

**Report on the Findings of the  
Information Commissioner's Office  
Annual Track 2011**

**Individuals**

**SMSR**

social and market strategic research

SMSR House 51-52 Market Place Hull HU1 1RQ Tel: 01482 211 200

Fax: 01482 211 201 info@smsr.co.uk www.smsr.co.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**Report V05**

**October 2011**

## Contents Page

Foreword .....	3
1.0. Introduction .....	4
2.0 Research Aims and Objectives .....	4
3.0 ICO Communications Objectives .....	5
4.0 Executive Summary .....	6
5.0 Methodology .....	9
6.0 Sample / Profile .....	10
7.0 Results.....	11
8.0 Appendices .....	38

## Foreword

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has tracked awareness and understanding of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) since 1997 and the Freedom of Information Act 2005 (FOIA) since 2004.

The research was fully reviewed in 2007 to form a more focussed and respondent-friendly consultation, whilst still meeting the needs of the ICO's core research objectives.

Where possible, questions are tracked over time. Changes in question approach are highlighted in footnotes throughout the report.

---

## 1.0. Introduction

Since the revised DPA came into force in 1998, the ICO has monitored awareness and understanding of this legislation amongst individuals about whom information is held.

The FOIA was passed in 2000 and was fully enforced at the start of 2005. This Act governs public authorities only. Research is undertaken amongst individuals to monitor awareness and understanding of the Act.

SMSR Ltd has conducted this research - which takes the form of an annual track survey - on behalf of the ICO since 2004.

Research is also undertaken amongst organisations to measure awareness and understanding of each of the Acts. Findings are detailed in a separate report.

## 2.0 Research Aims and Objectives

Where applicable this report contains and compares the results from previous years and compares all results with 2007's revised questions.

The research objectives of the consultation were as follows;

### 2.1 DPA Objectives:

- To measure awareness of rights under the DPA.
- To measure awareness of the Act.
- To understand the relevance of the Act to individuals.
- To gauge individuals' perceptions of the way organisations handle personal information.
- To measure the importance of specific matters relating to personal information.
- To understand where individuals go for advice relating to the DPA.
- To understand the extent to which individuals perceive the Act to be beneficial.
- To understand how individuals learn about their rights under the Acts.

## **2.2 FOIA Objectives:**

- To measure awareness of rights under the FOIA.
- To measure awareness of the Act.
- To understand the relevance of the Act to the public.
- To understand where the public goes for advice relating to the FOIA.
- To understand the extent to which the public perceives the Act to be beneficial.
- To gauge the public's' perceptions of the way public authorities handle official information.
- To understand how individuals learn about their rights under the Act.

## **2.3 Corporate Awareness Objectives:**

- To identify awareness of the ICO as being responsible for the DPA and FOIA.
- To measure the importance that both the DPA and FOIA is regulated independently from Government.

## **3.0 ICO Communications Objectives**

It is helpful to read this report in the context of the ICO's communications objectives for individuals, which are detailed as follows:

- Maintain awareness of rights amongst individuals.
- Educate young people about their information rights.

## 4.0 Executive Summary

### 4.1 Social Issues

Almost nine out of ten respondents said they were concerned about how information is handled, with 89% of respondents feeling concerned about protecting people's information. As a social issue, protecting people's personal information continues to be the second highest concern, with preventing crime being ranked at 92%.

*Access to information held by public authorities* remains at the lower end of the list of social concerns and there is less concern than in recent years; however 69% of individuals believe it is a concern.

When asked what social issue was of most concern, 13% identified protecting people's personal information, just 10% less than the most frequently mentioned concern; preventing crime (23%). Only 2% were most concerned about access to information held by public authorities.

### 4.2 Data Protection

Concern that the UK public have lost control over the way information is collected is still fairly high at 59%; however this does represent the lowest levels of concern since 2007 and is a further 1% decrease since 2010.

Positive perceptions around organisations handling data in a fair and proper manner is low as just 49% agreed that information is handled fairly and in a proper manner. In addition just over a third (34%) believe existing laws and practices provide sufficient protection and there is less confidence that online companies collect and keep personal details securely (26%).

Despite this, levels of knowledge seem to have increased as spontaneous awareness of *the right to see information* is now at 66%; the highest level of awareness since 2007.

Prompted awareness of the *right to see information* remains consistently high at 89%; the same level of awareness as in 2010.

Although awareness from those aged 18 to 24 was at its highest in 2009 and 2010 (95%), it is the joint highest level of awareness amongst all age groups in 2011 at 90% (with 25-34 year olds also indicating 90% awareness).

Levels of concern have generally increased across all aspects of organisations handling personal details. Consistent with previous years, the public is showing high levels of concern over the potential mismanagement of their information. Once again the two highest-ranking concerns are passing or selling your personal details onto other organisations (97%) and security (96%).

Spontaneous awareness of the DPA has continued to increase since 2007 as 38% mentioned the Act unprompted; an increase of 11% since 2009 and 1% since 2010. However; prompted awareness has decreased to 85%, 10% lower than 2010.

Unlike previous years media is cited as the main source of awareness (41%) and could be the driver to higher unprompted awareness and increased understanding of various rights. However, this could also be the predominant factor in the increased lack of confidence in organisations generally. The workplace is still a significant source of awareness (21%).

The CAB remains the number one source of advice on individuals' DPA rights (60%), with 47% of these suggesting they would visit a CAB office and 14% the CAB website. Just less than a fifth mentioned the internet (19%) or a solicitor (18%).

Applying for or being refused financial credit remain the main reasons for any previous or possible data requests and 14% had previously requested some kind of personal information, a 4% decrease since 2010.

### 4.3 Freedom of Information

After a 14% decrease in spontaneous awareness of the *right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities* last year awareness increased to 27% in 2011, representing a 4% increase. Those aged 18 to 24 had slightly lower levels of awareness (23%).

Almost one in eight of the UK population (77%) indicated a prompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government or public authorities. This represents a 7% decrease in awareness from 2010. Prompted awareness was higher among the older respondents as just 67% of 18 to 24 years olds were aware of this right compared to 83% of those aged 55 to 64.

Awareness of individual rights with regards to accessing information remains high and has increased since the Act came into effect in 2005. Individuals are more aware of the specific rights relating to the FOIA – *finding out what money is being spent on* (84%), *the type of information that is available* (84%) and *requesting information on the environment* (83%).

There is more uncertainty around public authority and Government information being available and accessible to the UK public as although 50% agreed with the statement '*information you want about the Government and other public authorities is available and accessible*' the remaining half either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed.

Spontaneous awareness of the FOIA remains the same as in 2010 as 24% of all respondents mentioned the FOIA. Almost three quarters (72%) of respondents indicated a level of prompted awareness, although this represented a decrease of 10% since 2010. This decline seems to have been driven by those aged 18 to 24 (50%) and those aged 25 to 34 (59%).

Perceived benefits of the Act have all decreased since 2010 but are still relatively high, especially agreement that *'being able to access information held by the public authorities increases knowledge of what they do'* (81%).

The internet is now the main source of awareness on the FOIA or freedom of information issues (38%) with media mentioned by 15% of the sample.

The CAB was mentioned frequently in terms of seeking advice on the FOIA (52%) but the internet continues to increase from 24% in 2007 to 36% in 2011. The internet was also mentioned the most frequently as a preferred method for receiving advice and guidance (30%).

#### **4.4 Independent Regulation**

Almost one in seven (68%) respondents felt it was very important that the regulator of both the DPA and the FOIA are independent of Government; an additional 18% said it was fairly important that the FOIA was independently regulated and 15% said the same for the DPA. Only 3% said this was unimportant.

#### **4.5 The ICO**

Awareness of the ICO has continued to increase as 25% of respondents said they were aware of the ICO when prompted, a 3% increase since 2010.



## 5.0 Methodology

The consultation was undertaken by telephone to retain consistency with previous years and because it has proven to be a very successful contact method in the past.

Quotas were placed on individuals by age, gender, region, ethnicity and socio-economic grouping to ensure a nationally representative sample was achieved. The sample was also structured in order to be able to identify variations between these key demographics.

All the interviews were conducted in house by SMSR's telephone team. The majority of interviewers had previously worked on ICO projects. All were regularly monitored by the call centre's quality manager and supervisors as part of SMSR's ISO accredited Quality Management System.

When the results are listed within the report, percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest one per cent. Therefore, occasionally figures may add up to 101% or 99%.

Explanation of the use of  $R^2$  in graphs throughout the report:

$R^2$  tells us what fraction of the variance of the data is explained by the fitted trend line.  $R^2$  ranges from 0 to 1; with a value closer to 1, data is better explained by the trend line, or the trend line is more fitted to the data. In our charts, the bigger the value, the stronger trend the data has across time, therefore the more confident we can be in predicting next year's figures.

Fieldwork was carried out between 8<sup>th</sup> August and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2011.

## 6.0 Sample / Profile

The sample size achieved for the data protection individual questionnaire was 1,241 and the freedom of information individual questionnaire 1,234. A total sample of 2,475 was delivered.

Subject	Quota	Achieved
Data Protection	1,222	1,241
Freedom of Information	1,222	1,234
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,444</b>	<b>2,475</b>

A breakdown of the full sample can be found in the appendices.

## 7.0 Results

### 7.1 Social Issues<sup>1</sup>

#### 7.1.1 Concerns with issues of social importance

Q1: I am going to read out a list of issues that could be considered of social importance. Please tell me how concerned you are about each of the following issues. <sup>2</sup>					
Prompted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Preventing crime	94%	94%	96%	93%	92%
Protecting people's personal information	92%	94%	94%	92%	89%
Unemployment	80%	83%	93%	90%	86%
The National Health Service	91%	88%	90%	90%	84%
Improving standards in education	88%	87%	89%	90%	84%
National security	89%	87%	90%	85%	80%
Protecting freedom of speech	86%	85%	89%	86%	78%
Equal rights for everyone	89%	88%	89%	87%	77%
Environmental issues	86%	87%	90%	83%	74%
Access to information held by public authorities	79%	78%	80%	75%	69%

Since 2007 the prevention of crime has continually emerged as the issue of greatest concern among individuals. However, between 2009 and 2011 the levels of concern have decreased by 4%.

Individuals continue to show concern about the issue of protecting people's personal information (89%), although levels of importance are 5% lower than at the peak of concern in 2008 and 2009 (94%).

Access to information held by public authorities remains the lowest ranked of all of the social concerns listed, with 69% of individuals perceiving it to be a concern.

For all of the issues mentioned, individuals expressed lower levels of concern when compared with responses in 2010, with differences ranging from -1% to -10%.

Female respondents expressed higher levels of concern on most of the issues mentioned; particularly unemployment (88%), equal rights for everyone (79%) and environmental issues (76%).

<sup>1</sup> Although both questionnaires covered two different subjects there were some generic questions asked in each around social issues and the ICO. The results from generic sections are based on the combined sample; results within the data protection and freedom of information sections are based on the two respective samples.

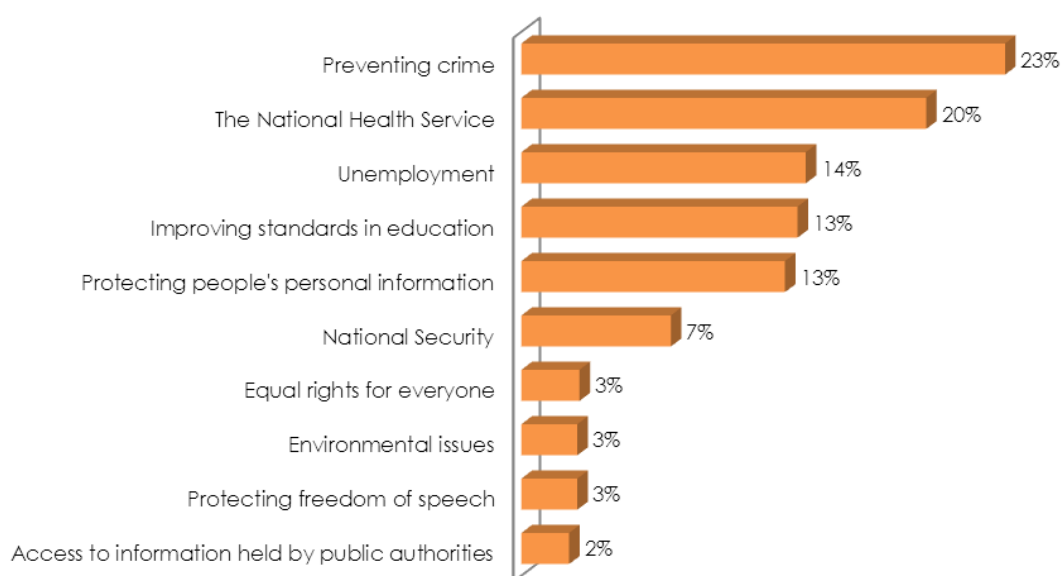
<sup>2</sup> Previous surveys have used a 1- 5 scale (1 being the lowest level of concern and 5 being the highest level of concern), however in 2007/2008 a worded scale was used ranging from very concerned to not at all concerned. The 2007/2008 results in the table above are those that said 'very' or 'fairly' concerned, whereas previous results are based on those that answered 4 or 5.

Respondents aged 55 to 64 considered most of the issues to be more concerning than respondents of other ages; the level of importance expressed by this age group was significantly higher than average when considering the protection of freedom of speech (86%), environmental issues (82%) and accessing information held by public authorities (77%).

Concern tended to be higher among respondents in socio-economic group A/B for most of the social issues listed. However, C2 respondents placed most importance on protecting people's information (91%) and access to information held by public authorities (71%).

In previous years, and again in 2011, high numbers of respondents have expressed concern for all of the social concerns listed, therefore to further understand people's concerns an additional question was added this year to capture which is of the greatest concern to the individual.

**Chart 1: Please could you tell me which you are personally most concerned about?**



Preventing crime was again identified as the main issue of personal concern, with 23% of respondents stating that it was the social issue that caused the greatest concern to them.

Although protecting people's information was the second highest concern in the previous question, only 13% of respondents said this was the social issue that most concerned them personally. Only 2% of respondents felt that accessing information held by public authorities was their greatest concern.

## 7.2 Data Protection

### 7.2.1 Current perceptions of information handling

Q3: I am now going to read out a list of statements and this time I would like you to tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. <sup>3</sup>					
Prompted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
You have lost control over the way your information is collected and processed	60%	68%	67%	60%	59%
Organisations handle the information they collect about you in a fair and proper way	50%	47%	57%	56%	49%
Existing laws and organisational practices provide sufficient protection of your personal information	39%	40%	44%	46%	34%
Online companies collect and keep your personal details in a secure way	34%	32%	37%	37%	26%

The data shows that 59% of the UK public lack confidence in the way their personal information is protected and handled. Although this is still what would generally be considered to be reasonably high, agreement with the statement has continued to decline from 68% in 2008 to 59% in 2011.

Individuals' belief that organisations handle their information in a fair and proper way has declined by 7% from 56% in 2010 to 49% in 2011.

Similarly between 2010 and 2011 there have been decreases in agreement that *existing laws and organisational practices provide sufficient protection of your personal information* (-12%) and *online companies collect and keep your personal details in a secure way* (-11%).

The perception that organisations handle personal information correctly and online information is kept secure was significantly lower among respondents living in Northern Ireland and Wales. Moreover, within these areas agreement was high that individuals have lost control over the way their information is collected and processed (Northern Ireland: 72%, Wales: 74%).

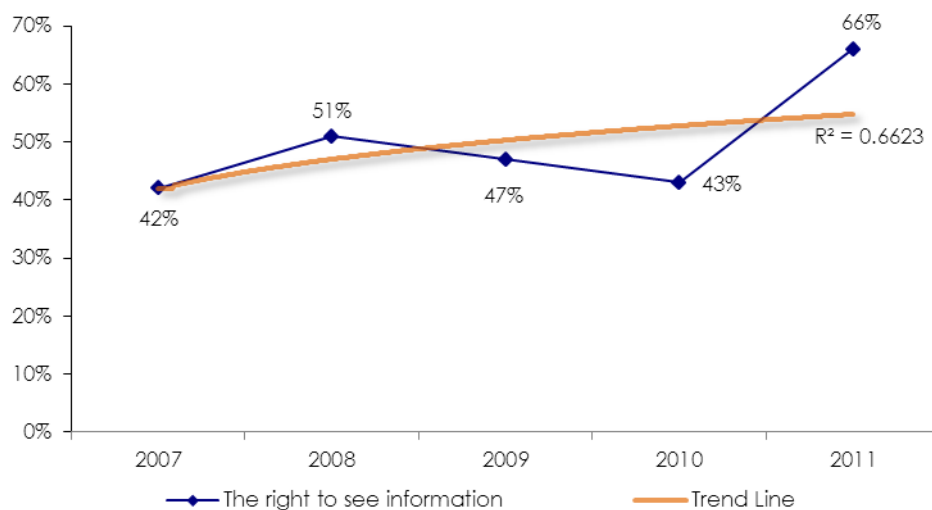
Respondents aged 18 to 24 were the most positive when considering all of the statements listed, particularly that *online companies collect and keep your personal details in a secure way* (32%).

---

<sup>3</sup> Refers to those respondents stating 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. In previous years the question was a numbered scale from 1 – 5.

## 7.2.2 Awareness of rights (Unprompted)

Chart 2: Unprompted awareness of the right to see information



Spontaneous awareness of the right to see information was higher in 2011 than any year previously (66%). Prior to this the highest levels of awareness had been in 2008, when 51% of respondents mentioned this right without prompt.

As in 2010, A/B and C1 respondents were more aware of the right to see information (67% and 68% respectively). Also consistent with 2010, was awareness among respondents aged 25 to 34 who again demonstrated the highest levels of awareness (72%).

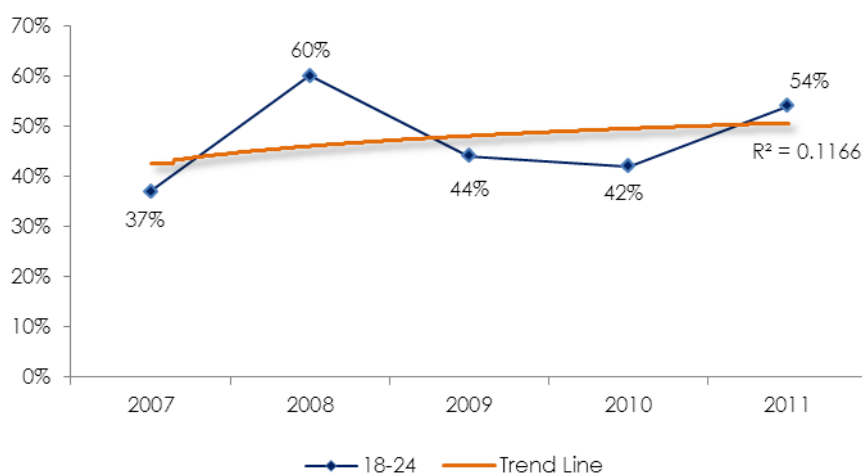
Highest levels of awareness of the right to see information were found in South East (83%) and the North East (76%). Respondents living in Northern Ireland (53%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (56%) were less likely to be aware of the right to see information, although within both areas awareness has increased since 2010.

**Q4: Organisations such as doctors/banks and credit card companies hold personal information. This personal information can include your name, your address, your bank account details or your credit rating information. What rights do you think you have to access personal details held about you by organisations?**

(Unprompted)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The right to see information	42%	51%	47%	43%	66%
Individuals have no rights	5%	6%	6%	5%	4%
The right to correct inaccurate information	6%	2%	2%	3%	1%
The right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
The right to stop unsolicited mail	2%	0.4%	0.2%	2%	1%
The right to claim compensation for damage or distress caused by a breach of the Act	1%	0.2%	0.2%	1%	0.4%
The right to object to decisions made only by automatic means	1%	0.2%	0.1%	2%	0.3%
The right to have the breach of the Act investigated and assessed	1%	0.3%	0%	1%	0.2%
<i>Don't know</i>	48%	34%	38%	43%	28%

As seen in previous years there were very low levels of awareness of any other rights, and awareness of all other rights had decreased since 2010.

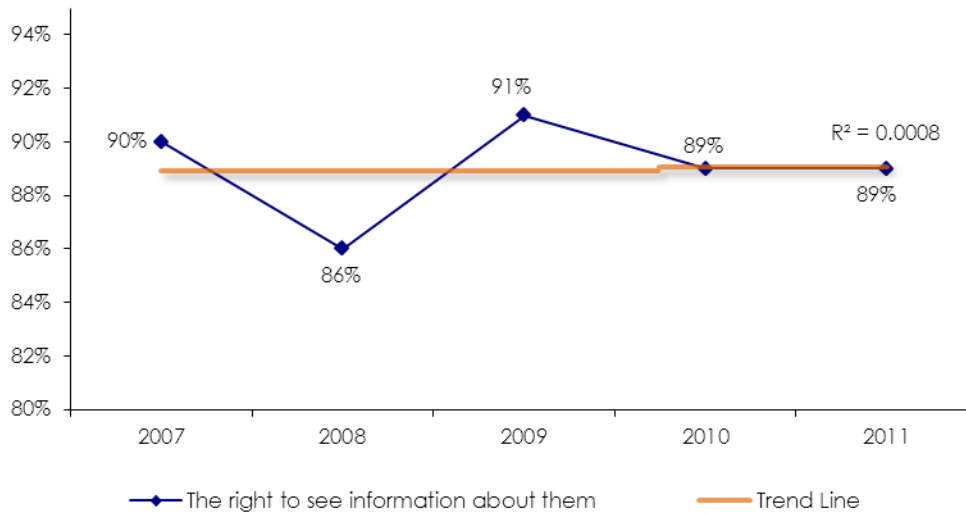
**Chart 3: Unprompted awareness of the right to see information, 18-24 year olds**



In 2011, awareness among respondents aged 18 to 24 was 12% lower than average (66% average, 54% 18 to 24). However, awareness among respondents in this age group has increased by 12% since 2010.

### 7.2.3 Awareness of rights (Prompted)

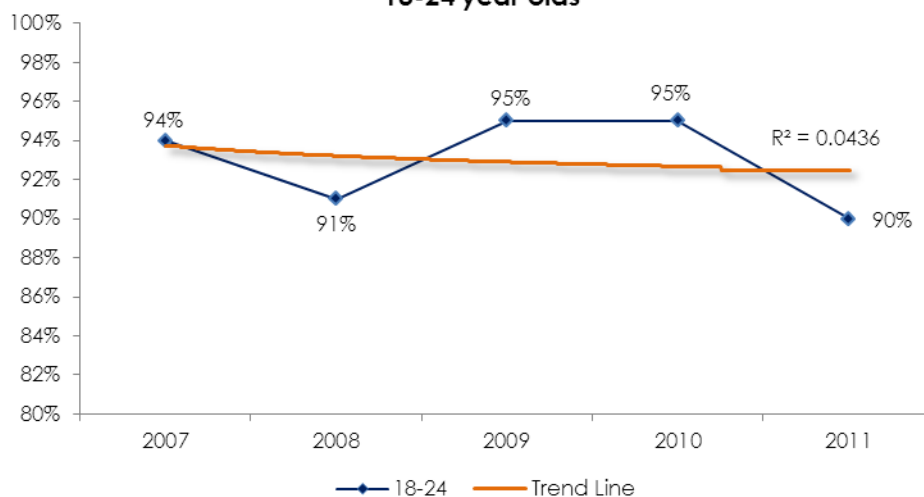
Chart 4: Prompted awareness of the right to see information



Prompted awareness of the right to see information remained at 89% in 2011.

Respondents living in the Yorkshire and Humberside (81%) and the North East (81%) were least likely to be aware of the right to see information, while those living in the South East (96%) were more likely to be aware.

Chart 5: Prompted awareness of the right to see information, 18-24 year olds



Since 2007, prompted awareness of the right to see information has remained over 90% among 18 to 24 year olds. However, there has been a 5% decrease in prompted awareness among respondents in this age group in 2011 to 90%.



**Q5: Which of the following rights do you think you have with regards to your personal details held by organisations?**

<b>(Prompted)</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
The right to see information	90%	86%	91%	89%	89%
The right to correct inaccurate information	87%	81%	87%	82%	82%
The right to stop unsolicited mail	88%	88%	86%	81%	79%
The right to have a breach of the Act investigated and assessed	87%	83%	88%	83%	74%
The right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress	78%	68%	75%	63%	71%
The right to claim compensation for damage or distress caused by a breach of the Act	82%	74%	82%	74%	70%
The right to object to decisions made only by automatic means	77%	63%	69%	62%	65%
Individuals have no rights	3%	9%	9%	7%	8%

Similar to previous years *'The right to see information'* was the right respondents were most likely to be aware of, with 89% of respondents stating this right in 2011.

For the second year in succession there has been a decrease in nearly all other rights when prompted. One exception in this year's results is that awareness of *'the right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress'* has increased by 8% since 2010.

44% of respondents were aware of all seven rights; 7% higher than in 2010. Similar to 2010 respondents aged 25 to 34 (51%) were most likely to be aware of all seven rights, as were C2's (49%). Lowest awareness of all rights was found among respondents living in Northern Ireland (27%) and the North East (26%).

## 7.2.4 Concerns with regard to organisations using personal information

**Q6: I am now going to read out a list of concerns that people might have about organisations holding their personal details. Please tell me how concerned you are about each issue<sup>4</sup>**

Prompted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Passing or selling your personal details onto other organisations	94%	95%	97%	96%	97%
Not collecting and keeping your personal details secure	94%	96%	96%	96%	96%
Requesting too many of your personal details	88%	89%	92%	88%	93%
Requesting inappropriate information that is not relevant	83%	83%	87%	81%	91%
Receiving unwanted emails, faxes, letters or telephone calls	87%	87%	89%	87%	89%
Holding inaccurate or out of date information	87%	89%	91%	88%	86%
Holding information for longer than is required	84%	84%	89%	84%	83%
Collecting and holding your personal information online	84%	81%	87%	80%	81%

Levels of concern are generally very high in regards to organisations handling personal information. In 2010 concern had slightly decreased across the majority of statements; however in 2011 concerns have tended to rise again. Concern over organisations passing or selling personal information to other organisations and not collecting, and keeping personal details secure continue to be very high at 97% and 96% respectively. Of these respondents, 81% said they were very concerned about organisations passing or selling personal details onto other organisations and 72% were very concerned that organisations did not collect and keep information secure.

Concern that organisations are holding inaccurate information that is out of date or that has been held for longer than is required has decreased slightly since 2010 (by 2% and 1% respectively).

Similar to 2010, females again showed higher levels of concern regarding organisations using personal information than males, although the difference in 2011 is less than it has been in previous years.

For the fourth consecutive year, older age groups tended to be more concerned than younger age groups. Those categorised as A/B in the socio-economic groupings also indicated higher levels of concern generally.

<sup>4</sup> Answers are based on those who said 'very' or 'fairly' concerned.

## 7.2.5 Awareness of laws concerning the handling of personal information (Unprompted)

Q8: What, if any, laws are you aware of concerning the handling of your personal details?					
Unprompted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
DPA	45%	41%	27%	37%	38%
FOIA	7%	5%	6%	8%	7%
Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations	1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	1%
Environmental Information Regulations	1%	1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
None	52%	56%	70%	59%	57%

Almost two fifths (38%) of respondents spontaneously mentioned the DPA as the law concerning the handling of personal details, a 1% increase since last year and an 11% increase since 2009.

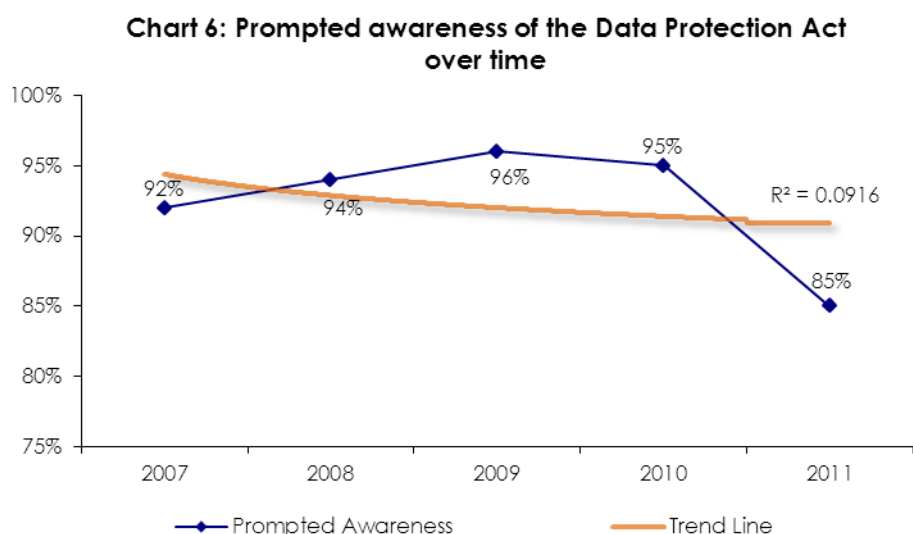
As in the last four years there were higher levels of awareness of the Act among male respondents (45%), and A/B respondents (42%). Additionally there has been an increase of unprompted awareness amongst C2 (+14%) and D/E (+7%) respondents.

Consistent with 2010 those aged 25 to 34 indicated the highest levels of spontaneous awareness (56%), a level which represents a 6% increase since last year.

Only 17% of those aged 65 and over reported awareness. Awareness among those aged 65 and over has decreased by 7% since 2010.

Unprompted awareness of the DPA was highest in the South West (50%), and was lowest in the North East where just 19% mentioned the Act unprompted.

## 7.2.6 Awareness of the DPA (Prompted)



When prompted, over four-fifths (85%) of respondents were aware of the DPA. This represents a significant decrease in prompted awareness from 2010 (-10%).

Awareness of the Act had steadily increased from 2007 to 2009, but has declined over the last two years.

Prompted awareness of the DPA was greatest among individuals in the South East (89%) and A/B respondents (92%).

Awareness of the Act was the lowest amongst D/E respondents (81%) and those aged 18 to 24 (72%).

## 7.2.7 Sources of awareness of the DPA

Q10: Generally, how are you made aware of data protection issues or the DPA? <sup>5</sup>		
Unprompted	2010	2011
Newspapers/radio/TV	28%	41%
Through work	29%	21%
Education	6%	4%
My bank	2%	4%
From a family member/friend	4%	4%

The media was cited as the main source of awareness of the DPA at 41% and the workplace was once again a prominent source of awareness (21%). These have been the top two responses for the last four years.

<sup>5</sup> Prior to 2010 this has been a coded question with just 5 response categories, whereas this year interviewers recorded verbatim responses and the majority of answers cannot be compared.

A greater percentage of Scottish respondents were aware of the DPA through the media (50%), as were A/B (44%) and C2 (43%) respondents. Consistent with last year, a greater proportion of A/B (29%) and C1 respondents (28%) had heard or seen about the DPA through their work.

### 7.2.8 Requests for personal information held by organisations

Of the sample, 14% had previously requested personal information, a 4% decrease since 2010 and a 6% decrease since 2009.

The pattern of male respondents being more likely to make such a request remains consistent, as 18% of males said they had requested information compared to 10% of female respondents.

The 25 to 44 age group is the most likely to activate their rights and request personal information (17%), which has remained the case since 2009.

<b>Q12: Can you think of any situations where you have or would request any of your personal details held by a company or organisation?</b>					
<b>Unprompted</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Applying for financial credit	21%	20%	16%	22%	18%
Being refused financial credit	26%	21%	17%	22%	16%
No circumstances	16%	14%	25%	14%	14%
General interest	3%	3%	2%	2%	10%
To check medical records	17%	13%	9%	14%	9%
To check criminal record	4%	1%	2%	3%	4%
Change in employment status	4%	1%	3%	2%	2%
When moving house	1%	2%	1%	0.3%	2%
After being involved in court action	1%	0.1%	0.3%	1%	1%
Altering marital status	1%	0.2%	2%	0.1%	0.2%

Applying for financial credit or being refused financial credit are still the two main situations identified whereby an individual would request any personal details being held by a company. This has been consistent since this question was first asked in 2007; however these situations were not mentioned as frequently as in 2010 (with decreases of 4% and 6% respectively).

As in 2010, 14% said they could not think of any circumstances whereby they would request any of their personal details.

## 7.2.9 Sources of advice on the rights under the DPA

Q13: Where would you go to get advice on your rights under the Data Protection Act?					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CAB	59%	55%	66%	69%	60%
Internet	22%	19%	20%	27%	19%
Solicitor	11%	12%	12%	15%	18%
Local MP/Councillor/Assembly member	3%	2%	2%	3%	4%
Police	1%	1%	0.4%	1%	3%
ICO	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Public library	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%

CAB remains the top response for sourcing advice on the DPA at 60%, although the percentage of respondents stating the CAB has decreased by 9% since 2010. The internet was the second most frequently mentioned source at 19%; an 8% decrease compared to 2010. A similar portion of respondents mentioned a solicitor (18%) as a source of advice on rights under the DPA.

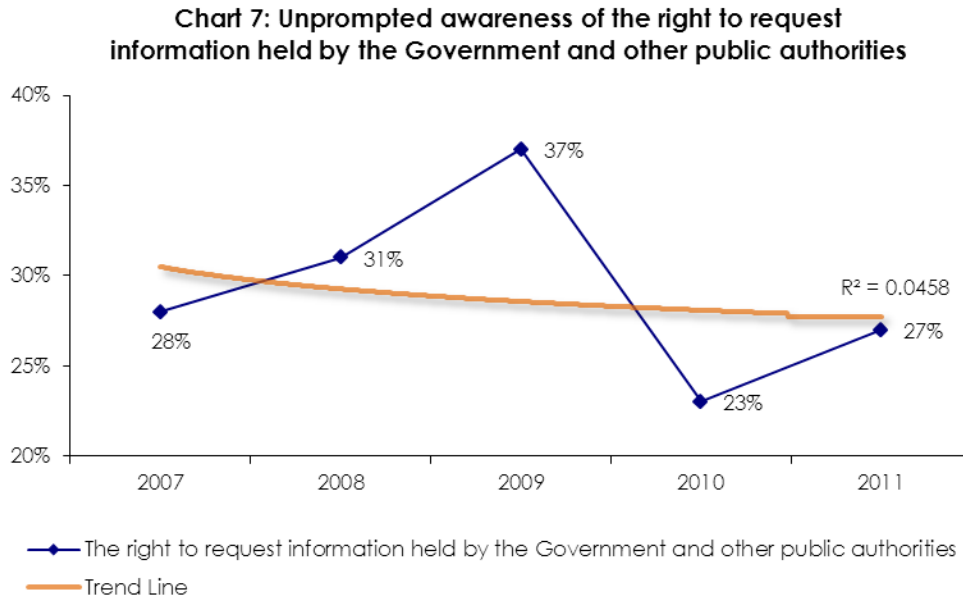
Of the 60% who said CAB, 47% said they would go into a CAB office and 14% said they would look on the CAB website.

Preference for the internet is higher for those aged 18 to 24 (34%) and 25 to 34 (26%) and C1 respondents (23%). This is a slightly different picture from last year when those aged 35 to 44 were the most likely to mention this source of advice, alongside A/B and C1 respondents.

In contrast to this, those aged 18 to 34 (52%) mentioned the CAB far less frequently than those aged 35 and over (63%).

### 7.3 Freedom of Information

#### 7.3.1 Awareness of rights (Unprompted)



Unprompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities had increased steadily between 2007 and 2009 (peaking at 37%), however after a significant decrease of 14% in 2010, awareness has now increased by 4% to 27%.

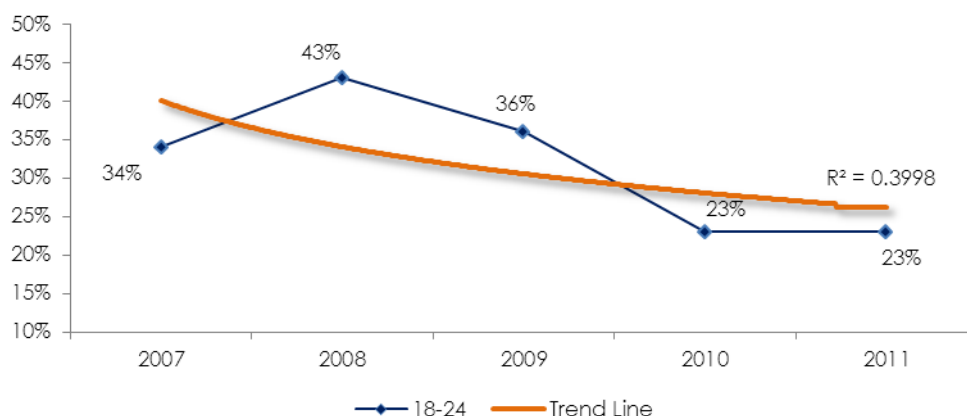
Respondents within social class A/B (40%), C1 (26%) and C2 (26%) were more likely than those in social class D/E (19%) to mention this right unprompted, which was very similar to the findings in 2010.

Those aged 35 to 44 reported the highest levels of unprompted awareness at 36%, while just 18% of those aged 65 and over mentioned this right unprompted.

Those living in Yorkshire and Humberside (40%), South West (37%) and West Midlands (36%) indicated the highest levels of spontaneous awareness.

In 2010 Northern Ireland had the lowest levels of awareness, however this year the figure in this area 4% above the average at 31%. In 2011 it was those living in the South East that gave the lowest response as just 13% said they were aware of this right unprompted.

**Chart 8: Unprompted awareness of the right to request information held by the government and other public authorities, 18-24 year olds**



Despite there being a 4% increase in unprompted awareness overall, among those aged 18 to 24 awareness has remained consistent with 2010 at 23%. This represents a decrease of a fifth since the peak in awareness among this age group in 2008.

**Q3: What rights do you think you have to access information held by the Government and other public authorities?**

Unprompted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
The right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities	28%	31%	37%	23%	27%
The right to see what public money is being spent on	5%	1%	2%	3%	15%
The right to know what type of information is available from the Government and other public authorities	3%	1%	1%	3%	15%
The right to see official information from the Government and other public authorities	3%	1%	0.1%	3%	12%
The right to request information about the environment	3%	1%	1%	2%	11%
The public don't have any rights	4%	8%	6%	7%	7%
Don't know	59%	49%	46%	50%	49%

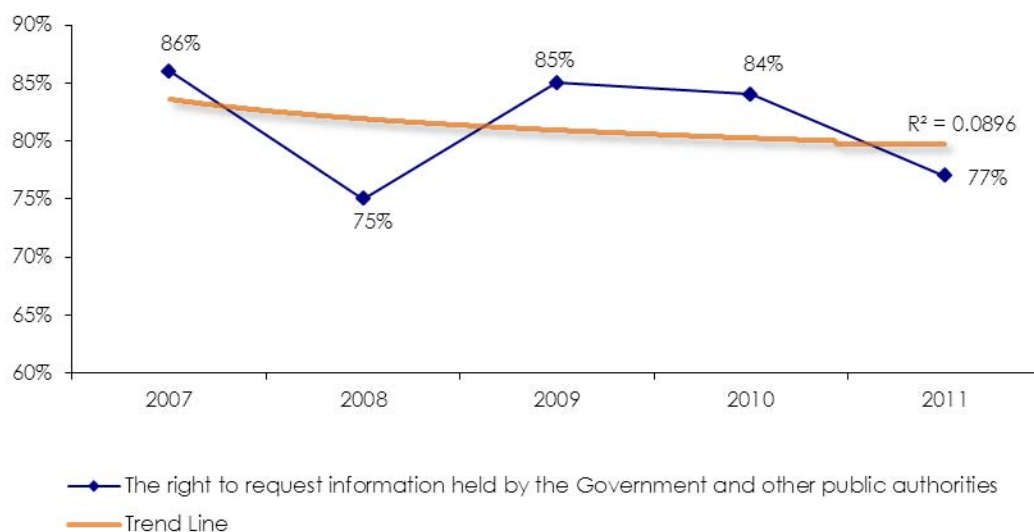
Unprompted awareness of all FOIA rights possessed by individuals has increased since 2010; with increases of more than a tenth that individuals have the right to see what public money is being spent on (+12%), and to know what type of information is available from the Government and other public authorities (+12%).

Similar to previous years, around a half (49%) of respondents did not know what rights they held, and 7% of respondents felt that individuals did not have any rights.



### 7.3.2 Awareness of rights (Prompted)

**Chart 9: Prompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities**

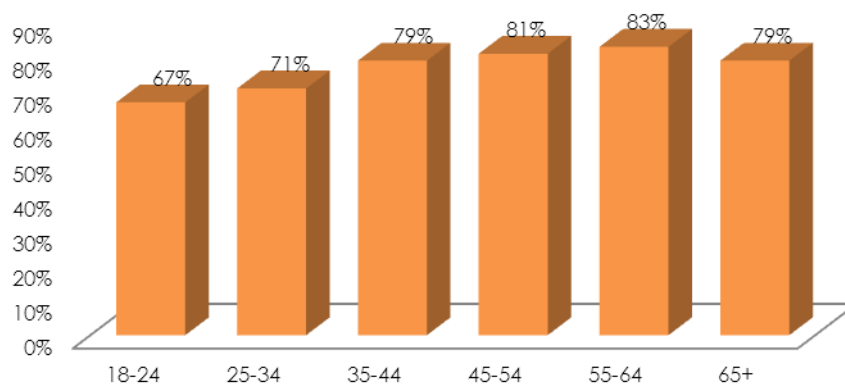


Following peaks in awareness in 2009 (85%) and 2010 (84%), the prompted awareness of the right to request information has decreased to 77% in 2011.

As in 2010, male respondents demonstrated higher than average levels of awareness of this right at 79%, 4% higher than awareness among female respondents.

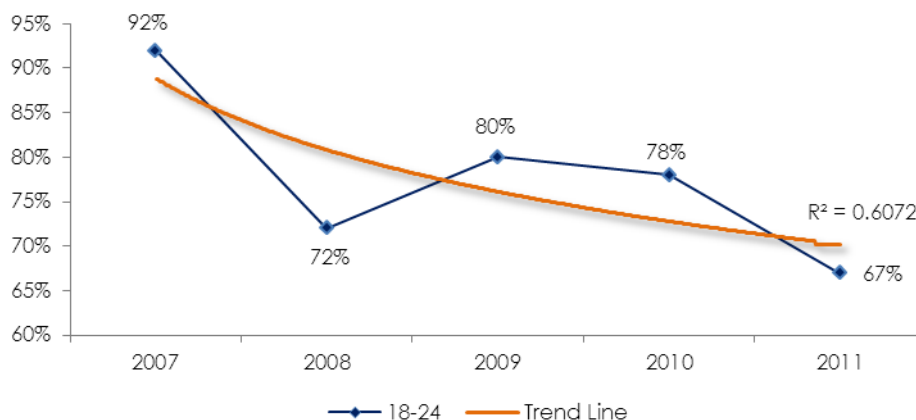
Respondents living in Wales had significantly lower levels of prompted awareness (65%). In addition those living in Northern Ireland also expressed lower levels of awareness (66%). Highest awareness was found among respondents living in the South West, where almost nine tenths (87%) of respondents knew they had the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities.

**Chart 10: Prompted awareness of the right to access information held by the Government and other public authorities, by age**



Younger respondents were least aware of their rights, with only 69% of respondents aged 18 to 34 being in agreement that they had the right to request information. Respondents aged 55 to 64 had the highest awareness, as more than four fifths (83%) were aware of their right to request information.

**Chart 11: Prompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities, 18-24 year olds**



In 2011 only two thirds (67%) of respondents aged 18 to 24 were knowledgeable about this right; this is the lowest level of awareness this age group has demonstrated since 2007.

Overall, awareness of FOIA rights remain relatively high, and are higher than when the Act came into effect in 2005. However, knowledge of all rights has decreased slightly since 2010. Although awareness is high for all rights mentioned, a tenth of respondents still felt that individuals did not have any rights.

### 7.3.3 Confidence in information being available and accessible

<b>Q4: Which of the following rights do you think you have with regards to accessing information held by the Government and other public authorities?</b>					
<b>Prompted</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
The right to see what public money is being spent on	91%	86%	86%	88%	84%
The right to know what type of information is available from the Government and other public authorities	91%	83%	84%	88%	84%
The right to request information about the environment	90%	83%	86%	87%	83%
The right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities	86%	75%	85%	84%	77%
The right to see official information from the Government and other public authorities such as minutes and planning documents	79%	72%	71%	75%	71%

This question was added to the survey in 2008 asking individuals how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *"information you want about the Government and other public authorities is available and accessible."*

<b>Q5: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement "information you want about the government and other public authorities is available and accessible"?</b>				
<b>Prompted</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Agree	50%	59%	59%	50%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%	16%	16%	26%
Disagree	25%	25%	25%	23%

Agreement that information about public authorities was available and accessible was highest in 2009 and 2010 at 59%. In 2011 there has been a 9% decrease in agreement to 50%.

Agreement was significantly lower among respondents living in Northern Ireland, where only 35% of respondents agree to any extent. In Scotland around two thirds (66%) of respondents agreed that information about the Government and other public authorities was available and accessible.

Male respondents (54%) were more likely than female respondents (47%) to agree that the information that they want is available and accessible.

Respondents who were aware of their right to request information were more likely to agree that information about the Government and other public authorities was available and accessible (55%).

### 7.3.4 Awareness of laws regarding access to information held by the Government and other public authorities (Unprompted)

<b>Q6: What laws are you aware of regarding access to information held by the Government and other public authorities about the way they run their organisation?</b>					
<b>Unprompted</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
FOIA	20%	16%	18%	24%	24%
DPA	19%	10%	11%	12%	22%
Environmental Information Regulations	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	3%
Open Government Code	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	1%
None	16%	13%	23%	33%	26%

Consistent with 2010, almost a quarter (24%) of respondents demonstrated unprompted awareness of the FOIA. Despite this increase, there has also been an increase in confusion with the DPA, as almost an equal percentage (22%) of respondents stated this as the law regarding access to Government/public authority information.

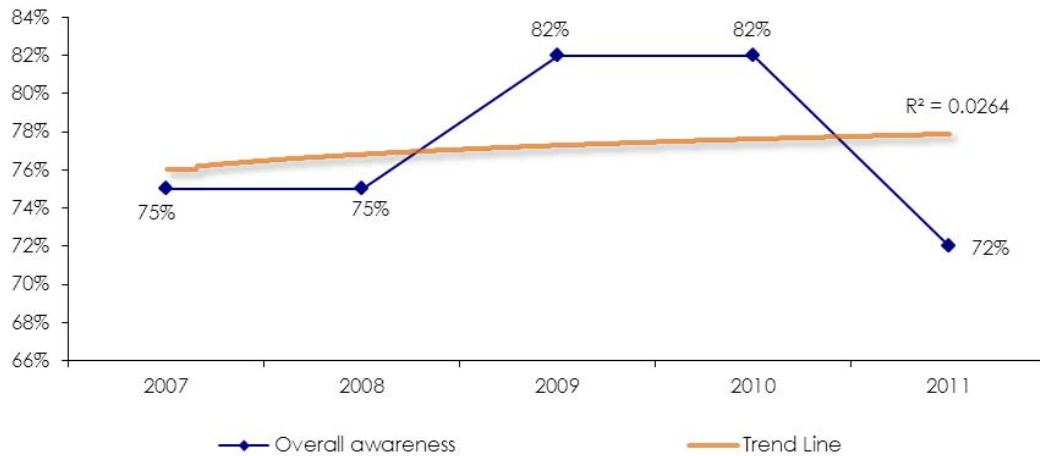
A recurring pattern seems to be that males (31%) show a higher spontaneous awareness of the Act than females (17%), and A/B respondents were far more likely than any other social-economic grouping to mention the Act (42%).

Those at either end of the age spectrum indicated the lowest levels of awareness as just 15% of those aged 18 to 24 and 65 and over were spontaneously aware of the FOIA.

Respondents living in the West Midlands (36%) and the South West (31%) also showed higher levels of awareness, whereas just 18% living in the North West indicated a level of awareness.

### 7.3.5 Awareness of the FOIA (Prompted)

Chart 12: Prompted awareness of the Freedom of Information Act over time



Prompted awareness had increased between 2007 and 2010 to 82%, however, in 2011 awareness dropped to 72%.

Male respondents were again more likely to indicate awareness of the Act, 76% compared to 67% of females, this has occurred consistently since 2007.

Those aged 45 to 64 also indicated higher levels of prompted awareness (82%). It is the younger respondents that seem to have driven down overall awareness, as only half (50%) of all 18 to 24 year olds and 59% of those aged 25 to 34 were aware of the Act when prompted. Last year awareness among respondents in these age groups was 63% and 81% respectively.

A/B respondents (88%) were significantly more likely to know of the Act although this was a decrease of 3% since 2010; C1 (74%) respondents, C2 (68%) and D/E respondents (57%), indicated lower levels of awareness.

### 7.3.6 Sources of awareness of the FOIA

Q8: Generally, how do you find out about freedom of information issues or the FOIA? <sup>6</sup>		
Unprompted	2010	2011
The internet	25%	38%
Media	29%	15%
Through my local authority	4%	5%
Through work	8%	3%
From a friend/relative/family member	4%	2%
CAB	2%	2%

Unlike for the DPA, the internet was identified as the key source of information on the FOIA, followed by the media.

Over half of those respondents living in London (52%) mentioned the internet as their main source of information, as did 51% of A/B respondents and 41% of C1 respondents. Only 32% of C2 and D/E respondents mentioned this source of information; a similar pattern to the 2010 findings.

The age groups ranging from 25 to 54 indicated higher levels of internet usage for sourcing information on the FOIA (43% 25-34, 48% 35-44, and 45% 45-54).

Almost a third (32%) of those living in the West Midlands cited media as their main source of information, twice the overall average.

<sup>6</sup> Comparisons with previous years have not been highlighted in the table as prior to 2010 this has been a coded question with just 5 response categories, whereas this year interviewers recorded verbatim responses and the majority of answers cannot be compared.

### 7.3.7 Requests for information

One in ten (10%) respondents said that they had requested information held by the Government or other public authorities; this is a 3% decrease since 2010. Similar to findings from previous years, A/B respondents were the most likely to have made a request (13%).

Respondents living in the East (14%) were most likely to have requested to see information held by the Government or public authorities and those in the in the North West and North East were the least likely (4%).

**Q10: Can you think of any situations where you have or would request to access information held by the Government and/or public authorities such as your local council, your local hospital or a Government department?**

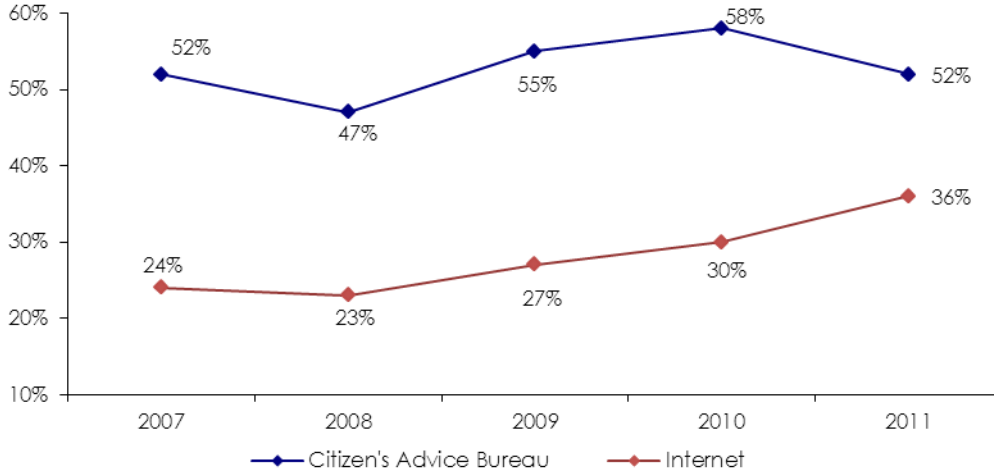
Unprompted	2007 (Base: 574)	2008 (Base: 623)	2009 (Base: 1222)	2010 <sup>7</sup> (Base: 1223)	2011 (Base: 1234)
When dealing with planning issues	32%	25%	18%	15%	14%
To check medical records	21%	27%	15%	12%	8%
When investigating Council/Government plans/activities that may affect an individual	5%	18%	12%	11%	5%
To check public spending	9%	11%	12%	4%	2%
When checking what personal information the Government is holding	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%

The most likely scenario for requesting information still remains around dealing with planning issues (14%), and checking medical records was also mentioned by 8% of respondents.

<sup>7</sup> This has been calculated differently since 2009 taking into account the full sample and therefore percentages appear less significant.

### 7.3.8 Sources of advice for rights under the FOIA

Chart 13: Top two sources of contact for advice on the FOIA over time (Unprompted)



Since tracking began, the CAB remains the main contact for seeking advice on the FOIA with over half the sample (52%) mentioning this facility; this has remained a fairly consistent figure over the last 5 years. It also remains that a higher proportion of those that mention the CAB suggest it would be an office (39%) rather than a website (14%) that would be the main source of CAB advice. C2 respondents were most likely to mention the CAB office (44%).

The internet continues to be used as a source of advice as 36% mentioned this, compared with 30% in 2010. A/B (44%) and C1 (42%) respondents, along with those aged 54 or under are the main groups to mention the internet.

Solicitors were mentioned by 8% of respondents; a 1% increase from the last 2 years and again local politicians were mentioned by 16% of respondents, a 2% increase from last year and a 7% increase since 2009. Just 1% mentioned the ICO as a source of advice.



### 7.3.9 Preferred method for receiving advice and guidance on the FOIA

Q12: How would you prefer to receive advice and guidance on the FOIA?					
Unprompted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Website	22%	18%	22%	25%	30%
Via a letter	39%	35%	38%	35%	28%
Face to face	22%	22%	18%	15%	24%
Via stand-alone e-mail request	8%	9%	9%	10%	11%
Leaflet	6%	8%	7%	10%	11%
Phone	6%	5%	6%	4%	8%
Via an e-mail request through a website	1%	2%	2%	3%	5%
Visit office	3%	1%	1%	2%	5%
Via an e-mail bulletin I register to	1%	0.3%	1%	1%	2%
Get in touch with other organisation / advice agency to ask on my behalf	0.2%	0.3%	1%	1%	1%

From 2007 through to 2010 the preferred method for receiving advice and guidance on the FOIA was via a letter. However, in 2011 the internet was mentioned more frequently as a preferred method (30%). A letter was suggested by over a quarter of the sample (28%) but this represents a decrease of 7% since 2010.

A preference for face to face methods has also increased (+9%) since 2010.

The increased preference for the internet as a source of advice and guidance seems to have been driven by A/B (37%) and C1 (32%) respondents, along with those aged 18 to 24 (37%), 25 to 34 (38%) and 35 to 44 (35%). Male respondents also indicated higher levels of preference (32%) compared with female respondents (27%).

Those aged 65 and over indicated the highest level of preference for receiving advice and guidance via a letter (37%).

### 7.3.10 Benefits of the FOIA

Q13: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? <sup>8</sup>					
Prompted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your knowledge of what they do	86%	84%	88%	87%	81%
Being able to access information held by public authorities promotes their accountability and transparency	81%	80%	82%	83%	76%
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your confidence in them	81%	75%	81%	79%	76%
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your trust in them	72%	73%	79%	75%	71%
Existing laws mean that information held about the Government and local authorities and their operations is available and accessible to you	66%	65%	73%	68%	59%

Agreement with all prompted benefits of the Act is still high, although all levels of agreement have decreased since 2010.

Agreement with the statement *being able to access information held by public authorities increases your knowledge of what they do* remains the highest of all statements (81%), however agreement has decreased by 6% since 2010.

Around three-quarters (76%) agreed that *being able to access information held by public authorities promotes accountability and transparency* and *being able to access information held by public authorities increases confidence*.

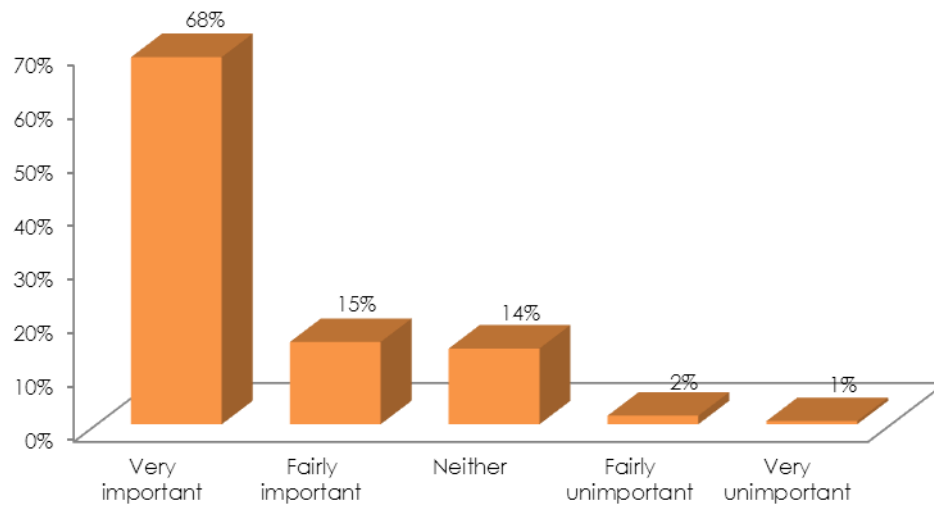
Agreement around existing laws providing information that is available and accessible still remains the factor that generates the lowest levels of agreement (59%); this is the lowest level of agreement since the question was introduced in 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Results refer to those respondents stating 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. In years 2004, 2005 and 2006 the question was a numbered scale from 1 – 5.

## 7.4 Independent Regulation

### 7.4.1 Data Protection

**Chart 14: How important is it that the regulator of the Data Protection Act is independent of government?**

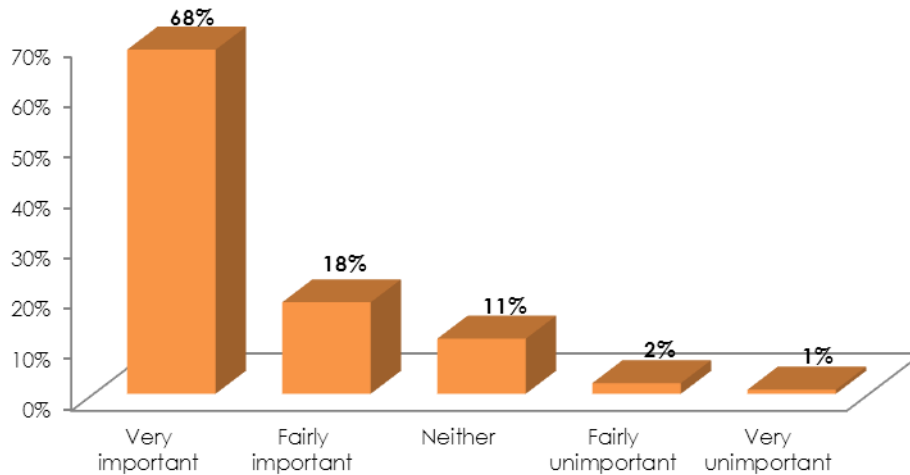


The majority of respondents (83%) said it was important that the regulator of the DPA is independent of Government, and 68% of these said it was very important. Only 3% said this was not important.

Over three quarters of A/B respondents (78%), those aged 55 to 64 (78%) and those living in the North East (76%) and the East of England (77%) said it was very important.

## 7.4.2 Freedom of Information

**Chart 15: How important is it that the regulator of the Freedom of Information Act is independent of government?**



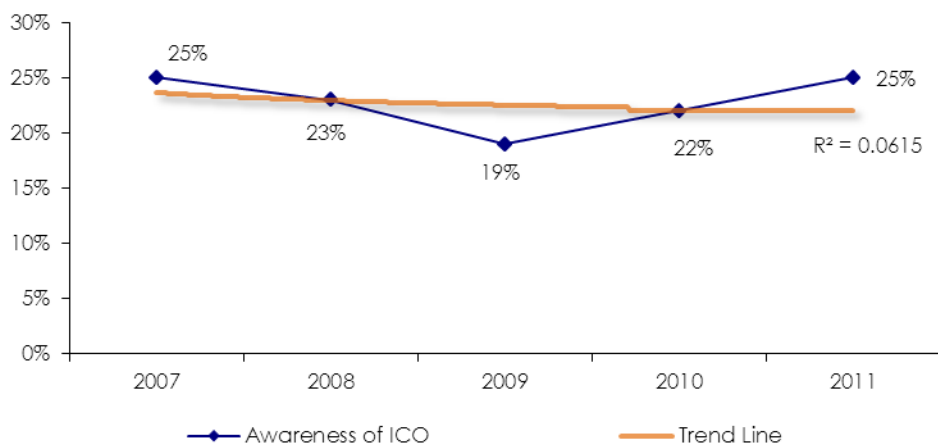
Levels of importance were even higher on the question of independent regulation of the FOIA as 86% said that it was either fairly (18%) or very important (68%). Consistent with regulation of the DPA, only 3% suggested that this was unimportant.

Again A/B respondents (81%) indicated the highest levels of importance as did those aged 45 to 64 (79%). Geographically, respondents living in London (77%), the South West (77%) and the East Midlands (76%) said this was very important more frequently.

## 7.5 The Information Commissioner's Office

### 7.5.1 Awareness of the ICO<sup>9</sup>

Chart 17: Awareness of the ICO



After experiencing a decline in 2007 to 2009 awareness of the ICO has steadily increased back to 25% in 2011. This represents an increase of 3% since 2010.

Consistent with previous years, A/B respondents (35%) and those aged 35 to 44 (29%) indicated higher levels of awareness. C2 (21%), D/E (20%) and 18 to 24 years olds (19%) indicated the lowest levels of awareness.

<sup>9</sup> Results are based on the combined sample; results within the data protection and freedom of information sections.

## 8.0 Appendices

### 8.1 Demographic Tables

Gender	Achieved	Percentage
Male	1208	49%
Female	1267	51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,475</b>	<b>100%</b>

Age	Achieved	Percentage
18-24	296	12%
25-34	402	16%
35-44	442	18%
45-54	440	18%
55-64	377	15%
65+	516	21%
Refused	2	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,475</b>	<b>100%</b>

SEG	Achieved	Percentage
A/B	418	17%
C1	895	36%
C2	390	16%
D/E	526	21%
Refused	246	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,475</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ethnicity	Achieved	Percentage
White British	2254	91%
Non White	146	6%
Refused	75	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,475</b>	<b>100%</b>