



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
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Information Commissioner's
Office

Freedom of Information:
Three Years On
Market Research Report

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Appendix 1: Key to abbreviations

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1. Background and objectives

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 came into force fully in January 2005. The Act provides the public with a general right of access to information held by public authorities, which include:

- Central government departments and agencies
- Local government
- Police
- NHS
- State schools, colleges and universities
- Publicly owned companies

Access to information is provided through publication schemes and general rights of access. A publication scheme is a guide to what information is routinely published by a public authority, and details the format each type of information is available in and how much any charges for that information are. The public can ask to see a public authority's publication scheme and then can make a request for any information included in it. If the information required is not included in the publication scheme, the general right of access gives the public the right to make a separate request for that information. This right came into force in January 2005. The authority must usually respond to such a request within 20 working days.

Where there are believed to be grounds for withholding information, there are a number of exemptions to the public's right to know, for example information which is commercially sensitive or which might compromise national security.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Information Commissioner is responsible for regulating the Freedom of Information Act, and investigates complaints about the ways public authorities deal with requests. The Scottish Information Commissioner is responsible for freedom of information matters for devolved authorities in Scotland.

In 2005, once the Freedom of Information Act had been in force for almost a year, research was conducted to help the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) understand how the Act was working, how public authorities saw it working in the future, and what their perceptions of it were. In 2006, two years after the Act had been in force, further research was conducted to measure reactions to the Act and to assess changes in perceptions over the previous year.

In 2007, three years after the Act had been in force research was again required to measure current reactions to the Act and assess changes in perceptions over the past year. Specific objectives of the research were to understand:

- whether the Act has led to a culture of increased openness,
- whether public authorities are publishing more information as a matter of course since the introduction of the Act,
- the amount and types of information released under the Act, and
- public authorities' perceptions of the Act, and what they perceive its benefits (and drawbacks) to be.

The key focus of the research was to understand the impact of the Act on the way public authorities deal with information and whether it has led to a culture of increased openness, but as secondary objectives, the research looked briefly at:

- how the Act has affected public authorities in practice, and how much additional workload or pressure it has placed on them;
- whether public authorities felt complying with the Act had got easier or more complicated over the past year; and
- whether public authorities require additional support from the ICO to help them improve their implementation of the Act, and what support is needed.

Continental Research was commissioned to conduct the research by COI on behalf of the ICO. This document summarises the main findings from the 2007 study.

2. Method

In total 522 telephone interviews were conducted with the person with day-to-day responsibility for freedom of information across a range of types and sizes of public authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In each case, the interview was conducted with the officer responsible for freedom of information rather than any more senior person, as this will be the person with the greatest knowledge of how the Act works in practice. Interviewers screened for the relevant respondent by responsibility, asking for the person with day-to-day responsibility for freedom of information, or who is or would be responsible for dealing with public requests for information about the organisation.

For most sectors, lists of organisations were provided by the ICO. Telephone numbers were then sourced through a combination of directory enquiries and internet searches. Sample for schools and independent practitioners was drawn from the Yell Business Database.

Quotas were set by size and type of public authority, as well as region (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) to achieve a spread.

Interviewing was conducted from 10th December 2007 to 11th January 2008, excluding a break over Christmas from 22nd December 2007 to 1st January 2008.

A benchmark wave of research was conducted in 2005, one year after the Act came into force. Fieldwork was conducted from 17th November to 6th December 2005. A second wave of research was conducted in 2006, two years after the Act came into force. Fieldwork was conducted from 30th November to 21st December 2006. Both waves used the same method and sample structure as the 2007 survey. Results of the three research stages are compared throughout this report.

Throughout this report significant differences between samples are shown with a red circle or red bracket.

- For year on year results, significance is shown for differences between 2006 and 2007 (with the higher percentage circled).
- For large and small/medium authorities, results are compared for large vs. small/medium (not vs. total 2007) (with the higher percentage circled).

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- For Wales and Northern Ireland, results are compared to all UK (not Wales vs. NI) (with the percentage that is significant vs. all UK circled)
- For Wales and Northern Ireland significant differences for year on year results are also shown, for differences between 2006 and 2007 (with the higher percentage circled)

3. UK management summary

3.1. Compliance with the Act and release of information

The vast majority (85%) of respondents said their organisation had made changes to comply with the Freedom of Information Act since it was introduced, mainly drawing up or revising a publication scheme, or increasing the type of information published or released automatically. Large authorities were more likely to have made these changes than smaller ones.

Taking into account both information published as a matter of course and information released in response to requests from members of the public, 62% of respondents said their organisation released a lot or a little more information to the public as a result of the Freedom of Information Act that would not otherwise be provided. This level was similar to 2005 and 2006.

Virtually all organisations (97%) released some information to the public as a matter of course for any reason. While there was no significant difference in 2007 in the release of annual reports or audited accounts there was a significant decrease in many other types of information being released to the public as a matter of course. This may be due to organisations becoming more aware of what needs to be published in order to comply with the Act.

Around seven in ten respondents (71%) said their organisation had received requests for information from the public in the past year. This is a decrease, albeit not significant, from 2006 (73%). Significantly more large authorities had received public requests than small/medium authorities. The main requests made were for information about decisions made, statistics about the organisation, details of what public money is spent on and details of contracts awarded. Almost half (46%) had received requests for personal information about staff.

On average, those receiving requests from the public had received 104 requests in the past year, down from 110 in 2006. Those in large authorities received around double those of small/medium authorities.

As in 2005 and 2006, two thirds (70%) of organisations who had received public requests for information under the Act had had to turn some requests down, most commonly because the requests were for personal information about members of staff.

While the proportion of organisations having to turn down requests from the public in the last year is similar in 2007 to previous years there was a significant increase in information being turned down due to the information already being available by other means and because the cost of providing the information is above the threshold. This may be due to increased familiarity and confidence in applying the Act, leading to organisations being more pragmatic about meeting requirements.

Overall, taking into account information released as a matter of course and information provided in response to requests from the public, 62% of respondents said their organisation released a lot or a little more information to the public now because of the Act than would otherwise be provided. Encouragingly there has been a significant increase in those who claimed they release a lot more information because of the Act between 2005 and 2007. Significantly more respondents in large authorities said this than in small/medium authorities.

Nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents said their organisation was likely to make further changes in the next year to comply with the Freedom of Information Act, a similar level to 2005 and 2006. Significantly more large authorities than small/medium ones intended to make further changes.

3.2. Attitudes to the Act

Respondents' attitudes to the Freedom of Information Act were generally positive, similar to 2005 and 2006. The majority (80%) of respondents felt the Act was a very good thing or a fairly good thing for their organisation, with a significant increase in those rating it as a very good thing compared to 2006. It is widely viewed to have promoted a culture of greater openness and to have encouraged organisations to improve their record management systems. There was little change in agreement with these positive attributes of the Act over the last three years. There was a slight increase in 2007 of people claiming the Act increased the public's trust in them. While this increase was not significant against 2006, it was significant compared to 2005.

Conversely, as seen in previous years, there was some agreement that compliance with the Act led to extra costs for the organisation (65%) and put a strain on staff resources (63%). Furthermore, around a third of respondents (36%) felt that they wasted time on pointless requests from the public. There was a significant increase in 2007 of respondents spontaneously

mentioning that the Act is open to abuse by people and interest groups (10% in 2007 vs. 1% in 2006).

Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents said the Act had at least some impact on their organisation, but only a minority (12%) described its impact as substantial.

Around half (52%) of organisations felt that complying with the requirements of the Act had not changed over the last year. There was a fairly even split between those who felt that complying with the Act had got easier (26%) compared to those who felt that it had got more complicated (21%).

As was seen in 2006, information available online about decisions made by the ICO and appeals made to the Information Tribunal were regarded as useful information resources by the vast majority of those aware this information was available. More respondents were aware that information about ICO decisions are published than that details of appeals are published.

Overall, both large and small/medium public authorities had experienced some impact of the Act, but on most measures, the impact was greater on large public authorities than on the small/medium ones. Despite this, attitudes to the Freedom of Information Act remain positive among authorities of both sizes, with large authorities holding stronger opinions about both the advantages and the disadvantages of the Act than the small/medium ones.

3.3. Conclusions

Overall the results of the 2007 wave of research are positive and fairly consistent with those in 2006.

The Act has led to public authorities publishing more information as a matter of course and, taking into account both information published as a matter of course and information released in response to requests from members of the public, 62% of respondents said their organisation released a lot or a little more information as a result of the Act that would not otherwise be provided.

Although the Act was seen to have had an impact on workloads, costs and staff resources, authorities' attitudes to the Act remain generally positive. It was widely viewed as a good thing from the point of view of the organisation, to have promoted a culture of greater openness and to have encouraged organisations to improve their record management systems.

Both large and small/medium public authorities had experienced some impact of the Act, but on most measures, the impact was greater on large public authorities than on the small/medium ones. Despite this, attitudes to the Freedom of Information Act were positive among authorities of both sizes. Due to the Act's greater impact on large authorities they generally have stronger opinions about the Act, in terms of both its benefits and drawbacks.

Overall, while the results are similar to 2006 there are some key changes that are important to note. There has been a decrease in several types of information being made available as a matter of course. This may be due to organisations becoming more aware of what needs to be published in order to comply with the Act. The overall proportion of organisations having to turn down requests in the last year has remained the same. However there has been a significant increase in those turning down requests because the information is available by other means or the cost of providing the information is above the threshold. Overall attitudes to the Act remain positive, with slightly more claiming the Act is a very good thing for their organisation compared to 2006. While the proportion who felt that complying with the Act got easier over the last year has decreased, this has resulted from more perceiving that there has been no change.

4. UK main findings

4.1. Sample profile

The final number of interviews achieved with each type of public authority is shown in the following table.

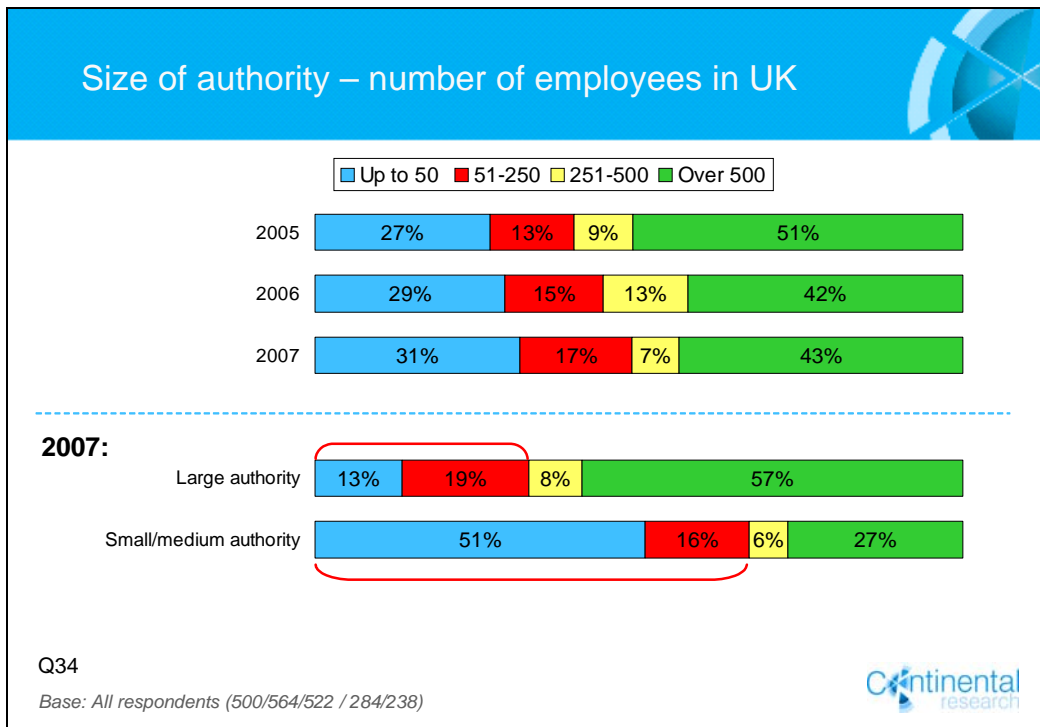
	Large Public Authorities	Small/Medium Public Authorities	TOTAL
Central government	51	-	51
Local government	91	72	163
Police	40	10	50
NHS	50	64	114
Education	52	55	107
Publicly owned companies	-	37	37
England	209	160	369
Wales	39	40	79
Northern Ireland	36	38	74

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These main sample categories were defined by sector and type of organisation as follows:

	Large Public Authorities	Small/Medium Public Authorities
Central government	Central government dept NDPBs	-
Local government	Local authorities NI district councils Fire authorities Welsh local authorities	Internal drainage boards Port health authorities Magistrates courts committee Passenger transport execs National parks Parish/community councils
Police	Police authorities Police forces	District Policing Partnerships
NHS	Primary care trusts Strategic health authorities Mental health trusts Special health authorities	Independent practitioners (GPs / opticians / pharmacists / dentists) Acute trusts Ambulance trusts Local health boards Trusts (Wales) Health regulators HSS boards Community health councils HSS trusts, agencies & councils
Education	Higher education	FE colleges Secondary schools Primary schools
Publicly owned companies	-	Publicly owned companies

Although “size” of authority was defined according to the type of organisation rather than its physical size in terms of employee numbers, the large authorities were larger in terms of number of employees than the small/medium authorities, as shown in the following chart. The profile of the total sample by size of authority was broadly similar in 2005, 2006 and 2007.



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Respondents had a wide range of different job titles, similar to the 2005 and 2006 research. The most commonly held posts were information managers or officers (for large authorities) or clerical officers or clerks (for small/medium authorities). The following table shows all job titles mentioned by 2% or more of the total sample in 2007.

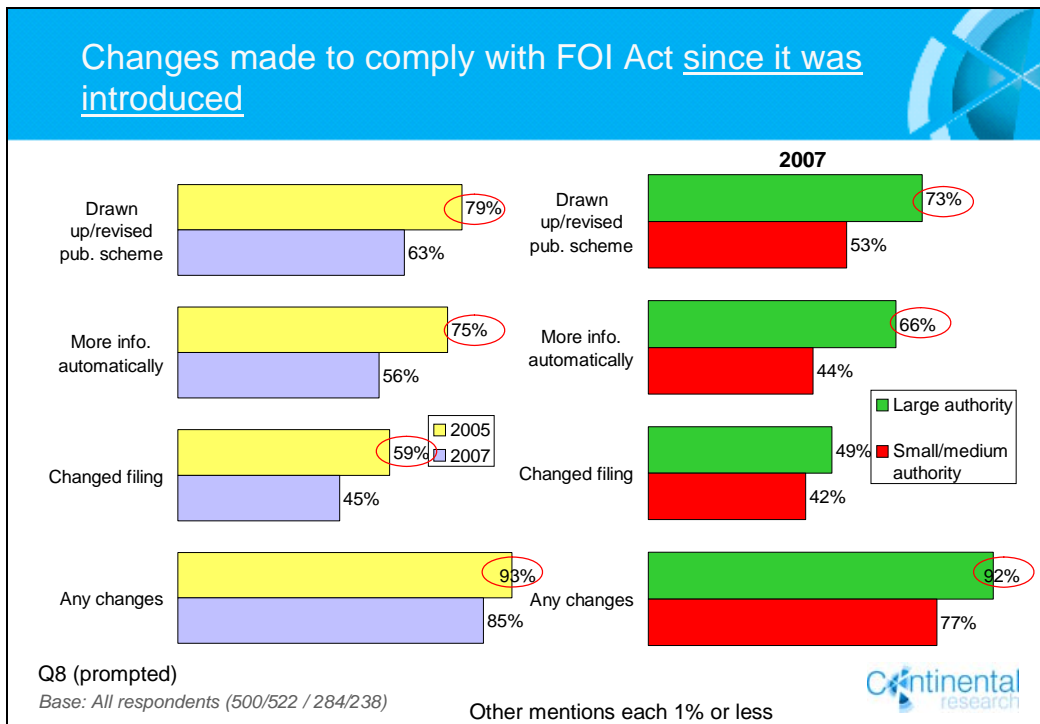
Respondent job title					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total	Total	Total	Large	Small / medium
Base: all respondents	500	564	522	284	238
Information manager / officer / head of information	19%	16%	17%	22%	10%
Freedom of Information manager / officer	5%	7%	9%	13%	4%
Clerk/clerical officer / clerk to council / parish clerk	11%	9%	8%	0%	16%
Records manager / officer / archivist	6%	7%	7%	7%	6%
Head teacher / principal	3%	5%	6%	1%	12%
Administrator / admin officer / office manager	6%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Head of legal services / corporate solicitor etc.	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%
Corporate services/corporate affairs officer/head of corporate services	6%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Bursar / finance manager / officer	4%	4%	4%	5%	3%
Secretary / PA	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Communications manager / officer	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%
Policy officer	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%
Business manager/business development manager	-	1%	2%	2%	2%

Most respondents have had day-to-day responsibility for freedom of information within their organisation for over a year, with 43% having responsibility since the Act came into force. As shown in the following table, significantly more of those in small/medium authorities have had responsibility for the Act for more than three years.

Length of time with day to day responsibility for Freedom of Information within organisation			
	Total sample	Large	Small/medium
Base: all respondents	522	284	238
Less than one year	14%	15%	13%
One to two years	15%	18%	11%
Two to three years	28%	34%	21%
More than three years	43%	32%	54%

4.2. Compliance with the Act

Respondents were prompted with a list of three possible changes they might have made to comply with the Act since it was introduced. The vast majority (85%) of respondents in 2007 said their organisation had made some changes to comply with the Act since it was introduced, most commonly drawing up or revising a publication scheme (63%) or increasing the amount of information provided or released to the public as a matter of course (56%). Furthermore, as shown in the following chart, 45% said they had made changes to filing or record management systems. Significantly fewer respondents claimed to have taken any of these steps since the Act was introduced in the 2007 survey than in the 2005 survey. This is possibly due to some of these changes being made before the current staff member took over responsibility for the Act or that the Act is becoming more embedded in organisations.



Large authorities were significantly more likely than small/medium authorities to have made any of these changes, with the exception of changing filing or record management systems.

4.3. Information released automatically

All respondents were asked what types of information they published or released to the public as a matter of course for any reason, whether related to the Freedom of Information Act or not. Virtually all organisations (97%) released some information to the public as a matter of course for any reason. As shown in the following table (showing all responses given by 5% of respondents or more in 2007), most organisations released annual reports/audited accounts (89%) and future strategies and objectives (72%) as a matter of course. However, while the types of information released were similar to 2006, significantly fewer organisations in 2007 claimed to automatically release a number of types of information including future strategies and objectives, information about decisions made by the company, internal policies, details of what public money is spent on, statistics about the organisation, information about the organisation's performance, meeting minutes, details of consultations and research and personal information about staff. This may be due to organisations becoming more aware of what needs to be published in order to comply with the Act. Decreases in 2007 were seen for both large and small/medium authorities.

Types of information published or released as a matter of course (prompted)			
	2005	2006	2007
Base: all respondents	500	564	522
Annual reports / audited accounts	91%	89%	89%
Future strategies / objectives	85%	85%	72%
Information about decisions made by organisation	84%	77%	70%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	81%	76%	66%
Details of what public money is spent on	83%	79%	63%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	80%	71%	62%
Information about the organisation's performance	78%	81%	47%
Meeting minutes	74%	75%	45%
Details and results of consultations / research	60%	62%	36%
Details of contracts awarded	36%	34%	33%
Personal information about staff	12%	15%	5%
None/don't know	2%	2%	3%

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In general, large authorities were more likely to mention each type of information than the small/medium authorities, and as shown in the following table, were significantly more likely to mention annual reports, future strategies and objectives, information about decisions made by the organisation, details of what public money is spent on, statistics about the organisation, information about the organisation's performance, meeting minutes, and details and results of consultations/research.

Types of information published or released as a matter of course (2007) (prompted)		
	Large authorities	Small/medium authorities
Base: all respondents	284	238
Annual reports / audited accounts	93%	84%
Future strategies / objectives	76%	67%
Information about decisions made by organisation	74%	65%
Details of what public money is spent on	71%	53%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	68%	63%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	65%	58%
Information about organisation's performance	55%	38%
Meeting minutes	52%	36%
Details and results of consultations / research	41%	31%
Details of contracts awarded	31%	35%
Personal information about staff	7%	4%
None/don't know	2%	4%

4.4. Public requests

Around seven in ten (71%) of respondents said they had received requests from the public for information under the Act in the last year. This is a decrease, albeit not significant, from 2006 (73%). Large authorities (94%) were significantly more likely to have received requests than small/medium authorities (44%).

The table below shows the types of information (from a prompted list) respondents said were requested by members of the public.

Types of information requested by the public (prompted)			
	2005	2006	2007
Base: all receiving requests from public	376	417	377
Information about decisions made by organisation	65%	73%	70%
Stats about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	70%	68%	67%
Details of what public money is spent on	64%	66%	65%
Details of contracts awarded	58%	63%	62%
Information about organisation's performance	47%	48%	54%
Annual reports / audited accounts	46%	56%	51%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	51%	53%	51%
Future strategies / objectives	43%	51%	46%
Personal information about staff	53%	48%	46%
Details and results of consultations / research	41%	45%	37%
Meeting minutes	51%	59%	33%

Those receiving requests for information from the public most frequently said they were asked for information about decisions made by the organisation, statistics about the organisation or details of what public money is spent on. Almost half (46%) were asked for personal information about members of staff.

The types of information requested in 2007 were mostly similar to those mentioned in 2005 and 2006, although there were significant decreases in the proportions saying they were asked for details and results of consultations and research and for minutes of meetings.

As shown in the following table, for virtually all types of request large authorities were more likely to have received such requests, significantly so in some cases.

Types of information requested by the public (prompted) - 2007		
	Large authorities	Small/medium authorities
Base: all receiving requests from public	268	109
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	72%	56%
Details of what public money is spent on	71%	51%
Information about decisions made by organisation	70%	69%
Details of contracts awarded	64%	56%
Information about organisation's performance	55%	50%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	54%	43%
Annual reports / audited accounts	52%	49%
Personal information about staff	50%	36%
Future strategies / objectives	49%	40%
Details and results of consultations / research	37%	37%
Meeting minutes	34%	29%

As shown in the following table, 21% of those who received any requests for information from the public had received only ten requests or less, and just over half (53%) had received no more than 50 requests. The average number of requests received in a year by authorities receiving any in 2007 was 104, due to a relatively small number of organisations receiving a high volume of requests (8% had received over 300 requests). The average of 104 requests received in 2007 was similar to previous years (with 110 in 2006 and 95 in 2005).

Those in large authorities who received any requests received around double those of small / medium authorities, as shown in the following table.

Number of requests received from public over last year					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all receiving requests	376	417	377	268	109
Up to 10	25%	23%	21%	18%	29%
11 to 50	34%	31%	32%	28%	41%
51 to 100	15%	16%	15%	15%	18%
101 to 300	16%	17%	19%	24%	7%
Over 300	8%	12%	8%	10%	4%
Average number	95	110	104	122	62

A high proportion of authorities which had received requests for information from the public had turned requests down in the past year. As shown in the following table, similar to 2005 and 2006, over two thirds (70%) of all respondents said public requests had been turned down in the past year, with significantly more in large authorities saying this (73%) than in small authorities (62%). When these figures are re-percentage on the total sample, results suggest that around half (49%) of all public authorities have received requests for information from the public that they have had to turn down in the past year, and among large authorities this figure rises to over two thirds (68%).

Proportion having to turn down requests for information from public in past year		
	Based on all receiving requests	Re-percentage on total sample
All respondents 2005	68%	51%
All respondents 2006	68%	51%
All respondents 2007	70%	49%
Large authorities	73%	68%
Small/medium authorities	62%	27%

Where requests for information from the public were turned down, the most frequent reason for this was that personal information about staff had been asked for (64%). The other most commonly cited reasons for turning down requests for information from the public were requests for commercially sensitive information (38%), information already available by other means (22%) and where the cost was above the threshold (21%). There was a significant increase in requests being turned down in 2007 due to the information being available by other means and the cost of

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providing the information being above the threshold. This could be due to respondents having more familiarity and confidence in the Act leading to them being more pragmatic about meeting requirements. A range of other reasons was given for turning down requests, but each only by a minority of respondents, as shown in the table following (which shows all mentions of 3% or more in 2007).

Types of information turned down			
	2005	2006	2007
Base: all having turned down requests for information	256	285	266
Personal information about staff	53%	57%	64%
Commercially sensitive information	33%	33%	38%
Information already available by other means	14%	11%	22%
Cost of providing information above threshold	8%	12%	21%
Information we don't have / hold / record	8%	7%	5%
Investigations / ongoing investigations	4%	7%	4%
Legally sensitive / legally privileged information	9%	5%	4%
Mention of specific section e.g. Section 1 / 41 etc	-	6%	3%
Other personal information / third party personal information	2%	11%	3%
Private / confidential information	9%	4%	3%
Information intended for future publication	-	2%	3%

As shown in the following table, there were few significant differences in the types of request turned down by large and small/medium authorities.

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Types of information turned down - 2007		
	Large authorities	Small/medium authorities
Base: all having turned down requests for information	196	70
Personal information about staff	66%	58%
Commercially sensitive information	37%	41%
Information already available by other means	24%	16%
Cost of providing information above threshold	22%	18%
Investigations / ongoing investigations	6%	-
Legally sensitive / legally privileged information	5%	4%
Information we don't have / hold / record	3%	8%
Information intended for future publication	3%	3%
Health & safety exemptions e.g. officer whereabouts	3%	-
Far reaching requests/requests that take too long/ too broad	3%	-
Other personal information / third party personal information	2%	7%
Private / confidential information	2%	5%
Mention of specific section e.g. Section 1 / 41 etc	2%	4%
Requests not relevant to our organisation/ not applicable	1%	3%

4.5. Additional information released to public because of the Freedom of Information Act

All respondents were asked how much more information, if any, they felt their organisation released to the public now because of the Freedom of Information Act that would not otherwise be provided. Over six in ten respondents (62%) felt their organisation released a lot or a little more information than they would have done without the Act. Encouragingly, there has been a significant increase in those who claimed they release a lot more information because of the Act between 2005 (19%) and 2007 (27%). Significantly more large authorities (78%) claimed they release a lot or a little more information than they would have done without the Act than small/medium authorities (46%). Only one in five respondents (20%) said they did not release any more information at all than they would otherwise have done, with results similar to those in 2005 and 2006, as shown in the following table.

How much more information released to public because of the Freedom of Information Act					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	500	564	522	284	238
A lot more	19%	24%	27%	38%	15%
A little more	39%	35%	35%	40%	31%
Not much more	18%	15%	15%	11%	18%
No more than before	21%	24%	20%	7%	35%

The types of information respondents were most likely to say that the public has access to now because of the Freedom of Information Act were information about decisions made by the organisation, internal policies and details of contracts awarded, as shown in the following table.

While there was a significant increase in 2007 of annual reports and audited accounts being made available now that would not otherwise be, there were significant decreases in meeting minutes, details and results of consultations and research and personal information about staff being made available. This is consistent with the significant decreases in 2007 for requests made by the public for details and results of consultations and research and meeting minutes. There was also a significant increase in 2007 of those who said they did not know what types of

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information were available now that the public would not have had access to before the Act. This is possibly due to new staff taking responsibility for the Act.

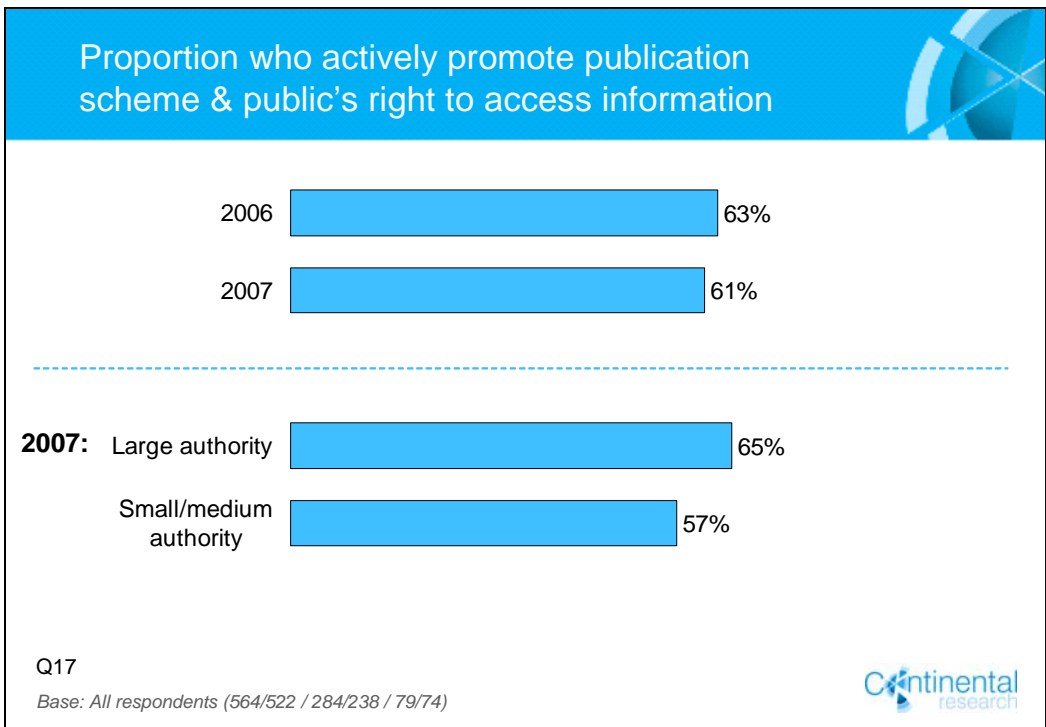
Types of information available that the public would not have had access to before the Freedom of Information Act (prompted)			
	2005	2006	2007
Base: all releasing more info. due to Freedom of Information Act	379	414	401
Information about decisions made by organisation	34%	39%	39%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	30%	39%	37%
Details of contracts awarded	39%	41%	36%
Statistics about organisation e.g. staff numbers	26%	34%	34%
Future strategies / objectives	24%	35%	33%
Details of what public money is spent on	26%	30%	31%
Information about organisation's performance	20%	28%	30%
Meeting minutes	31%	37%	24%
Annual reports / audited accounts	13%	16%	23%
Details and results of consultations / research	21%	27%	19%
Personal information about staff	10%	17%	9%
Don't know	23%	10%	15%

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As shown in the following table, those in large authorities tended to be more likely to say each type of information was now available to the public because of the Act, though the only significant differences were for information about decisions made by the organisation and organisation statistics.

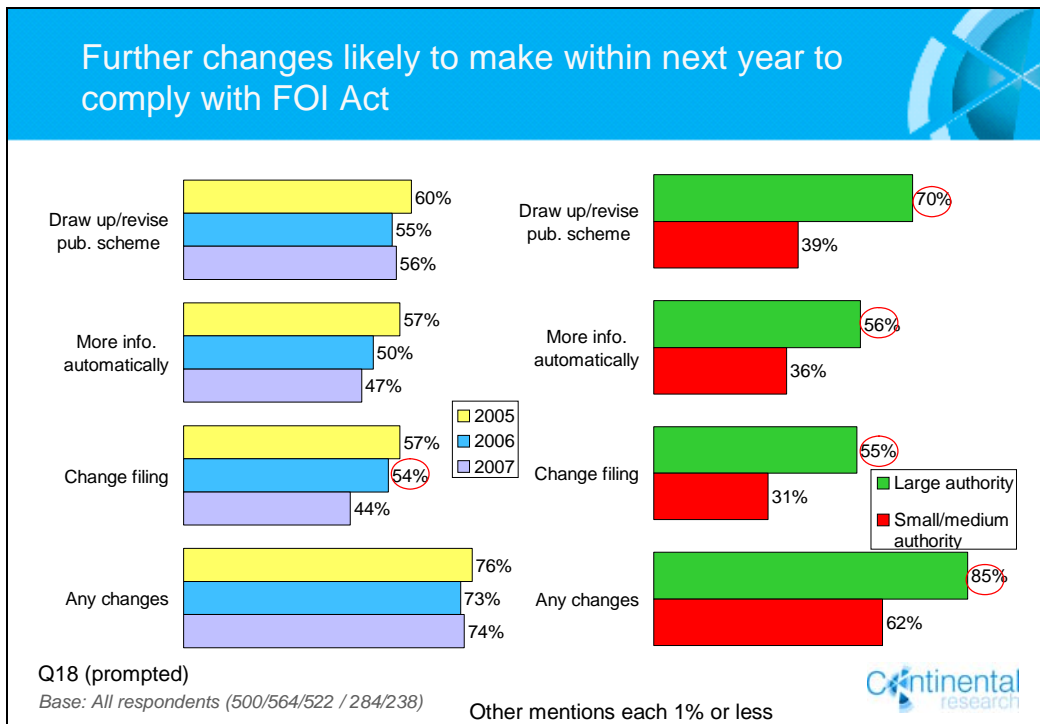
Types of information available that the public would not have had access to before the Freedom of Information Act – 2007 (prompted)		
	Large authorities	Small/medium authorities
Base: all releasing more information due to Freedom of Information Act	251	150
Information about decisions made by organisation	44%	31%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	39%	33%
Details of contracts awarded	38%	34%
Statistics about organisation e.g. staff numbers	39%	26%
Future strategies / objectives	35%	30%
Details of what public money is spent on	32%	30%
Information about organisation's performance	31%	30%
Meeting minutes	27%	19%
Annual reports / audited accounts	21%	25%
Details and results of consultations / research	20%	18%
Personal information about staff	11%	7%

Similar to 2006, almost two thirds (61%) of authorities in 2007 said they actively promoted their publication scheme and the public’s right to access information, while just over a third (36%) said they left it to people to find out about these for themselves. As shown in the following chart, those in large authorities were slightly more likely to actively promote the information available (65%) than those in small authorities (57%) but the difference was not significant.



4.6. Future changes

Respondents were prompted with a list of changes their organisation might make within the next year to comply with the Freedom of Information Act. As shown in the following chart, 74% of all respondents planned to make further changes, a similar level to 2005 and 2006. Significantly more of those in large authorities (85%) than in small/medium authorities (62%) said they might make changes in the future. Respondents were most likely to say they might draw up or revise a publication scheme (56%), followed by making more information available to the public as a matter of course (47%), and making changes to filing or record management systems (44%). There was a significant decrease in 2007 of respondents claiming that they are likely to change their filing system in the next year to comply with the Act, probably because the Act is more embedded and there is less need to alter systems.



Those who said they were likely to make more information available as a matter of course in the future were asked to say (spontaneously) what types of additional information they might release. As shown in the following table, annual reports/ audited accounts, details of future strategies/ objectives, and information about decisions made by the organisation were most frequently mentioned. All mentions other than those listed in the table were 5% or less and are not shown in the table. There were significant increases in 2007 in several types of information likely to be

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made available in the future: annual reports/ audited accounts, information about decisions made by the organisation and internal policies. There was a significant decrease in respondents claiming that meeting minutes were likely to be made available in the future.

Types of information likely to make available in the future (spontaneous)			
	2005	2006	2007
Base: all likely to publish more information as a matter of course	283	293	247
Annual reports / audited accounts	19%	18%	27%
Future strategies / objectives	20%	19%	26%
Information about decisions made by organisation	23%	18%	25%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	24%	17%	24%
Information about organisation's performance	19%	19%	23%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	18%	16%	21%
Details of contracts awarded	20%	15%	18%
Details of what public money is spent on	18%	15%	18%
Meeting minutes	27%	23%	16%
Details and results of consultations / research	14%	15%	15%

As shown in the following table, while overall the types of information likely to be released in future by large and small/medium authorities was similar, those in large authorities were more likely to claim that several types of information may be released. In particular, large authorities were significantly more likely to claim they would make available information about decisions made by the organisation, information about the organisation's performance and statistics about the organisation.

Types of information likely to make available in the future (spontaneous) - 2007		
	Large authorities	Small/medium authorities
Base: all likely to publish more information as a matter of course	161	86
Information about decisions made by organisation	29%	17%
Future strategies / objectives	28%	21%
Information about organisation's performance	28%	16%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	27%	20%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	27%	12%
Annual reports / audited accounts	26%	28%
Details of what public money is spent on	20%	15%
Details of contracts awarded	20%	14%
Meeting minutes	19%	13%
Details and results of consultations / research	18%	11%
Don't know	28%	26%

4.7. Attitudes to Freedom of Information Act

When asked how they felt about the Act overall, respondents were positive. As shown in the following table, similar to 2005 and 2006, four in five respondents (80%) felt the Act was a very good thing or a fairly good thing from the point of view of their organisation. Furthermore, there was a significant increase in 2007 of respondents claiming that the Act is a very good thing. Those in large authorities were significantly more likely than those in small / medium authorities to say the Act was a good thing (87% vs. 72%), but both groups were highly positive. Only a small minority described the Act as a bad thing, with the remainder saying they were not really affected by the Act.

Overall rating of Freedom of Information Act					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	500	564	522	284	238
A very good thing	36%	32%	38%	42%	34%
A fairly good thing	45%	49%	42%	45%	38%
Not affected by Freedom of Information Act	14%	9%	11%	4%	18%
A very/fairly bad thing (net)	3%	6%	5%	5%	6%

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When asked to say, spontaneously, what they felt were the benefits of the Act from the point of view of their organisation, all but 16% of respondents in 2007 mentioned at least one positive aspect, as shown in the following table. The most commonly mentioned benefits, particularly by large authorities, were increased openness or transparency as a result of the Act, or the fact that it led to improvements in record management, more accountability or improved relationships with the public. Significantly more respondents in 2007 than in 2006 mentioned that the Act had led to them providing a better quality of service and that it allowed them to publish more information.

Perceived benefits of the Act for organisation (spontaneous)					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	500	564	522	284	238
Openness / transparency	35%	37%	39%	40%	38%
Better record management / more organised records	27%	18%	14%	21%	7%
Accountability	18%	16%	14%	19%	9%
Improved relationship with public / public understanding	17%	17%	13%	13%	12%
Improved public access to info. / helps us respond to public	16%	12%	9%	11%	7%
Improved quality of service / ensures best practice	5%	5%	8%	10%	6%
Allows us to publish more/ we publish more information	-	2%	6%	8%	4%
Agree with Freedom of Information Act / right for public to have info.	4%	3%	5%	7%	4%
Staff more aware of their responsibilities	3%	4%	3%	4%	1%
Consistency of release of information/good to have set rules	-	2%	3%	4%	2%
Ability to demonstrate how decisions are made	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Raised public awareness of what can obtain	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%
No benefits / don't know	15%	15%	16%	11%	21%

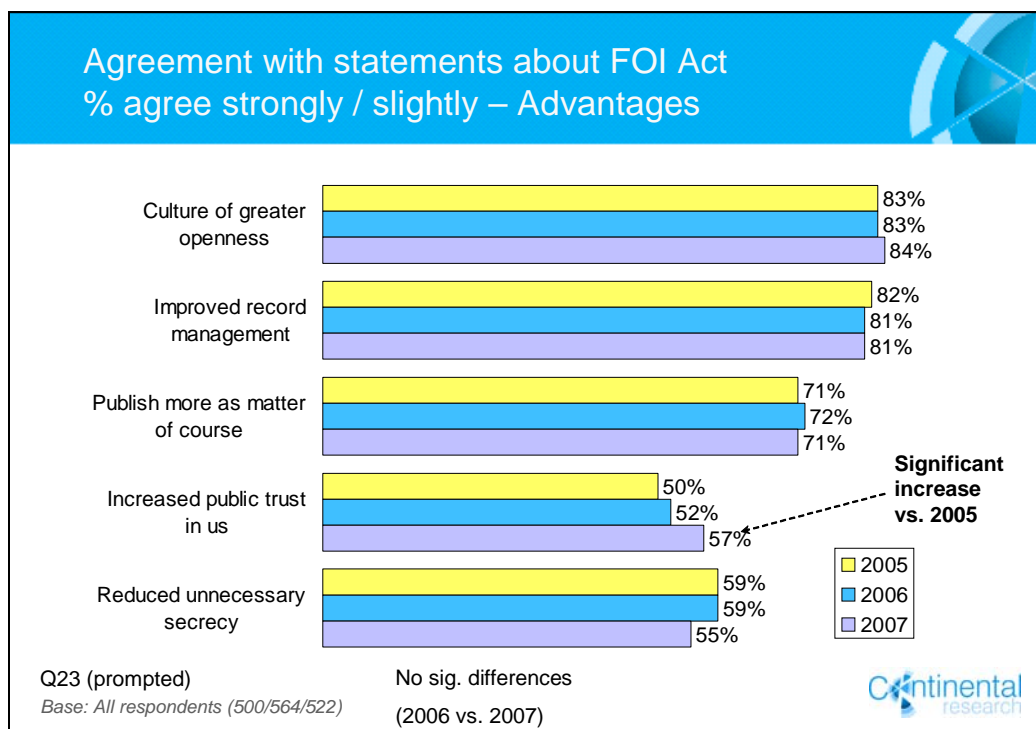
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When asked what they felt the disadvantages of the Act were for their organisation, 26% could not think of any. Significantly more respondents in small/medium authorities (36%) than in large authorities (18%) did not mention any disadvantages. As shown in the following table, the most frequently mentioned issue with the Act was that it was time consuming, mentioned by around one in five respondents (21%, significantly less than in 2006). Other disadvantages of the Act are problems with workload (15%), and having to respond to commercial, research or media requests (12%). There was a significant increase in respondents claiming that the Act is open to abuse by people and interest groups (10% vs. 1% in 2006). There was a significant decrease in respondents mentioning issues with cost or finance from 2006 to 2007.

Perceived disadvantages of the Act for organisation (spontaneous)					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	500	564	522	284	238
Time / time consuming	22%	29%	21%	25%	16%
Workload	13%	15%	15%	16%	14%
Have to respond to commercial / research / media requests	8%	11%	12%	15%	7%
Act is open to abuse by people/interest groups	-	1%	10%	14%	5%
Cost / finance / no funding from government	13%	13%	8%	11%	6%
Resource element / resource implications	9%	11%	8%	10%	7%
Malicious/ vexatious requests e.g. by competitors	6%	4%	6%	8%	3%
Administrative burden / bureaucracy	10%	7%	5%	5%	7%
Having to disclose personal/confidential information	2%	3%	5%	5%	5%
None/don't know	25%	21%	26%	18%	36%

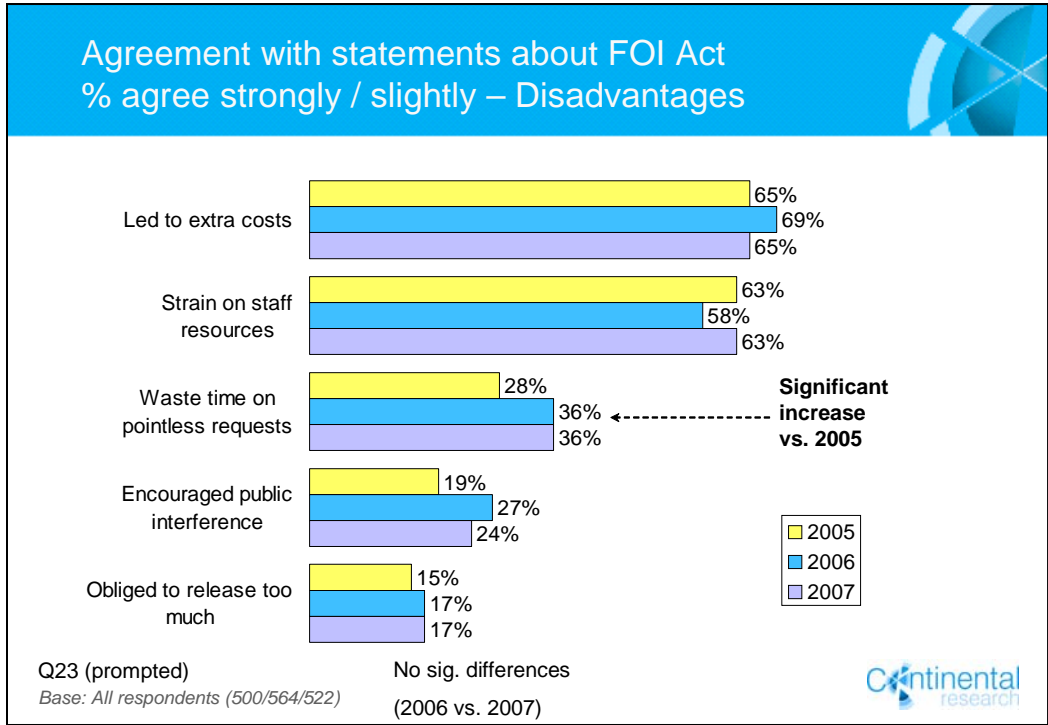
Respondents in large authorities were the most likely to mention disadvantages of time, having to deal with commercial, media or research requests, that the Act is open to abuse by people or interest groups, cost issues, and having to deal with malicious or vexatious requests, as might be expected since the larger authorities receive more requests and a wider range of requests than small/medium authorities.

Reactions to the Act were positive too across a range of attitude statements read to respondents. As shown in the following chart, 84% of all respondents agreed strongly or slightly that the Act promoted a culture of greater openness and 81% agreed that it had encouraged them to improve their record management systems. Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents agreed that the Act meant they published more information as a matter of course now, and over half agreed that it had increased the public's trust in them (57%) and that it reduced unnecessary secrecy about the way they worked (55%). These positive results were very similar to those seen in 2005 and 2006. While there were no significant differences in 2007 compared to 2006 there has been a gradual increase in respondents agreeing that the Act has led to an increase in the public's trust of their organisation and the result in 2007 is significantly higher compared to 2005.

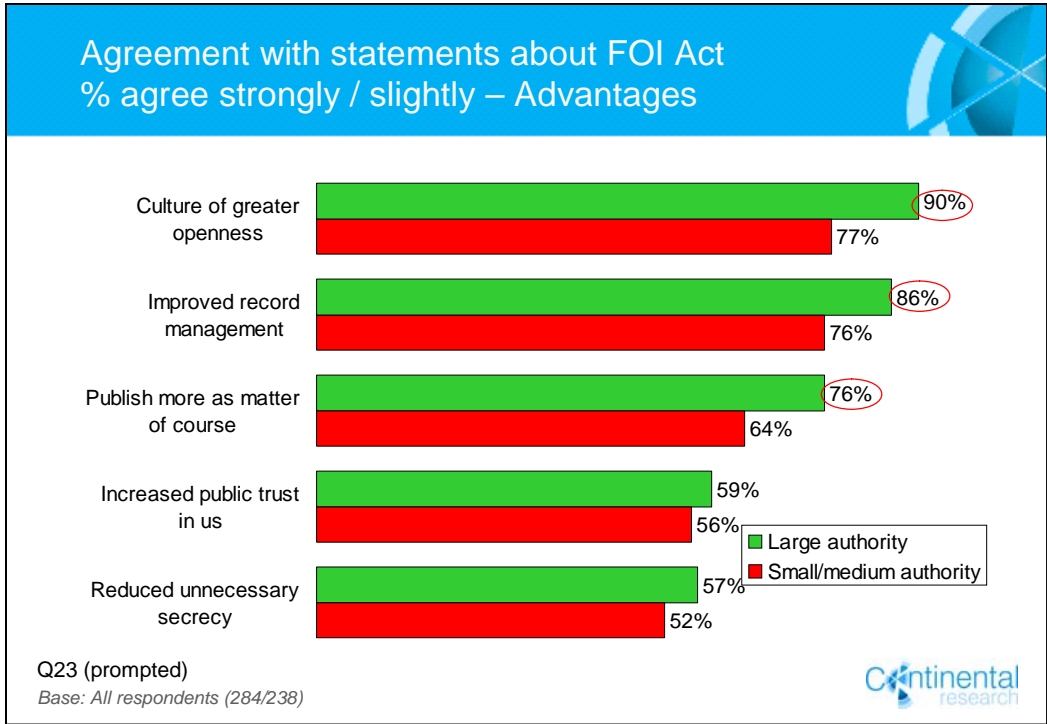


On the negative side, around two thirds (65%) of respondents agreed that the Act had led to extra costs and that it had put a strain on staff resources (63%). Over a third (36%) felt that the Act meant they had to waste time responding to pointless requests from the public and around a quarter (24%) agreed that it encouraged the public to interfere too much, although only one in six (17%) said it obliged them to release too much information.

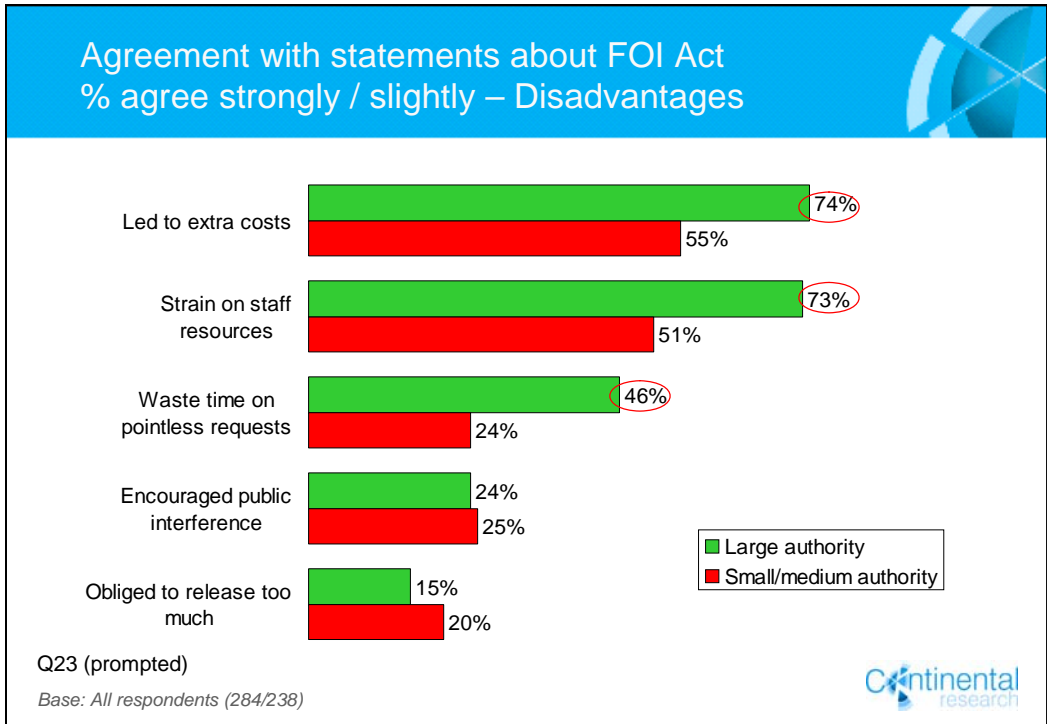
While there were no significant differences in 2007 compared to 2006 in disadvantages of the Act, significantly more respondents agreed that the Act led to them wasting a lot of time responding to pointless requests from the public compared to 2005.



As shown in the following chart, respondents in large authorities were more likely to agree with each of the positive statements about the Act, and significantly more likely to see the benefits of the Act in terms of increasing openness, improving record management and leading them to publish more information as a matter of course.



Larger authorities were also more likely to perceive disadvantages of the Act, including suffering strains on financial or staff resources, and to feel time is wasted dealing with pointless requests, as is illustrated in the following chart.



4.8. Impact of Freedom of Information Act on organisation

As shown in the following table, the majority of respondents (71%) felt the Act had at least some impact on their organisation, but many more said it had some impact (59%) than a substantial impact (12%). These results were very similar to 2005 and 2006. Those in large authorities were significantly more likely than those in small/medium authorities to say the Act had an impact on them.

Amount of impact Freedom of Information Act had on organisation					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	500	564	522	284	238
A substantial impact	12%	14%	12%	17%	6%
Some impact	58%	57%	59%	68%	48%
Not much impact	23%	23%	23%	12%	34%
No impact	7%	5%	6%	1%	11%

For the majority of organisations, the Act has meant additional workload. As shown in the following table, in 2005, 2006 and 2007 over three quarters of all respondents (77% in 2007) said the Act had meant a lot or a little additional workload for their organisation, and significantly more of those in large organisations said this (86%) than in small/medium authorities (66%).

How much additional workload Act has meant for organisation					
	2005	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	500	564	522	284	238
A lot	27%	32%	29%	40%	17%
A little	51%	47%	48%	46%	49%
Not much	14%	15%	16%	9%	25%
None at all	6%	5%	5%	2%	9%

There was a fairly even split between those who claim that complying with the Act had got easier over the past year (26%) compared to those who claim that it had got more complicated (21%). Around half (52%) of respondents felt things had not changed. The proportion of respondents who felt that complying with the Act had got easier decreased in 2007; this is due to a significant increase in those perceiving that there has been no change.

As shown in the following table, large authorities were significantly more likely to feel that things had got easier, while those in smaller authorities were the most likely to feel things had not changed. Those in large authorities were also more likely to feel things had got more complicated but this was the minority view regardless of organisation size.

Changes in difficulty of complying with requirements of Act over past year (2007)				
	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	564	522	284	238
A lot easier	6%	5%	5%	4%
A little easier	31%	21%	24%	17%
A little more complicated	15%	16%	20%	11%
A lot more complicated	5%	5%	8%	2%
Things have not changed	41%	52%	41%	65%

All respondents were asked (spontaneously) what additional help or support the ICO could provide to make implementing the Act easier for respondents. As shown in the following table (showing all mentions over 1%), guidance was by far the most commonly mentioned (25%), followed by making information available online (13%). While overall a similar proportion of

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respondents in 2007 (55% vs. 54% in 2006) could think of at least one idea that might help their organisation implement the Act, there were significant increases in several of the suggestions made in 2007 compared to 2006. This may be due to respondents becoming more aware of what types of assistance would be useful to them as they become more familiar with the Act.

Additional help or support ICO could provide (spontaneous)				
	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all respondents	564	522	284	238
Guidance	18%	25%	29%	20%
Information available online	6%	13%	12%	15%
Quicker response time to enquiry	4%	9%	8%	11%
e-bulletins	4%	9%	9%	9%
Training courses	6%	8%	9%	7%
Raise public awareness / understanding of Act	5%	8%	8%	7%
Case law	1%	5%	6%	4%
Seminars	2%	5%	5%	4%
Clarity / clearer / simple advice	4%	2%	3%	1%
Improved website/easier to navigate/ more information	1%	2%	3%	1%
More consistent advice	1%	2%	3%	1%
Helpline	3%	2%	2%	1%
Advice on specific areas e.g. data sharing	2%	2%	1%	2%
Nothing / don't know	46%	45%	41%	50%

4.9. Awareness and use of information available on ICO and Information Tribunal websites

Similar to 2006, when prompted, over two thirds of respondents (71%) said they were aware that details of the ICO's decisions about complaints made against organisations under the Act are published on the ICO website. Awareness was significantly higher among large authorities (83%) than small/medium ones (56%).

The vast majority (83%) of those aware that details of the ICO's decisions are available online said they found this a useful information resource for their organisation. As shown in the following table, those in large organisations were significantly more likely than those in smaller authorities to find this information useful.

Usefulness of ICO decisions on website as information resource				
	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all aware decisions are published	385	377	239	138
Very useful	46%	43%	48%	34%
Fairly useful	42%	40%	41%	39%
Not very useful	7%	7%	6%	9%
Not at all useful	3%	4%	1%	10%
Don't know	2%	6%	4%	7%

Similar to 2006, over half (57%) of all respondents said they were aware that details of appeals made to the Information Tribunal against the ICO's decisions are published on the Information Tribunal's website. Again, awareness was significantly higher among large authorities (71%) than small/medium ones (41%).

The vast majority (81%) of those aware that details of appeals made to the Information Tribunal are available online said they found this a useful information resource for their organisation. As shown in the following table, those in large organisations were significantly more likely than those in smaller authorities to find this information useful.

Usefulness of Information Tribunal appeals on website as information resource				
	2006	2007		
	Total sample	Total sample	Large authorities	Small / medium authorities
Base: all aware appeals are published	294	305	206	99
Very useful	45%	40%	45%	32%
Fairly useful	43%	41%	42%	39%
Not very useful	7%	8%	6%	11%
Not at all useful	2%	5%	2%	11%
Don't know	3%	5%	5%	6%

5. Wales management summary

5.1. Compliance with the Act and release of information

The majority of respondents (86%) in Wales said their organisation had made changes to comply with the Freedom of Information Act since it was introduced, mainly drawing up or revising a publication scheme, or increasing the type of information published or released automatically. As in the UK as a whole, fewer changes were made in 2007 than in 2005. In 2007, authorities in Wales were equally likely to have made changes as the whole of the UK.

Virtually all (98%) organisations in Wales released some information to the public as a matter of course for any reason, whether related to the Freedom of Information Act or not. As was seen in the UK as a whole, in Wales there were several significant decreases in 2007 of the types of information released to the public as a matter of course including releasing information about future strategies and objectives, meeting minutes, details and results of consultations and research and personal information about staff. This may be due to organisations becoming more aware of what needs to be published in order to comply with the Act.

The majority (68%) of respondents in Wales said their organisation had received requests for information from the public in the past year, a similar level to 2006 and to the UK as a whole. The main requests were for statistics about the organisation, information about decisions made by the organisation, and information about the organisation's performance. Compared to 2006, authorities in Wales in 2007 reported slightly lower levels of requests for several types of information.

On average, those in Wales receiving requests from the public reported high volumes of requests – on average, 131 requests were received in the past year, more than the 104 across the UK as a whole but fewer than the average of 154 received in Wales in 2005.

In Wales, over three quarters (80%) of those receiving requests for information from the public had turned some requests down, a similar level to the UK as a whole (70%). The proportion of authorities in Wales who had to turn down requests in the last year was higher than 2006 (68%) but this difference is not significant. It was however a significant increase compared to 2005

(59%). The most commonly turned down requests were for personal information about staff members or requests for commercially sensitive information.

Overall, taking into account information released as a matter of course and information provided in response to requests from the public, 57% of respondents in Wales said their organisation released a lot or a little more information to the public now because of the Act that would not otherwise be provided, and this proportion was similar to that in the UK as a whole and to Wales in 2006.

Three quarters (75%) of respondents in Wales said their organisation was likely to make further changes in the next year to comply with the Freedom of Information Act. This proportion is the same as 2006 in Wales and a similar proportion to the UK as a whole in 2007.

5.2. Attitudes to the Act

Attitudes to the Act were generally positive and similar both to the UK as a whole and to Wales in 2006. The vast majority (84%) of respondents felt it was a very or fairly good thing from the point of view of their organisation, 85% agreed that it led to a culture of greater openness, 84% agreed that it improved record management, 75% agreed that it meant they published more information as a matter of course, 59% that it had increased the public's trust in them and 46% that it reduced unnecessary secrecy about the way the organisation worked.

Negative aspects of the Act were most commonly seen to be administrative, with 65% of respondents in Wales agreeing that the Act led to extra costs and 64% that it put a strain on resources. However, few disagreed with the Act on principle as only 22% felt that it encouraged the public to interfere in the way they worked, 32% that it meant they wasted time responding to pointless requests and 14% that it obliged them to release too much information.

There were no significant differences in attitudes in Wales compared to the UK as a whole in 2007. Overall attitudes in Wales in 2007 were similar to 2006 but there was a significant decrease in agreement that the Act had reduced unnecessary secrecy.

As in 2005 and 2006, most respondents felt that the Act had had some impact on their organisation and had meant additional workload. There was little difference between Wales and the UK as a whole in terms of perceptions of the impact of the Act on their organisation.

As was seen in the UK as a whole, there was a significant increase in those in Wales saying that there was no change in difficulty with complying with the requirements of the Act in the past year.

5.3. Conclusions

Results indicate that the Freedom of Information Act has led to public authorities publishing more information as a matter of course. Taking into account both information published as a matter of course and information released in response to requests from members of the public, 57% of respondents in Wales said their organisation released a lot or a little more information as a result of the Act that would not otherwise be provided.

The vast majority (80%) of organisations in Wales who had received public requests for information under the Act had had to turn some requests down. This was most commonly because the requests were for personal information about members of staff or for commercially sensitive information. More authorities in Wales had turned requests down in 2007 than in 2006. While this increase was not significant the proportion of authorities in Wales which turned down requests in 2007 was significantly higher than in 2005.

Although the Act was seen to have had an impact on workloads, costs and staff resources, authorities' attitudes to the Act were generally positive. It was widely viewed as a good thing from the point of view of the organisation, to have promoted a culture of greater openness and to have encouraged organisations to improve their record management systems. There continues to be little disagreement with the Act "on principle".

Overall, reactions to the Freedom of Information Act and its impact on organisations to date were similar in Wales to the UK as a whole, and in Wales, were similar to 2006. However, there were some important differences. Like the UK as a whole there was a decrease in 2007 in several types of information being made available as a matter of course. More organisations in Wales turned down requests for information in 2007 compared to 2006 but this difference was not significant. There was however a significant increase in the number of organisations in Wales

which had turned down requests in the last year compared to 2005. Like the UK as a whole there was a significant increase in organisations in Wales turning down requests because the information was available by other means. Finally, there was a significant increase in those saying the difficulty in complying with the Act had not changed in the past year.

6. Wales main findings

6.1. Sample profile

The final number of interviews achieved with each type of public authority in Wales is shown below.

	Wales		
	Large Public Authorities	Small/Medium Authorities	TOTAL
Central government	9	-	9
Local government	26	12	38
Police	7	-	7
NHS	-	23	23
Education	10	17	27
Publicly owned companies	-	-	-

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The following table compares the profile of the sample in Wales in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and compares the profile in 2007 to that of the UK as a whole, by respondent job title and by number of employees in the organisation.

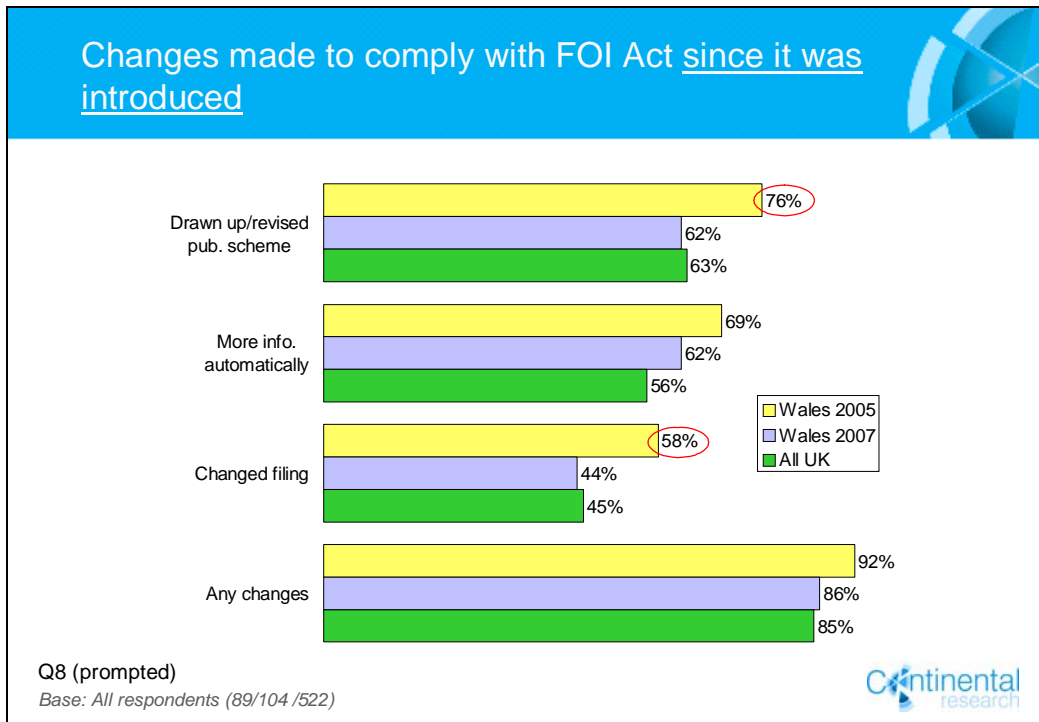
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
Respondent job title:				
Information manager / officer / head of information	12%	18%	11%	17%
Freedom of Information manager / officer	4%	8%	7%	9%
Secretary / PA	7%	4%	7%	4%
Records manager / officer / archivist	4%	8%	6%	7%
Head of legal services / corporate solicitor etc.	6%	6%	6%	4%
Administrator / admin officer / office manager	9%	5%	6%	5%
Corporate services/corporate affairs officer/ head of corporate services	9%	3%	6%	4%
Head teacher / principal	7%	2%	5%	6%
Bursar / finance manager / officer	4%	1%	3%	4%
(Customer) services manager	-	3%	2%	1%
Data protection officer	1%	2%	2%	1%
Clerk/clerical officer / clerk to council / Parish clerk	1%	3%	1%	8%
Communications manager / officer	-	3%	1%	4%
IT manager / IT officer	2%	2%	1%	1%
Compliance manager / officer	2%	2%	1%	1%
Policy officer	-	1%	1%	2%
Chief Executive	-	3%	-	1%
Number of employees:				
Up to 50	27%	29%	29%	31%
51-250	24%	19%	18%	17%
251-500	3%	5%	4%	7%
Over 500	46%	44%	48%	43%

Respondents had a wide range of different job titles, but the posts most commonly held by those in Wales were information managers or officers, Freedom of Information managers or officers, or secretaries or P.A.s. There were no significant changes from 2006 to 2007. More respondents in the UK as a whole than in Wales had clerical titles, due to the inclusion of English parish councils in the all UK sample but overall there were few differences in profile between Wales and the total UK sample.

6.2. Understanding of and compliance with the Act

Respondents were prompted with a list of three possible changes they might have made to comply with the Act since it was introduced. As shown in the following chart, in 2007 86% of respondents in Wales said their organisation had made one of the listed changes or had made some other change to comply with the Act since it was introduced. This is a slight decrease from the 92% of respondents in 2005 who claimed their organisation had made one of these changes but this decrease is not significant. The changes most commonly made were drawing up or revising a publication scheme (62% in Wales in 2007) or increasing the amount of information provided or released to the public as a matter of course (62% in Wales in 2007). In 2007 there was a significant decrease in those who claimed to have drawn up or revised a publication scheme since the Act was introduced (62% in 2007 vs. 76% in 2005). In addition, 44% claimed to have made changes to their filing or record management systems, significantly fewer than those who mentioned this in 2005 (58%).

There were no significant differences in the changes made by those based in Wales compared to the UK as a whole.



6.3. Information released automatically

All respondents were asked what types of information, from a prompted list, they published or released to the public as a matter of course for any reason, whether related to the Freedom of Information Act or not. As shown in the following table, most of the types of information listed were released automatically by over half of the organisations in 2007. In both Wales and in the UK as a whole, all but a small minority of respondents (2% in Wales) released some information as a matter of course. The only significant difference in 2007 between Wales and the whole of the UK was the higher proportion of authorities in Wales saying they released information about decisions made by the organisation. In Wales, there were several significant decreases in 2007 including releasing information about future strategies and objectives, meeting minutes, details and results of consultations or research and personal information about staff.

Types of information published or released as a matter of course (prompted)				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
Annual reports / audited accounts	84%	92%	88%	89%
Future strategies / objectives	79%	91%	80%	72%
Information about decisions made by organisation	84%	82%	81%	70%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	76%	69%	73%	66%
Details of what public money is spent on	75%	80%	70%	63%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	79%	64%	68%	62%
Information about organisation's performance	78%	86%	53%	47%
Meeting minutes	69%	71%	47%	45%
Details and results of consultations / research	53%	61%	40%	36%
Details of contracts awarded	29%	26%	30%	33%
Personal information about staff	11%	15%	3%	5%
None/don't know	3%	2%	2%	3%

6.4. Public requests

The majority of respondents in Wales (68%) said they had received requests from the public for information under the Act in the last year, a similar proportion to the UK as a whole (71%), and to the proportion in Wales who received requests in 2005 (69%) and 2006 (73%).

The following table shows the types of information respondents said (after prompting) were requested by members of the public.

Types of information requested by the public (prompted)				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all receiving requests from public	61	63	53	377
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	69%	63%	71%	67%
Information about decisions made by organisation	64%	74%	65%	70%
Information about organisation's performance	48%	57%	63%	54%
Details of what public money is spent on	62%	71%	59%	65%
Details of contracts awarded	51%	71%	55%	62%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	49%	64%	53%	51%
Annual reports / audited accounts	39%	48%	52%	51%
Future strategies / objectives	36%	53%	45%	46%
Personal information about staff	49%	39%	39%	46%
Details and results of consultations / research	39%	50%	36%	37%
Meeting minutes	48%	64%	34%	33%

In Wales and in the UK as a whole, those receiving requests for information from the public frequently said they were asked for statistics about the organisation, information about decisions made by the organisation and information about the organisation's performance. In 2007, requests for information from the public made to authorities in Wales were similar to those made across the UK as a whole. Compared to 2006, respondents in Wales in 2007 reported slightly lower levels of requests for several types of information but the only significant differences were a decrease in requests for internal policies and for meeting minutes.

As shown in the following table, in Wales in 2007, just over half (56%) of those who received any requests for information from the public had received no more than 50 requests. This proportion was similar in 2005 and 2006. In 2007, the average number of requests received (131) was lower than in 2006 (154) but higher than in 2005 (90). The average number of requests received in a year by those receiving any in Wales was higher than across the UK as a whole in 2007.

Number of requests received from public over last year				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all receiving requests from public	61	63	53	377
Up to 10	30%	19%	18%	21%
11 to 50	26%	34%	38%	32%
51 to 100	16%	5%	6%	15%
101 to 300	18%	18%	20%	19%
Over 300	7%	22%	13%	8%
Average number	90	154	131	104

A high proportion of authorities who had received requests for information from the public had turned requests down in the past year. Over three quarters (80%) of those receiving requests in Wales said public requests had been turned down in the past year, a similar proportion to the UK as a whole (70%). The proportion of authorities in Wales who said public requests had been turned down in the past year was higher than in 2006 (68%) but not significantly so. However, it was a significant increase compared to 2005 (59%).

If these figures are re-percentage on the total sample, results suggest that over half (55%) of all public authorities in Wales have received requests for information from the public that they have had to turn down in the past year, the same proportion as 2006 and a similar proportion to the UK as a whole (49%).

Where requests for information from the public were turned down, the most frequent reason for this was that personal information about staff had been asked for (66%). Requests were also turned down for commercially sensitive information (53%), because the information was already available by other means (37%) or because the cost of providing the information was above the threshold (35%). A range of other reasons was given for turning down requests, but each by only around one in ten or fewer, as shown in the following table. It should be noted that the base of respondents in Wales who had turned down requests for information in 2005, 2006 and 2007 was low, so results should be treated with caution. There were some changes from 2006 to 2007 but due to low base sizes only one of these differences (an increase in requests being turned down due to the information already being available by other means) is significant. Similarly, while there

were several differences between Wales and the UK as a whole, none of these differences is significant due to the low base in Wales.

Types of information turned down				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all having turned down requests for information	36	44	43	266
Personal information about staff	58%	60%	66%	64%
Commercially sensitive information	33%	37%	53%	38%
Information already available by other means	19%	11%	37%	22%
Cost of providing information above threshold	6%	18%	35%	21%
Investigations / ongoing investigations	8%	12%	7%	4%
Other personal information / 3 rd party personal information	6%	8%	5%	3%
Information we don't have / hold / record	3%	10%	4%	5%
Mention of specific section e.g. 1/41 etc	-	8%	4%	3%
Information prejudicial to prevention of crime	3%	6%	3%	1%
Information exempted under Data Protection Act	-	11%	2%	2%
Legally sensitive / legally privileged information	6%	5%	2%	4%

6.5. Additional information released to public because of the Freedom of Information Act

All respondents were asked how much more information, if any, they felt their organisation released to the public now because of the Freedom of Information Act that would not otherwise be provided. Over half of respondents (57%) in Wales felt their organisation released a lot or a little more information than they would have done without the Act, the same proportion as 2006 and slightly less than the UK as a whole (62%). The proportion saying they now released a *lot* more information was lower than in 2006 (but not significantly so) and similar to the UK as a whole. As shown in the following table, only a quarter (25%) of respondents in Wales in 2007 said they did not release any more information at all than they would otherwise have done.

How much more information released to public because of the Freedom of Information Act				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
A lot more	22%	31%	25%	27%
A little more	34%	26%	32%	35%
Not much more	13%	21%	16%	15%
No more than before	27%	20%	25%	20%

Those who felt more information was released to the public as a result of the Act were asked what types of additional information were provided. The types of information respondents in Wales were most likely to say that the public has access to now because of the Freedom of Information Act were internal policies, future strategies and objectives, information about decisions made by the organisation and statistics about the organisation, as shown in the following table. There was just one significant change from 2006 to 2007 (a decrease in details of contracts awarded), though several types of information were mentioned somewhat less frequently in 2007. Similarly there was just one significant difference between Wales and the UK as a whole, with significantly less authorities in Wales mentioning details of contracts awarded.

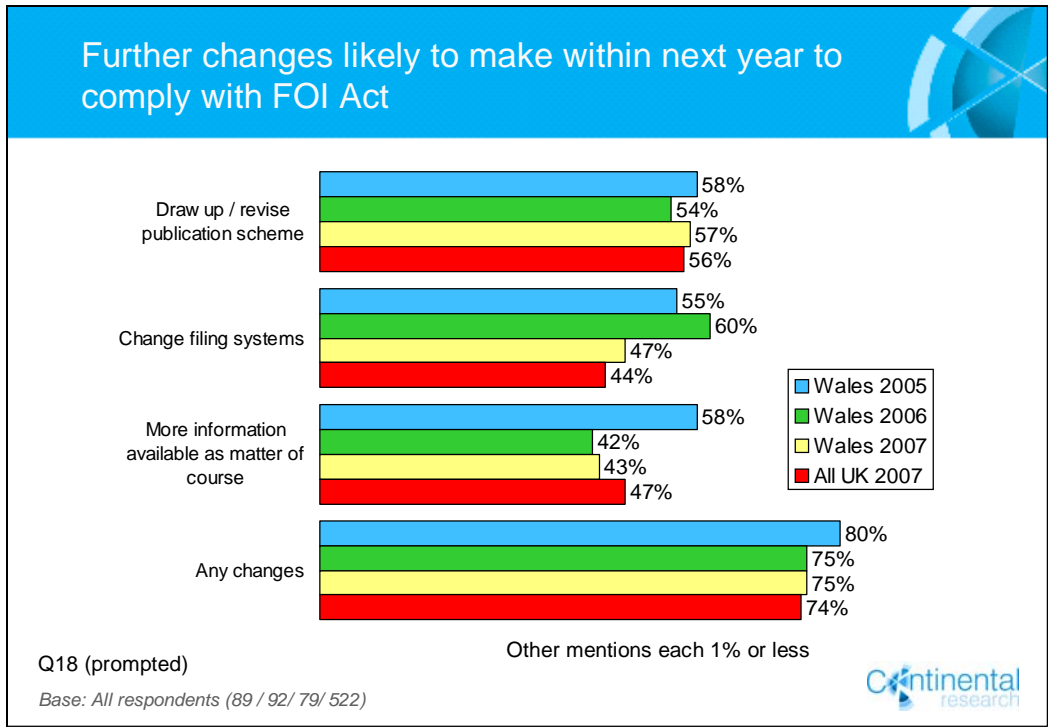
Types of information available now that public did not have access to before the Freedom of Information Act (prompted)				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all releasing more info.	62	69	57	401
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	32%	36%	43%	37%
Future strategies / objectives	23%	37%	38%	33%
Information about decisions made by organisation	35%	41%	35%	39%
Statistics about organisation e.g. staff numbers	31%	26%	31%	34%
Details of what public money is spent on	35%	30%	23%	31%
Meeting minutes	35%	35%	21%	24%
Details of contracts awarded	35%	42%	20%	36%
Details and results of consultations / research	19%	32%	19%	19%
Information about organisation's performance	29%	26%	19%	30%
Personal information about staff	6%	16%	6%	9%
Annual reports / audited accounts	21%	15%	22%	23%
Don't know	23%	11%	24%	15%

Over half (55%) of authorities in Wales in 2007 said they actively promoted their publication scheme and the public's right to access information, while just over a third left it to people to find out for themselves (36%). These figures are similar to the UK as a whole, with 61% actively promoting their scheme and 36% leaving it to people to find out for themselves. The results are also similar to 2006 when 68% of authorities in Wales claimed to actively promote their publication scheme.

6.6. Future changes

Respondents were prompted with a list of changes their organisation might make within the next year to comply with the Freedom of Information Act. As shown in the following chart, three quarters (75%) of all respondents in Wales planned to make further changes, the same proportion to 2006 in Wales and a similar proportion to the UK as a whole in 2007. Respondents were most likely to say they might draw up or revise a publication scheme or change filing systems. While there was a decrease in 2007 compared to 2006 of those in Wales saying they might change their

filing system in the next year to comply with the Act this difference was not significant. There were no significant differences for any of these changes amongst those in Wales compared to the total UK sample.



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Those who said they were likely to make more information available as a matter of course in future were asked what types of additional information they might release. As shown in the following table, annual reports, future strategies and objectives, information about decisions made by the organisation, meeting minutes and internal policies were most likely to be mentioned in Wales in 2007 and there were no significant differences in Wales compared to the UK as a whole. From 2006 to 2007 in Wales there were no significant differences. It should be noted that the base of respondents in Wales who claimed to be likely to publish more information as a matter of course in 2005, 2006 and 2007 was low, so results should be treated with caution.

Types of information likely to make available in future (spontaneous)				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all likely to publish more information as a matter of course	52	38	33	247
Annual reports / audited accounts	25%	17%	28%	27%
Future strategies / objectives	29%	17%	25%	26%
Information about decisions made by organisation	29%	11%	25%	25%
Meeting minutes	25%	25%	24%	16%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	27%	13%	23%	24%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	25%	15%	20%	21%
Information about organisation's performance	23%	15%	19%	23%
Details of what public money is spent on	23%	14%	19%	18%
Details of contracts awarded	23%	19%	11%	18%
Details and results of consultations / research	15%	11%	11%	15%
Don't know	37%	41%	42%	27%

6.7. Attitudes to Freedom of Information Act

When asked how they felt about the Act overall, respondents were positive. As shown in the following table, in Wales 84% of respondents felt the Act was a very good thing or a fairly good thing from the point of view of their organisation, similar to 2005 (79%) and 2006 (81%) and the UK as a whole (80%). Encouragingly, only 2% of Welsh authorities in 2007 described the Act as a bad thing, with the remainder saying they were not really affected by the Act.

Overall rating of Freedom of Information Act				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
A very good thing	34%	36%	35%	38%
A fairly good thing	45%	45%	49%	42%
Not affected	17%	8%	9%	11%
A very/fairly bad thing (net)	3%	7%	2%	5%

When asked to say, spontaneously, what they felt were the benefits of the Act from the point of view of their organisation, the most commonly mentioned benefits were increased openness or transparency as a result of the Act, and that it led to improvements in record management and improved relationships with the public. There was little difference between Wales and the UK as a whole in 2007, and in Wales, little change from 2006 to 2007.

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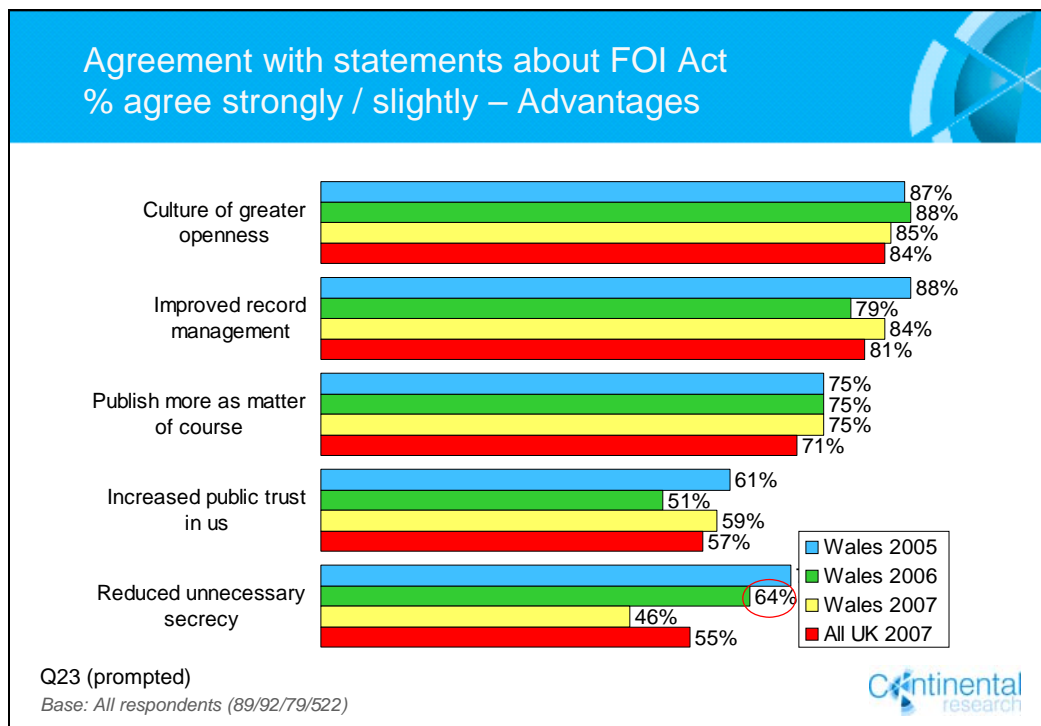
Perceived benefits of Act for organisation (spontaneous)				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
Openness / transparency	38%	31%	33%	39%
Better record management / more organised records	16%	19%	16%	14%
Improved relationship with public / public understanding	18%	15%	14%	13%
Accountability	15%	16%	9%	14%
Improved public access to information / helps us respond to public	11%	13%	7%	9%
Agree with Freedom of Information / right for public to have information	2%	8%	6%	5%
Consistency of the release of information	6%	1%	7%	3%
Allows us to publish more information	-	2%	6%	6%
Makes us think about what should / should not release	-	2%	5%	1%
Improved quality of service / ensures best practice	2%	7%	4%	8%
Makes us think about the information we hold/if we should hold it	-	2%	3%	2%
Staff more aware of their responsibilities	-	7%	2%	3%
Ability to demonstrate how decisions are made	3%	6%	1%	3%
Raised public awareness of what they can obtain	1%	6%	2%	3%
Improves decision making	-	4%	-	1%
Improved staff access to information / available internally	-	2%	-	1%
No benefits / don't know	17%	11%	21%	16%

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Respondents were asked to spontaneously mention what they perceived to be the disadvantages of the Act were for their organisation. As shown in the following table, the most frequently mentioned issues with the Act amongst Welsh authorities was that it increased workload (20%), was time consuming (16%), and led to increased costs (14%). There were few significant decreases between 2006 and 2007 with a decrease in those mentioning that the Act was time consuming and that it put pressure on staff resource in 2007. As was seen in the whole of the UK, there was a significant increase in organisations in Wales in 2007 mentioning that the Act is open to abuse by people and interest groups. There were no significant differences between Wales and the UK as a whole.

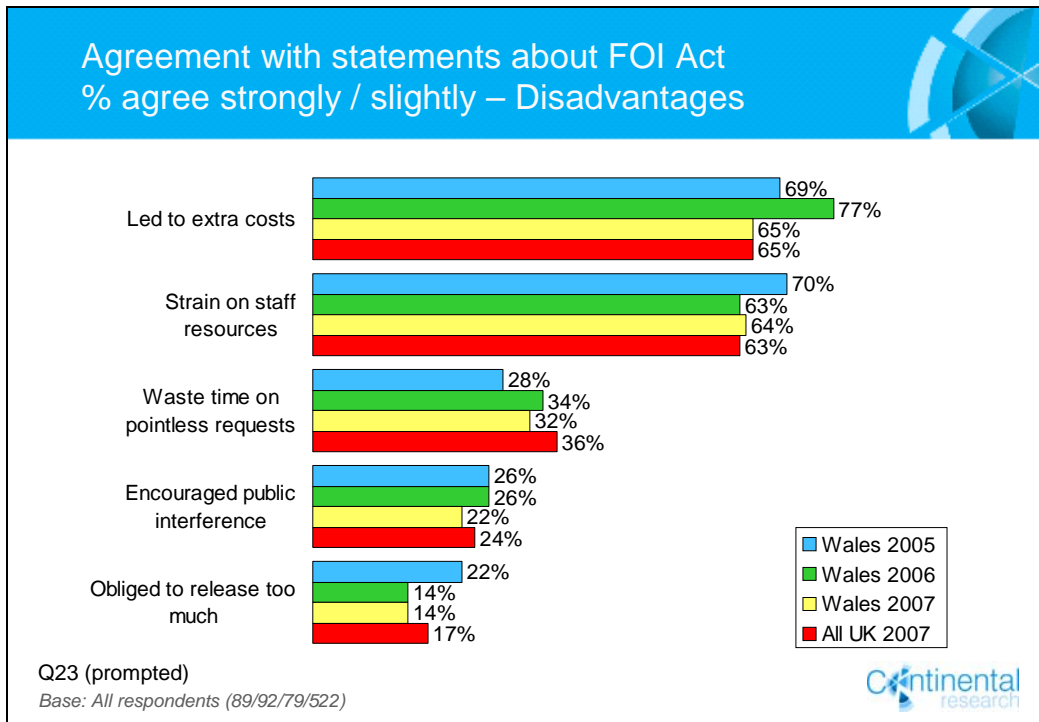
Perceived disadvantages of Act for organisation (spontaneous)				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
Workload	17%	17%	20%	15%
Time / time consuming	21%	29%	16%	21%
Cost / finance / no funding from government	9%	20%	14%	8%
Resource element / resource implications	12%	10%	12%	8%
Act is open to abuse by people/interest groups	-	-	10%	10%
Have to respond to commercial / research / media requests	7%	10%	7%	12%
Administrative burden / bureaucracy	4%	10%	5%	5%
Inappropriate / trivial requests	6%	4%	5%	4%
Malicious / vexatious requests e.g. by competitors	3%	4%	5%	6%
Having to disclose personal / confidential information	3%	4%	3%	5%
Lack of limits of what people can ask for	-	-	3%	3%
Implications for training/ lack of staff awareness	-	-	3%	2%
Staffing / staff resource	12%	13%	2%	3%
Dealing with large / difficult / time-consuming requests	7%	3%	1%	3%
Lack of public understanding of Act / unrealistic expectations	1%	3%	1%	3%
None/don't know	28%	20%	28%	26%

Reactions to the Act were positive across a range of attitude statements read to respondents. As shown in the following chart, 85% of respondents in Wales agreed strongly or slightly that the Act promoted a culture of greater openness, 84% agreed that it had encouraged them to improve their record management systems, 75% agreed that that Act meant they published more information as a matter of course now, 59% felt that it had increased the public's trust in them, and 46% said that it reduced unnecessary secrecy about they way they worked.



On the negative side, 65% agreed that the Act had led to extra costs and 64% said it put a strain on staff resources. These administration related issues aside, only a third or fewer agreed with any negative statement about the Act – that it meant they had to waste time responding to pointless requests from the public (32%), that it encouraged the public to interfere too much (22%) or that it obliged them to release too much information (14%).

There were no significant differences in attitudes between Wales and the UK as a whole in 2007. In Wales, attitudes in 2007 were overall similar to those in 2006, although there was a significant decrease in agreement that the Act had reduced unnecessary secrecy (64% in 2006 and 46% in 2007).



6.8. Impact of Freedom of Information Act on organisation

As shown in the following table, the majority of respondents (74% in Wales) felt the Act had at least some impact on their organisation, but many more said it had some impact than a substantial impact. There were no significant changes in Wales from 2006 to 2007, and no significant differences in 2007 between Wales and the UK as a whole, although respondents in Wales in 2006 were somewhat more likely to say the Act had a substantial impact.

Amount of impact Freedom of Information Act had on organisation				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
A substantial impact	12%	21%	18%	12%
Some impact	57%	51%	56%	59%
Not much impact	21%	19%	17%	23%
No impact	9%	6%	8%	6%

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As in the UK as a whole, for the majority of organisations in Wales the Act has meant additional workload. As shown in the following table, three quarters of respondents in Wales (75%) said the Act had meant a lot or a little additional workload for their organisation, a similar level to 2005 (81%) and 2006 (82%) and to the UK as a whole (77%).

How much additional workload Act has meant for organisation				
	Wales			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	89	92	79	522
A lot	28%	34%	31%	29%
A little	53%	48%	44%	48%
Not much	15%	11%	18%	16%
None at all	3%	4%	7%	5%

When asked whether they felt complying with the Act had got easier or more complicated over the past year, there was an increase in those who said it had not changed (54% vs. 31% in 2006) as shown in the following table. This increase has come from less respondents claiming that complying with the Act had got easier in the last year with a similar proportion claiming that things had got more complicated. Results were similar for respondents in Wales compared to the UK as a whole.

Changes in difficulty of complying with requirements of Act over past year			
	Wales		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	92	79	522
A lot easier	9%	3%	5%
A little easier	37%	26%	21%
Not changed	31%	54%	52%
A little more complicated	13%	11%	16%
A lot more complicated	5%	5%	5%

All respondents were asked (spontaneously) what additional help or support the ICO could provide to make implementing the Act easier for them. As shown in the following table (showing all mentions over 1%), guidance was by far the most commonly mentioned (by 25% of

respondents). A range of other suggestions were made by respondents but each by only 8% or less and many of these also related to guidance in some form. Almost half (48%) of all respondents could not think of anything that might help them implement the Act. Responses were very similar in Wales to those in the UK as a whole, although respondents in Wales were significantly less likely to mention making information available online and quicker response times to enquiries.

Additional help or support ICO could provide (spontaneous)			
	Wales		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	92	79	522
Guidance	19%	25%	25%
Information available online	2%	8%	13%
Raise public awareness / understanding of Act	4%	7%	8%
Seminars	2%	6%	5%
Training courses	6%	5%	8%
e-bulletins	5%	4%	9%
Quicker response time to enquiry	4%	4%	9%
Case law	1%	4%	5%
Improved website/easier to navigate/find information	-	4%	2%
Clarity / clearer / simple advice	7%	3%	2%
Changes in fees/ cost structure	-	3%	1%
More advice/help specific to type of organisation	1%	2%	1%
Nothing / don't know	48%	48%	45%

6.9. Awareness and use of information available on ICO and Information Tribunal websites

When prompted, 74% of all respondents in Wales and 71% of those in the whole of the UK said they were aware that details of the ICO's decisions about complaints made against organisations under the Act are published on the ICO website. This is a slight increase, albeit not significant, from 2006 (Wales 2006: 67%, UK 2006: 68%).

The vast majority of those aware that details of the ICO's decisions are available online said they found this a useful information resource for their organisation. As shown in the following table, 77% said they found this information useful and there were no significant differences between Wales and the whole of the UK.

Usefulness of ICO decisions on website as information resource			
	Wales		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all aware decisions are published	58	58	377
Very useful	57%	40%	43%
Fairly useful	31%	37%	40%
Not very useful	5%	6%	7%
Not at all useful	4%	6%	4%
Don't know	3%	11%	6%

Similar to 2006, just over half of all respondents in Wales (59% vs. 54% in 2006) and in the UK as a whole (57% vs. 52% in 2006) said they were aware that details of appeals made to the Information Tribunal against the ICO's decisions are published on the Information Tribunal's website.

The vast majority of those aware that details of appeals made to the Information Tribunal are available online said they found this a useful information resource for their organisation. As shown in the following table, in 2007 those in Wales were significantly less likely than in 2006 to find this information very useful, but the base of those aware in Wales was small in both 2006 and 2007 so results should be treated with some caution.

Usefulness of Information Tribunal appeals on website as information resource			
	Wales		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all aware decisions are published	43	46	305
Very useful	71%	41%	40%
Fairly useful	23%	38%	41%
Not very useful	-	8%	8%
Not at all useful	1%	4%	5%
Don't know	5%	8%	5%

7. Northern Ireland management summary

7.1. Compliance with the Act and release of information

The majority of respondents (87%) in Northern Ireland said their organisation had made changes to comply with the Freedom of Information Act since it was introduced, with similar proportions having taken each of the three main courses of action. As in the whole of the UK, significantly less respondents had taken action in 2007 than in 2006, probably because action had been taken prior to the staff member taking responsibility for the Act. There were no significant differences compared to the UK as a whole.

Virtually all organisations released some information to the public as a matter of course for any reason, whether related to the Freedom of Information Act or not. There was just one significant difference between the types of information released by organisations in Northern Ireland compared to the UK as a whole (with less in Northern Ireland releasing personal information about staff). There were however several changes in the types of information released in Northern Ireland from 2006 to 2007 with a significant increase in the proportion releasing annual reports and audited accounts and, as was seen in the UK as a whole and in Wales, a significant decrease in several types of information being released as a matter of course.

Over half (58%) of respondents in Northern Ireland said their organisation had received requests for information from the public in the past year. While this is lower than the proportion who received requests from the public in 2006 the difference is not significant. It is however lower than the proportion receiving requests in 2005 and the UK as a whole. The main requests from the public were for details of contracts awarded, decisions made by the organisation, details on what public money is spent on and statistics about the organisation. The type of information requested by the public in Northern Ireland in 2007 was broadly similar to 2006 and to the UK as a whole.

On average, those in Northern Ireland receiving requests from the public had received 75 requests in the past year, more than the 41 received on average in 2006 and lower than the average of 104 across the UK as a whole.

Over half (59%) of those receiving requests for information from the public had turned some requests down, greater than the 49% who turned down requests in 2006, and fewer than the UK

as a whole (but these results are not significant). Both in Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole, the most commonly turned down requests were for personal information about staff members.

Overall, taking into account information released as a matter of course and information provided in response to requests from the public, 65% of respondents in Northern Ireland said their organisation released a lot of a little more information to the public now because of the Act that would not otherwise be provided, a similar level to 2006 and to the UK as a whole.

A large proportion (69%) of respondents in Northern Ireland said their organisation was likely to make further changes in the next year to comply with the Freedom of Information Act, similar to 2006. Compared to the UK as a whole slightly fewer respondents in Northern Ireland said they planned to make changes in the next year but the difference was not significant.

7.2. Attitudes to the Act

Attitudes to the Act remain generally positive, and were similar to 2006 and to the UK as a whole. Most respondents (77%) in Northern Ireland felt it was a very or fairly good thing from the point of view of their organisation, 92% agreed that it improved record management, 84% that it led to a culture of greater openness, 69% that it meant they published more information as a matter of course, 64% that it increased the public's trust in them and 54% that it reduced unnecessary secrecy about the way the organisation worked.

Negative aspects of the Act were most commonly seen to be administrative, with almost 63% agreeing that the Act led to extra costs and 62% that it put a strain on resources. However, few disagreed with the Act on principle, with just 30% agreeing that it encouraged the public to interfere in the way they worked, 36% that it meant they wasted time responding to pointless requests and 29% that it obliged them to release too much information.

Respondents in Northern Ireland were significantly more likely than the whole of the UK to agree that the Act had encouraged them to improve their record management systems. However respondents in Northern Ireland were also significantly more likely than those in the UK as a whole to say that the Act obliged them to release too much information.

Similar to 2006, most respondents felt that the Act had had some impact on their organisation (74%) and had meant additional workload (79%).

When asked whether they felt complying with the Act had got easier or more complicated over the last year or so, results were similar in 2007 compared to 2006 with slightly fewer claiming that it had got easier and slightly more claiming it had not changed. There was little difference in perceptions between Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole.

7.3. Conclusions

Results indicate that the Freedom of Information Act has led to public authorities in Northern Ireland publishing more information as a matter of course. Taking into account both information published as a matter of course and information released in response to requests from members of the public, 65% of respondents in Northern Ireland said their organisation released a lot or a little more information as a result of the Act that would not otherwise be provided. This is a similar level to 2006 and to the UK as a whole.

Over half of organisations who had received public requests for information under the Act had had to turn some requests down, most commonly because the requests were for personal information about members of staff.

Although the Act was seen to have had an impact on workloads, costs and staff resources, authorities' attitudes to the Act were generally positive. It was widely viewed as a good thing from the point of view of the organisation, to have promoted a culture of greater openness and to have encouraged organisations to improve their record management systems. There was little disagreement with the Act "on principle".

Overall, reactions to the Freedom of Information Act and its impact on organisations to date were similar in Northern Ireland to the UK as a whole, and in Northern Ireland, were similar to 2006. However, there were some important differences. Like the UK as a whole there was a decrease in 2007 in several types of information being made available as a matter of course, perhaps because organisations are becoming more aware of what needs to be published in order to comply with the Act. There was a decrease in the proportion of organisations in Northern Ireland receiving requests from the public in the last year. While this decrease (compared to 2006) was not significant it was a significant decrease compared to the proportion of organisations receiving requests from the public in 2005. Of those organisations which received requests there was on average a significantly higher number of requests received. However as this mean was driven up by a few organisations receiving a very high number of requests this result should be treated with caution.

8. Northern Ireland main findings

8.1. Sample profile

The final number of interviews achieved with each type of public authority in Northern Ireland is shown below.

	Northern Ireland		
	Large Public Authorities	Small/Medium Authorities	TOTAL
Central government	30	-	30
Local government	16	-	16
Police	4	11	15
NHS	-	15	15
Education	2	23	25
Publicly owned companies	-	4	4

The following table compares the profile of the sample in Northern Ireland in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and compares the profile in 2007 to that of the UK as a whole, by respondent job title and by number of employees in the organisation. Respondents had a wide range of different job titles, but the posts most commonly held by those in Northern Ireland were head teachers/principals, information managers or officers, or communication managers. More respondents in the UK as a whole than in Northern Ireland had clerical titles, due to the inclusion of English parish councils in the all UK sample. More respondents in Northern Ireland in 2007 were head teachers or principals than in the UK as a whole and this was also a significant increase compared to 2006. Due to the small base size of authorities from Northern Ireland as a whole this difference may explain some differences in results compared to 2006. Otherwise there were few major differences in job titles between the groups.

There were some differences by size of authority. Although the same contact sample was used in 2006 and 2007, of the authorities successfully interviewed in 2007 there were less authorities with 251-500 employees. In 2007, there were also significantly more smaller organisations (up to 50 employees) interviewed in Northern Ireland than the UK as a whole and less larger organisations

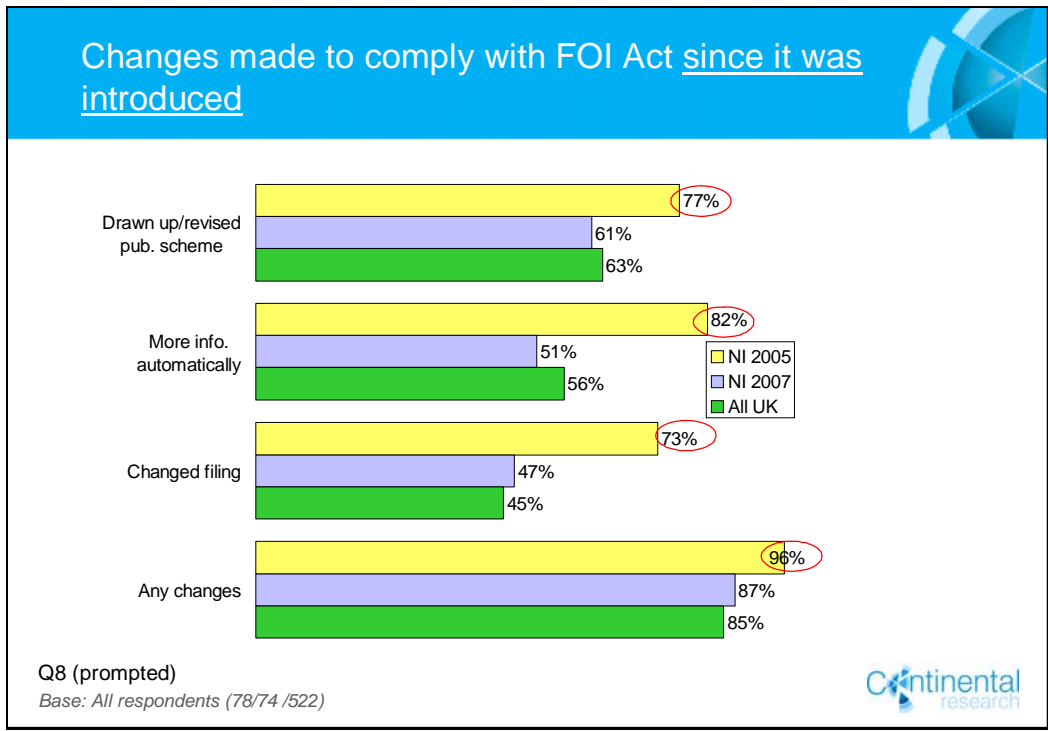
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(over 500 employees). The smaller average size of organisations in Northern Ireland may explain some of the differences noted in Northern Ireland compared to the UK as a whole.

	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	522
Respondent job title:				
Head teacher / principal	5%	8%	20%	6%
Information manager / officer / head of information	18%	17%	10%	17%
Communications manager / officer	1%	2%	9%	4%
Records manager / officer / archivist	6%	5%	8%	7%
Administrator / admin officer / office manager	9%	8%	7%	5%
Freedom of Information manager / officer	4%	8%	6%	9%
Policy officer	3%	1%	6%	2%
Corporate services/corporate affairs officer/head of corporate services	10%	5%	3%	4%
Compliance manager / officer	3%	1%	3%	1%
Bursar / finance manager / officer	1%	1%	3%	4%
Clerk/clerical officer / clerk to council / Parish clerk	1%	1%	1%	8%
Number of employees:				
Up to 50	29%	39%	43%	31%
51-250	18%	17%	26%	17%
251-500	21%	27%	10%	7%
Over 500	32%	17%	20%	43%

8.2. Understanding of and compliance with the Act

Respondents were prompted with a list of three possible changes they might have made to comply with the Act since it was introduced. The vast majority of respondents in Northern Ireland (87%) said their organisation had made at least one of the listed changes or had made some other change to comply with the Act, with similar proportions having made each of the changes. As shown in the following chart, similar proportions in Northern Ireland and in the UK as a whole had taken any of the steps in 2007. There were significant decreases in the proportions taking each of the steps from 2005 to 2007 (as also seen in the UK overall) likely to be due to staff changes and those currently in their role being unaware of what changes took place previously.



8.3. Information released automatically

All respondents were asked what types of information, from a prompted list, they published or released to the public as a matter of course for any reason, whether related to the Freedom of Information Act or not. As shown in the following table, in both Northern Ireland and in the UK as a whole, all but a small minority of respondents (3% in Northern Ireland) released some information as a matter of course. There was just one significant difference between the types of information released by organisations in Northern Ireland compared to the UK as a whole (with less authorities in Northern Ireland releasing personal information about staff). There were however several significant changes in the types of information released in Northern Ireland from 2006 to 2007, with a significant increase in the proportion releasing annual reports and audited accounts and a significant decrease in the proportion releasing information about internal policies, details of what public money is spent on, information about the organisation's performance, details and results of consultations and research and meeting minutes. These decreases were also seen in the UK as a whole and in Wales and may be due to organisations becoming more aware of what needs to be published in order to comply with the Act.

Types of information published or released as a matter of course (prompted)				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	522
Annual reports / audited accounts	88%	80%	92%	89%
Future strategies / objectives	87%	75%	68%	72%
Information about decisions made by organisation	68%	66%	62%	70%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	77%	72%	61%	62%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	86%	75%	56%	66%
Details of what public money is spent on	78%	72%	52%	63%
Information about organisation's performance	72%	73%	44%	47%
Details and results of consultations / research	58%	59%	37%	36%
Meeting minutes	72%	66%	34%	45%
Details of contracts awarded	35%	31%	27%	33%
Personal information about staff	5%	15%	1%	5%
None/don't know	4%	6%	3%	3%

8.4. Public requests

Over half of respondents (58%) in Northern Ireland said they had received requests from the public for information under the Act in the last year. This level was lower than in 2006 (68%) but this difference is not significant. It is however significantly lower than in 2005 (76%). It is also significantly lower than the UK as a whole (71%).

The following table shows the types of information respondents said (after prompting) were requested by members of the public.

Types of information requested by the public (prompted)				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all receiving requests from public	61	55	44	377
Details of contracts awarded	61%	49%	73%	62%
Information about decisions made by organisation	63%	62%	70%	70%
Details of what public money is spent on	58%	55%	67%	65%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	64%	55%	62%	67%
Information about organisation's performance	41%	27%	45%	54%
Annual reports / audited accounts	47%	50%	42%	51%
Personal information about staff	51%	39%	40%	46%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	44%	38%	35%	51%
Future strategies / objectives	39%	29%	32%	46%
Details and results of consultations / research	36%	29%	29%	37%
Meeting minutes	53%	56%	27%	33%

In Northern Ireland those receiving requests for information from the public most frequently said they were asked for information about details of contracts awarded, decisions made by the organisation, details of what public money is spent on and statistics about the organisation. Compared to the UK as a whole, significantly fewer authorities in Northern Ireland received requests about internal policies. There was a significant increase in 2007 of organisations

receiving requests from members of the public of details of contracts awarded and a significant decrease in requests for meeting minutes.

As shown in the following table, almost a third (28%) of those in Northern Ireland who received any requests for information from the public had received only ten requests or less, and as in 2006, around two thirds (61%) had received no more than 50 requests. The average number of requests received in a year by those receiving any in Northern Ireland was 75, a significant increase on the average of 41 reported in 2006. It should however be noted that the proportion of requests within each range was in fact similar in 2006 and 2007 but the mean was driven up in 2006 by a few organisations saying they had received over 300 requests in 2007. Due to the small base sizes of those receiving requests from the public in Northern Ireland these results and in particular the average scores should be treated with caution.

Authorities in Northern Ireland were significantly less likely than the UK as a whole to receive over 100 requests a year and, as a result, the average number of requests in Northern Ireland was fewer than that of the whole of the UK.

Number of requests received from public over last year				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all receiving requests from public	59	63	44	377
Up to 10	25%	32%	28%	21%
11 to 50	42%	34%	33%	32%
51 to 100	22%	22%	23%	15%
101 to 300	7%	11%	10%	19%
Over 300	2%	-	3%	8%
Average number	57	41	75	104

Many authorities who had received requests for information from the public had turned requests down in the past year. Over half (59%) of those receiving requests in Northern Ireland said public requests had been turned down in the past year. This was greater than the 49% who said they had turned down requests in 2006 and fewer than the 63% who said they had turned requests down in 2005, but the differences are not significant. In 2007, authorities in Northern Ireland were less likely than the UK as a whole (70%) to have turned requests down but again this difference is

not significant. If these figures are re-percentage on the total sample, results suggest that around one third (35%) of all public authorities in Northern Ireland have received requests for information from the public that they have had to turn down in the past year, compared to around half (49%) of authorities across the whole of the UK.

Where requests for information from the public were turned down, the most frequent reason for this was that personal information about staff had been asked for (61%). The other key reason that information was turned down in Northern Ireland in 2007 was that it was commercially sensitive information (38%). It should be noted that the base of respondents in Northern Ireland who had turned down requests for information was very low, so results should be treated with caution. For the main reasons given by respondents, there were several differences between Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole but the main significant difference was the lower proportion in Northern Ireland who had turned requests down for cost reasons. There was also a significant decrease in Northern Ireland from 2006 to 2007 in those turning down requests because the request was for personal information.

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Types of information turned down				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all having turned down requests for info.	37	28	26	266
Personal information about staff	57%	53%	61%	64%
Commercially sensitive information	27%	21%	38%	38%
Information already available by other means	8%	7%	10%	22%
Cost of providing information above threshold	-	4%	7%	21%
Legally sensitive / legally privileged information	14%	14%	6%	4%
Mention of specific section e.g. 1/41 etc	-	7%	6%	3%
Investigations / ongoing investigations	3%	4%	6%	4%
Health & safety exemptions e.g. officer whereabouts	3%	3%	6%	2%
Information exempted under Data Protection Act	8%	3%	4%	2%
Information we don't have / hold / record	8%	-	4%	5%
Information prejudicial to prevention of crime	3%	-	3%	1%
Other personal information / 3 rd party personal information	-	16%	-	3%
Exempted information / Freedom of Information exempted	5%	10%	-	1%
Private / confidential information	8%	3%	-	3%

8.5. Additional information released to public because of the Freedom of Information Act

All respondents were asked how much more information, if any, they felt their organisation released to the public now because of the Freedom of Information Act that would not otherwise be provided. A large proportion (65%) in Northern Ireland felt their organisation released a lot or a little more information than they would have done without the Act, the same proportion as 2005 and a similar proportion to 2006 (57%) and the UK as a whole (62%) in 2007.

In 2007 there were no significant differences between Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole, as shown in the following table.

How much more information released to public because of the Freedom of Information Act				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	522
A lot more	21%	20%	28%	27%
A little more	44%	37%	37%	35%
Not much more	23%	13%	13%	15%
No more than before	12%	30%	20%	20%

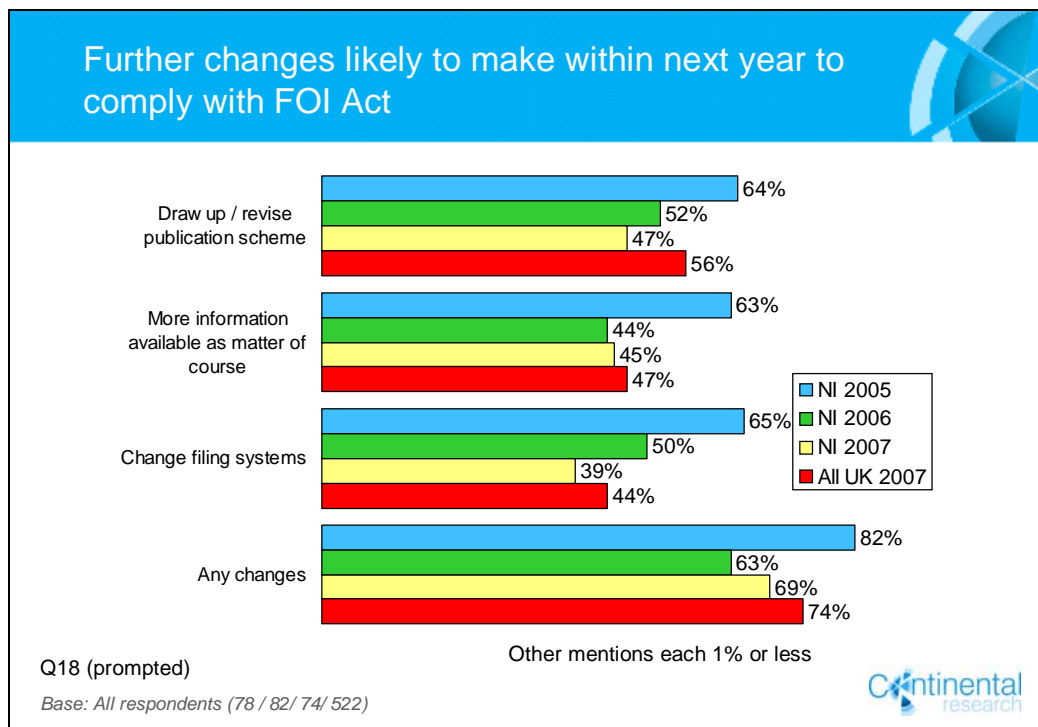
Those who felt more information was released to the public as a result of the Act were asked what types of additional information were provided. The types of information respondents in Northern Ireland were most likely to say that the public has access to now because of the Freedom of Information Act were information about decisions made by the organisation, information about the organisation's performance, details of contracts awarded and future strategies, as shown in the following table. Most of the types of information were mentioned by similar proportions of respondents in Northern Ireland as the UK as a whole, with no significant differences. From 2006 to 2007 there was just one significant difference, a decrease in meeting minutes now being available.

Types of information available now that public did not have access to before the Freedom of Information Act (prompted)				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all releasing more info.	68	58	57	401
Information about decisions made by organisation	37%	33%	44%	39%
Information about organisation's performance	22%	41%	40%	30%
Details of contracts awarded	40%	44%	37%	36%
Future strategies / objectives	26%	40%	37%	33%
Statistics about organisation e.g. staff numbers	21%	40%	37%	34%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	28%	47%	34%	37%
Details of what public money is spent on	31%	34%	34%	31%
Annual reports / audited accounts	15%	19%	31%	23%
Details and results of consultations / research	24%	23%	26%	19%
Meeting minutes	34%	45%	22%	24%
Personal information about staff	10%	16%	7%	9%
Don't know	21%	5%	8%	15%

Similar to the UK as a whole, over three fifths (63%) of authorities in Northern Ireland said they actively promoted their publication scheme and the public's right to access information (61% in the UK as a whole). Just over a third left it to people to find out for themselves (34%).

8.6. Future changes

Respondents were prompted with a list of changes their organisation might make within the next year to comply with the Freedom of Information Act. As shown in the following chart, 69% of all respondents in Northern Ireland planned to make further changes, with changes to publication schemes or making more information available as a matter of course the most likely. Fewer respondents in Northern Ireland planned to make these changes than in 2005 but results in 2007 were fairly similar to 2006. Compared to the UK as a whole, slightly fewer respondents in Northern Ireland said they planned to make each of the changes but this difference is not significant.



Those who said they were likely to make more information available as a matter of course in future were asked what types of additional information they might release. As shown in the following table, details of contracts awarded, future strategies and objectives, annual reports, internal policies and information about decisions made by the organisation were mentioned most frequently in Northern Ireland. Several of the types of information listed were mentioned more frequently in Northern Ireland than across the UK as a whole, but just one of these differences is significant, details of contracts awarded. The types of information mentioned by organisations in Northern Ireland in 2007 was fairly similar compared to 2006, with no significant differences.

Types of information likely to make available in future (spontaneous)				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all likely to publish more information as a matter of course	49	36	32	247
Details of contracts awarded	16%	24%	36%	18%
Future strategies / objectives	10%	33%	30%	26%
Annual reports / audited accounts	14%	22%	30%	27%
Internal policies (e.g. equal opportunities)	20%	32%	29%	24%
Information about decisions made by organisation	24%	30%	25%	25%
Details and results of consultations / research	12%	29%	19%	15%
Statistics about organisation (e.g. staff numbers)	16%	25%	19%	21%
Information about organisation's performance	20%	35%	17%	23%
Meeting minutes	27%	25%	16%	16%
Details of what public money is spent on	14%	25%	16%	18%
Don't know	22%	19%	20%	27%

8.7. Attitudes to Freedom of Information Act

When asked how they felt about the Act overall, respondents were positive. As shown in the following table, 77% of respondents in Northern Ireland and 80% of those in the UK as a whole felt the Act was a very good thing or a fairly good thing from the point of view of their organisation. Only a minority described the Act as a bad thing (6% in Northern Ireland), with the remainder saying they were not really affected by the Act. There were no significant differences between Northern Ireland and the whole of the UK or from 2006 to 2007 in Northern Ireland.

Overall rating of Freedom of Information Act				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	522
A very good thing	37%	36%	46%	38%
A fairly good thing	49%	45%	31%	42%
Not affected	9%	10%	12%	11%
A very/fairly bad thing (net)	3%	4%	6%	5%

When asked to say, spontaneously, what they felt were the benefits of the Act from the point of view of their organisation, all but 15% of respondents in Northern Ireland mentioned at least one positive aspect, as shown in the following table. The most commonly mentioned benefit was increased openness or transparency as a result of the Act. There were no significant differences between Northern Ireland and the whole of the UK. Compared to 2006, results were similar in 2007 with just a few significant differences, an increase in those saying that the public have a right to this information and that the Act allows more information to be published and a significant decrease in those mentioning the benefit that it improves decision making.

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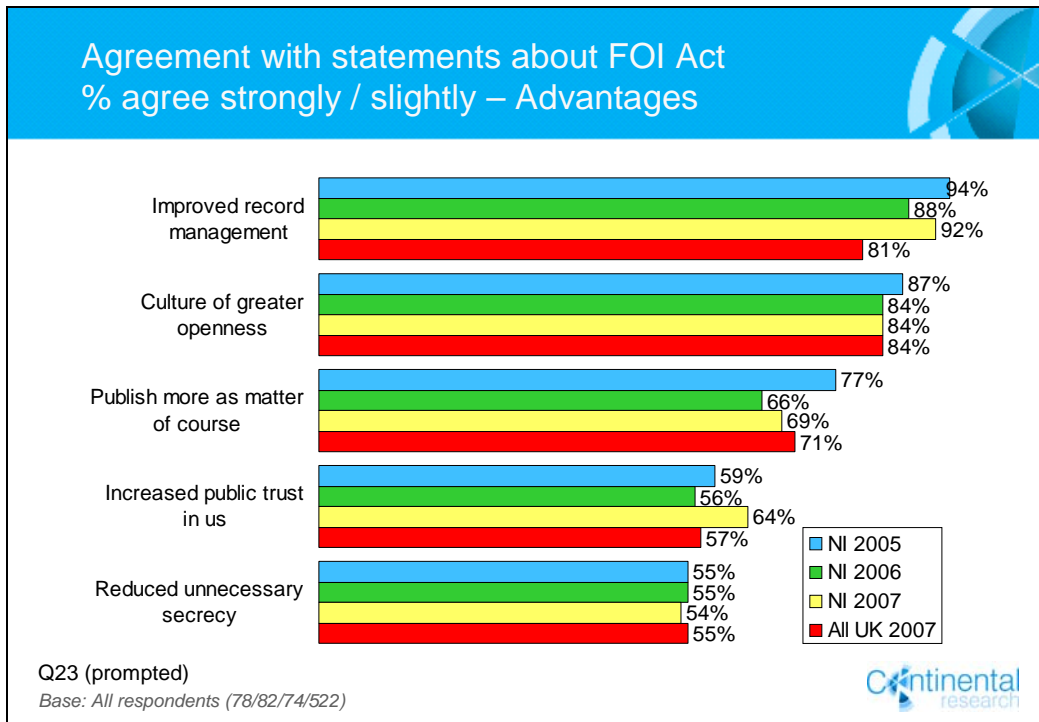
Perceived benefits of Act for organisation (spontaneous)				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	
Openness / transparency	32%	39%	35%	39%
Better record management / more organised records	33%	17%	17%	14%
Accountability	22%	15%	16%	14%
Improved relationship with public / public understanding	23%	13%	12%	13%
Improved quality of service / ensures best practice	8%	6%	8%	8%
Allows us to publish more information	-	1%	8%	6%
Improved public access to information / helps us respond to public	18%	13%	7%	9%
Agree with Freedom of Information / right for public to have information	8%	-	7%	5%
Makes us think about what should / should not release	4%	5%	3%	2%
Staff more aware of their responsibilities	3%	6%	3%	3%
Improved staff access to information / available internally	-	2%	3%	1%
Consistency of the release of information	1%	3%	3%	3%
Ability to demonstrate how decisions are made	5%	4%	2%	3%
Raised public awareness of what they can obtain	3%	1%	1%	3%
Improves decision making	6%	6%	-	1%
No benefits / don't know	9%	20%	15%	16%

When asked what they felt the disadvantages of the Act were for their organisation, over one in four (29%) respondents in Northern Ireland could not think of any, slightly but not significantly more than in the UK as a whole. As shown in the following table, the most frequently mentioned issue with the Act in Northern Ireland was that it was time consuming, led to increased workload and meant they had to respond to commercial, research and media requests. There were few differences between Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole, but those in the UK as a whole were significantly more likely to mention the disadvantage of malicious or vexatious requests by competitors. From 2006 to 2007 in Northern Ireland there was a significant decrease in mentions of time issues, resource implications and staff resource issues as disadvantages of the Act and an increase in organisations mentioning that the Act is open to abuse by people and interest groups.

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Perceived disadvantages of Act for organisation (spontaneous)				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	522
Time / time consuming	10%	29%	16%	21%
Workload	19%	14%	13%	15%
Have to respond to commercial / research / media requests	4%	6%	10%	12%
Administrative burden / bureaucracy	15%	9%	8%	5%
Having to disclose personal / confidential information	1%	4%	8%	5%
Act is open to abuse by people/interest groups	-	1%	7%	10%
Inappropriate / trivial requests	-	2%	5%	4%
Resource element / resource implications	8%	14%	4%	8%
Cost / finance / no funding from Government	12%	7%	4%	8%
Confusion between Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act	-	-	4%	1%
Staffing / staff resource	9%	17%	3%	3%
Dealing with large / difficult / time-consuming requests	4%	4%	3%	3%
Lack of public understanding of Act / unrealistic expectations	4%	5%	2%	3%
Malicious / vexatious requests e.g. by competitors	9%	1%	1%	6%
None/don't know	22%	28%	29%	26%

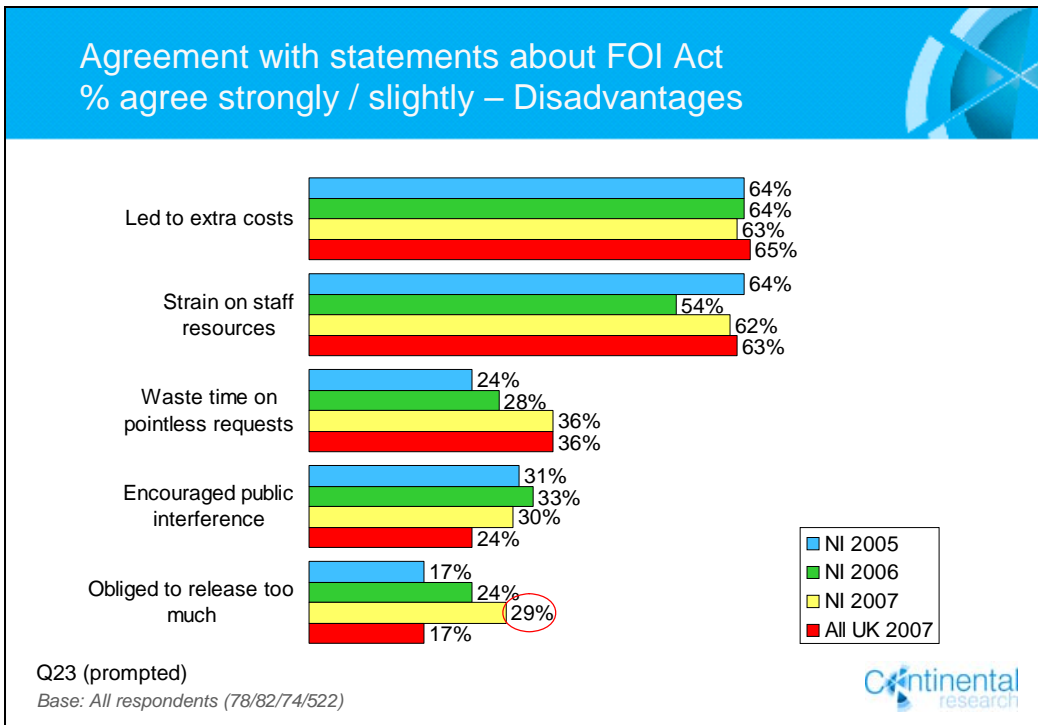
Reactions to the Act were positive across a range of attitude statements read to respondents. As shown in the following chart, 92% of respondents in Northern Ireland agreed strongly or slightly that the Act had encouraged them to improve their record management systems, 84% agreed that the Act promoted a culture of greater openness, 69% agreed that that Act meant they published more information as a matter of course, 64% that it increased the public's trust in them and 54% that it reduced unnecessary secrecy about their work.



On the negative side, 63% agreed that the Act had led to extra costs, and 62% said it put a strain on staff resources, but these administration related issues aside, only around a third of respondents in Northern Ireland agreed with any negative statement about the Act – that it encouraged the public to interfere in the way they worked (30%), that it meant they had to waste time responding to pointless requests from the public (36%), or that it obliged them to release too much information (29%).

Respondents in Northern Ireland were significantly more likely than the UK as a whole to agree that the Act had encouraged them to improve their record management systems. However respondents in Northern Ireland were also significantly more likely than the UK as a whole to say that the Act obliged them to release too much information.

There were no significant differences in levels of agreement with the attitudinal statements for those in Northern Ireland between 2006 and 2007.



8.8. Impact of Freedom of Information Act on organisation

As shown in the following table, the majority of respondents (74% in Northern Ireland) felt the Act had at least some impact on their organisation, but many more said it had some impact than a substantial impact. Perceptions of the impact of the Act in Northern Ireland were similar to those in the UK as a whole, and to those in 2006.

Amount of impact Freedom of Information Act had on organisation				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	522
A substantial impact	13%	13%	10%	12%
Some impact	60%	55%	64%	59%
Not much impact	23%	27%	24%	23%
No impact	4%	6%	3%	6%

For a majority of authorities in Northern Ireland, the Act has meant additional workload, to a similar extent as the UK as a whole. As shown in the following table, there was a significant increase amongst those in Northern Ireland in 2007 (79%) claiming the Act had led to increased workload compared to 2006 (60%), with significantly fewer in 2007 saying it has meant no additional workload (3% in 2007 vs. 13% in 2006).

How much additional workload Act has meant for organisation				
	Northern Ireland			All UK
	2005	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	78	82	74	522
A lot	31%	24%	25%	29%
A little	53%	36%	54%	48%
Not much	10%	17%	18%	16%
None at all	5%	13%	3%	5%

When asked whether they felt complying with the Act had got easier or more complicated over the past year or so, results were similar amongst respondents in 2007 compared to 2006 with slightly fewer claiming it had got easier and slightly more claiming it had not changed, as shown in the following table. There was little difference in perceptions between Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole.

Changes in difficulty of complying with requirements of Act over past year			
	Northern Ireland		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	82	74	522
A lot easier	7%	7%	5%
A little easier	36%	25%	21%
Not changed	42%	51%	52%
A little more complicated	12%	15%	16%
A lot more complicated	1%	1%	5%

All respondents were asked (spontaneously) what additional help or support the ICO could provide to make implementing the Act easier for them. As shown in the following table, guidance was by far the most commonly mentioned, by 26% of those in Northern Ireland in 2007. A range of other suggestions were made by respondents including making information available online (20%), e-bulletins (10%) and quicker response times to enquiries (10%). Overall results were fairly similar in 2007 to 2006 in Northern Ireland but there was a significant increase in making information available online and specifically offering e-bulletins, as well as offering advice on specific matters, a quicker response time and more consistent advice in 2007. A large proportion of respondents (39%) could not think of anything that might help them implement the Act. Responses were similar in Northern Ireland to those in the UK as a whole, with no significant differences.

Additional help or support ICO could provide (spontaneous)			
	Northern Ireland		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all respondents	82	74	522
Guidance	18%	26%	25%
Information available online	9%	20%	13%
e-bulletins	2%	10%	9%
Quicker response time to enquiry	-	10%	9%
Training courses	9%	6%	8%
Raise public awareness / understanding of Act	8%	6%	8%
Advice on other specific matters (e.g. data sharing)	-	5%	2%
More consistent advice	-	5%	2%
Seminars	3%	3%	5%
Clarity / clearer / simple advice	-	3%	2%
More advice on exemptions	3%	3%	1%
Nothing / don't know	48%	39%	45%

8.9. Awareness and use of information available on ICO and Information Tribunal websites

When prompted, just over half (53%) of respondents in Northern Ireland said they were aware that details of the ICO's decisions about complaints made against organisations under the Act are published on the ICO website. Awareness in Northern Ireland was significantly lower than in the UK as a whole (71%).

The vast majority (87%) of those aware that details of the ICO's decisions are available online said they found this a useful information resource for their organisation. As shown in the following table, there were no significant differences between those in Northern Ireland in 2006 and 2007. Compared to the UK as a whole, significantly less respondents in Northern Ireland claimed that publishing details of the ICO's decisions online was not at all useful. However, the base of those in Northern Ireland is relatively low so results should be treated with some caution.

Usefulness of ICO decisions on website as information resource			
	Northern Ireland		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all aware decisions are published	47	41	377
Very useful	52%	50%	43%
Fairly useful	38%	37%	40%
Not very useful	6%	10%	7%
Not at all useful	2%	-	4%
Don't know	2%	2%	6%

Just over one third of respondents (37%) in Northern Ireland said they were aware that details of appeals made to the Information Tribunal against the ICO's decisions are published on the Information Tribunal's website. This is similar to 2006 (40%). Awareness in Northern Ireland was significantly lower than in the UK as a whole (57%).

The vast majority (92%) of those aware that details of appeals made to the Information Tribunal are available online said they found this a useful information resource for their organisation. As shown in the following table, those in Northern Ireland were significantly more likely to find this information useful than the whole of the UK (82%), but the base of those aware in Northern Ireland was small so results should be treated with caution.

Usefulness of Information Tribunal appeals on website as information resource			
	Northern Ireland		All UK
	2006	2007	2007
Base: all aware decisions are published	33	28	305
Very useful	46%	32%	40%
Fairly useful	46%	60%	41%
Not very useful	5%	5%	8%
Not at all useful	3%	5%	5%
Don't know	-	3%	5%

Appendix 1
Key to abbreviations

Abbreviations used throughout this report

e.g.	for example
etc	etcetera
Exec	Executive
FE	Further education
FOI	Freedom of information
GP	General practitioner
HSS	Health and Social Services
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
info.	information
IT	information technology
NDPBs	Non-Departmental Public Bodies
NHS	National Health Service
NI	Northern Ireland
PA	Personal Assistant
vs.	versus

Appendix 2
Questionnaire

Market Research Report: Freedom of Information: Three Years On

Serial No: _____ (1-5)
Card: 01 (6-7)

Q1 Job number: J9133

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION 2007

=====

J9133 _____ (8-12)

Interviewer name: _____ No: _____

Booth no: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Respondent name: _____

Company: _____

Telephone no. (incl code): _____

PL Initials: _____ Coder initials: _____

SURVEY DETAILS: Executive Name: Tanya Parkinson
Field Dates: 10 December to 11 January 2008

Sample Source: Information Commissioners Office / Yellow Pages

Client: ICO / Information Commissioner's Office

Q2	CODE SAMPLE TYPE - SINGLE CODE	(13)
	LARGE	
	1. Central Government Departments.....	1
	2. NDPBs	2
	3. Local Authorities	3
	4. NI District Councils	4
	5. Fire Authorities.....	5
	6. Welsh Local Authorities	6
	7. Police authorities	7
	8. Police Forces	8
	9. Primary Care Trusts.....	9
		(14)
	10. Strategic Health Authorities	0
	11. Mental Health Trusts.....	1
	12. Special Health Authorities.....	2
	13. Higher Education	3
	SMALL/MEDIUM	
	14. Parish meetings	4
	15. Internal drainage boards.....	5
	16. Port health authorities.....	6
	17. Magistrates courts committees	7
	18. Passenger Transport Executives.....	8
	19. District drainage commissioners.....	9
		(15)
	20. Waste authorities	0
	21. Passenger transport authorities.....	1
	22. National parks	2
	23. Parish/community councils	3
	24. Independent practitioners (GPs / opticians / pharmacists / dentists)	4
	25. Acute trusts.....	5
	26. Ambulance trusts	6
	27. Local health boards	7
	28. Trusts (Wales)	8
	29. Health Regulators	9
		(16)
	30. HSS Boards	0
	31. Community Health Councils	1
	32. HSS Trusts, Agencies & Councils	2
	33. Ambulance Service (Northern Ireland)	3
	34. FE Colleges	4
	35. Secondary Schools.....	5
	36. Primary Schools.....	6
	37. District Policing Partnerships.....	7
	38. Publicly Owned Companies.....	8

Q3 CODE SAMPLE SECTOR (17)

LARGE

Central Government 1
 Local Government 2
 Police 3
 NHS 4
 Education 5

SMALL / MEDIUM

Local Government 6
 NHS 7
 Education 8
 Police 9
 Publicly owned companies 0 (18)

Q4 CONTACT: The person with day-to-day responsibility for freedom of information / the person who is / would be responsible for dealing with public requests for information about the organisation (the person responsible on a day to day basis rather than someone who has overall responsibility e.g. at head office)

INTRODUCTION:

Hello, my name is and I'm calling from Continental Research, an independent market research company based in London. We are conducting a survey on behalf of the Information Commissioner's Office among public authorities about the Freedom of Information Act and how information is made available to the public. May I ask you a few questions?

The interview will last around (13) minutes. Results are completely confidential and will only be reported in the form of statistical summaries. Neither you nor your organisation will be identified as having taken part in the survey.

..... []

Q5 Can I check, are you the person with day to day responsibility for Freedom of Information within your organisation, or would you be responsible for dealing with requests from the public for information about the organisation?
 IF NO REQUESTS EVER RECEIVED, CHECK WHETHER RESPONDENT WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE IF THERE WERE REQUESTS (19)

Yes 1 Goto Q7
 No/don't know 2 Goto Q6

Market Research Report: Freedom of Information: Three Years On

Q6 ASK FOR NAME OF PERSON WHO WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OR PUBLIC REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS

WRITE IN NAME

TRANSFER NOW OR MAKE APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK.

RESTART INTERVIEW AT Q4

..... []

Q7 And how long have you had day to day responsibility for Freedom of Information within your organisation or responsibility for dealing with requests from the public for information about the organisation?

Is it...(READ OUT)

SINGLE CODE

(20)

Less than one year 1

One to two years..... 2

Two to three years 3

More than three years..... 4

Q8 Since the Freedom of Information Act was introduced, has your organisation made any changes to the way things are done to comply with the Freedom of Information Act? Have you

READ OUT - MULTICODE

(21)

Increased the type of information you publish or release to the public as a matter of course 1

Changed any of your filing or record management systems 2

Drawn up or revised a publication scheme..... 3

Other (WRITE IN) 4

(22)

(23)

NO CHANGES MADE 1

DON'T KNOW..... 2

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Q9 What types of information do you publish or make available to the public as a matter of course? Please include all types of information you make available automatically, whether it is because of the Freedom of Information Act or for any other reason. Please don't include information you only release in response to requests from the public as we will cover this later.
 READ OUT - MULTICODE

	(24)
Annual reports or audited accounts.....	1
Details of what public money is spent on	2
Details of contracts awarded by your organisation.....	3
Statistics about the organisation such as staff numbers	4
Information about decisions made by the organisation	5
Information about future strategies and objectives.....	6
Internal policies such as your equal opportunities or health and safety policy.....	7
Information about the organisation's performance	8
Personal data about staff members.....	9
	(25)
Details and results of consultations or research.....	0
Meeting minutes	1
Other (WRITE IN)	2
NONE OF THEM	3
DON'T KNOW.....	4

Q10 Over the last year, has your organisation received any requests from members of the public for information under the Freedom of Information Act?

	(26)
Yes.....	1 Goto Q11
No	2 Goto Q15
DON'T KNOW.....	3 Goto Q15

Q11 Have you had requests for any of the following types of information?
 READ OUT - MULTICODE

	(27)
Annual reports or audited accounts.....	1
Details of what public money is spent on	2
Details of contracts awarded by your organisation.....	3
Statistics about the organisation such as staff numbers	4
Information about decisions made by the organisation	5
Information about future strategies and objectives.....	6
Internal policies such as your equal opportunities or health and safety policy.....	7
Information about the organisation's performance	8
Personal data about staff members.....	9

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	(28)
Details and results of consultations or research.....	0
Meeting minutes	1
Other (WRITE IN)	2
NONE OF THEM	3
DON'T KNOW.....	4

Q12 Approximately how many requests for information would you say you have received from members of the public over the last year?
 READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

	(29)
Just 1 or 2	1
3 to 10.....	2
11 to 20.....	3
21 to 30.....	4
31 to 50.....	5
51 to 75.....	6
76 to 100.....	7
101 to 150.....	8
151 to 200.....	9
	(30)
201 to 300.....	0
301 to 400.....	1
401 to 500.....	2
Over 500.....	3
DON'T KNOW.....	4

Q13 Has your organisation had to turn down any requests for information from the public for any reason?
 (31)

Yes.....	1	Goto Q14
No	2	Goto Q15
DON'T KNOW.....	3	Goto Q15

Q14 What types of information requests have you turned down?
 DO NOT READ OUT - MULTICODE

	(32)
Personal information about staff members.....	1
Commercially sensitive information	2
Information already available by other means.....	3
Cost of providing the information above the threshold	4
Other (WRITE IN)	5
DON'T KNOW.....	6

Market Research Report: Freedom of Information: Three Years On

Q15 ASK ALL

=====

Overall, how much more information, if any, do you think your organisation releases to the public now because of the Freedom of Information Act that would not otherwise be released?

READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

	(33)
A lot more.....	1 Goto Q16
A little more.....	2 Goto Q16
Not much more.....	3 Goto Q16
No more than before.....	4 Goto Q17
DON'T KNOW.....	5 Goto Q17

Q16 What types of information about your organisation do you think are available to the public now that they would not have had access to before the Freedom of Information Act?

READ OUT - MULTICODE

	(34)
Annual reports or audited accounts.....	1
Details of what public money is spent on.....	2
Details of contracts awarded by your organisation.....	3
Statistics about the organisation such as staff numbers.....	4
Information about decisions made by the organisation.....	5
Information about future strategies and objectives.....	6
Internal policies such as your equal opportunities or health and safety policy.....	7
Information about the organisation's performance.....	8
Personal data about staff members.....	9
	(35)
Details and results of consultations or research.....	0
Meeting minutes.....	1
Other (WRITE IN).....	2

DON'T KNOW..... 3

Q17 ASK ALL

=====

Does your organisation actively promote your publication scheme and the public's right to access information, or do you tend to leave it to people to find out about these themselves?

	(36)
Actively promote.....	1
Let people find out about it themselves.....	2
DON'T KNOW.....	3

Market Research Report: Freedom of Information: Three Years On

Q18 Is your organisation likely to make any further changes within the next year or so to comply with the Freedom of Information Act? Are you likely to
 READ OUT - MULTICODE

	(37)
Publish or make available more information as a matter of course.....	1
Make changes to filing or record management systems	2
Draw up or revise a publication scheme.....	3
Other (WRITE IN)	4
NO CHANGES LIKELY	5
DON'T KNOW.....	6

Q19 IF LIKELY TO PUBLISH MORE INFORMATION (CODE 1 AT Q18) ASK: (OTHERS GO TO Q20)
 What types of information are you likely to make available as a matter of course in future?
 DO NOT READ OUT - MULTICODE

	(38)
Annual reports or audited accounts.....	1
Details of what public money is spent on	2
Details of contracts awarded by your organisation.....	3
Statistics about the organisation such as staff numbers	4
Information about decisions made by the organisation	5
Information about future strategies and objectives.....	6
Internal policies such as your equal opportunities or health and safety policy.....	7
Information about the organisation's performance	8
Personal data about staff members.....	9
	(39)
Details and results of consultations or research.....	0
Meeting minutes	1
Other (WRITE IN)	2
DON'T KNOW.....	3

Q20 ASK ALL

=====

Overall, from the point of view of your organisation, would you say the Freedom of Information Act is a good thing or a bad thing?

READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

	(40)
A very good thing.....	1
A fairly good thing	2
A fairly bad thing	3
A very bad thing.....	4
OR does it not really affect you.....	5
DON'T KNOW.....	6

Market Research Report: Freedom of Information: Three Years On

Q21 What, if anything, would you say are the main benefits of the Freedom of Information Act from the point of view of your organisation?
PROBE: What else?

(41-43)

Q22 And what, if anything, would you say are the main disadvantages of the Freedom of Information Act from the point of view of your organisation?
PROBE: What else?

(44-46)

Q23 I am now going to read out some things other people have said about the Freedom of Information Act and the impact it has had on their organisation and I would like you to say how strongly you agree or disagree with each one.

READ STATEMENT. Do you agree or disagree? PROBE: Is that strongly or slightly?

ROTATE STATEMENTS

		Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	DON'T KNOW
It has promoted a culture of greater openness and transparency within the organisation	(47)	1	2	3	4	5
It has encouraged us to improve our record management systems	(48)	1	2	3	4	5
It has increased the public's trust in us	(49)	1	2	3	4	5
It has encouraged the public to interfere in the way we work	(50)	1	2	3	4	5
It obliges us to release too much information	(51)	1	2	3	4	5
It has reduced unnecessary secrecy about the way we work	(52)	1	2	3	4	5
It has put a strain on staff resources	(53)	1	2	3	4	5
It has led to extra costs for our organisation	(54)	1	2	3	4	5
We publish more information as a matter of course now	(55)	1	2	3	4	5
We waste a lot of time responding to pointless requests from the public now	(56)	1	2	3	4	5

Q24 Overall, how much impact has the Freedom of Information Act had on your organisation and the way you work?

READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

(57)

A substantial impact.....	1
Some impact.....	2
Not much impact.....	3
No impact at all.....	4
DON'T KNOW.....	5

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Q25 How much additional workload, if any, would you say the Act has meant for you or your organisation?
 READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

	(58)
A lot.....	1
A little	2
Not much.....	3
None at all.....	4
DON'T KNOW.....	5

Q26 Over the last year or so, do you think complying with the requirements of the Act has got ...
 READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

	(59)
A lot easier	1
A little easier	2
A little more complicated.....	3
A lot more complicated	4
OR have things not changed	5
DON'T KNOW.....	6

Q27 What additional help or support, if any, could the ICO provide to make implementing the Act easier for you?
 DO NOT READ OUT CAN BE MULTI CODED

	(60)
Guidance.....	1
Training courses	2
Seminars.....	3
Raise awareness and understanding of the Act amongst the public	4
Case law	5
Quicker response time to enquiry.....	6
Information available online	7
e-bulletins.....	8
OTHER (Specify)	9
	(61)

	(62)
NONE.....	1

Q28 Were you aware that details of the ICO's decisions about any complaints made against organisations under the Act are published on the ICO website?
 (ICO=Information Commissioner's Office)

	(63)
Yes.....	1 Goto Q29
No	2 Goto Q30

Market Research Report: Freedom of Information: Three Years On

Q29 Are the ICO's decisions published on the website a useful information resource for your organisation?
Would you say they are ... READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

	(64)
Very useful.....	1
Fairly useful.....	2
Not very useful.....	3
Not at all useful.....	4
DON'T KNOW.....	5

Q30 ASK ALL

=====

An organisation can appeal against the ICO's decision in a complaint made against them to the Information Tribunal. Were you aware that details of any such appeals are published on the Information Tribunal's website?

	(65)
Yes.....	1 Goto Q31
No	2 Goto Q32

Q31 Are the appeals published on the Information Tribunal's website a useful information resource for your organisation? Would you say they are ... READ OUT - SINGLE CODE

	(66)
Very useful.....	1
Fairly useful.....	2
Not very useful.....	3
Not at all useful.....	4
DON'T KNOW.....	5

Q32 CLASSIFICATION:

Now as you probably know, it is necessary in market research surveys to interview balanced samples, so the next few questions about you and your organisation are just to ensure this.

..... []

Q33 What is your job title?
WRITE IN AND CODE:

	(67)
.....	1
.....	2
.....	3
.....	4

Market Research Report: Freedom of Information: Three Years On

Q34	How many people, approximately, does your organisation employ in the UK? READ OUT	(68)
	1-50.....	1
	51-100.....	2
	101-250.....	3
	251-500.....	4
	500+	5
	Don't know	6

Q35 CODE POSTCODE FROM SAMPLE _____ (69-76)

Q36	STANDARD REGION - CODE FROM POSTCODE	(77)
	North East.....	1
	Yorkshire/Humberside	2
	North West.....	3
	West Midlands	4
	East Midlands	5
	East Anglia.....	6
	Wales.....	7
	South West	8
	London.....	9
		(78)
	South East	0
	Northern Ireland.....	1

I hereby declare that this interview was conducted within the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** ___/___/___

Q37	May we recontact you if there are any further questions or queries arising from this study?	(79)
	Yes.....	1
	No	2