Statement of Intent

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Topic: Privacy vs. Security on the internet

Information security is one of the foundations on which the internet is built. If data on the internet were visible and accessible by anyone, many normal activities such as writing an email or doing internet banking would be impossible. The main technology that allows information to be transmitted confidentially and securely is encryption.

Today's encryption technology is virtually impenetrable.Therefore, law enforcement agencies and governments fear that they will "go dark", i.e. be unable to gather enough data to do their jobs. They propose to either modify existing encryption technology to incorporate "master keys", or to restrict the use of strong encryption to make it easier to break. Both ideas are heavily criticized as such backdoors could be exploited by criminals or foreign governments. Thus they would weaken the data security for everyone, not just criminals.

The issue is that these two reasonable interests conflict with each other, and there seems to be no easy way to resolve this conflict. On one hand, law enforcement should be able to do its job and stop criminals. On the other hand, compromising the security and privacy of everyone is a (too) high price to pay.

I want to look into the current status of this debate in the EU (and maybe the USA) and investigate whether there are any reasonable solutions to the conflict.

Preliminary Resources

I am including these resources to show my progress, but also for my organization. As such, the citations do not follow strict style guidelines.

General resources include the EU Open Data Portal, Google Dataset Search, Google Public Data and World Bank Open Data.

Open Data

- EU Open Data Portal - Cyber Security
- EU Open Data Portal - Internet
- World Bank Data - Individuals using the Internet (% of population)
- Google Public Data - The Connected Consumer
- Google Public Data - Economic and social statistics - UNECE Statistics Division

Other Sources

- McAfee - The Economic Impact of Cybercrime [PDF]
- Maria Koomen - The Encryption Debate in the European Union [PDF]
- Internet Society - Policy Brief: Encryption
- World Economic Forum - The Global Risks Report 2019 [PDF]
- European Parliament Think Tank - Cyber: How big is the threat? [PDF]
- H. Abelson et al. - Keys Under Doormats: Mandating insecurity by requiring government access to all data and communications [PDF]
- CGP Grey - Should all locks have keys? Phones, Castles, Encryption, and You [YouYube Video]