Report on the Findings of the Information Commissioner's Office Annual Track 2009

Individuals

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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
6.0 Sample / Profile 10
7.0 Results 11
8.0 Appendices 37
8.1 Sample Tables **37**

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 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.

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 publics' perceptions of the way public authorities handle official information.

2.3 Corporate Awareness Objectives:

- To identify awareness of the ICO as being responsible for the FOIA and the DPA.

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.
- Maintain confidence in organisations' handling of personal information.

4.0 Executive Summary

4.1 Social Issues

The proportion of the UK public showing concern about the issue of *preventing crime* has reached the highest levels recorded to date, at 96%. It now ranks as the most important social concern, moving up from its previous second position in 2008. There is still a level of concern around how information is handled, with 93% of respondents concerned about protecting people's information (up 23% since 2004), of which 62% were 'very concerned'.

The figures reflect a shift in the population's psyche based on the current global economic climate: concerns about unemployment show the largest increase year on year, with this year seeing the biggest increase (of 10%) since 2005.

Access to information held by public authorities remains at the lower end of the list of social concerns. However, 80% of individuals believe it is a concern. This compares to 48% in 2004, demonstrating the ever-increasing profile of this subject.

4.2 Data Protection

57% of respondents believe that *organisations handle the details they collect about you in a fair and proper way*, an increase of 10% since 2008 and has grown 15% since 2004.

67% believe they have *lost control over the way their personal details are collected and processed*, a measure that has increased since 2004 – and has remained fairly constant since 2008.

Again the report shows that respondents who are informed about data handling processes and educated about current legislation are less likely to believe that they have 'lost control' of their personal details.

Spontaneous awareness of *the right to see information* has decreased by 4% since 2008. However, it remains higher than levels recorded pre 2008. Ironically, while the increases were driven by the 18-24 year old age group last year, this same age group has driven the decrease this year.

Prompted awareness of the *right to see information* is now at 91% - an increase of 5% since 2008 – the highest recorded level of awareness since the survey began in 2004. This right is also the right with the highest level of prompted awareness in 2009. Unlike previous years, in which 18-24s showed the highest awareness levels, it is those aged 35-44 that have recorded the highest awareness levels this year.

Consistent with previous years, the public is showing high **levels of concern over the potential mismanagement of their information**. The two highest-ranking concerns are *passing or selling your details onto other organisations*

(97%) and *security* (96%) – these have 'switched' in terms of highest ranking when compared with 2008. It is worth noting that a high proportion of respondents said they were 'very concerned', demonstrating breadth **and** depth of concern about these issues.

Awareness of the DPA is at 27% (spontaneously) and 96% (prompted). The prompted measure is a 2% increase on last year and the highest level recorded since the annual track began in 2004. However, the spontaneous level is down 14%.

The source of awareness about the DPA has continued to be the media (35%), for the second year in a row, although the number of respondents that cited this has decreased by 7%.

The CAB remains the number one **source of advice** on individuals' rights (66% - an 11% increase since 2008) and a fifth mentioned the internet.

16% of the sample have **previously requested personal information,** a 2% increase on last year. 25 to 34 year olds are the most likely to have activated their rights, reflective of their financially active lifestyles.

4.3 Freedom of Information

Spontaneous awareness of the *right to request information held by the government and other public authorities* continues to increase, and now stands at 37%, a 6% increase since 2008.

Prompted awareness of the right to request information held by the government or public authorities has increased significantly since 2008, and now stands at 85% and is more in line with the result recorded in 2007 (86%).

Overall, awareness levels of rights under the FOIA remain relatively high, and have increased since the Act came into effect in 2005. Individuals are more likely to be aware of the specific rights relating to the FOIA – *finding out what money is being spent on, requesting information on the environment* and *the type of information that is available,* with the latter two 'switching' in terms of awareness of rights when compared with 2008.

There is good news with regard to the two principles behind the Act – transparency and accessibility in that they continue to be translated to the public. This is based on the response to a new question added last year that asked individuals how much they agreed or disagree with this statement: *Information you want about the government and other public authorities is available and accessible.* 59% agreed with this statement, a 9% increase on last year; 25% disagreed.

Awareness of the FOIA: 18% of all respondents spontaneously mentioned the FOIA, an increase of 2% on 2008. 82% of respondents had heard of the Act when prompted, a 7% increase on 2008 and a 28% increase from 2004.

As with in 2008, AB's indicated much higher levels of awareness on both measures (Spontaneous: 18%, Prompted: 82%).

The media remains the main **source of awareness for the FOIA** as 52% mentioned this, although this is a 10% decrease on last year. 18% mentioned the internet, a 15% increase on last year.

The CAB was mentioned by 55% of respondents as their main contact for **seeking advice on FOIA** – an 8% increase on last year. Over a quarter (27%) mentioned the internet, a 4% increase on 2008.

54% of respondents said they would **consider exercising their rights under FOIA,** a 6% decrease since 2008. The likelihood of doing so is related to social class – ABs are the most likely (65%), DEs the least likely (47%) – which was also the case in 2008.

4.4 The ICO

Spontaneous awareness of the ICO is currently 19%. This is a decrease of 4% since 2008.

5.0 Methodology

The consultation was undertaken by telephone to retain consistency with previous years.

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. Any significant differences in answers given across the geographic and demographic information will be commented on, where relevant, throughout the report.

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 Supervisors.

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 is 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 3rd August and 19th September 2009.

6.0 Sample / Profile

The sample size required for each of the two individual questionnaires was 1,222. A total sample of 2,444 was delivered.

Subject	Quota	Achieved
Data Protection	1,222	1,222
Freedom of Information	1,222	1,222
Total	2,444	2,444

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

7.0 Results

7.1 Social Issues[1]

7.1.1 Concerns with issues of social importance

Individuals continue to show concern about the issue of *protecting people's personal information* – with levels of importance staying at 94%. The prevention of crime has increased by 2% making it the highest ranked issue considered to be of social importance.

It is worth noting that the degree of concern has continued to remain high, with 71% of respondents feeling "very concerned" about this matter, which was also the case in 2008.

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.[2]

Prompted	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Preventing crime	85%	88%	93%	94%	94%	96%
Protecting people's personal information	70%	83%	83%	92%	94%	94%
Unemployment	50%	70%	72%	80%	83%	93%
The National Health Service	78%	83%	90%	91%	88%	90%
National security	71%	78%	82%	89%	87%	90%
Environmental issues	66%	74%	77%	86%	87%	90%
Equal rights for everyone	69%	81%	85%	89%	88%	89%
Improving standards in education	76%	84%	81%	88%	87%	89%
Protecting freedom of speech	67%	80%	81%	86%	85%	89%
Access to information held by public authorities	48%	66%	68%	79%	78%	80%

Access to information held by public authorities' remains at the lower end of the list of social concerns; however 80% of individuals believe it is a concern, a 2% increase on last year.

For the second year in a row, current concerns about global finances are reflected in the figures, with unemployment showing the highest increase year on year (from 83% to 93%). This is up 43% from 2004.

[1] 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.

[2] 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.

In contrast to last year people living in North West have the highest level of concern on most of these issues including preventing crime (99%), equal rights for everyone (91%), improving standards in education (89%) and protecting freedom of speech (94%).

7.2 Data Protection

7.2.1 Current perceptions of information handling

Positively, there has been an increase in the number of respondents that feel that information is handled properly and securely and a decrease (although slight) in the number of respondents that feel that they have lost control over the way information about them is processed.

However we must acknowledge that two thirds of respondents still feel that *they have lost control over the way their personal details are collected and processed* from 53% in 2004 to 60% in 2007 and 68% in 2008, although the slight decrease in 2009 could be the beginning in a downward curve.

Conversely, the UK public are becoming more likely to believe that *organisations handle the details they collect about individuals in a fair and proper way,* with this statement seeing the largest increase in agreement. Since 2004 this has increased from 42% to 57% in 2009.

37% agreed that *online companies collect and keep personal details in a secure way* – a 5% increase since last year. Younger respondents were more likely to agree with this statement, with 59% of 18-24s indicating a level of agreement. This was also the case in 2007 and 2008.

Q2 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?[3]

Prompted	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
You have lost control over the way your information is collected and processed	53%	58%	63%	60%	68%	67%
Organisations handle the information they collect about you in a fair and proper way.	42%	40%	47%	50%	47%	57%
Existing laws and organisational practices provide sufficient protection of your information	40%	40%	49%	39%	40%	44%
Online companies collect and keep your personal details in a secure way	-	-	-	34%	32%	37%

[3] Refers to those respondents stating agree or strongly agree. In previous years the question was a numbered scale from 1 – 5.

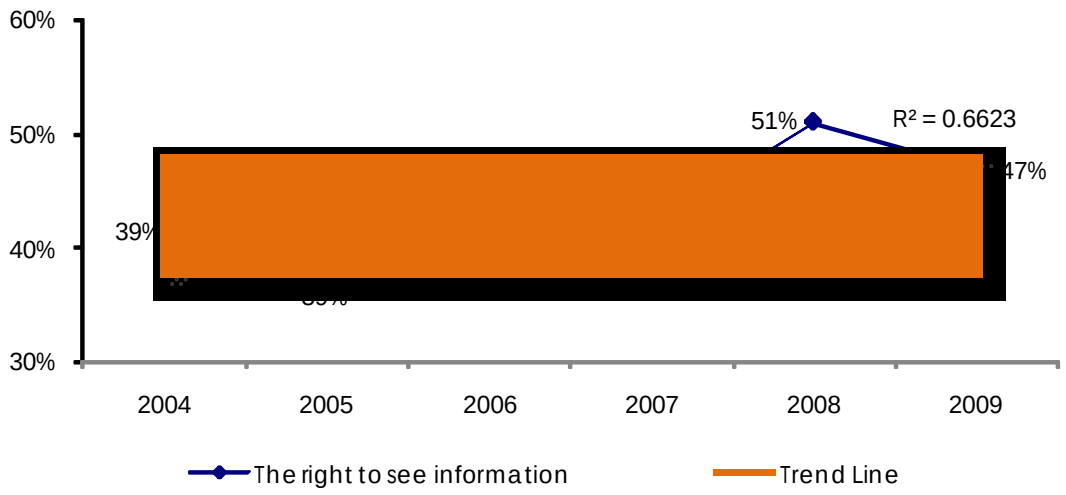
As with in 2008, respondents who agreed with the statement *you have lost control over the way your details are collected and processed* were, perhaps not surprisingly, more likely than average to disagree with the remaining three statements. Again this suggests that in order to build public confidence regarding this matter, the public need to be more informed about the current data handling processes of organisations (on and offline) and better educated about current legislation,

7.2.2 Awareness of rights (Unprompted)

Spontaneous awareness of the right to see information has decreased by 4% since 2008. AB's continue to have the highest level of awareness of the right to see information (49%), however this has dropped significantly from last year and drives the decrease. In complete contrast to 2008, it is the 18-24s who demonstrate one of the lowest levels of awareness across the whole sample (44%) – a 16% decrease on last year.

Unlike in 2008, levels of awareness of the right to see information in C2's and DE's has not changed since 2008. As with in 2008, DE's were least likely to be aware of having any rights (however only slightly: DE: 7.4%, C2: 7.1%).

Chart 1: Unprompted awareness of the right to see information



As seen in 2007 and 2008, there were still very low levels of spontaneous awareness of any other rights.

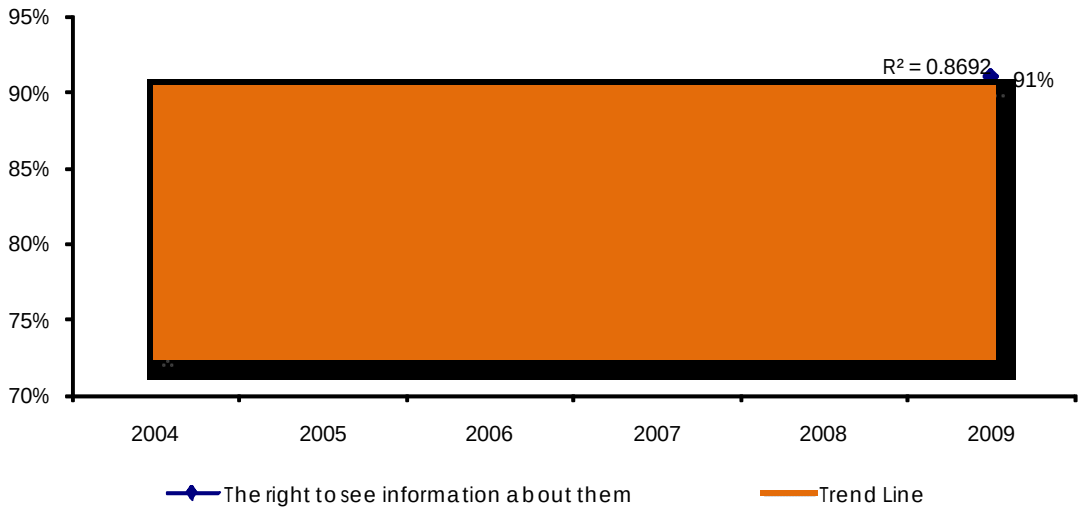
Q3 Everybody has personal details including your name, your address, your bank account details or even your credit rating information. What rights do you think you have to access personal details held about you by organisations?			
(Unprompted)	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
The right to see information	42%	51%	47%
Individuals have no rights	5%	6%	6%
The right to correct inaccurate information	6%	2%	2%
The right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress	2%	1%	1%
The right to stop unsolicited mail	2%	0.4%	0.2%
The right to claim compensation for damage or distress caused by a breach of the Act	1%	0.2%	0.2%
The right to object to decisions made only by automatic means	1%	0.2%	0.1%
The right to have the breach of the Act investigated and assessed	1%	0.3%	0%
Don't know	*48%*	34%	38%

7.2.3 Awareness of rights (Prompted)

Overall, prompted awareness of *the right to see information* has increased since 2008 by 5%, now measuring 91%; the highest level of awareness recorded.

Unlike last year, in which respondents aged18-24 were most aware (91%), this year, those aged 35-44 (97%) are most likely to be aware. Unusually AB's were least likely to be aware of the right to see information (83%) while C2's (95%) were most likely to. Those living in the South West (98%) were also most likely to be aware of their right to see information.

Chart 2: Prompted awareness of the right to see information



The right to see information has regained the top spot for the right respondents are most likely to be aware of, with *the right to stop unsolicited mail* dropping to the fourth right respondents were most aware of.

With one exception *the right to stop unsolicited mail,* all other rights have seen an increase in awareness since 2008.

52% of respondents were aware of all 7 rights; respondents aged 35-44 were most likely to be aware of all 7 rights (23%), as were C1s (43%).

Q4 Which of the following rights do you think you have with regards to your personal details held by organisations?			
(Prompted)	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
The right to see information	90%	86%	91%
The right to have the breach of the Act investigated and assessed	87%	83%	88%
The right to correct inaccurate information	87%	81%	87%
The right to stop unsolicited mail	88%	88%	86%
The right to claim compensation for damage or distress caused by a breach of the Act	82%	74%	82%
The right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress	78%	68%	75%
The right to object to decisions made only by automatic means	77%	63%	69%
Individuals have no rights	3%	9%	9%

7.2.4 Concerns with regard to organisations using personal information

The public are generally very concerned about organisations using their personal information.

Security and *passing information onto other organisations* are again the two concerns mentioned by the highest number of respondents - their ranking changing again, for the second year, with passing/selling information now ranking highest. Again it is also worth noting that these two issues ranked significantly higher than the others on the "very concerned" measure, at 70% and 69% respectively. (By way of comparison, only 46% of respondents were very concerned about the issue ranked third: *requesting too many of your personal details*.) This again demonstrates the depth and breadth of concern the public has about security and passing on of personal details.

Q5 I am 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[4]

Prompted	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Passing or selling your personal details onto other organisations	85%	95%	94%	95%	97%
Not collecting and keeping your personal details secure	85%	94%	94%	96%	96%
Requesting too many of your personal details	77%	88%	88%	89%	92%
Holding inaccurate or out of date information	74%	88%	87%	89%	91%
Receiving unwanted emails, faxes, letters or telephone calls	-	-	87%	87%	89%
Holding information for longer than is required	69%	83%	84%	84%	89%
Requesting inappropriate information that is not relevant	72%	83%	83%	83%	87%
Collecting and holding your personal information online	-	-	84%	81%	87%

As in 2007 and 2008, females showed higher levels of concern than males, and older age groups tended to be more concerned than younger age groups.

Respondents were also asked if they had any additional concerns relating to the way organisations handle their personal details. 98% said they did not, a 6% increase on last year.

[4] Answers are based on those who said very or fairly concerned.

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

27% of respondents spontaneously mentioned the DPA as the law concerning the handling of personal details, a 14% decrease since 2008.

Q7 What, if any, laws are you aware of concerning the handling of your personal details?						
Unprompted	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
DPA	42%	40%	31%	45%	41%	27%
FOIA	3%	6%	5%	7%	5%	6%
Environmental Information Regulations	-	1%	1%	1%	1%	0.2%
Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations	1%	1%	1%	1%	0.4%	0.2%
Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002	-	-	-	0.4%	0%	0.1%
None	54%	57%	66%	52%	56%	70%

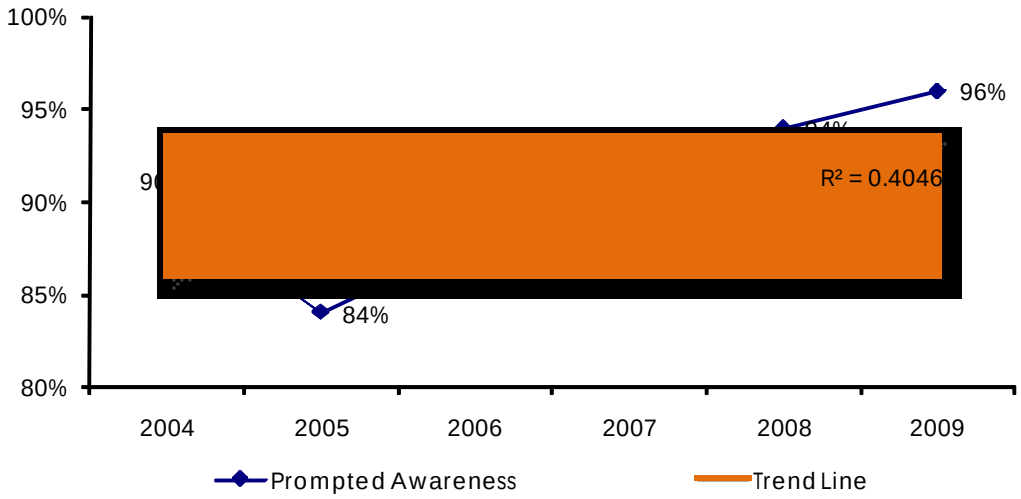
As with in 2007 and 2008, there were higher levels of awareness of the DPA among male respondents (31%) and AB respondents (37%). Conversely, only 16% of DE respondents were spontaneously aware of the DPA, an 18% decrease since last year.

It would appear that it is the DEs (-18% on 2008) and 45-54 year olds (-19% on 2008) that have driven the decrease in 2009.

7.2.6 Awareness of the DPA (Prompted)

When prompted, the vast majority (96%) of respondents were aware of the DPA, a 2% increase on last year and the highest level recorded so far.

Chart 3: Prompted awareness of the Data Protection Act over time



Prompted awareness of the DPA was greatest among individuals in the North East (100%) and the South East (99%), AB respondents (98%) and those aged 35-44 (98%), while awareness was the lowest among those in Northern Ireland (90%), also seen in 2008 and 2007 although their awareness has increased.

7.2.7 Sources of awareness of the DPA

As in 2008, the most likely source of awareness of the DPA has been through the media (35%), although the number of respondents that cited this has decreased by 7%. The workplace was also a key source of awareness, at 29%. Increases were seen with regards to word of mouth (+2%) and the internet (+2%).

Q9 Generally, how are you made aware of data protection issues or the DPA?			
Unprompted	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
Media	31%	42%	35%
Through work	34%	31%	29%
Other	10%	13%	16%
General knowledge	27%	18%	14%
Word of mouth	6%	7%	9%
The internet	2%	4%	6%

A greater proportion of AB (34%)/C1's (33%), and those aged 35-44 were most likely to have heard or seen about the DPA through their work, whilst a greater percentage of DE respondents were aware of the DPA through media (41%) or word of mouth (13%), which was also the case in 2008. As suggested last year it is likely that the UK's socio-demographic classification makes this a self fulfilling prophecy: ABC1s are, by classification, often office-based and therefore more likely to deal with data protection issues whilst at work.

AB's (8%), 18-24 year olds (13%) and females (7%) were most likely to have used the internet to find out about the DPA.

7.2.8 Requests for personal information held by organisations

Of the sample, 16% had previously requested personal information, a 2% increase since 2008 equivalent to 7.7 million adults.

A significantly higher percentage of AB respondents (23% - a 4% increase on last year) had requested to see information about them held by organisations when compared with DE respondents (8%). This gap has increased significantly. Male respondents are more likely to request to see information about them held by organisations compared to females (18% v 13%), which was also the case in 2008.

The 25-34s (19%) are the age group most likely to activate their rights and request personal information, which is reflective of their financially active lifestyles.

Around 15% of respondents that had requested to see their personal information were aware of their rights under the DPA.

33% of all respondents said that being refused for or applying for financial credit would be the most likely situation whereby they would make a personal information request, while a quarter could think of no circumstances of which they would request personal information.

Q11 Can you think of any situations where you have or would request any of your personal details held by a company or organisation?			
Unprompted	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
No circumstances	16%	14%	25%
Being refused financial credit	26%	21%	17%
Applying for financial credit	21%	20%	16%
To check medical records	17%	13%	9%
Change in employment status	4%	1%	3%
General interest	3	3%	2%
To check criminal record	4%	1%	2%
Altering marital status	1	0.2%	2%
When moving house	1	2%	1%
After being involved in court action	1	0.1%	0.3%

7.2.9 Source of advice on the rights under the DPA

For the fourth year in a row, the main source of advice for rights mentioned by the highest number of respondents was Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), at 66%, an 11% increase since 2008. The internet was the second most frequently mentioned source, at 20%, a 1% increase on last year.

Of the 66% who said CAB, 44% said they would go in to a CAB office and 22% said they would look on the CAB website which is up 6%. The inclusion of CAB website as a pre-coded option in the 2008 survey may account for the slight drop of respondents saying "internet" since 2007.

Q12 Where would you go to get advice on your rights under the Data Protection Act?				
	2006	2007	2008	2009
CAB	52%	59%	55%	66%
Internet	14%	22%	19%	20%
Solicitor	14%	11%	12%	12%
Local MP/Councillor/Assembly member	2%	3%	2%	2%
ICO	1%	2%	1%	1%
Public library	3%	1%	1%	2%
Police	1%	1%	1%	0.4%

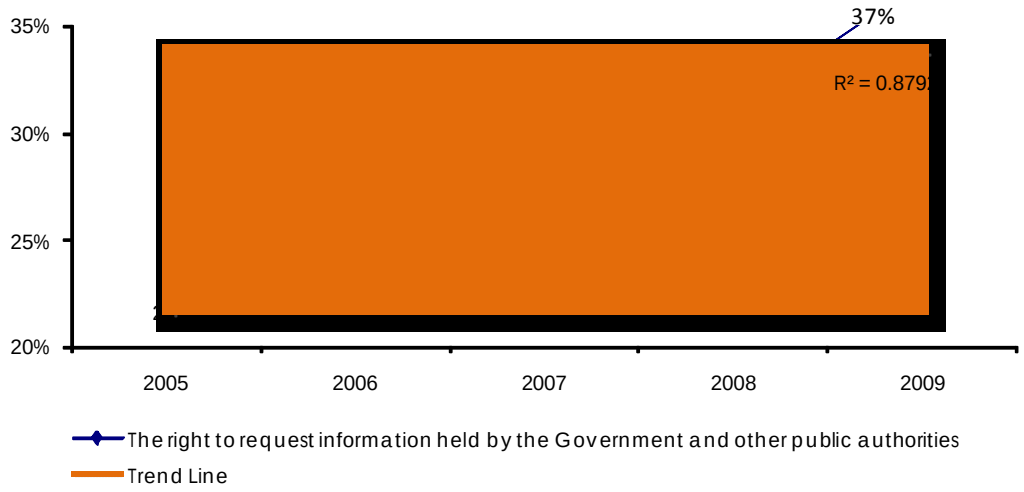
Internet preference is driven by age and socio-demograph: those aged 18–24 (34%) are more likely to use the internet compared to only 12% of those aged 65+. ABC1s (22%) were more likely to use the internet compared to C2s (16%) and DEs (12%).

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* is now at its highest level at 37%, a 6% increase since 2008. Awareness of the right to request information has steadily risen from 23% since 2005.

Chart 4: Unprompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities



Unlike last year where higher social classes and the younger audience drove the increase respondents within social class C1 (41%) were most likely to be aware of this right, along with those aged between 25 and 34 (43%).

Those living in the West Midlands (47%) and Northern Ireland (47%) showed the highest awareness levels. Northern Ireland also had one of the highest levels of awareness in 2008 – this level has increased by 5% since then.

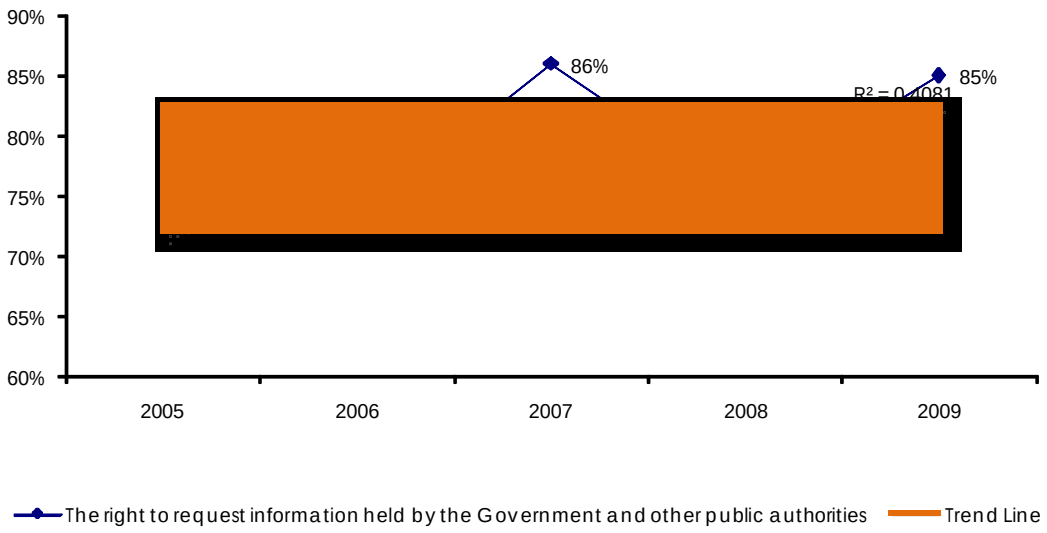
Awareness of the other rights remains very low, with 46% of respondents in 2009 being unaware of any rights when unprompted; just 6% of respondents do not believe they have any rights, compared to 9% in 2008 which would suggest that, although the increase is relatively small, there is a growing awareness of FOIA rights.

Q2 What rights do you think you have to access information held by the Government and other public authorities?					
Unprompted	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
The right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities	23%	25%	28%	31%	37%
The right to see what public money is being spent on	7%	4%	5%	1%	2%
The right to request information about the environment	9%	5%	3%	1%	1%
The right to know what type of information is available from the Government and other public authorities	6%	4%	3%	1%	1%
The right to see official information from the Government and other public authorities	2%	2%	3%	1%	0.1%

7.3.2 Awareness of rights (Prompted)

There has been an increase in prompted awareness of the *right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities* from 75% in 2008 to 85% in 2009, which is more in line with the results of 2007 (86%). Between 2005 and 2008, the significant year on year decreases in awareness amongst 18-24s and C1s were the key contributors to this fall; however, while the 18-24 age group has not seen the biggest increase in awareness, awareness in this age group has increased by 8%, while those in social group C1 have seen a 15% increase in awareness.

Chart 5: Prompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities



Respondents who demonstrated higher than average levels of awareness of this right are C2 respondents (86%) those aged 35-44 (95%) and men (87%). 35-44 year olds saw the biggest increase in awareness of this right, with levels of awareness increasing by 17% since 2008.

Individuals are more aware of the more specific rights - *finding out what public money is spent on* and *requesting information on the environment.* It's likely that the public find it easier to remember these rights as they are more specific.

421 respondents (34%) were both spontaneously and prompted aware of this right.

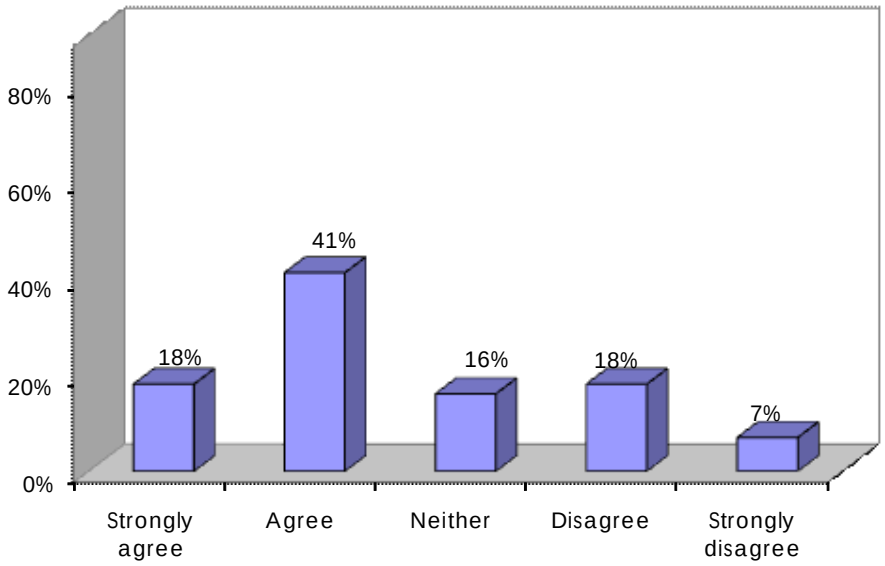
Q3 Which of the following rights do you think you have with regards to accessing information held by the Government and other public authorities?					
Prompted	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
The right to see what public money is being spent on	81%	72%	91%	86%	86%
The right to request information about the environment	80%	75%	90%	83%	86%
The right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities	73%	73%	86%	75%	85%
The right to know what type of information is available from the Government and other public authorities	76%	67%	91%	83%	82%
The right to see official information from the Government and other public authorities such as minutes and planning documents	55%	50%	79%	72%	71%

8% of individuals do not believe the public have any rights.

7.3.3 Confidence in information being available and accessible

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*." Overall, 59% agreed with the statement – a 9% increase on 2008. A quarter disagreed.

Chart 6: Level of agreement with "information you want about the Government and other public authorities is available and accessible"



Respondents living in Yorkshire and Humberside were most likely to agree with this statement (70%), as were males (61%), D/E respondents (67%) and those aged 35-44 (74%).

7.3.4 Awareness of laws (Unprompted)

Unprompted awareness of the FOIA is now at 18%, a 2% increase since 2008 and a significant increase of 13% since 2004. However, 11% also mentioned the DPA, a 1% increase on last year, suggesting some confusion still remains.

Q5 What, if any, laws are you aware of regarding access to information held by the Government and other public authorities about the way they run their organisation?						
Unprompted	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
FOIA	5%	11%	11%	20%	16%	18%
DPA	11%	11%	10%	19%	10%	11%
Environmental Information Regulations	1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%
Open Government Code	1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%
None	50%	28%	29%	16%	13%	23%

Awareness of FOIA was highest amongst men (24%) and ABs (29%). Respondents aged 55-64 (24%) were most likely to be aware of the FOIA when compared against other age groups, and those living in the South West, were most likely to be aware (27%). C2 and DE's (8%) and female respondents (12%) had the lowest levels of awareness.

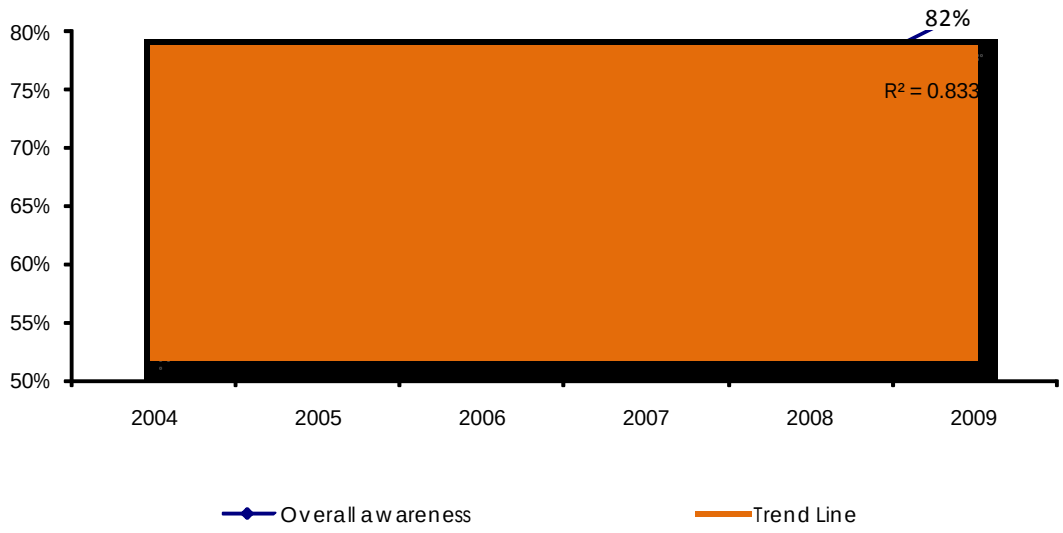
Respondents that were aware of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities, were most likely to be aware of the above laws regarding access to information held by the government.

Q3 by Q5: Respondents that were aware of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities by awareness of laws regarding access to information	
Laws	**%**
FOIA	92%
DPA	90%
Environmental Information Regulations	100%
Open Government Code	100%

7.3.5 Awareness of the FOIA

Prompted awareness of the FOIA has increased since 2008 by 7%. This is a 26% increase since 2005.

Chart 7: Prompted awareness of the Freedom of Information Act over time



As in 2007 and 2008, male respondents had a greater awareness of the FOIA (87%) compared to female respondents (77%), although it should be noted that both groups have increased since 2008. Those aged 55 – 64 again also had significantly higher levels of awareness at 90%, an 8% increase on last year.

AB (94%) and C1 (83%) respondents indicated much higher awareness levels than C2 (80%) and DE respondents (69%) – although increases in awareness are similar across all social groups (6-7% increase).

7.3.6 Source of awareness of the FOIA

Media is the still the main source of awareness about the FOIA, although it has decreased by 10% following a significant increase in the number of respondents that use the internet as a source of information regarding the FOIA (+15%).

Q7 Generally, how are you made aware of freedom of information issues or the FOIA?			
Unprompted	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
Media	60%	62%	52%
The internet	2%	3%	18%
Through work	24%	20%	12%
General knowledge	18%	11%	10%
Other	7%	7%	8%
Word of mouth	4%	6%	8%

Respondents living in Wales (70%) mentioned the media more frequently than any other region. Male respondents (56%) were also more likely than female respondents to have been made aware of the FOIA or related issues via the media.

A greater percentage of C1 (17%) and those aged 35-44 (21%) have heard or seen about the FOIA through work, whilst a greater percentage of C1s (60%) and those aged 55-64 (65%) have heard or seen about it in the media. A similar trend was recorded in 2007 and 2008.

7.3.7 Requests for information

Overall, 54% said that they would consider requesting information held by the government or other public authorities, a 6% decrease since 2008. As with in 2008, the likelihood of considering a request is clearly related to social class: AB (65%), C1 (55%), C2 (48%), DE (47%). Respondents in the South West were most likely to consider requesting to see held information (64%).

Amongst those who would consider requesting information, planning issues and checking medical records were both spontaneously mentioned as reasons why someone may want to access information. Investigating government activities and public spending was also mentioned by 12% of those interviewed.

Q9 What, if any, situations can you think of when you have or would like to access information held by public authorities such as your local Council, your local hospital or from the a Government organisation?

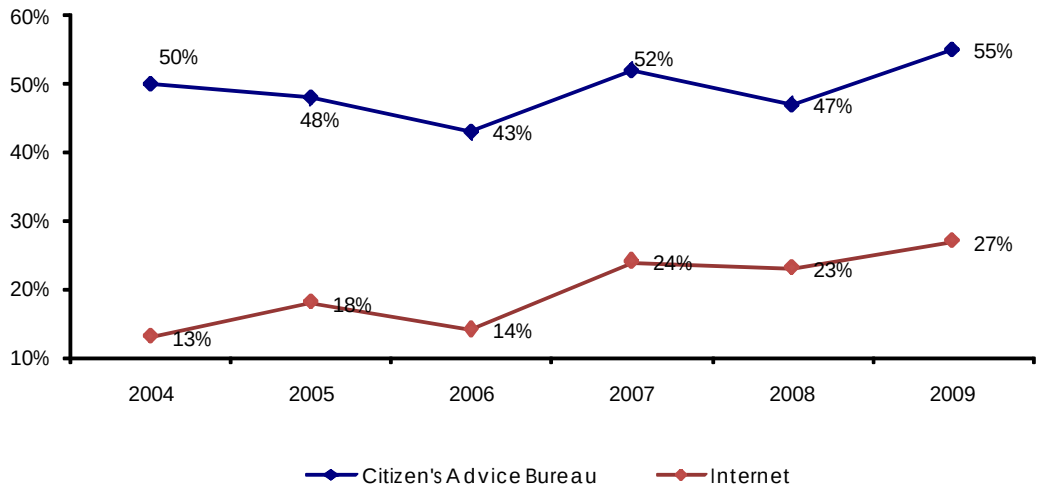
Unprompted	2007 (Base: 574)	2008 (Base: 623)	2009 (Base:955)
When dealing with planning issues	32%	25%	18%
To check medical records	21%	27%	15%
When investigating Council/Government plans/activities that may affect an individual	5%	18%	12%
To check public spending	9%	11%	12%
When checking what personal information the Government is holding	3%	3%	3%
When applying for a CRB check	6%	3%	2%

7.3.8 Contact for advice

As in 2008, the CAB remains the main contact for seeking advice on the FOIA, and approximately half of the respondents mention this every year – with 55% mentioning it in 2009. The internet is also increasingly being used as a source of advice as 27% mentioned this in 2009, compared with 23% in 2008, and 13% in 2004. (CAB figure shown in graph is combined CAB office and CAB website).

As in 2008, solicitors were mentioned by 7% of respondents (no change) and 9% said local politicians (a 2% decrease on 2008). Less than 1% mentioned the ICO.

Chart 8: Top two sources of contact for advice on the FOIA over time (Unprompted)



Younger respondents (18-24:35%)and those in social group A/B (35%) were most likely to favour the internet; while those aged 65 and over (41%) favoured visiting the CAB offices.

Q10 Where would you go to get advice on your rights under the FOIA?						
Unprompted	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
Citizen's Advice Bureau	50%	48%	43%	52%	47%	55%
Internet	13%	18%	14%	24%	23%	27%
Local MP/Councillor	10%	6%	6%	12%	11%	9%
Solicitor	16%	11%	11%	9%	7%	7%
Public Library	6%	6%	4%	3%	3%	4%
ICO	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%

7.3.9 Preferred method for receiving advice and guidance on the Act

For the third year running, the preferred method for receiving advice and guidance on the FOIA is via a letter (38%) – a 3% increase on 2008. 22% stated a preference for website methods and 18% would prefer face to face which is the opposite of last year.

Q11 How would you prefer to receive advice and guidance on the FOIA?			
Unprompted	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
Via a letter	39%	35%	38%
Website	22%	18%	22%
Face to face	22%	22%	18%
Via stand alone e-mail request	8%	9%	9%
Leaflet	6%	8%	7%
Phone	6%	5%	6%
Via an e-mail request through a website	1%	2%	2%
Visit office	3%	1%	1%
Via an e-mail bulletin I register to	1%	0.3%	1%
Get in touch with other organisation / advice agency to ask on my behalf	0.2%	0.3%	1%

All sectors of the sample cited a letter as their preferred method. Variances arose at the second and third choices, within the West Midlands, the South West, Wales and Scotland preferring face to face contact to a website option. This was also the case for C2 and DEs and those aged 65 and over.

7.3.10 Benefits of the Act

The majority of the general public were in agreement with all prompted benefits of the Act. Additionally, levels of agreement have remained consistently high and have increased since 2008, with the largest increase (8%) being with regards to *existing laws mean that information held about the government and local authorities and their operations is available and accessible to you* – although it does still have the lowest level of awareness. Agreement has increased significantly since 2004.

Q12 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements[5]						
Prompted	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your knowledge of what they do	54%	62%	76%	86%	84%	88%
Being able to access information held by public authorities promotes their accountability and transparency	53%	58%	74%	81%	80%	82%
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your confidence in them	51%	55%	72%	81%	75%	81%
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your trust in them	51%	57%	69%	72%	73%	79%
Existing laws mean that information held about the government and local authorities and their operations is available and accessible to you	-	-	-	66%	65%	73%

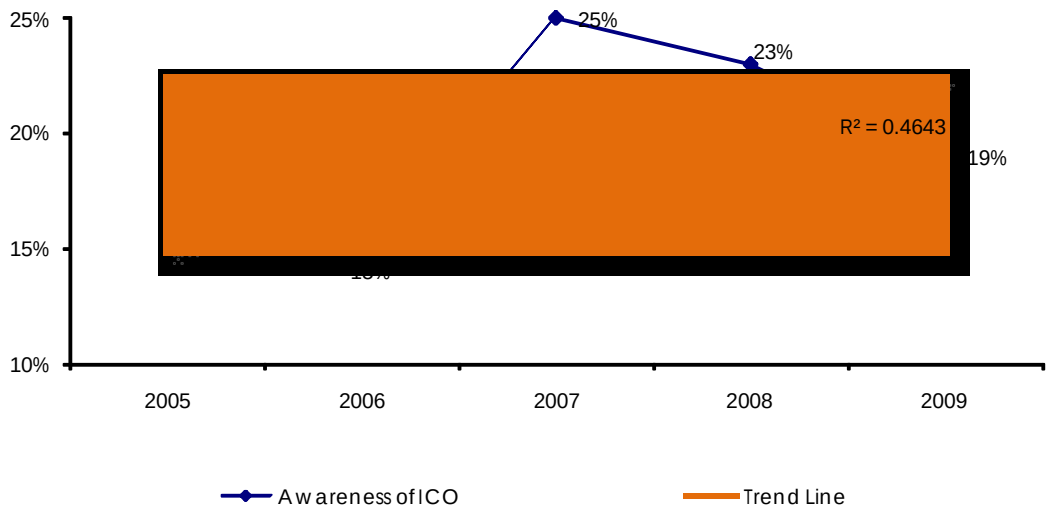
[5] Results refer to those respondents stating agree or strongly agree. In years 2004, 2005 and 2006 the question was a numbered scale from 1 – 5.

7.4 The Information Commissioner's Office

7.4.1 Awareness of the ICO[6]

Overall, 19% of all those interviewed had heard of the ICO, a 4% decrease since 2008 and a 6% decrease since 2007.

Chart 9: Awareness of the ICO



As with in 2007 and 2008, ABs (27% - a 4% decrease since 2008) and male respondents (23%) indicated higher levels of awareness. Those aged 25-34 also indicated higher levels of awareness, at 25%.

6 Results are based on the combined sample; results within the data protection and freedom of information sections.

8.0 Appendices

8.1 Sample Tables

Gender	Achieved	Percentage
Male	1183	48%
Female	1261	52%
Total	2444	100%

Age	Achieved	Percentage
18-24	215	9%
25-34	426	17%
35-44	426	17%
45-54	462	19%
55-64	493	20%
65+	397	16%
Refused	25	1%
Total	2444	100%

Occupation	Achieved	Percentage
A/B	399	17%
C1	1077	46%
C2	519	22%
D/E	322	14%
Total	2317	100%

Ethnicity	Achieved	Percentage
White British	2289	95%
Non White	110	5%
Total	2399	100%