

Information Rights Tracker Survey – Key Wave 7 (W7) results

Wave 7 fieldwork: 12-17 July 2007. Sample: 1,825 adults aged 16 and over in England and Wales.

Previous waves:

Wave 1 – June 2005

Wave 2 – September 2005

Wave 3 – December 2005

Wave 4 – March 2006

Wave 5 – July 2006

Wave 6 – March 2007

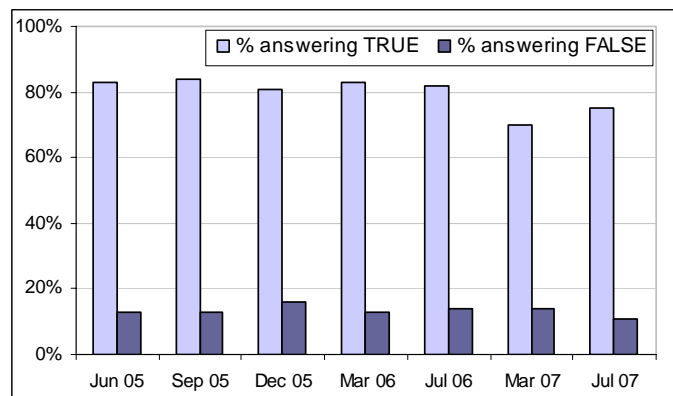
Important Note: The fieldwork for this survey was carried out by BMRB Social Research up to and including the Wave 5 survey. The most recent Wave 6 and Wave 7 surveys were carried out by another contractor (Ipsos MORI). Although the survey methodology (face-to-face Omnibus) and the question and answer wordings have been retained unchanged as far as possible, there will inevitably be differences in approach (e.g. sampling frames, interviewer coding practices, etc.) between the two contractors. Comparisons between the Waves 6 and 7 results and those from earlier Waves should therefore be drawn with caution, bearing these differences in mind.

Please also note that “**don’t know**” answers are now included in all percentage calculations.

"People have the legal right to get hold of information about the work of a public authority"

% of respondents answering in each wave:

	TRUE	FALSE	DON'T KNOW
W1	83%	13%	4%
W2	84%	13%	4%
W3	81%	16%	3%
W4	83%	13%	4%
W5	82%	14%	4%
W6	70%	14%	16%
W7	75%	11%	8%



The proportion of respondents who knew (or guessed) that this statement is "True" dropped noticeably in Waves 6 and 7. This did, however, coincide with a greater proportion of respondents answering "Don't know" and it seems likely that this is a factor resulting from the change in contractor and possible differences in approach in the latest two waves, rather than a genuine change in public awareness.

The Wave 7 results also provide information on demographic differences in factual awareness of freedom of information rights:

- *Adults in the main "working age population", ages 25-64, had a higher level of awareness of their rights to obtain information from public authorities than those outside this age range (78% thought the statement was "True" compared to 71%). This suggests that any work intended to increase awareness of Freedom of Information could usefully be targeted at adults aged under 24 and over 65.*
- *There was a markedly greater level of freedom of information rights awareness from respondents in social classes AB and C1 compared to those in social classes C2 and DE. 85% of respondents in the former category thought that the statement above is "True", compared to 65% in the latter.*

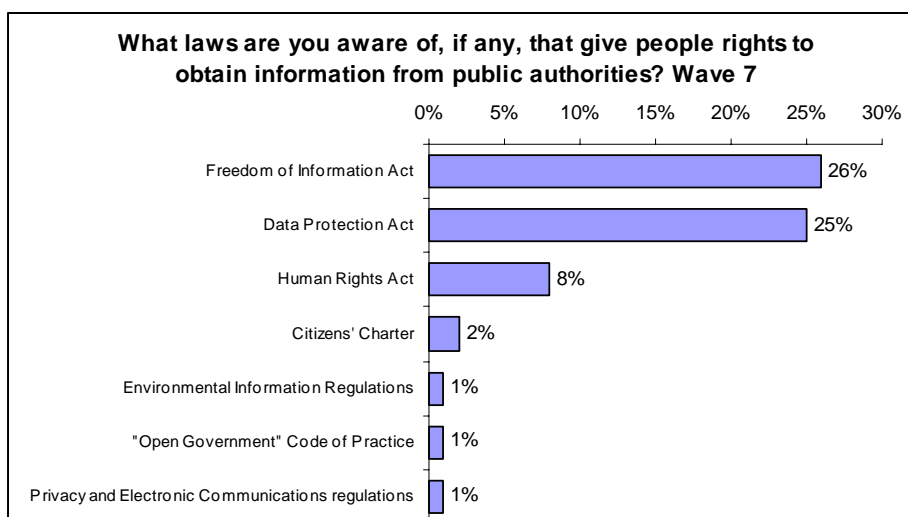
- There was a greater level of awareness from readers of “quality” newspapers compared to the readership of the “popular” press.

What laws are you aware of, if any, that give people rights to obtain information from public authorities?

(Unprompted question; all applicable answers coded, so respondents could mention more than one item on the list)

The previous questions did not name the Data Protection Act or Freedom of Information Act by name when asking about awareness of, and attitude to, information rights legislation. This question asked about awareness of the specific laws that allow public access to information held by public authorities. Interviewers recorded which, if any, items of legislation respondents mentioned in their response to this question.

	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7
Freedom of Information Act	33%	30%	26%	24%	25%	28%	26%
Data Protection Act	35%	31%	29%	27%	29%	38%	25%
Human Rights Act	24%	17%	15%	13%	16%	16%	8%
Citizens' Charter	16%	10%	9%	6%	8%	7%	2%
Environmental Information Regulations	7%	4%	3%	1%	2%	3%	1%
"Open Government" Code of Practice	6%	4%	3%	2%	3%	5%	1%
Privacy and Electronic Communications regulations	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Others	10%	5%	7%	7%	7%	1%	3%
Don't know / unable to name any relevant item	35%	46%	48%	48%	45%	42%	52%



Responses varied considerably by age. Awareness of the Freedom of Information Act seems very low among young adults, in particular those below 24, of whom in Wave 7 only 9% mentioned the FOI Act in their answer. This supports the finding in section 1 of the low awareness of the right to obtain information from public authorities by people in this age group. The 9% mentioning the FOI Act compares to 39% of those aged 55 to 64. However, young adults' awareness of the Data Protection Act was much higher, with a quarter mentioning it in their response, and awareness of the Human Rights Act in this context, although relatively low at 8%, was slightly higher than in most older age groups.

Awareness of information rights legislation, in particular the FOI Act, was significantly greater among social class AB respondents than in the C1, C2 and DE groupings, and significantly greater among “quality” newspaper readers than the “popular” press.