



The Church of Scotland

Church and Society Council

Surveillance and Social Justice – May 2017

Section 2. Rationale

2.1 Surveillance encompasses many, if not all, areas of life. Entire populations experience suspicion-less surveillance, sifting through data which might identify targets for more focused scrutiny. Such closer observation may be aimed at detecting criminal activities - but equally it might be to find potential customers, more risky borrowers, or people vulnerable to disease. Police investigations, covert monitoring by the intelligence services and tactics associated with oppressive regimes are only *some* of what surveillance means today.

2.2 Mirroring the focus of Jesus, this report highlights those who are already marginalised and often find their experience of surveillance to be counter to their flourishing. It is a timely report because it has become increasingly easy to collect and speedily process complex data. There is increased public awareness of surveillance. Particular groups of people in our society are unfairly under considerable suspicion.

2.3 Whilst digital surveillance is absent from the Biblical narrative, the Psalms and the New Testament provide a picture of a God who sees all. In the portrayal of some Pharisees, the Gospels also illustrate the power that can come from being those monitoring other people. At a more fundamental level, Scripture addresses fear, to which surveillance is often a 21st century response: “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).

[See the full report](#)