Internet Governance Survey 2015

Internet Society

Introduction

Since the very first Internet governance discussions over a decade ago, the Internet Society (ISOC) has been fully engaged in the Internet governance debate. The global Internet community will continue to address significant issues in 2015 that could shape the future of Internet governance. As we engage in these discussions, we recognize the importance that the collective sentiment of our community plays in shaping our work and informing our approach in this important area. To gain valuable insight into our community's views on Internet governance, we opted to conduct a survey on this topic in February. We are now pleased to be able to share the survey findings with you all in this summary report.

Focus Areas and Main Takeaways

The **questions posed in the survey** focused on four main topics:

1. Identifying the most important Internet governance issues facing the Internet community;

2. Understanding whether existing platforms and organizations are effectively addressing these issues;

3. Improving Internet governance processes;

4. Recognizing which fora are best positioned to respond to the current set of issues.

Other questions asked respondents to rate how ISOC staff and members could best strengthen inclusive and effective Internet governance, and whether ISOC should be involved in the more recent NETmundial Initiative (NMI).

The main takeaways from this survey are that:

- The majority of respondents (86%) indicated that Cybersecurity is the most important issue facing the Internet community today;

- The priorities for the community are to make Internet governance easier to understand (with 75% feeling that this is "Extremely" or "Very Important") and to develop and share best practices amongst countries and communities (70% indicating that this was Extremely" or "Very Important");

- A high percentage of respondents (90%) indicated that informal local and regional communities should be enhanced while 87% of respondents want the global, regional, and national Internet Governance Forums (IGFs) to be enhanced; and

- 27% of respondents think NMI is needed for effective Internet governance, while 56% indicated that they are unclear as to whether NMI is needed, and 17% think it is not needed.

W**ith regards to the Internet Society's role and how it can best strengthen Internet governance**:

- Convening dialogues and facilitating Information sharing among all stakeholder communities was considered "Very" or "Extremely important" by 94% of respondents;

- 92% of respondents indicated that supporting platforms where best practices can be discussed in an open and inclusive manner was "Very" or "Extremely important"; and;

- With respect to NMI, 41% respondents favored formal participation; 49% of the respondents wanted the Internet Society to lead consultations about NMI; 10% did not want any kind of participation.

Methodology

The survey of ISOC members was conducted using a Web-based questionnaire from 2 to 20 February 2015. Invitations to complete the survey were sent via Internet Society community email lists and also shared with external mailing lists (e.g. IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus (IGC) lists). The topics covered by the survey, the means of recruiting participants, and the nature of the questions mean that it attracted individuals who have a higher interest in Internet governance than the general Internet user community. Thus, while the results are not representative of a broad population, we nonetheless believe they are a useful window into the range of stakeholders' needs and expectations.

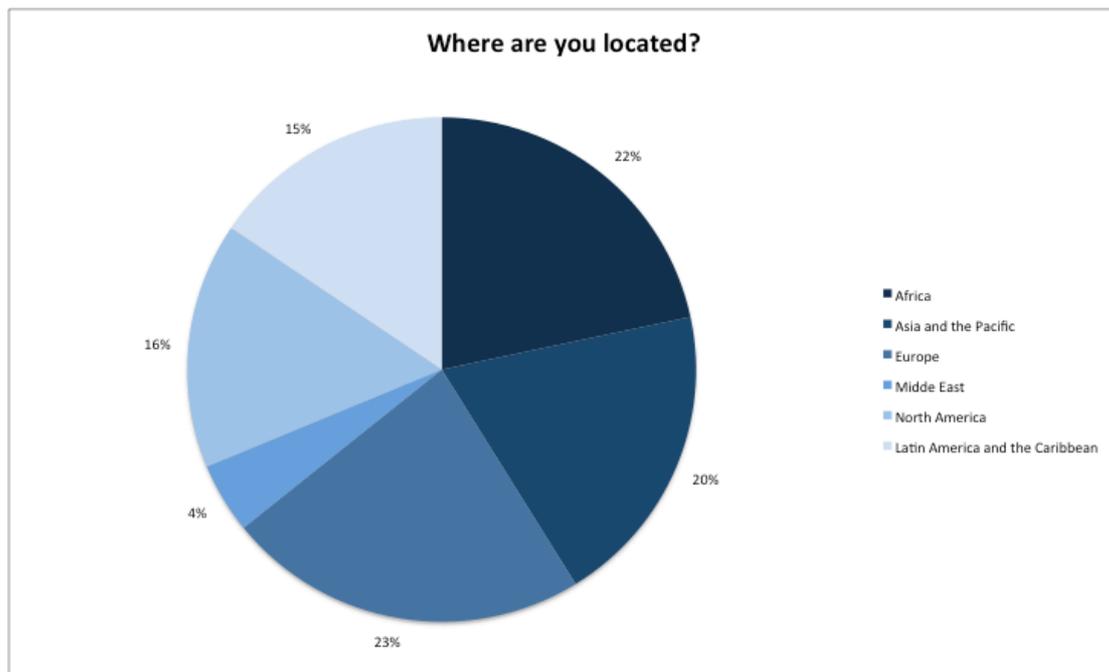Percentages may not always add up to 100% due to rounding and selection of categories.

The survey was made available in English, French, and Spanish. The English version of the questionnaire is included as an appendix to this report.

The analysis of the results of this survey was commissioned to Judith Hellerstein, Founder and CEO of Hellerstein & Associates, Council member of the Washington, D.C. Chapter of the Internet Society. The Internet Society would like to thank her for her important contribution to this project.
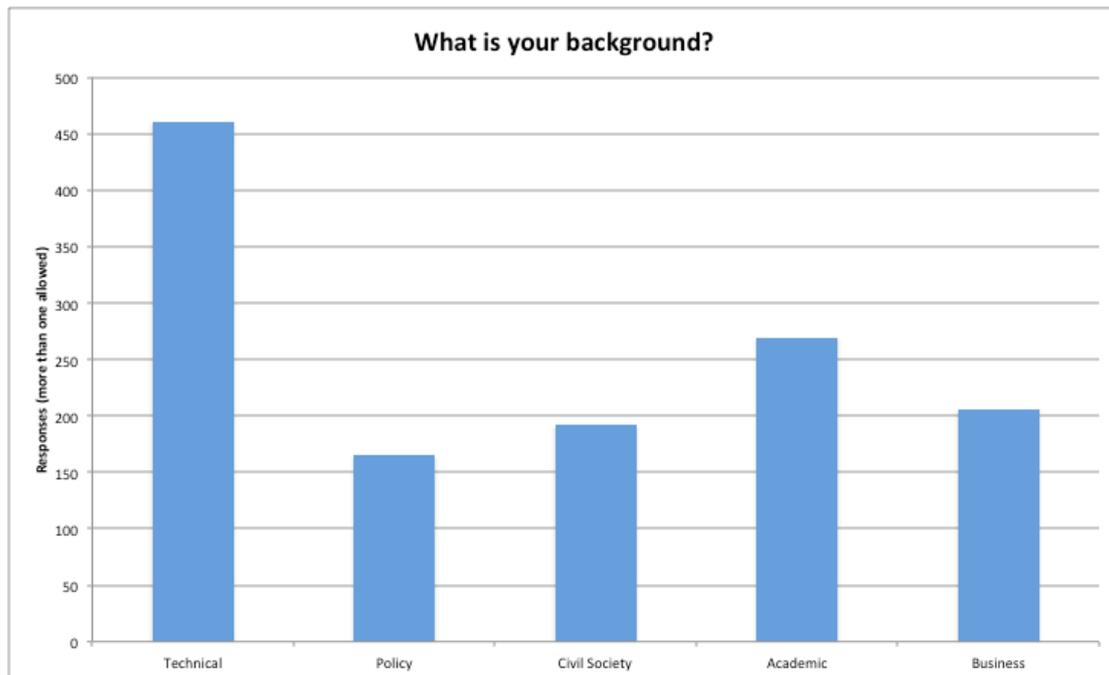
Survey participation

A total of 801 responses from ISOC's six regions (North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific) were recorded, indicating a global interest in Internet governance. All attempts were made to identify and delete duplicate responses. However, since respondents had the choice of recording their names or opting for anonymity, there is a possibility that individuals could have responded more than once. Note that some of the respondents indicated they were responding in the name of their ISOC Chapter, while others responded in their individual capacity.

Over 86% of all respondents to the survey indicated that they were ISOC members. As shown in the figure below, the largest regional group participating in this survey came from Europe at 23%, with Africa the next largest group at 22%, and Asia Pacific with 20%.
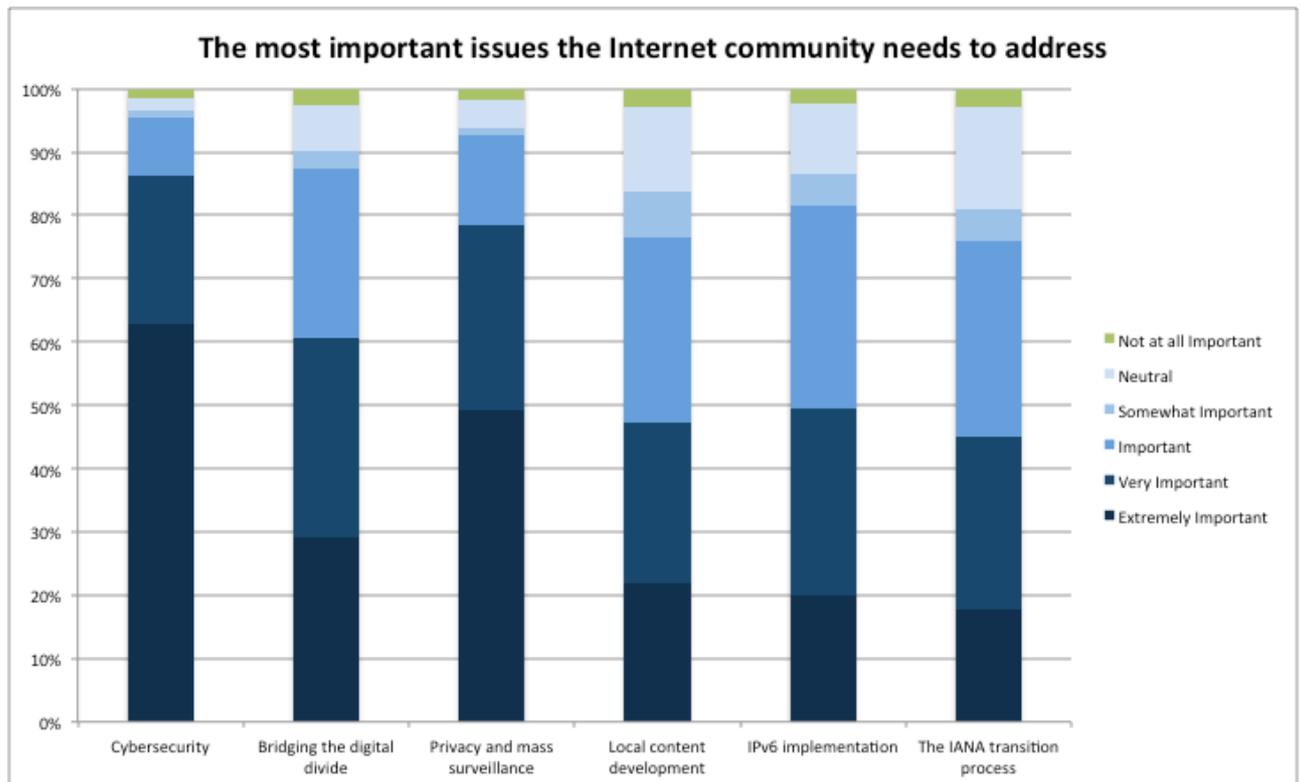

Participants were asked to identify themselves into the stakeholder categories, with the option of choosing more than one category. Having a technical background received the most responses.

What is your background?

Chart showing "Responses (more than one allowed)" by background category:
- Technical: ~460
- Policy: ~165
- Civil Society: ~192
- Academic: ~268
- Business: ~205

Top issues facing the Internet community

Question 4 of the survey asked respondents to identify the importance of a number of issues facing the Internet community. The most important issue identified was Cybersecurity, with 86% of respondents indicating that it was either "Extremely important" or "Very important" to them.
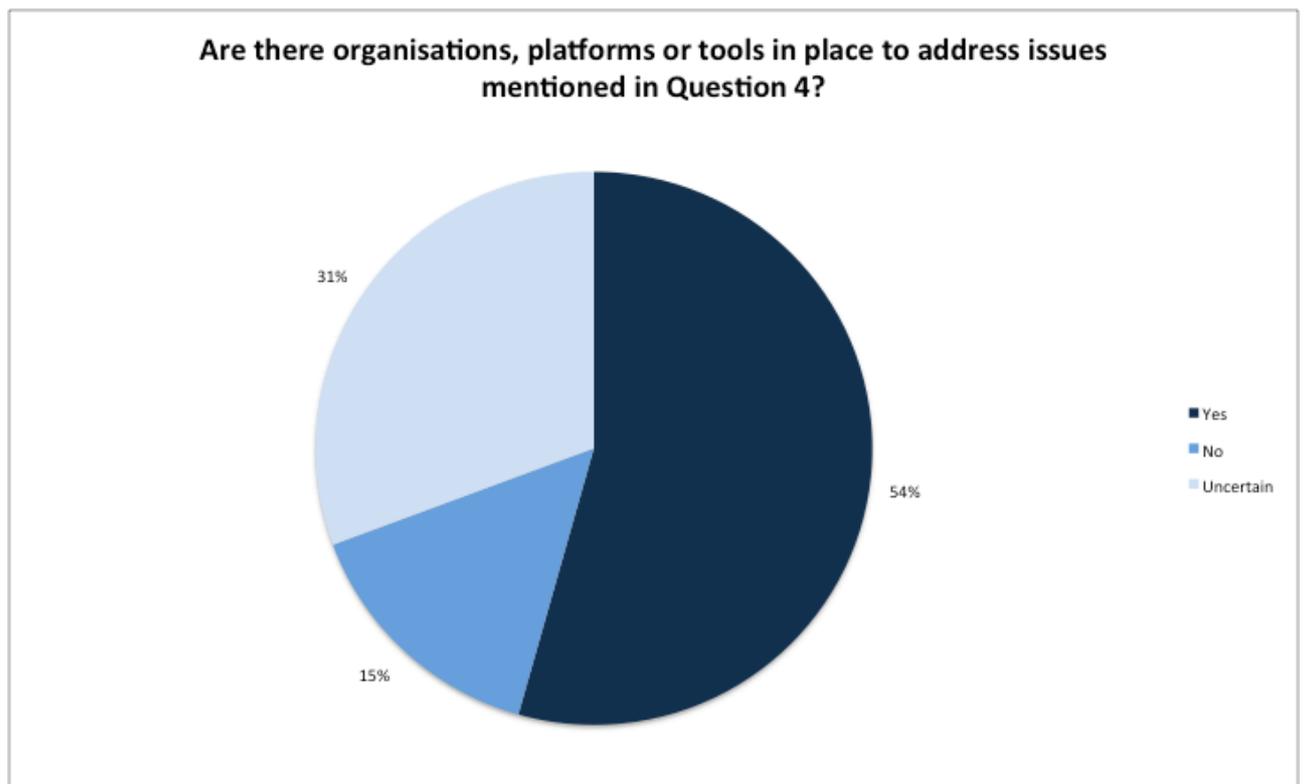
This was followed by Privacy and Mass Surveillance, with 79% indicating that this was either "Extremely" or "Very" important. Bridging the Digital Divide followed close behind at 61%. Other issues that participants felt were either "Extremely" or "Very" important included IPv6 implementation (49%), local content development (47%), and the IANA transition process (45%).

The most important issues the Internet community needs to address

Participants were also given the opportunity to suggest other important issues outside the categories provided. Suggestions included "education and online learning", "digital and Internet literacy", and "ensuring women had Internet access." Other key policy issues were also identified: data protection, cybercrime, child online protection, Internet freedom and human rights, surveillance, trust, copyright, intellectual property issues, accessibility issues, multi-lingualism, and general competition policy issues. Several thought that access and affordability were key issues, and that the digital divide category was too narrow. Other issues raised included ensuring and promoting open and interoperable standards, enhancing Internet security through DNSSEC, or ensuring net neutrality worldwide.

Organizations and tools

54% of the respondents thought existing organizations, platforms, or tools can address the issues identified in the previous section. The rest either do not believe that such platforms exist, or are uncertain whether they do.

Are there organisations, platforms or tools in place to address issues mentioned in Question 4?

- 31%
- 54%
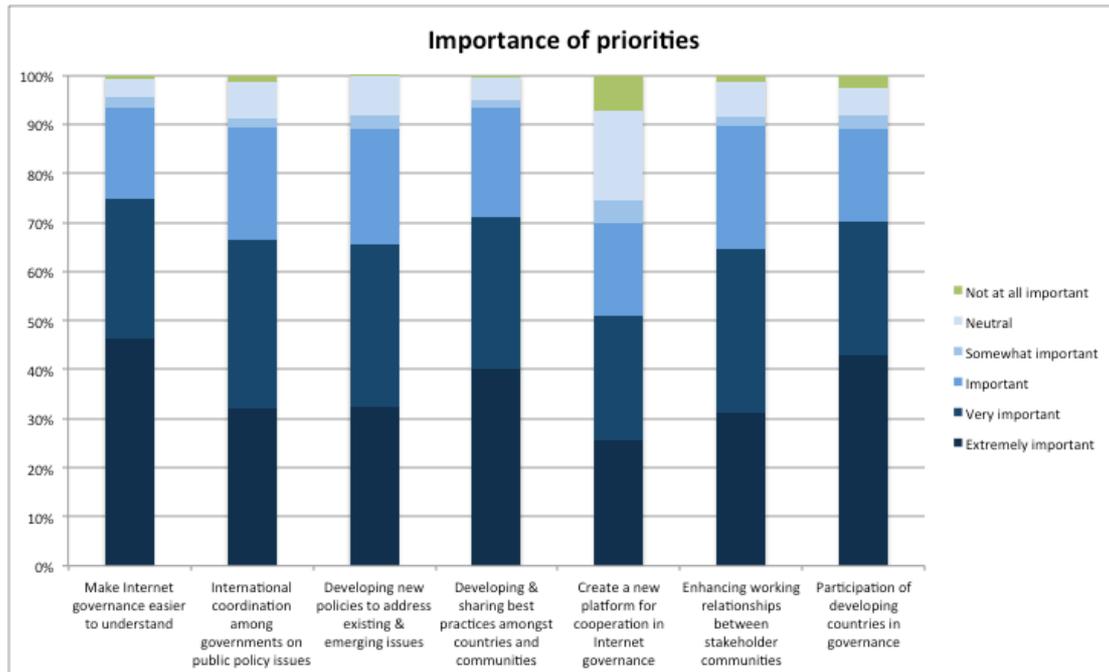- 15%
- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

There were a wide range of suggestions about how current organizations or platforms could be made more effective in addressing issues facing the Internet. Some stated that ISOC should specifically strengthen the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), as well as regional or national organizations and institutions such as AfTLD, AfriNIC and AfPIF. Some felt that perhaps a United Nations (UN) organization, but not the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), might be an effective place to address issues. Others felt that Civil Society groups could be funded to help address them. Several people also indicated that with additional funding and training national regulatory authorities could better address some of these issues.

Many respondents thought that the regional IGFs could play a significant role as they are a place to learn, educate, and share knowledge. It was also indicated that the ISOC Chapters could be strengthened with additional resources to tackle issues on a country-by-country basis. A few participants thought that ICANN or even the local Internet Service Providers could be used as an effective platform to address these issues. Finally, there were a number of people who thought that "multistakeholder partnerships" could be created to help address these important issues.

Priorities for the community

Participants were also asked to rate the importance of a variety of issues related to improving Internet governance processes, ranging from making Internet governance easier to

understand to increasing participation among developing countries. As shown in the figure below, the top priorities included making Internet governance easier to understand (75% of respondents indicated this was "Extremely" or "Very" important); developing and sharing best practices (71%); and participation of developing countries (70%). Other issues rated highly included developing new policies to address current and emerging issues, increasing international coordination among governments on public policy issues, and enhancing working relationships between stakeholders.
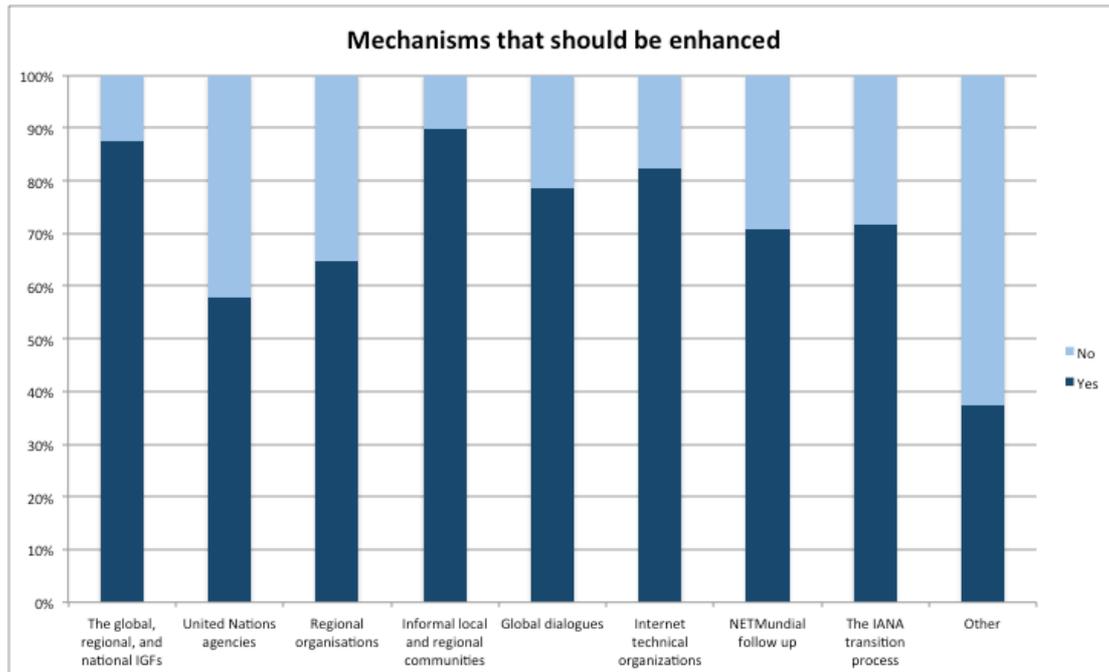

A number of the respondents suggested other issues of importance. There was a call for more work on education, privacy, and freedom of expression. Other respondents thought that the IGF, as well as other regional fora, should be strengthened through additional funding.

Several respondents suggested devoting additional funding to scholarships for people from developing countries to attend meetings of the IETF and the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs). Respondents also felt that the IETF should focus more on privacy and cyber-security issues. Finally, several participants called for the creation of public-private partnerships, or to strengthen civil society organizations to take these on.

Enhancing Existing Mechanisms

Other questions in the survey asked participants to indicate which existing mechanisms should be enhanced. Respondents clearly indicated that fora where Internet governance issues are discussed in an open and neutral manner and where all parties are on equal footing represent the best environments to strengthen Internet governance.

As shown in the chart, over 90% of respondents felt that informal local and regional communities (e.g. ISOC Chapters) should be enhanced. 87% of respondents indicated that the global, regional, and national IGFs should be enhanced. Over 82% of all participants thought that the various Internet technical organizations such as the IETF, Country Code Names Supporting Organizations (ccNSOs), and the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) should be enhanced, while 79% of all respondents felt that more global dialogues such as the RightsCon and the Global Cyberspace Conference should be enhanced.

Respondents also had the option to provide other suggestions. A number of the them felt that if the global IGF was significantly strengthened and funded it could take on an expanded role. Some indicated the UN should increase its funding of the Forum, and would like to see the Secretariat of the IGF appropriately staffed. Many respondents also called for the renewal of the IGF mandate and for the strengthening of the regional and national IGFs. In particular, they felt that participation of governments in these events would be a benefit. They also called for better remote participation in IGF events, including through remote hubs, increased travel funding to attend the regional or global IGFs, more active recruitment of speakers, and better marketing of these events through the use of social media.

Several participants also called for increasing capacity building and strengthening the Global Cyber-Security Conference, including modeling it after the global IGF so it could become a place for all stakeholders to discuss best practices on cyber issues on an equal footing. Some respondents also called for an enhanced role for UNESCO in Internet governance and the IGF because of its work on Internet freedom and digital rights.

Finally, several comments related to Internet Society Chapters themselves, suggesting they should be strengthened. Others had questions regarding their management, from more effective programs to creating more than one Chapter in a country.
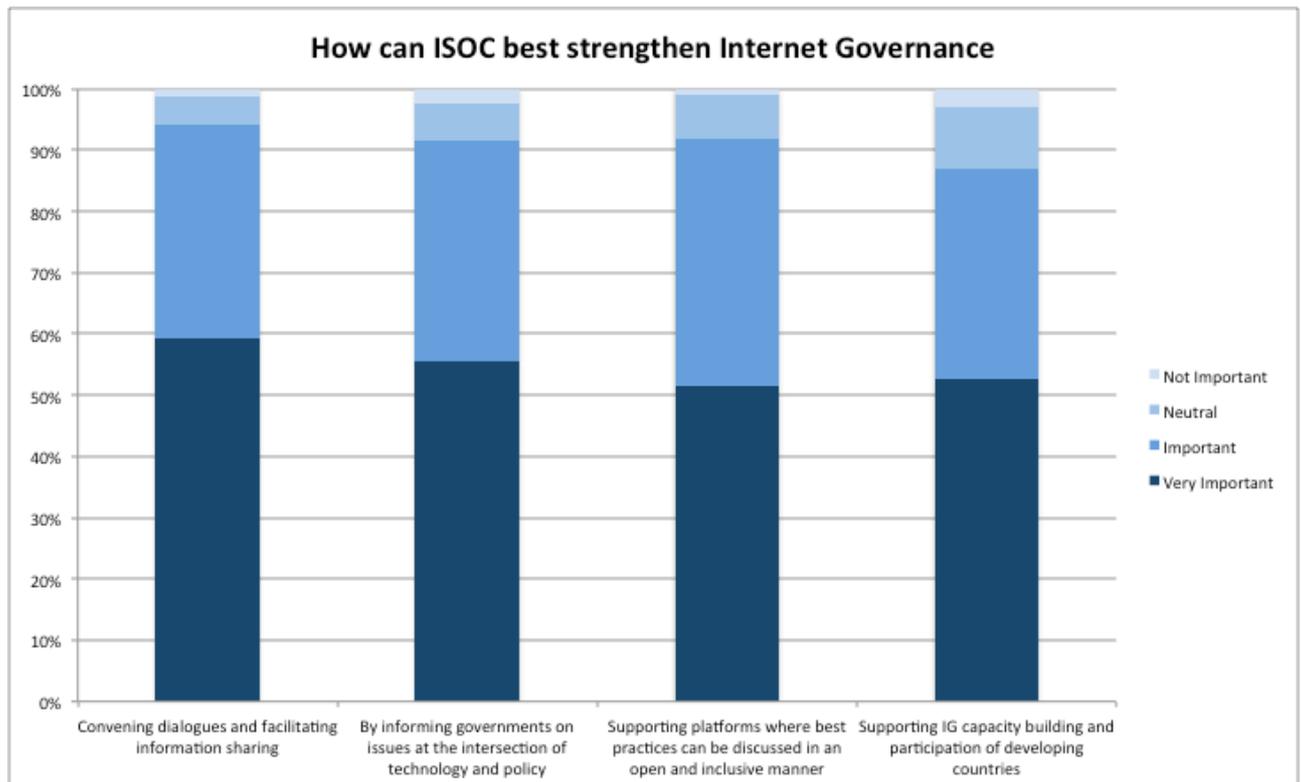
The Internet Society's Role

Asked how ISOC staff and members could best strengthen inclusive and effective Internet governance, respondents rated four different things ISOC could do:

1. Convene dialogue and play a facilitating role;

2. Better inform governments on technology and policy issues;

3. Support platforms for best practices, and;

4. Support Internet governance capacity building and participation of developing countries in these discussions.

The responses are summarized in the figure below.

"Convening dialogues and facilitating information sharing among all stakeholder communities" was considered "Very Important" or "Important" by 94% of respondents, followed closely by "supporting platforms where best practices can be discussed in an open and inclusive manner" which 92% indicated where "Very Important" or "Important". In fact, all four categories were considered quite important.

How can ISOC best strengthen Internet Governance

A number of respondents provided other answers. Some respondents felt that ISOC staff should focus their efforts at consulting more often, strengthening and providing Chapters with more training resources and funding. Some comments suggested ISOC could create a monitoring team within Chapters to better evaluate countries' practices. Along with the strengthening of Chapters comes a desire for ISOC to do more outreach and to grow its own user base, both in increasing the number of Chapters and their individual membership. Relatedly, several respondents indicated that if ISOC is to claim to represent both the technical, civil society, and other end-user's interests it should aim to have at least one chapter in every country.

Several respondents felt that ISOC should use this survey as a tool to better define its goals, objectives, its vision for the future, and where it fits into the Internet ecosystem.

A number of respondents indicated that ISOC would be able to communicate its message more effectively and also to strengthen Internet governance if it worked in all six UN language, enabling users to get involved from the ground up. Several participants indicated that their involvement in governance issues was limited because of the language barrier. A few participants made similar comments regarding the IETF meetings and proceedings.

Respondents also felt that the more ISOC staff knew about the Chapters and individuals' needs, the better it would be able to provide the necessary training on Internet governance, policy, and other issues. Several participants called for additional surveys to be conducted or for surveys to be carried out more frequently and on different topics. There was also a call for the publication of best practices and additional online learning including through partnerships

with local universities, in order to build capacity, advocacy and research in the field of Internet governance.
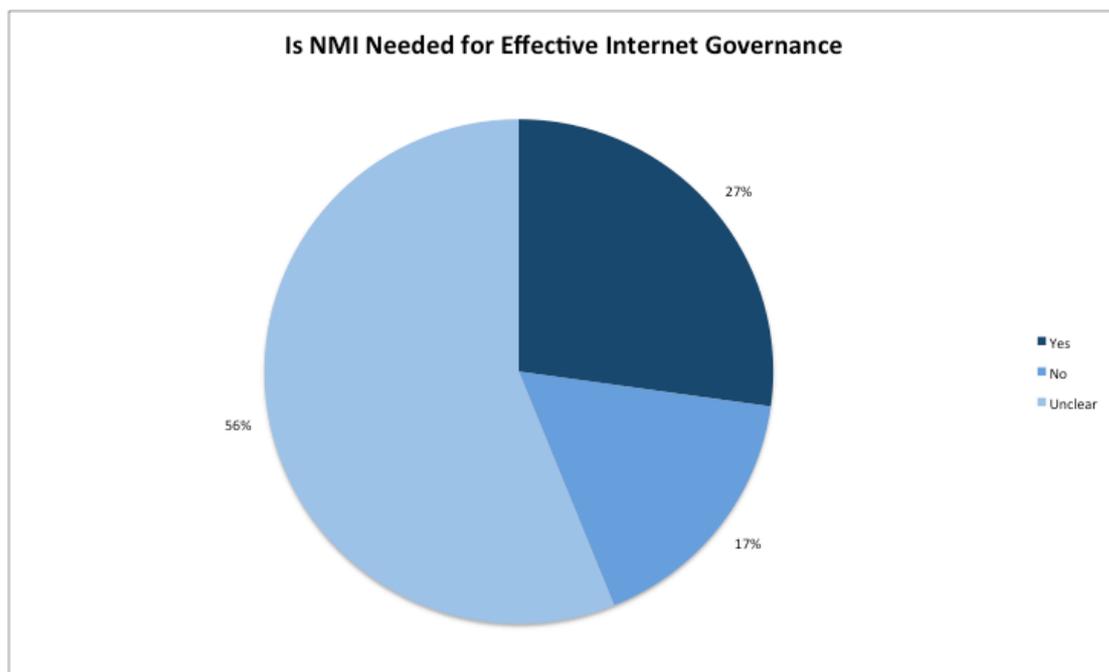
NETmundial Issues

The objective of the NETmundial Initiative (NMI) launched by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Brazil's CGI.br, and ICANN is to "provide an open, generative, and collaborative space, inviting permission-less innovation to build and deliver distributed Internet governance enablers and solutions[1]".

In November 2014, ISOC's Board of Trustees published a statement: based on its longstanding position that "there is no single, global platform that can serve to coordinate, organize or govern all the Internet issues that may arise", it could not agree to participate in, or endorse, the Coordination Council for the NETmundial Initiative.

The Board then asked Internet Society CEO Kathryn Brown to convene a dialogue within the Internet Society community to see whether any new initiatives or groups were needed at the current time and, if so, to define the objectives for any such effort. Several questions in this survey were designed to help understand the views and concerns of the members and Chapters in this regard.
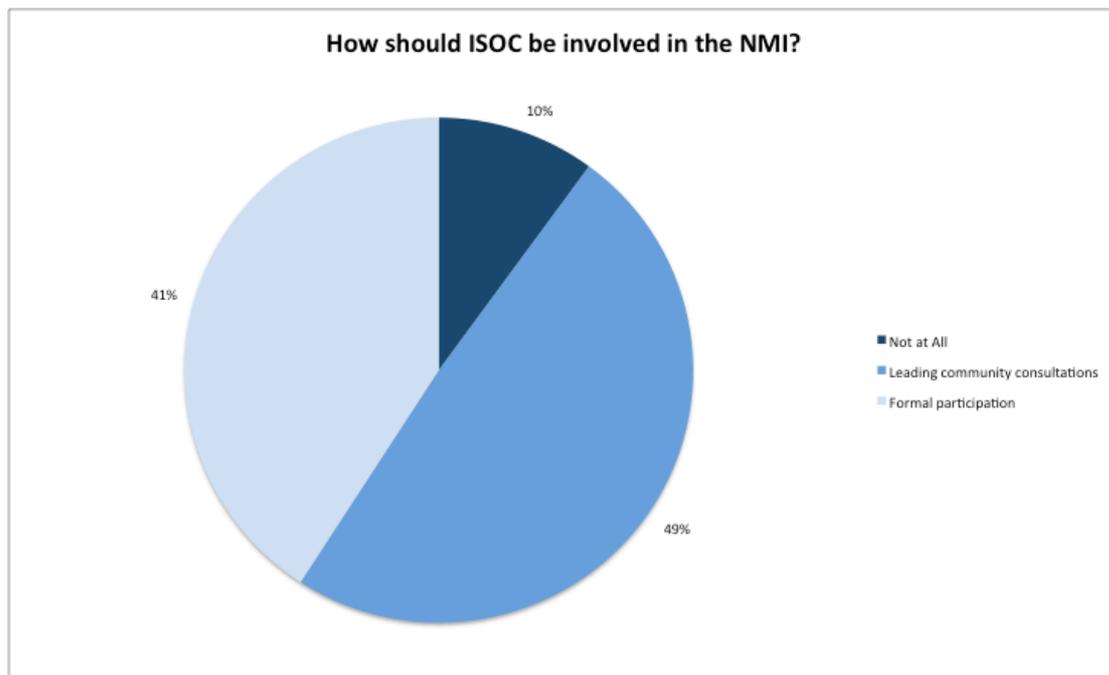
The results of the survey show that 27% of respondents thought NMI was needed for effective Internet governance, while 56% indicated they were unclear, and 17% thought it was not needed.

Is NMI Needed for Effective Internet Governance

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[1] https://www.netmundial.org/

When asked what ISOC's role should be with regards to NMI, 41% respondents favored formal participation; 49% of the respondents wanted the Internet Society to lead consultations about NMI; 10% did not want any kind of participation.

Conclusion

In summary, a clear majority of respondents indicated that they think Cybersecurity is the most important issue facing the Internet community today. Respondents indicated that making Internet governance easier to understand, and developing and sharing best practices amongst countries and communities are important. Enhancing informal local and regional communities, as well as the global, regional, and national Internet Governance Forums (IGFs) is important. On the other hand, a majority of respondents either indicated the NETMundial Initiative (NMI) was not needed for effective Internet governance, either that it was unclear.

The survey results indicate that a majority of the respondents are supportive of ISOC's work on Internet governance and want to see this continue. Respondents also offered suggestions on how ISOC could leverage the impact of its Internet governance activities, including by consulting its members.

The Internet Society would like to thank all individuals who took the time to respond to this survey.

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

Invitations to complete a Web-based version of a questionnaire below were sent to Internet Society members, as well as the broader Internet community via email lists. The survey was made available in English, French, and Spanish.

ISOC Survey on Internet Governance

The Internet Society (ISOC) is conducting a survey on Internet governance. The objective of this survey is to primarily ask you how we can strengthen mechanisms of the Internet governance ecosystem to better address policy challenges in 2015. It is also designed to help ISOC contribute to the current discussions on the evolution of the ecosystem. Your feedback and opinions will help us to understand the collective sentiment of our community and will inform our approach as we look to play our role to address these issues.

The questions should take approximately 10 minutes to complete and we would be grateful if you could find the time to respond. The survey will be open from 2 to 20 February. A synthesis report of responses will be made available on our website shortly after the survey closes.

Name, affiliation and email address (optional)

1. Are you an ISOC member?

- Yes
- No

2. Where are you located?

- Africa
- Asia and the Pacific
- Europe
- Middle East
- North America
- Latin America and the Caribbean

3. What is your background?

- Technical
- Policy
- Civil Society
- Business
- Academic

4. In your view, what are the most important issues the Internet community needs to address today? Please rate the importance of these issues from 1 to 6, with 1 being the highest.

a. Cyber-security
b. Bridging the digital divide
c. Privacy and mass surveillance
d. Local content development
e. IPv6 implementation
f. The IANA transition process
g. Other (Please specify below)

5. Are there organizations, platforms or tools in place to address issues mentioned in question 4?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

6. If "No" to question 5, how should those issues be addressed?

a. Suggestion 1
b. Suggestion 2
c. Suggestion 3

7. Which of the following should be enhanced? Please specify how:

a. The global, regional and national Internet Governance Forums (IGF)
b. United Nations agencies (ITU, UNESCO, WIPO, etc)
c. Regional organizations (e.g. OECD, APEC, African Union)
d. Informal local and regional communities (e.g. ISOC chapters)
e. Global dialogues (e.g. RightsCon, Global Cyberspace Conference)
f. Internet technical organizations (e.g. IETF, RIRs, etc.)
g. Follow up and implementation of the Netmundial principles and roadmap
h. The IANA transition process
i. Other (please specify below)

7b. Enhanced how? Please describe.

8. How important are the following? Please rate the importance of these priorities from 1 to 7, with 1 being the highest.

a. Make Internet governance easier to understand
b. International coordination among governments on public policy issues
c. Developing new policies to address existing and emerging issues
d. Developing and sharing best practices amongst countries and communities
e. Create a new platform for cooperation in Internet governance
f. Enhancing working relationships between stakeholder communities
g. Participation of developing countries in governance
h. Other (Please describe below)

9. How familiar are you with the NETmundial Multistakeholder Statement that was adopted in Brazil, in April 2014?

- No knowledge
- Somewhat
- Have reviewed
- Participated in its development

10. Do you think the new "NETmundial Initiative" (NMI) that was launched by the WEF, Brazil and ICANN is needed for effective Internet governance?

- Yes
- No
- Unclear at this stage

11. How should the Internet Society be involved in the "NMI"?

- Not at all
- Leading community consultations
- Formal participation
- Other (Please specify)

12. How can the Internet Society staff and members best strengthen inclusive and effective Internet governance? Please rate the importance of these efforts from 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest.

a. By convening dialogues and facilitating information sharing among all stakeholder communities
b. By informing governments on issues at the intersection of technology and policy

c. By supporting platforms where best practices can be discussed in an open and inclusive manner
d. By supporting IG capacity building and participation of developing countries in Internet governance discussions
e. Other (please specify below)