes-millions-selling-floridians-personal-information/](https://www.news4jax.com/consumer/2019/07/11/report-dmv-makes-millions-selling-floridians-personal-information/).

- Florida DMV selling data and making more than \$77 million. Sold to Acxiom for "as low as a 'penny a record'"

“Closing the Data Broker Loophole.” *Brennan Center for Justice*, 4 Jan. 2024,

[www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/closing-data-broker-loophole](http://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/closing-data-broker-loophole).

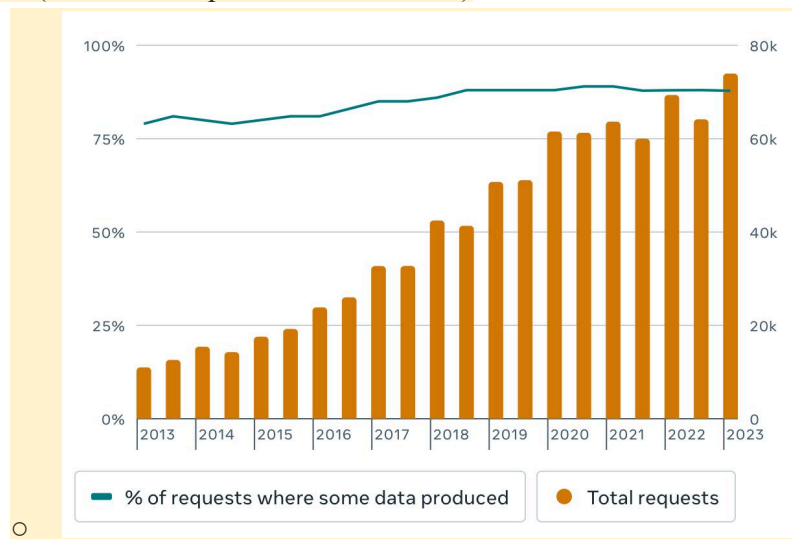
- Department of Defense purchasing data from prayer apps to monitor Muslim communities in the US
- Police access to Amazon’s Ring doorbell footage.
- Police Departments purchasing data to track racial justice protesters

For transparency info, it would be good to have all of this in one page for each company

“Government Requests for User Data.” *Transparency Center*,

[transparency.fb.com/reports/government-data-requests/](https://transparency.fb.com/reports/government-data-requests/). Accessed 17 Apr. 2024.

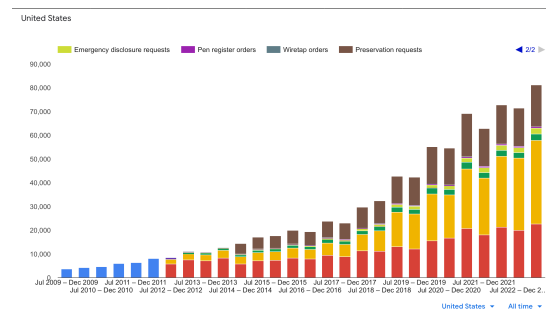
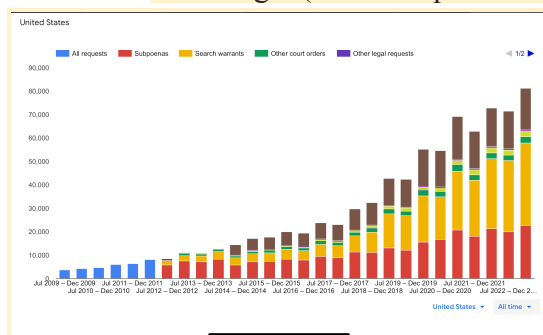
- Meta (87.84% compliance with the US)



*Google Transparency Report*, Google,

[transparencyreport.google.com/user-data/us-national-security?hl=en](https://transparencyreport.google.com/user-data/us-national-security?hl=en). Accessed 17 Apr. 2024.

- Google (85% compliance with the US)



“Privacy - Transparency Report - Apple.” *Apple Legal*,

[www.apple.com/legal/transparency/](https://www.apple.com/legal/transparency/). Accessed 17 Apr. 2024.

- Apple (83% compliance with the US)



## Users:

- Survey Questions: We tried to make these questions as neutral as possible so as to not mislead the responders. This is important to ensure our phrasing is not a confounding variable
  - How often do you think the US government is requesting data from tech companies?
  - What do you think tech companies CURRENTLY require the US government to provide before releasing user information?
  - How often do you think tech companies comply with the US government requests? (answer in percentages)
  - Do you think any data is off limits for required compliance? If so, what?
  - What user data do you think SHOULD be off limits for required compliance?
  - How do you feel about the US government accessing SPECIFIC user data on grounds of national security? (i.e. potential terrorist attacks, stopping criminals, etc.)
  - How do you feel about the US government having constant access to the GENERAL PUBLIC'S user data on grounds of national security? (i.e. potential terrorist attacks, stopping criminals, etc.)
  - What do you think tech companies SHOULD require the US government to provide before releasing user information?
  - How much do you trust the US government with user data?
  - Do you have any other comments/concerns on this topic?
- Survey Responders:
  - We chose to do a voluntary survey sent out to the general public. Because our topic is something that relates to anyone who has a personal technology device, we did not subset who was taking our survey. Our goal was to gather information on what the average American adult knew about tech companies compliance with the US government
  - Our responders were all adults who live in the US and have personal technology devices
  - We got 24 responses, which is not enough to assume normality, so we must take this into consideration when analyzing these results
- Most (79%) people that we have surveyed and interviewed have a general sense that the US government is requesting data from tech companies fairly often
- Most (63%) people surveyed believe that tech companies currently require nothing to release user data
  - (63 %) Some believe that they require a warrant or a subpoena in certain situations
- People on average thought that the tech companies complied with government requests 68% of the time.
- 1/6 of People surveyed said that health data was off limits for required compliance
- 1/6 of people surveyed said they had no idea what was off limits for required compliance
- 39% of people surveyed said nothing off limits for required compliance with the government
- 1/6 of people surveyed said that all user data should be off limits
- 33% of people surveyed said that data should be off limits unless it pertains to crimes
- 10% people surveyed said medical data should be off limits

- The average person who answered the survey that on a score of 1-10 (10 being in favor) they were at a 7.4 on how they felt about the US government accessing specific user data on grounds of national security
  - Normalish curve, one outlier
- The average person who answered the survey that on a score of 1-10 (10 being in favor) they were at a 5 on how they felt about the US government accessing the general public's user data on grounds of national security
  - Skewed right; 50% of people responded between 1-4
- 67% of respondents said tech companies should require a warrant to the US government before releasing data
- On a scale of 1-10, the average response was a 4 when asked if they trust the government with user data

Overall, Based on the data it seems that a lot of people have no idea what companies are collecting as data and they aren't sure how they feel about the government accessing the data tech companies have. They do have a general sense that it is often and that the government forces tech company compliance with little legal request. Most people seem to want transparency on both ends. Make the website a call for action on data privacy!!

## Summary

We understand that our sample size for our survey is very small and we cannot assume normality, but our thought is to create an informative website that allows for a better understanding of the topic regardless of the user's background. For those who have no understanding of our topic, they would be able to learn more information and for those who have a background would find use in our website by looking at our newsfeed and keeping up to date with the topic.

There seems to be a lot of data sharing with the government without the knowledge of the users via gag orders or simply loopholes with data brokerage.

- Users seem to share they have no knowledge of what exactly is being collected and the process of government gaining access.
- Would be nice to have a page dedicated to an overview of the process and push for transparency on the company side to share what information they are collecting

News related to data sharing with the government:

- Could be a news feed that has articles related to this issue?
  - Allows users to be up-to-date

Transparency information from companies:

- Have a page dedicated to showing this information



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Links:

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