

**Report on the Findings of the
Information Commissioner's Office
Annual Track 2010**

Individuals

SMSR

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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.
- 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.

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

There is still a high level of concern around how information is handled, with 92% of respondents feeling concerned about protecting people's information. Indeed, as a social issue, protecting people's personal information continued to be the second highest concern, with only preventing crime being ranked higher at 93%.

Access to information held by public authorities remains at the lower end of the list of social concerns; however 75% of individuals believe it is a concern. Although 5% lower than 2009, this compares to 48% in 2004, demonstrating the increased profile of this issue.

4.2 Data Protection

Overall, the majority of the UK public continue to **lack confidence in the way their personal information is protected and handled** as 60% believe they have *lost control over the way their personal details are collected and processed*. However, this figure has decreased by 7% since 2009.

Additionally, 56% of respondents believe that *organisations handle the details they collect about you in a fair and proper way*, an increase of 14% since 2004.

Spontaneous awareness of the right to see information has decreased by 4% since 2009, as 43% indicated awareness in 2010.

Prompted awareness of the *right to see information* is now at 89%. Although this is a slight decrease of 2% since 2009, awareness has increased by 15% since 2004 and continues to be high. This right was also the right with the highest level of prompted awareness in 2009.

Unlike 2009, when 35 to 44's showed the highest awareness levels, it is those aged 18 to 24 that have recorded the highest awareness levels this year. Respondents aged 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 reported the lowest awareness.

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 personal details onto other organisations* (96%) and *security* (96%). 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 37% (spontaneously) and 95% (prompted). The prompted measure is a 1% decrease on last year while unprompted awareness has increased by 10%.

The sources of awareness about the DPA cited most frequently were 'work' (29%) and newspapers/radio/TV (28%).

The CAB remains the number one **source of advice** on individuals' DPA rights (69%, a 3% increase since 2009) and 27% (a 7% increase since 2009) mentioned the internet.

18% of the sample has **previously requested personal information**, a 2% increase on last year. 25 to 34 year olds were again the most likely to have activated their rights, perhaps 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 has decreased by 14% since 2009 as only 23% indicated awareness of this right in 2010.

Prompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government or public authorities is now 84%; an increase of 11% since 2005, although a slight decrease of 1% occurred in 2010.

Respondents aged 35 to 44 (89%) demonstrated the highest levels of awareness, whereas 78% of those aged 18 to 24 were aware of the right to request information held.

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* (88%), *the type of information that is available* (88%) and *requesting information on the environment* (87%).

The findings in this report suggest that the principles behind the Act – transparency and accessibility – are translating to the public. This is based on response to a question added in 2008 that asked individuals how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement, '*information you want about the Government and other public authorities is available and accessible*'. 59% agreed with this statement, a 9% increase on 2008 and consistent with 2009.

Awareness of the FOIA: 24% of all respondents spontaneously mentioned the FOIA, an increase of 6% on 2009. 82% of respondents had heard of the Act when prompted, representing no change from last year.

As in 2009, A/B's indicated much higher levels of awareness on both measures (spontaneous: 34%, prompted: 91%).

The media was the main **source of awareness for the FOIA** (29%) and 25% cited the internet.

The CAB was mentioned by 58% of respondents as their main contact for **seeking advice on the FOIA**, a 3% increase on last year. Three tenths mentioned the internet, a 3% increase on 2009.

13% of respondents had **exercised their rights under FOIA**. The likelihood of doing so seems related to social class; A/B's were the most likely (15%), D/E's the least likely (9%).

4.4 The ICO

Awareness of the ICO is currently 22%. This is an increase of 3% since 2009 and an overall increase of 7% since 2005.

5.0 Methodology

The consultation was undertaken by telephone to retain consistency with previous years and because it has proven 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.

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 6th July and 20th August 2010.

6.0 Sample / Profile

The sample size required for the data protection individual questionnaire was 1,226 and the freedom of information individual questionnaire 1,223. A total sample of 2,449 was delivered.

Subject	Quota	Achieved
Data Protection	1,222	1,226
Freedom of Information	1,222	1,223
Total	2,444	2,449

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

7.0 Results

7.1 Social Issues¹

7.1.1 Concerns with issues of social importance

Individuals continue to show concern about the issue of *protecting people's personal information* – although levels of importance have decreased slightly since 2009 (-2%). Although the prevention of crime has decreased by 3% in 2010, it is still the highest ranked issue considered to be 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.²

Prompted	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Preventing crime	85%	88%	93%	94%	94%	96%	93%
Protecting people's personal information	70%	83%	83%	92%	94%	94%	92%
Unemployment	50%	70%	72%	80%	83%	93%	90%
The National Health Service	78%	83%	90%	91%	88%	90%	90%
Improving standards in education	76%	84%	81%	88%	87%	89%	90%
Equal rights for everyone	69%	81%	85%	89%	88%	89%	87%
Protecting freedom of speech	67%	80%	81%	86%	85%	89%	86%
National security	71%	78%	82%	89%	87%	90%	85%
Environmental issues	66%	74%	77%	86%	87%	90%	83%
Access to information held by public authorities	48%	66%	68%	79%	78%	80%	75%

Access to information held by public authorities remains at the lower end of the list of social concerns; however 75% of individuals believe it is a concern. This percentage does though represent a 5% decrease since 2009.

People living in Northern Ireland have higher levels of concern on most of these issues including environmental issues (86%) and access to information held by public authorities (82%).

For seven of the ten listed social concerns, female respondents had higher levels of concern than male respondents. Respondents in social class D/E had higher levels of concern on most of the issues including protecting people's personal information (95%), national security (89%) and access to information held by public authorities (78%).

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.

7.2 Data Protection

7.2.1 Current perceptions of information handling

The data shows that 60% of the UK public lack confidence in the way their personal information is protected and handled.

Following a long term increase in the number of respondents believing 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), a decrease in 2009 (67%) and 2010 (60%) could be the beginning of a downward curve, and could suggest an increase in public confidence in how organisations process information

Over time, the UK public has become 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 long-term increase in agreement. Since 2004 this has increased from 42% to 56% in 2010.

Agreement with the statement *existing laws and organisational practices provide sufficient protection of your personal information* continued to increase to 46% in 2010.

Similar to 2009, 37% agreed that *online companies collect and keep personal details in a secure way*. 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, 2008 and 2009.

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	2010
You have lost control over the way your information is collected and processed	53%	58%	63%	60%	68%	67%	60%
Organisations handle the information they collect about you in a fair and proper way	42%	40%	47%	50%	47%	57%	56%
Existing laws and organisational practices provide sufficient protection of your personal information	40%	40%	49%	39%	40%	44%	46%
Online companies collect and keep your personal details in a secure way	-	-	-	34%	32%	37%	37%

As with in 2009, 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.

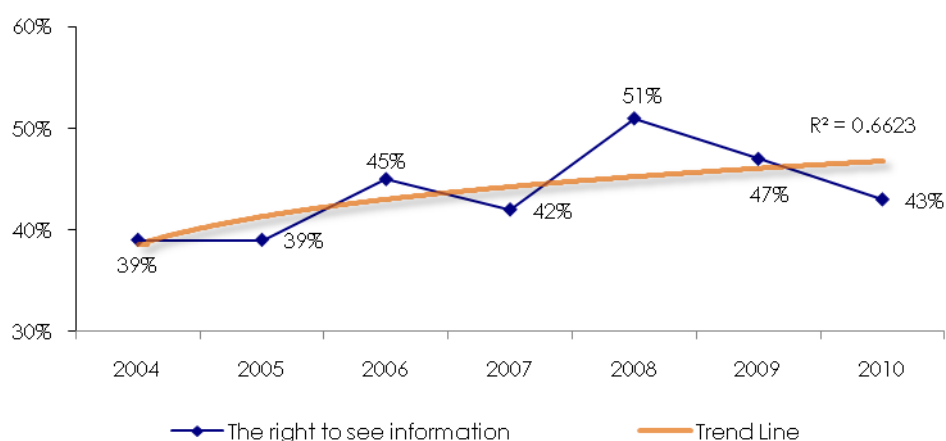
³ Refers to those respondents stating 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. In previous years the question was a numbered scale from 1 – 5.

7.2.2 Awareness of rights (Unprompted)

Spontaneous awareness of the right to see information peaked at 51% in 2008. This was followed by a decline to 47% in 2009, and a further 4% decrease to 43% has occurred in 2010. A/B's and C1's had the highest level of awareness of the right to see information (each at 46%), and it was the 25-34's who demonstrated the highest levels of awareness across the whole sample (47%) in 2010.

Highest levels of awareness of the right to see information were found in Scotland (58%) and the North East (48%). Respondents living in the North West (39%) were less likely to be aware of the right to see information.

Chart 1: Unprompted awareness of the right to see information

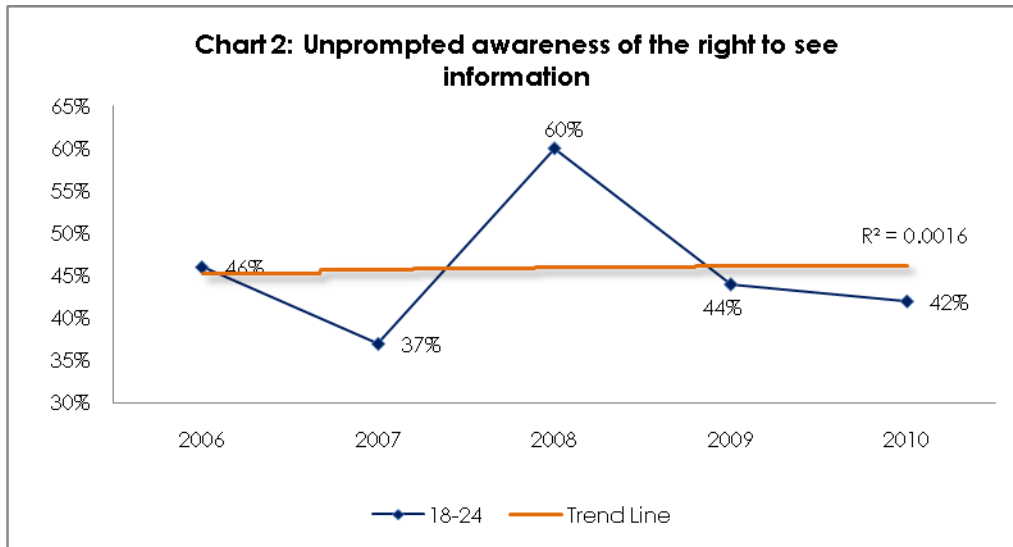


As seen in previous years there were very low levels of awareness of any other rights, although all had increased since 2009.

Q3: 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
The right to see information	42%	51%	47%	43%
Individuals have no rights	5%	6%	6%	5%
The right to correct inaccurate information	6%	2%	2%	3%
The right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress	2%	1%	1%	2%
The right to stop unsolicited mail	2%	0.4%	0.2%	2%
The right to object to decisions made only by automatic means	1%	0.2%	0.1%	2%
The right to claim compensation for damage or distress caused by a breach of the Act	1%	0.2%	0.2%	1%
The right to have the breach of the Act investigated and assessed	1%	0.3%	0%	1%
Don't know	48%	34%	38%	43%

In 2010, awareness among respondents aged 18 to 24 was similar to overall awareness (42% 18 to 24's, 43% overall). Awareness among those aged 18 to 24 peaked in 2008 (60%); however, overall awareness was also highest in this year.

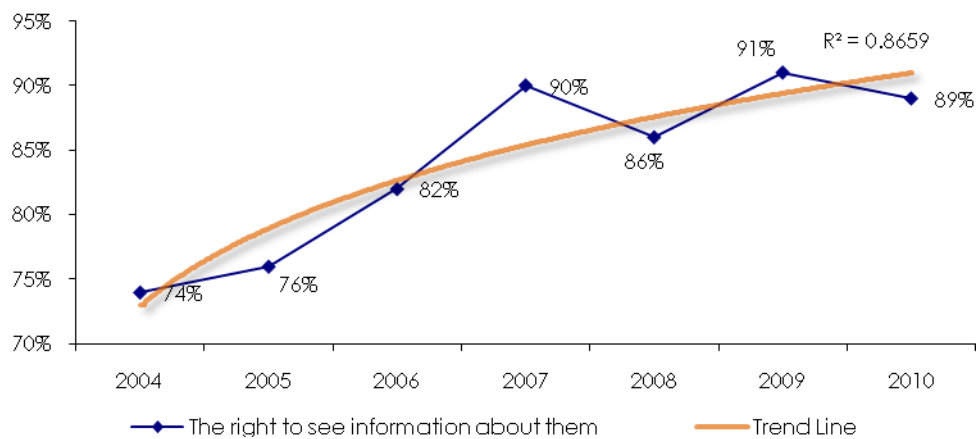


7.2.3 Awareness of rights (Prompted)

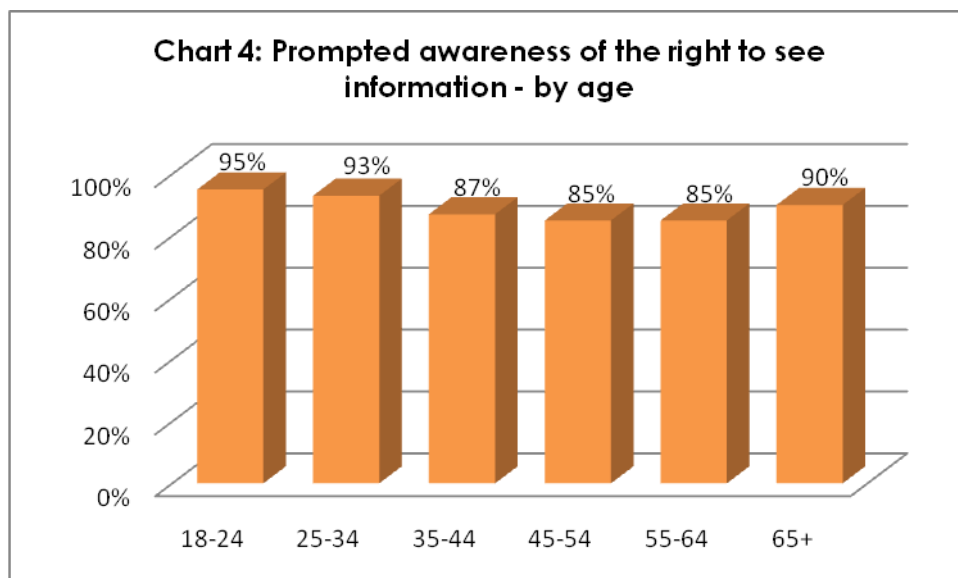
Prompted awareness of *the right to see information* has decreased slightly since 2009 (by 2%), to 89%. Despite this, since 2004 there has been a long term increase in prompted awareness.

Respondents living in the North East (79%) were least likely to be aware of the right to see information, while those living in the East Midlands (93%) and West Midlands (93%) were most likely to be aware.

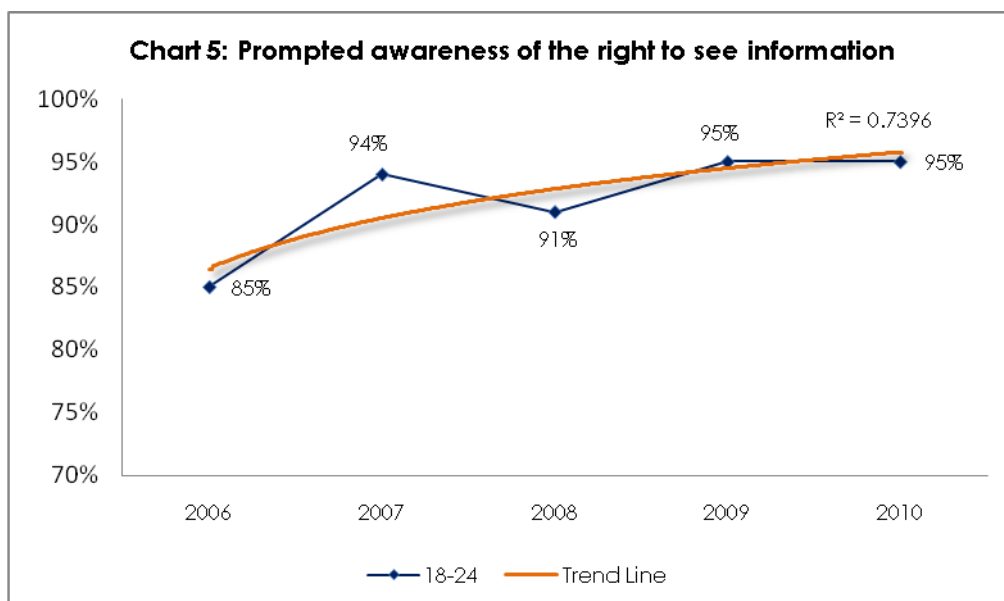
Chart 3: Prompted awareness of the right to see information



Unlike last year, in which respondents aged 35 to 44 were most aware (97%), this year those aged 18 to 24 (95%) were most likely to be aware. Respondents aged 45 to 54 (85%) and 55 to 64 (85%) had the lowest levels of awareness.



Among respondents aged 18 to 24 awareness has been highest in 2009 (95%) and 2010 (95%); this represents an increase of 10% since 2006.



'The right to see information' was the right respondents were most likely to be aware of (89%).

There has been a decrease in awareness of all rights since 2010, with the largest decrease being in awareness of *the right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress*.

37% of respondents were aware of all seven rights; respondents aged 25 to 34 were most likely to be aware of all seven rights, as were C1's.

Q4 Which of the following rights do you think you have with regards to your personal details held by organisations?				
(Prompted)	2007	2008	2009	2010
The right to see information	90%	86%	91%	89%
The right to have a breach of the Act investigated and assessed	87%	83%	88%	83%
The right to correct inaccurate information	87%	81%	87%	82%
The right to stop unsolicited mail	88%	88%	86%	81%
The right to claim compensation for damage or distress caused by a breach of the Act	82%	74%	82%	74%
The right to prevent the processing of information if it would cause damage or distress	78%	68%	75%	63%
The right to object to decisions made only by automatic means	77%	63%	69%	62%
Individuals have no rights	3%	9%	9%	7%

7.2.4 Concerns with regard to organisations using personal information

The public are generally very concerned about organisations handling their personal information; although for all of the concerns listed there has been a decrease in those who were either very or fairly concerned since 2009 with the exception of the statement *not collecting and keeping your personal details secure*.

Q5 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 issue⁴

Prompted	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Passing or selling your personal details onto other organisations	85%	95%	94%	95%	97%	96%
Not collecting and keeping your personal details secure	85%	94%	94%	96%	96%	96%
Requesting too many of your personal details	77%	88%	88%	89%	92%	88%
Holding inaccurate or out of date information	74%	88%	87%	89%	91%	88%
Receiving unwanted emails, faxes, letters or telephone calls	-	-	87%	87%	89%	87%
Holding information for longer than is required	69%	83%	84%	84%	89%	84%
Requesting inappropriate information that is not relevant	72%	83%	83%	83%	87%	81%
Collecting and holding your personal information online	-	-	84%	81%	87%	80%

Passing information onto other organisations and *security* were again the two concerns mentioned by the largest number of respondents – with their rankings being consistent with 2009. It is also worth noting that these two issues ranked significantly higher than the others on the “very concerned” measure, at 73% and 64% 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 demonstrates the depth and breadth of concern the public has about security and passing on of personal details.

Generally, females showed higher levels of concern than males, with the greatest difference being with regards to the holding of inaccurate or out of date information (+10%).

Older age groups tended to be more concerned than younger age groups. This was the same in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

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)

Almost two fifths (37%) of respondents spontaneously mentioned the DPA as the law concerning the handling of personal details, a 10% increase since 2009.

Q7 What, if any, laws are you aware of concerning the handling of your personal details?							
Unprompted	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
DPA	42%	40%	31%	45%	41%	27%	37%
FOIA	3%	6%	5%	7%	5%	6%	8%
Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations	1%	1%	1%	1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%
Environmental Information Regulations	-	1%	1%	1%	1%	0.2%	0.2%
None	54%	57%	66%	52%	56%	70%	59%

As in 2007, 2008 and 2009 there were higher levels of awareness of the DPA among male respondents (39%) and A/B respondents (47%), although only 23% of C2 and 25% of D/E respondents were spontaneously aware of the DPA.

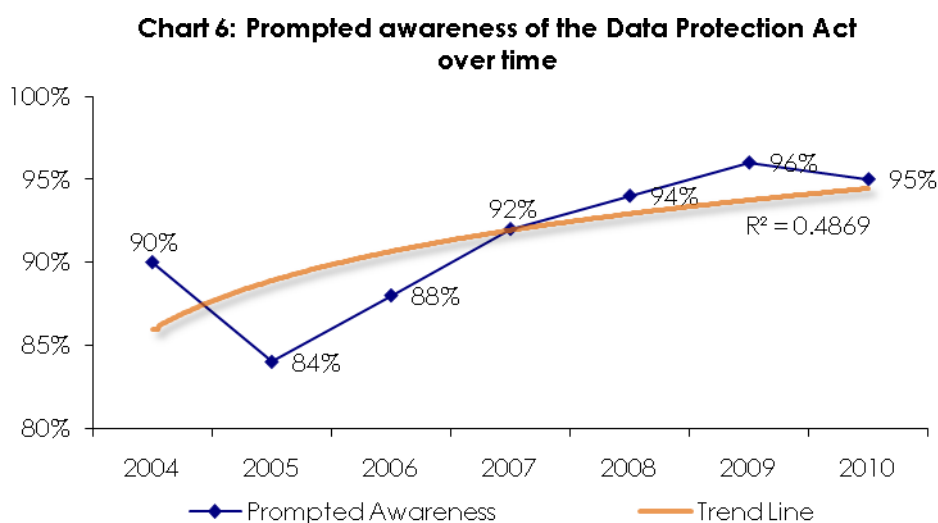
Half of respondents aged 25 to 34 were aware of the DPA (a 17% increase since 2009); whereas just 24% of those aged 65 and over reported awareness (-6% since 2009).

Unprompted awareness of the DPA was highest in the South East area, where 47% of respondents were able to name the act. Awareness of the DPA was lowest in Wales (27%).

The increase in spontaneous awareness of the DPA has been driven by increases in awareness among A/B (+10% on 2009) and C1 (+10% on 2009) respondents and those aged 25 to 34 (+17% on 2009).

7.2.6 Awareness of the DPA (Prompted)

When prompted, the vast majority (95%) of respondents were aware of the DPA. Although there has been a slight decrease in awareness since 2009, overall awareness has increased since tracking began in 2004.



Prompted awareness of the DPA was greatest among individuals in the East (98%); A/B respondents (97%) and those aged 55 to 64 (100%), while awareness was the lowest among those in Northern Ireland (90%), which is consistent with the findings since 2007.

7.2.7 Sources of awareness of the DPA

The workplace was the main source of awareness at 29%; media was also a key source of awareness (28%). These have been the top two responses for the last three years.

Q9 Generally, how are you made aware of data protection issues or the DPA? ⁵	
Unprompted	Percentage
Through work	29%
Newspapers/radio/TV	28%
By application forms	8%
The internet	7%
Education	6%

⁵ 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.

A greater proportion of A/B (35%)/C1's (34%), and those aged 45 to 54 (34%) were most likely to have heard or seen about the DPA through their work. A greater percentage of C2 respondents were aware of the DPA through media (38%). It is likely that the UK's socio-demographic classification makes this a self-fulfilling prophecy: A/B and C1s are, by classification, often office-based and therefore more likely to deal with data protection issues whilst at work.

7.2.8 Requests for personal information held by organisations

Of the sample, 18% had previously requested personal information, a 2% increase since 2009.

Male respondents are more likely to request to see information held about them by organisations than females (20% compared with 16%), which was also the case in 2009.

The 25 to 34's (23%) are the age group most likely to activate their rights and request personal information, which was again the case in 2009.

More than two fifths (44%) 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, which is an 11% increase since 2009. 14% of respondents could not think of any circumstances where they would request personal details, although this represents a decrease compared to a quarter of respondents in 2009.

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	2010
Being refused financial credit	26%	21%	17%	22%
Applying for financial credit	21%	20%	16%	22%
No circumstances	16%	14%	25%	14%
To check medical records	17%	13%	9%	14%
To check criminal record	4%	1%	2%	3%
Change in employment status	4%	1%	3%	2%
General interest	3%	3%	2%	2%
After being involved in court action	1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.8%
When moving house	1%	2%	1%	0.3%
Altering marital status	1%	0.2%	2%	0.1%

7.2.9 Source of advice on the rights under the DPA

For the fifth year in a row, the main source of advice for DPA rights was the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). At 69%, this is a 3% increase since 2009 and an increase of 17% overall since 2006. The internet was the second most frequently mentioned source, at 27%; a 7% increase on last year.

Of the 69% who said CAB, 44% said they would go into a CAB office and 25% said they would look on the CAB website.

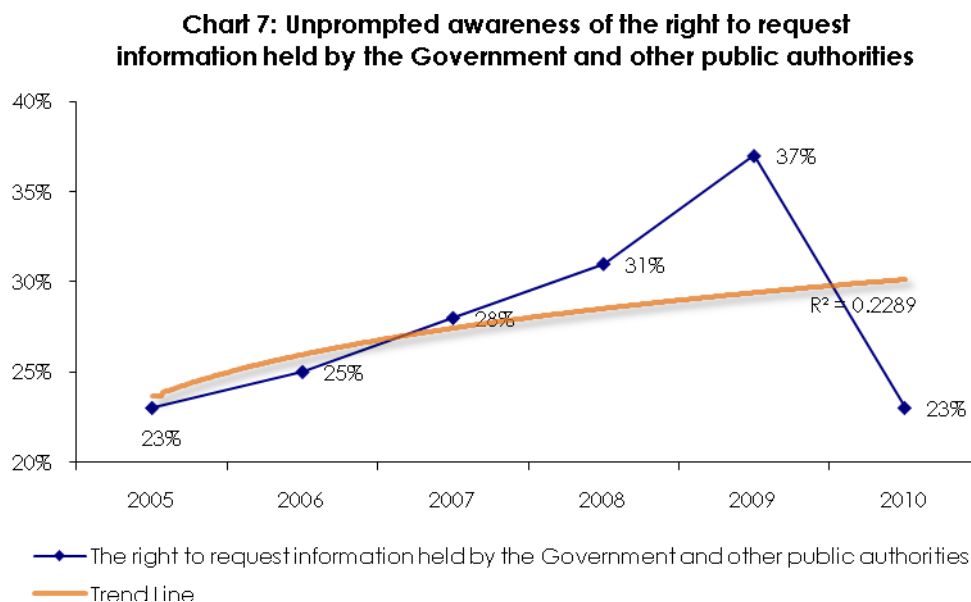
Q12 Where would you go to get advice on your rights under the Data Protection Act?					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
CAB	52%	59%	55%	66%	69%
Internet	14%	22%	19%	20%	27%
Solicitor	14%	11%	12%	12%	15%
Local MP/Councillor/Assembly member	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%
ICO	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Public library	3%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Police	1%	1%	1%	0.4%	1%

Internet preference is driven by age and socio-demographic: those aged 35 to 44 (34%) are more likely to use the internet compared to only 13% of those aged 65 and over. Those in social class A/B (33%) and C1 (33%) were more likely to use the internet compared to C2's (14%) and D/E's (18%).

7.3 Freedom of Information

7.3.1 Awareness of rights (Unprompted)

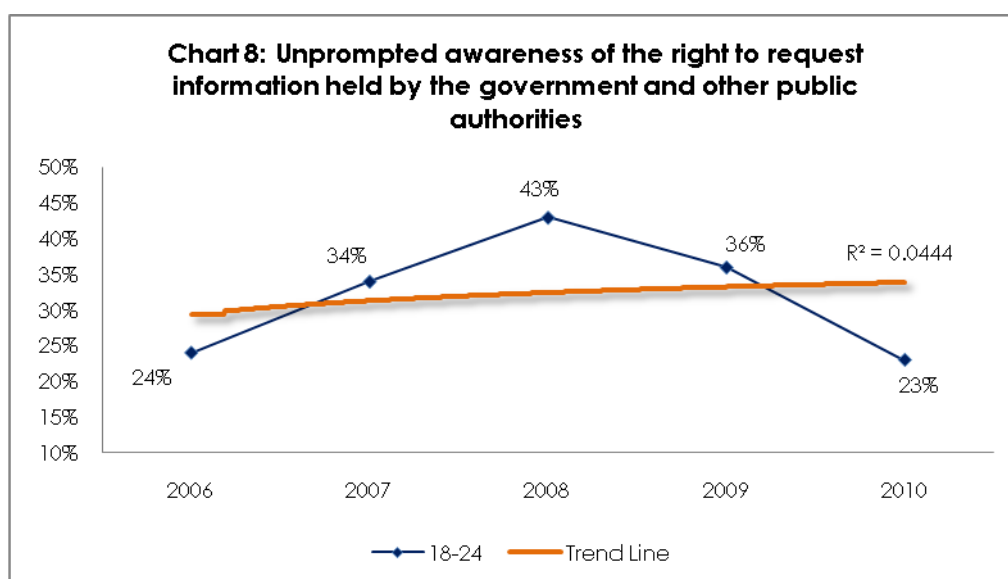
Unprompted awareness of the right to *request information held by the Government and other public authorities* is lower than a quarter (23%); a 14% decrease since 2009. This decrease follows a steady increase in unprompted awareness between 2005 and 2009 (from 23% to 37%). This is a significant decrease.



Respondents within social class A/B (23%), C1 (24%) and C2 (27%) were more likely than those in social class D/E (18%) to be aware of this right. Almost two fifths (36%) of those aged 35 to 44 reported awareness.

Those living in Wales (39%) and the North East (33%) showed the highest awareness levels. Northern Ireland had the lowest levels of awareness in 2010 (11%); this represents a decrease of 36% since 2009.

In 2010, unprompted awareness among respondents aged 18 to 24 was consistent with overall awareness (23%). Awareness has decreased by 20% since 2008.



Although awareness of the other rights remains very low, it has increased since 2009. Half of all respondents in 2010 were unaware of any rights spontaneously and 7% of respondents did not believe they have any rights.

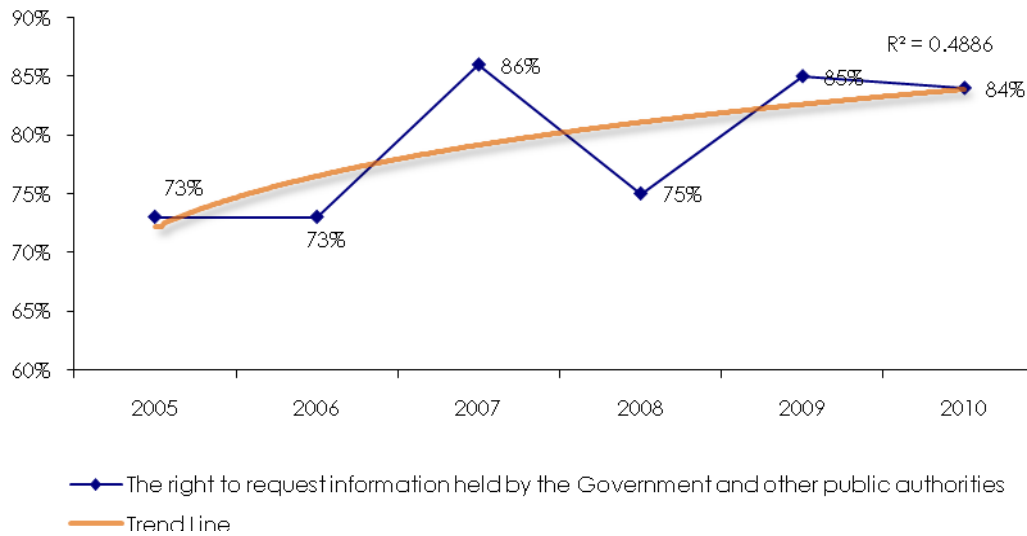
Q2 What rights do you think you have to access information held by the Government and other public authorities?

Unprompted	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
The right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities	23%	25%	28%	31%	37%	23%
The right to see what public money is being spent on	7%	4%	5%	1%	2%	3%
The right to know what type of information is available from the Government and other public authorities	6%	4%	3%	1%	1%	3%
The right to see official information from the Government and other public authorities	2%	2%	3%	1%	0.1%	3%
The right to request information about the environment	9%	5%	3%	1%	1%	2%
The public don't have any rights	5%	5%	4%	8%	6%	7%
Don't know	44%	48%	59%	49%	46%	50%

7.3.2 Awareness of rights (Prompted)

Following an increase of 10% between 2008 and 2009 (from 75% to 85%), there has been a slight decrease of 1% in awareness from 2009 to 2010 (84%).

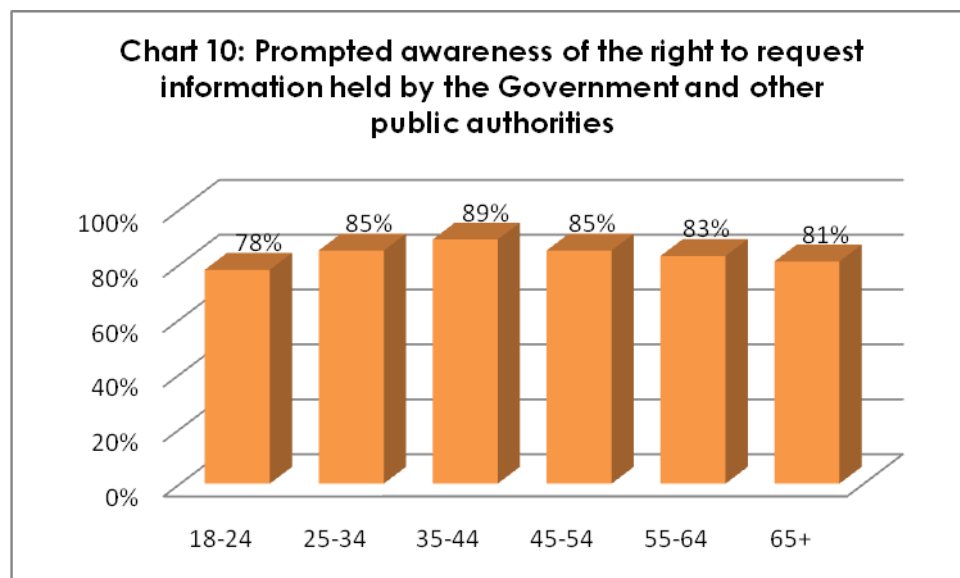
Chart 9: Prompted awareness of the right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities



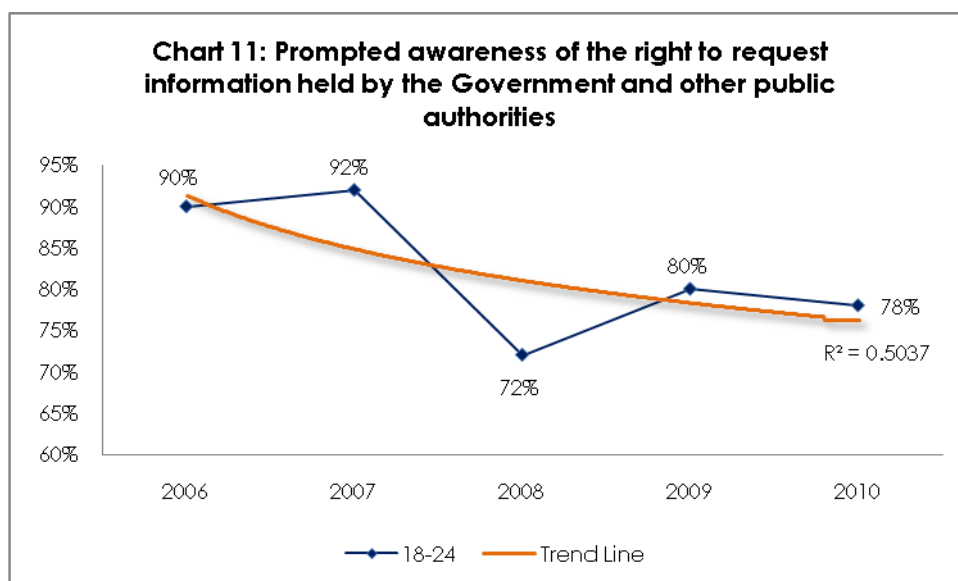
As in 2009, male respondents demonstrated higher than average levels of awareness of this right (86%).

In contrast to levels of spontaneous awareness, respondents from Northern Ireland reported the highest levels of prompted awareness of the right to request information at 90%.

Respondents aged 35 to 44 (89%) demonstrated the highest levels of awareness, whereas just 78% of those aged 18 to 24 were aware of the right to request information held.



Those aged 18 to 24 had the lowest awareness in 2010; awareness among this group has decreased by 2% since 2009. Awareness among 18 to 24 year olds was highest in 2007 (92%); 14% greater than awareness in 2010.



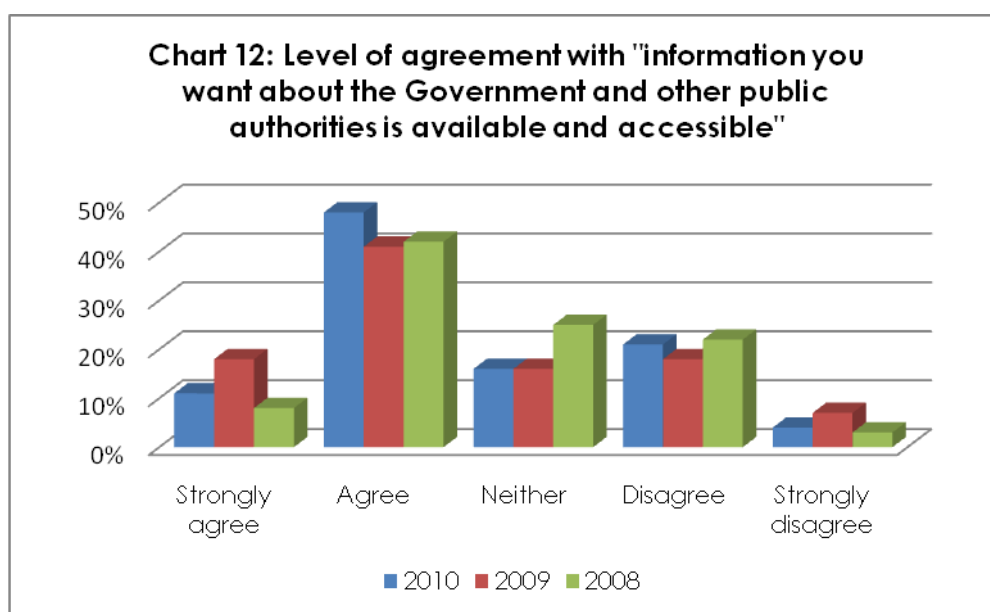
Overall, awareness levels remain relatively high and have increased since the Act came into effect in 2005. Despite this around a tenth (9%) of individuals did not believe the public has any rights.

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	2010
The right to see what public money is being spent on	81%	72%	91%	86%	86%	88%
The right to know what type of information is available from the Government and other public authorities	76%	67%	91%	83%	84%	88%
The right to request information about the environment	80%	75%	90%	83%	86%	87%
The right to request information held by the Government and other public authorities	73%	73%	86%	75%	85%	84%
The right to see official information from the Government and other public authorities such as minutes and planning documents	55%	50%	79%	72%	71%	75%

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." As was also found in 2009, around three fifths (59%) agreed with the statement.



Respondents living in the East Midlands (46%) were least likely to agree with this statement.

Male respondents (62%) were more likely than female respondents (56%) 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 you want about the Government and other public authorities' was available and accessible' (64%).

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

Unprompted awareness of the FOIA is now almost at a quarter (24%) of respondents, a 6% increase since 2009 and a significant increase of 19% since 2004. However, 12% also mentioned the DPA, a 1% increase on last year, suggesting some confusion still remains.

Q5 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?							
Unprompted	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
FOIA	5%	11%	11%	20%	16%	18%	24%
DPA	11%	11%	10%	19%	10%	11%	12%
Environmental Information Regulations	1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
Open Government Code	1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
None	50%	28%	29%	16%	13%	23%	33%

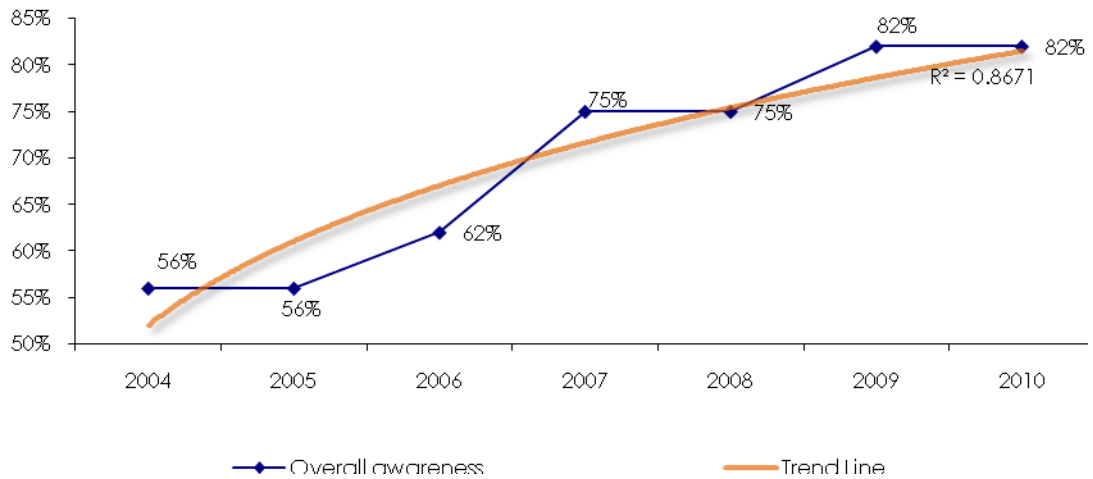
Awareness of the FOIA was significantly higher amongst men (33%) and A/B's (34%). Respondents aged 35 to 44 (30%) were most likely to be aware of the FOIA when compared against other age groups; those living in London were also more likely to be aware (35%).

D/E's (11%), those aged 18 to 24 (16%) and female respondents (16%) had the lowest levels of awareness.

7.3.5 Awareness of the FOIA

When prompted more than four fifths (82%) of respondents were aware of the FOIA; this is a 26% increase since 2004 and remains consistent with 2009.

Chart 13: Prompted awareness of the Freedom of Information Act over time



As in 2007, 2008 and 2009, male respondents (88%) had a greater awareness of the FOIA compared to female respondents (76%). Those aged 55 to 64 again also had significantly higher levels of awareness at 87% (a 3% decrease on last year). When prompted, fewer than two thirds (63%) of respondents aged 18 to 24 had heard of the FOIA (a decrease of 10% since 2009).

A/B (91%) and C1 (86%) respondents indicated much higher awareness levels than C2 (73%) and D/E respondents (68%).

7.3.6 Source of awareness of the FOIA

Media is the most prevalent source of awareness about the FOIA (29%), however 25% of respondents found information about the FOIA using the internet.

Q7 Generally, how do you find out about freedom of information issues or the FOIA?⁶	
Unprompted	2010
Media	29%
The internet	25%
Through work	8%
Through my local authority	4%
From a friend/relative/family member	4%
Through education	2%
CAB	2%

Respondents living in Wales (42%) and Northern Ireland (40%) mentioned the media more frequently than any other region. Male respondents (32%) were also more likely than female respondents (26%) to have been made aware of the FOIA or related issues via the media.

A greater percentage of A/B (30%) and those aged 55 to 64 (34%) had heard or seen about the FOIA on the internet, whilst a greater percentage of those aged 65 and over (41%) have heard or seen about it in the media.

⁶ 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

Overall, 13% said that they had requested information held by the Government or other public authorities. The likelihood of making a request tended to be related to social class: A/B (15%), C1 (13%), C2 (15%), DE (9%).

Respondents in the North East (20%) and male respondents (16%) were most likely to have requested to see held information.

Investigating Government activities and public spending was also mentioned by 12% of those interviewed.

Q9 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)	2010⁷ (Base: 1223)
When dealing with planning issues	32%	25%	18%	15%
To check medical records	21%	27%	15%	12%
When investigating Council/Government plans/activities that may affect an individual	5%	18%	12%	11%
To check public spending	9%	11%	12%	4%
When checking what personal information the Government is holding	3%	3%	3%	2%
When seeking information on climate change/environmental issues	n/a	n/a	n/a	2%
When dealing with financial matters	n/a	n/a	1%	2%

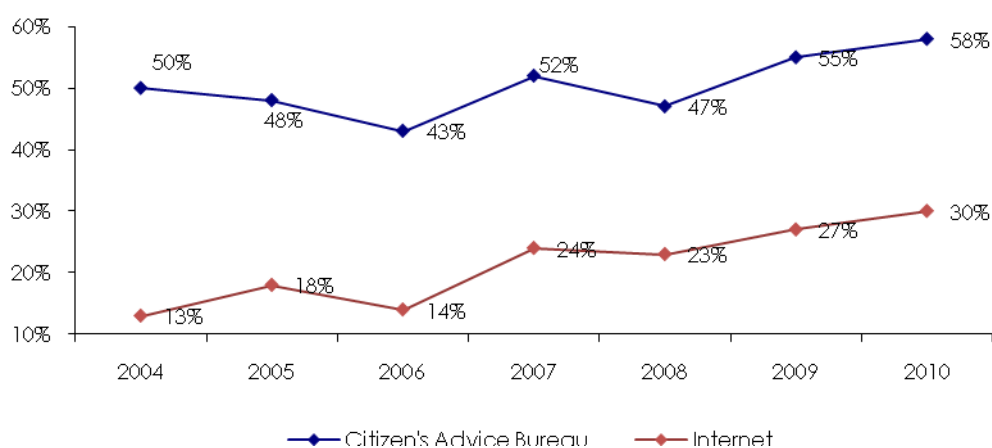
⁷ This has been calculated differently since 2009 taking into account the full sample and therefore percentages appear less significant.

7.3.8 Source of advice for rights under the FOIA

As in 2009, the CAB remains the main contact for seeking advice on the FOIA, and approximately half of the respondents mention this every year – with 58% mentioning it in 2010. The internet is also increasingly being used as a source of advice as 30% mentioned this in 2010, compared with 27% in 2009, and 13% in 2004. (CAB figure shown in graph is combined CAB office (36%) and CAB website (22%).

As in 2009, solicitors were mentioned by 7% of respondents (no change) and 14% said local politicians (a 5% increase on 2009). Less than 1% mentioned the ICO (0.5%).

Chart 14: Top two sources of contact for advice on the FOIA over time (Unprompted)



Younger respondents (18-24: 42%), those living in the West Midlands (40%) and those in social group A/B (34%) and C1 (34%) were most likely to favour the internet.

Respondents in social class C2 (45%) were most likely to go to the CAB office; this was also the case for respondents aged 25 to 34 (39%) and 45 to 54 (39%), and those living in the Wales (43%) and East (43%) areas.

7.3.9 Preferred method for receiving advice and guidance on the Act

For the fourth year running, the preferred method for receiving advice and guidance on the FOIA is via a letter (35%), although this represents a 3% decrease on 2009. 25% stated a preference for website methods, which represents a 3% increase on 2009.

Q11 How would you prefer to receive advice and guidance on the FOIA?				
Unprompted	2007	2008	2009	2010
Via a letter	39%	35%	38%	35%
Website	22%	18%	22%	25%
Face to face	22%	22%	18%	15%
Via stand alone e-mail request	8%	9%	9%	10%
Leaflet	6%	8%	7%	10%
Phone	6%	5%	6%	4%
Via an e-mail request through a website	1%	2%	2%	3%
Visit office	3%	1%	1%	2%
Via an e-mail bulletin I register to	1%	0.3%	1%	1%
Get in touch with other organisation / advice agency to ask on my behalf	0.2%	0.3%	1%	1%

Most sectors of the sample cited a letter as their preferred method. Variances arose in the London area where 34% of respondents said a website would be their preferred method; this was also the case for respondents in social class A/B (33%) and those aged 35 to 44 (31%).

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 agreement has increased significantly since 2004.

Since 2009 there were slight decreases in agreement that *being able to access information held by public authorities increases your knowledge of what they do* (-1%), *being able to access information held by public authorities increases your confidence in them* (-2%), *being able to access information held by public authorities increases your trust in them* (-4%) and *existing laws mean that information held about the Government and local authorities and their operations is available and accessible to you* (-5%).

Q12 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? ⁸							
Prompted	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your knowledge of what they do	54%	62%	76%	86%	84%	88%	87%
Being able to access information held by public authorities promotes their accountability and transparency	53%	58%	74%	81%	80%	82%	83%
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your confidence in them	51%	55%	72%	81%	75%	81%	79%
Being able to access information held by public authorities increases your trust in them	51%	57%	69%	72%	73%	79%	75%
Existing laws mean that information held about the Government and local authorities and their operations is available and accessible to you	n/a	n/a	n/a	66%	65%	73%	68%

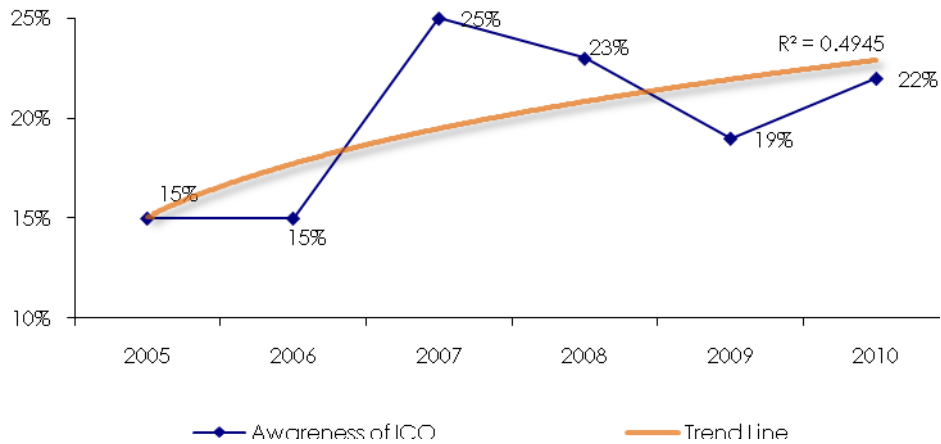
⁸ Results refer to those respondents stating 'agree' or 'strongly agree'. In years 2004, 2005 and 2006 the question was a numbered scale from 1 – 5.

7.4 The Information Commissioner's Office

7.4.1 Awareness of the ICO⁹

Overall, 22% of all those interviewed had heard of the ICO, a 3% increase since 2009 and an overall increase of 7% since 2005.

Chart 15: Awareness of the ICO



As with previous years, A/B's (28%) and male respondents (27%) indicated higher levels of awareness. Those aged 35 to 44 also indicated higher levels of awareness at 26%.

⁹Results 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	1,138	46.5%
Female	1,311	53.5%
Total	2,449	100%

Age	Achieved	Percentage
18-24	239	9.8%
25-34	416	17.0%
35-44	416	17.0%
45-54	433	17.7%
55-64	410	16.7%
65+	512	20.9%
Refused	23	0.9%
Total	2,449	100%

Occupation	Achieved	Percentage
A/B	703	28.7%
C1	841	34.3%
C2	253	10.3%
D/E	516	21.1%
Refused	136	5.6%
Total	2,449	100%

Ethnicity	Achieved	Percentage
White British	2,261	92.3%
Non White	138	5.6%
Refused	50	2.1%
Total	2,449	100%