

REPORT

Public Awareness Survey 2013



**Carried out on behalf of the Office of the Data
Protection Commissioner by Millward Brown**

Introduction

This report presents the findings from a Public Awareness Survey undertaken on behalf of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner by Millward Brown in May 2013.

The purpose of the Public Awareness Survey was to measure:

- The level of public awareness of data protection and privacy issues in general.
- The extent to which the public is concerned with protecting their personal information.
- The particular privacy issues of concern to them.
- Where privacy issues fall in the range of issues of concern to the public.
- Public awareness of the Data Protection Commissioner & understanding of its role.

The questionnaire was included in a Millward Brown omnibus survey in May 2013 where a sample of 1,000 respondents aged 18+ were interviewed. This survey is designed to be representative (in terms of age, sex, social class, region and area) of the adult population aged 18 and over living in the Republic of Ireland. All respondents were interviewed face to face, in their own homes, by trained and experienced Millward Brown interviewers.

Previous research was undertaken in 2008, 2005, 2002 and 1997. Where relevant, comparisons are shown.

Key Findings

- Awareness of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner continues to increase, with 65% of the respondents affirming they had heard of the Data Protection Commissioner. This compares with 25% when our awareness survey first commenced in 1997 and is an increase from the 58% recorded in 2008.
- Although the majority surveyed continue to have concerns about privacy in relation to internet use, there are indications that people are more accepting of the potential availability of their personal information online.
- Strong awareness of legal entitlements was displayed by respondents.
- Privacy in relation to medical records, financial history and PPS numbers rank as the top three types of information considered the most important to keep private. However, at least one in five respondents indicated they are not particularly concerned about keeping records of their telephone or internet usage private.
- 68% of the public indicated they had experienced an invasion of their privacy of some kind, very slightly higher than in 2008 (65%). Compared with 2008, the most notable increases relate to receiving unsolicited email and text messages. For example, 45% of respondents stated they had received unsolicited emails in comparison to 28% in 2008. We continue to devote considerable attention to this area and to prosecute offenders who breach regulations regarding unsolicited electronic communications.
- People living outside Dublin are more likely to consider privacy of their personal information to be very important.
- In 2013, 16% of respondents stated they had "information, images or footage" of themselves posted on the internet without their consent. This compares with 11% in 2008.

- In terms of general attitudes towards unsolicited mail or offers, both unsolicited calls to mobiles/landlines and texts to mobile phones annoy the public most.
- Despite the continued increase in awareness of the Office, there is no significant change in the percentage of the population who would contact the Commissioner with a complaint (one in five). A similar proportion also mention the Ombudsman and three in ten continue to mention the Gardaí.
- The survey results reveal strong opposition to the release of medical records for health research purposes without the permission of the patient. 18% voiced an outright 'no' and 57% of those surveyed indicated that they would permit the release of their medical records to health researchers but only with their consent. 13% indicated they would give their permission without having to ask their consent but only if the records were anonymised.
- Amongst issues of importance to the general public, privacy of personal information continues to rank third in order of importance (78%) behind a good health service and crime prevention.

1. Importance of key issues affecting the general public

Of the key issues that were put before respondents, a good health service was the most important issue identified, followed closely by crime prevention and privacy of personal information.

Importance of Key Issues Affecting the General Public

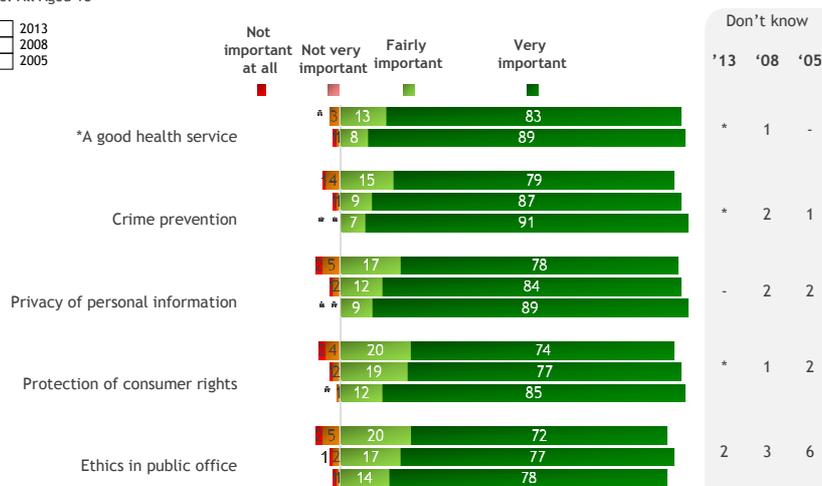
Privacy of personal information ranks third in terms of being a very important issue for the general public

An Coimisinéir
Cosanta Sonraí

Data Protection
Commissioner

Base: All Aged 18+

2013
2008
2005



*not included in 2005

3. Q.1 I would now like to talk to you about various issues that affect people today. How important or not, are each of the following issues to you personally?

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Overall, there were no significant differences in values attached to privacy of personal information by age, gender or across the social classification employed in the survey. However, respondents living in Dublin appear less concerned about privacy of personal information than those residing outside Dublin, with 67% of Dublin-based respondents stating that privacy of personal information was very important in comparison with 95% of respondents in Connacht/Ulster, 80% in the rest of Leinster and 78% in Munster.

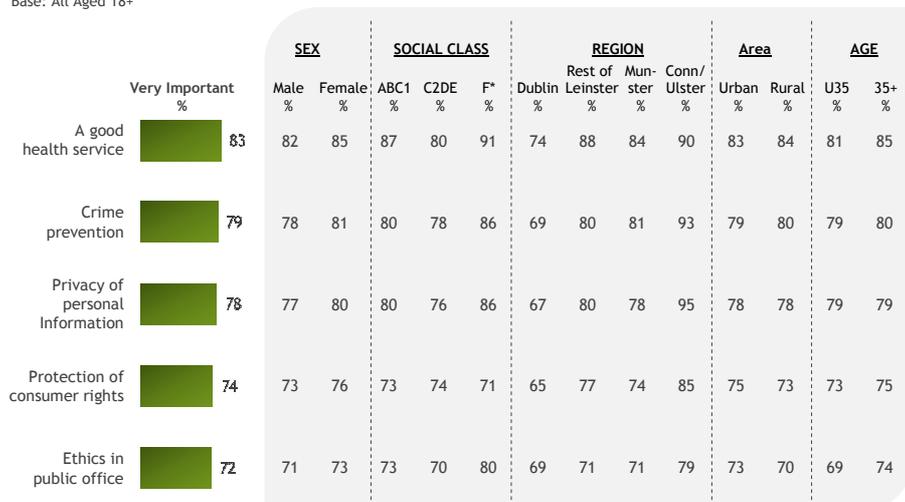
Importance of Key Issues Affecting the General Public

Those living outside of Dublin are more likely to consider privacy of their personal information to be very important

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Cosanta Sonraí

Data Protection
Commissioner

Base: All Aged 18+



*Caution - small base

4. Q.1 I would now like to talk to you about various issues that affect people today. How important or not, are each of the following issues to you personally?

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2. Importance of privacy in relation to key issues

As per 2008, people continue to attach a higher value on privacy in relation to medical records than financial history. Medical records, financial history and PPS Number attach the highest levels of importance in terms of keeping this information private, with over 7 out of 10 respondents attributing a 'very important' rating to these issues.

One finding of some surprise was that at least one in five respondents indicated they are not particularly concerned with regard to keeping records of their telephone or internet usage private. Only 49% of respondents deemed telephone usage records to be 'very important' with 48% assigning the same categorisation with regard to internet usage records. This is in stark comparison to 2008 when 71% of respondents indicated a 'very important' rating in relation to privacy of telephone and internet usage records.

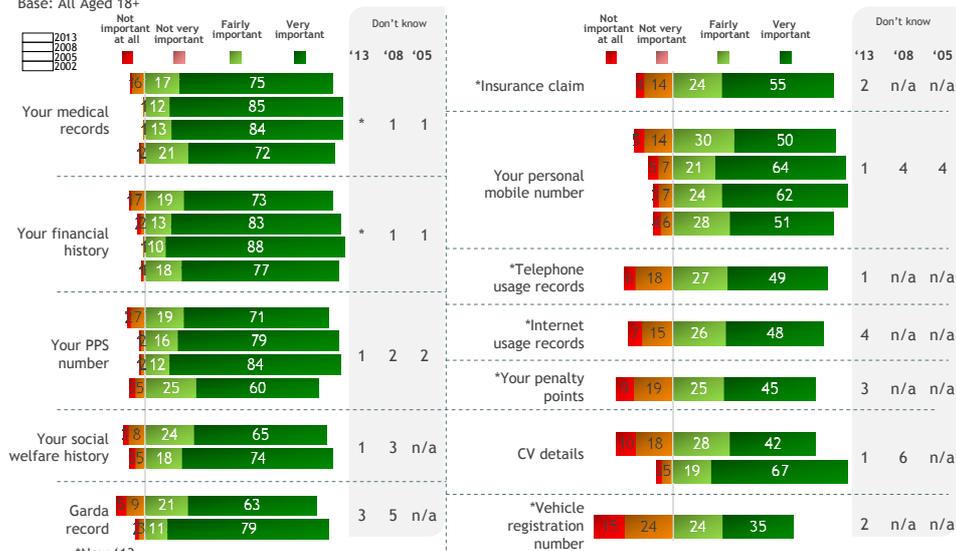
Importance of Privacy in Matters of...

The public continue to be most concerned about privacy in relation to medical records, financial history and PPS numbers but there are some indications that a minority are not overly concerned about privacy in general. At least one in five are not particularly concerned about keeping their telephone or internet usage records private

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Base: All Aged 18+



5. Q.2 How important or not is it to you to keep each of the following types of information private by not revealing it to others unless absolutely necessary?

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In 2013, we added some new topics to this question to assist us in learning more on how the public view the importance of privacy in relation to insurance claims, penalty points and vehicle registration numbers. It was interesting to note that the details of an insurance claim were considered to be 'very important' by 55% of respondents. Vehicle registration numbers achieved the lowest percentage of 'very important' with only 35% of respondents considering it very important to keep this information private.

Importance of Privacy in Matters of...

Once again, personal privacy issues appear to be more important to those living outside Dublin

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Base: All Aged 18+

	Very Important %	AGE		SOCIAL CLASS			REGION				Area	
		<35 %	>35 %	ABC1 %	C2DE %	F* %	Dublin %	Rest of Leinster %	Munster %	Conn/Ulster %	Urban %	Rural %
Your medical records	75	74	76	73	75	91	57	82	79	89	72	80
Your financial history	73	73	74	75	70	84	58	76	82	78	70	77
Your PPS number	71	71	72	72	70	74	59	80	79	66	72	70
Your social welfare history	65	65	66	62	66	69	49	70	76	65	64	67
Garda record	63	64	62	63	61	75	49	69	71	62	61	65
Insurance claim	55	54	57	53	55	70	41	63	62	58	51	62
Your personal mobile number	50	53	49	49	50	58	40	59	48	57	50	51
Telephone usage records	49	49	49	50	46	60	40	53	50	55	49	48
Internet usage records	48	46	49	50	44	64	38	56	48	50	45	52
Your penalty points	45	42	47	44	45	52	38	52	48	44	45	46
CV details	42	41	44	41	41	58	29	47	47	48	40	46
Vehicle registration number	35	33	36	33	34	50	30	38	30	46	33	38

*Caution small base

6. Q.2 How important or not is it to you to keep each of the following types of information private by not revealing it to others unless absolutely necessary?

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Once again, personal privacy issues appear to be more important to those living outside Dublin. In all cases, the categorisation of 'very important' assigned to the types of information listed was far lower in percentage terms from Dublin-based respondents. For example, medical records were deemed to be very important by 57% of Dublin-based respondents in comparison to 89% in the Connaught/Ulster. This is in contrast to the 2008 survey where, the 'very important' rating for privacy in relation to medical records was evenly geographically spread.

In addition, the 2013 survey found that overall people living in rural areas put a higher value on privacy in relation to their personal records than people living in urban areas. In 2008, the opposite was the case.

Overall, female respondents placed a higher value on privacy than men in relation to their personal records in particular with regard to their personal mobile phone number, social welfare history, PPS number, telephone usage records, vehicle registration number and CV details.

3. Experience of a privacy invasion in relation to personal information

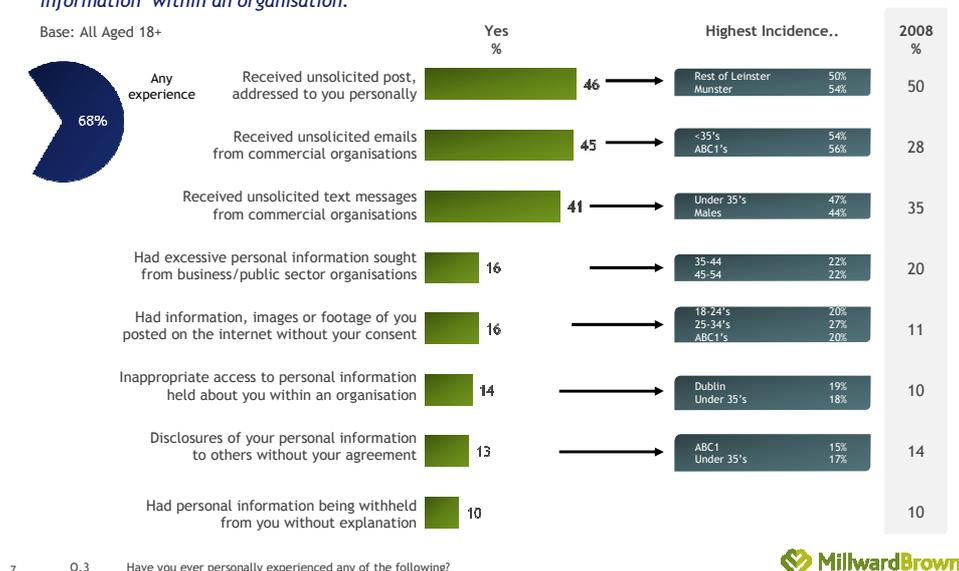
A new question was introduced in 2008 to measure the extent of invasions of privacy people believed had occurred in relation to their personal information. At the time we were surprised to note that 65% of those surveyed believed they had experienced an invasion of privacy with regard to personal information. In 2013, this finding was reinforced (68%).

Personal Experience of Privacy Invasion

Over two thirds of the public have had some experience of an invasion of privacy, very slightly higher than in 2008 (65%). Compared with 2008, the most notable increases relate to receiving unsolicited email and text messages, images or footage posted on the internet and inappropriate access to personal information within an organisation.

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Compared with 2008, the most notable increases relate to receiving unsolicited email and text messages. 45% of respondents stated they had received unsolicited emails from commercial organisations. This is a significant rise from the 28% figure from 2008 and a cause for concern to this Office.

41% of respondents stated they have received unsolicited text messages from commercial organisations (35% in 2008). Here, the highest incidence occurred amongst under 35's (47%) and geographically from respondents based in Munster (45%).

The survey also found that the highest incidence of unsolicited emails from commercial organisations was among the social class termed 'AB'¹ where 63% of those surveyed indicating that they had received unsolicited emails from commercial organisations.

The findings regarding the level of unsolicited electronic communications are of particular concern to this Office. We continue to devote considerable attention to this area and to prosecute offenders who breach regulations regarding unsolicited electronic communications.

In terms of perceived invasions of privacy online, 16% of respondents stated they have experienced information, images or footage of themselves being posted on the internet without their consent. This is in comparison with 11% in 2008.

4. Attitude to unsolicited communications

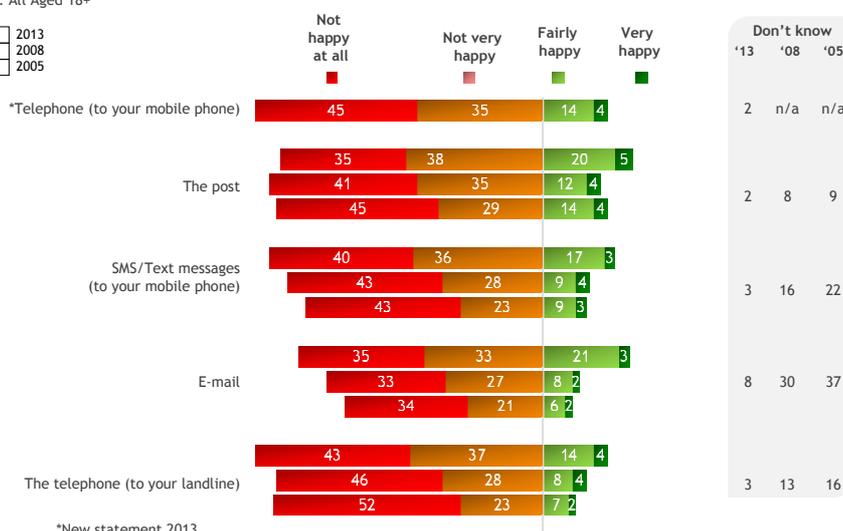
Attitude Towards Unsolicited Mail or Offers...

Highest levels of dissatisfaction with unsolicited contact via mobile phone.
Growing levels of dissatisfaction with all unsolicited contact with the exception of postal contact



Base: All Aged 18+

2013
2008
2005



*New statement 2013

8. Q.4 How do you personally feel about receiving unasked for mail or offers from private companies via...



People continue to be displeased with receiving unsolicited direct marketing. The highest levels of dissatisfaction relate to unsolicited contact

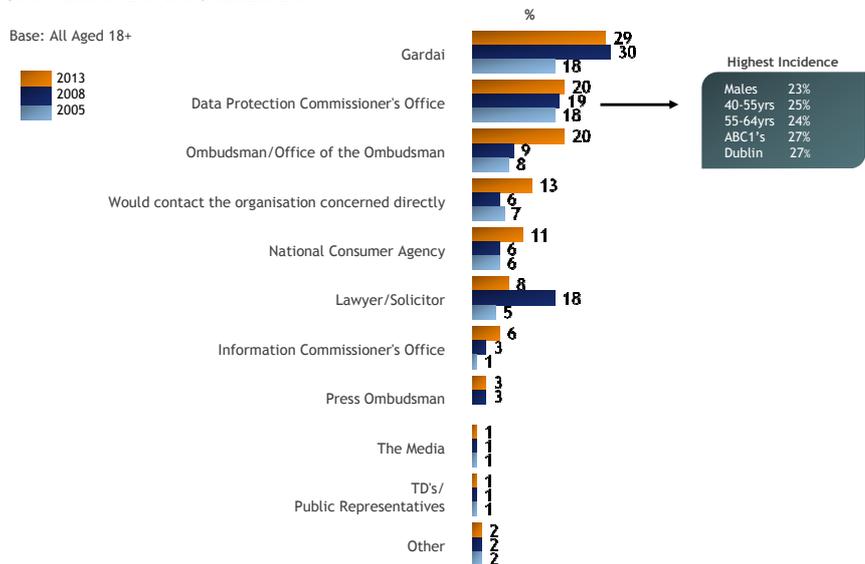
¹ (higher and intermediate managerial, administrative or professional occupations)

made over the telephone to both mobile phone and landlines. For both of these channels, 80% of respondents were either 'not happy at all' or 'not very happy' about receiving such communications. Equally, only 14% of respondents indicated they were agreeable to receiving unsolicited communications by way of telephone to their landline or mobile phone.

5. Complaining about an invasion of privacy in terms of personal information

When asked where a person would go if they wished to make a complaint about an invasion of their privacy in terms of personal information, 29% of respondents indicated that they would turn to the Gardaí. This was followed by 20% of respondents indicating that they would turn to the Data Protection Commissioners office. Of note also was the increase from 9% to 20% in the number of respondents who stated they would go to the Ombudsman and the increase from 6% to 11% of respondents who cited the National Consumer Agency.

Where to go to Make a Complaint (spontaneous mention)
The Gardaí remain the first point of contact followed by the Data Protection Commissioner and the Ombudsman.



9. Q.5 If you wanted to make a complaint about an invasion of your privacy in terms of personal information (about you) where would you go to make this complaint?



Interestingly, given the apparent decrease in concern about privacy related issues exhibited by respondents residing in Dublin in other questions, the survey found that the highest spontaneous mention of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioners came from respondents in urban areas with Dublin leading in terms of regional breakdowns (27%). Less than 30% of respondents who cited this Office were from rural areas even though over a third of members of the public surveyed overall were deemed to be resident in a rural area.

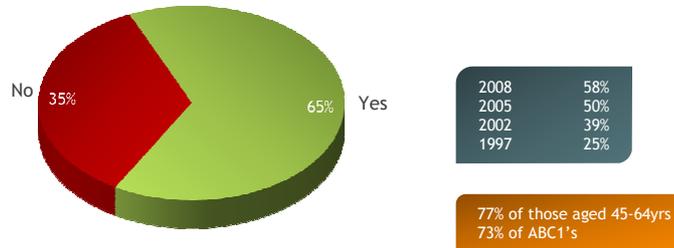
6. Awareness of the Data Protection Commissioner

Encouragingly, prompted awareness of the Data Protection Commissioner continues to increase, with 65% of respondents indicating they were aware of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. This is an increase from 2008 (58%). Overall, awareness has continued to increase significantly since 1997 when only 25% of people surveyed were aware of the Data Protection Commissioner.

We noted that awareness of the Office was highest among the age group 45-54 year olds (80%) and lowest among 18-24 year olds (54%). Overall, 77% of those responding affirmatively were aged 45-64 years. In terms of the social classification employed in the survey, 73% of ABC1s indicated their awareness of the Office.

Prompted Awareness of the Data Protection Commissioner An Coimisinéir Cosanta Sonraí Data Protection Commissioner
Strong and continued growth in awareness since the study began.

Base: All Aged 18+



10. Q.6 Have you ever heard of the Data Protection Commissioner?

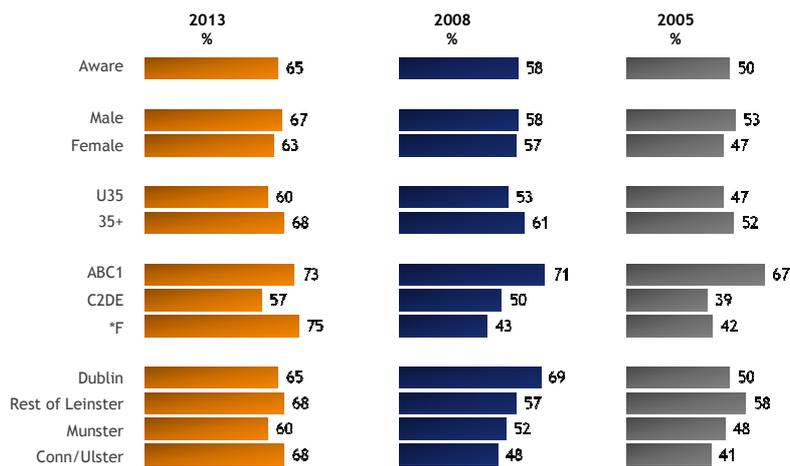


In terms of regional breakdown, we noted the growth in awareness amongst those living outside of Dublin.

Awareness - Data Protection Commissioner
Growth in awareness coming from those living outside of Dublin



Base: All Aged 18+



*Caution - small base size

11. Q.6 Have you ever heard of the Data Protection Commissioner?



7. Awareness of Legal Entitlements

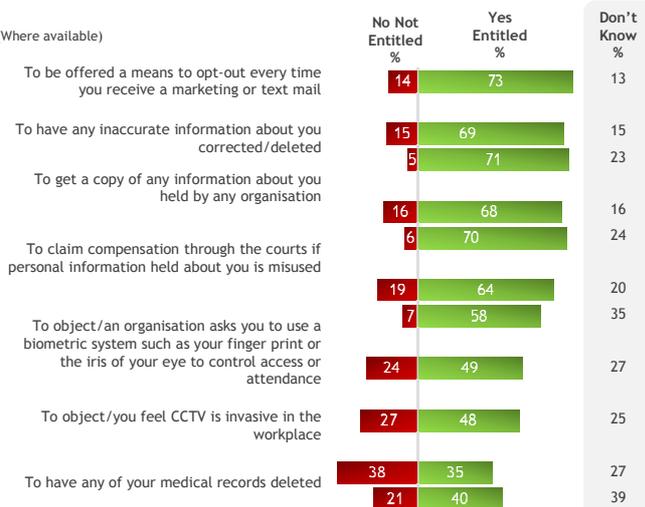
This question was introduced in 2008 to the survey to measure awareness of individuals' rights under the Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003.

Awareness of Legal Entitlements

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Base: All Aged 18+

2013
2008 (Where available)



12. Q.7 As far as you are aware, are you legally entitled...?

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Overall, we found a high level of awareness as to legal entitlements in terms of the Data Protection Acts and ePrivacy regulations.

In 2013, we added several new questions to this section of the survey, namely as to whether the persons surveyed felt they were legally entitled to:

- be offered a means to opt-out every time they receive a marketing or text mail.
- to object if an organisation asks them to use a biometric system (e.g. using a copy of their finger print or the iris of their eye) to control access or attendance.
- to object if they feel CCTV is invasive in the workplace.

We were pleased to learn that 73% of respondents felt they were legally entitled to be offered a means to opt-out every time they receive a marketing or text mail.

We intend to continue to monitor awareness of rights regarding the deployment of biometric systems and cctv in the workplace in future surveys.

Of some concern, we noted an increase in the number of respondents who did not believe they were entitled to:

- have inaccurate information about them corrected or deleted .
- get a copy of information about them held by any organisation.

8. Concerns about personal information on the Internet

A new question was introduced in 2008 to measure concerns regarding personal information on the internet.

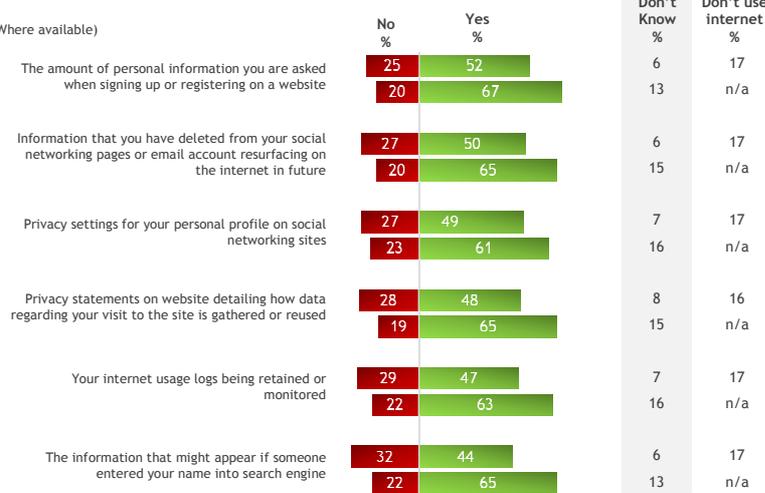
Concerns Regarding Internet Use

Although the majority continue to have concerns about privacy in relation to internet use, there are indications that people are less concerned and more accepting of the potential availability of their personal information.

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Base: All Using the Internet Nowadays = 615

2013
2008 (Where available)



13. Q.8 When using the internet do you ever have concerns about:

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The survey found strong indications that people in 2013 are less concerned and more accepting of the potential availability of their personal information online. In all scenarios presented to respondents, the levels of concern dropped significantly from that displayed by respondents in 2008.

- In 2008, 67% of respondents had concerns over the amount of personal information that is requested when signing up or registering on a website. In 2013 this fell to 52%.
- Concerns regarding information a person deletes from their social networking pages or email account resurfacing on the internet in the future decreased from 65% in 2008 to 50% in 2013.
- Concerns regarding privacy settings on social networking sites fell from 61% to 49%.
- Concerns regarding internet usage logs being retained or monitored fell from 63% to 47%.
- Concerns regarding the information that might appear if someone entered their name into a search engine fell from 65% to 44%.

The experience of this Office is that vigilance should be maintained at all times by individuals when posting their personal data online. We consider the potential risk to personal data on the internet is high if data protection legislation is not being complied with or appropriate security controls are not in place.

In light of these findings, we intend to raise awareness amongst the general public of the potential risks in relation to the posting and storing of their personal data on the Internet. We consider an increased focus is required on the precautions that should be taken by data subjects themselves as well the data controllers and processors who of course have their own legal obligations which they must adhere to.

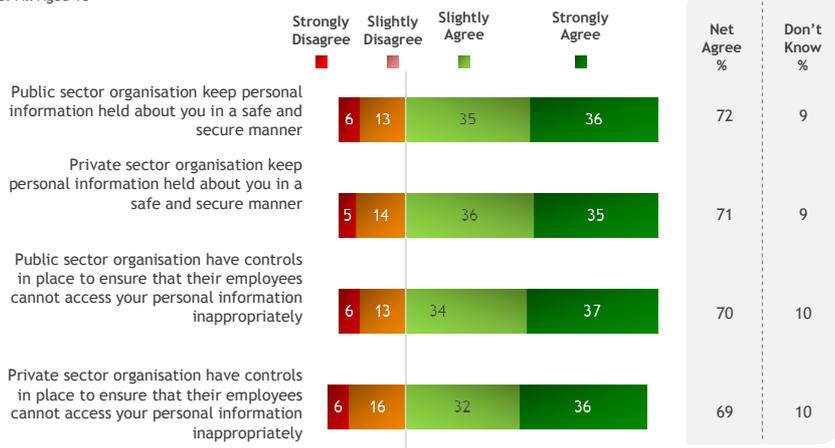
9. Perception of the level of security attached to personal information held in the Public & Private Sector

Level of Agreement Re: Personal Information Organisations Hold About You...

The majority believe organisations guard their personal information



Base: All Aged 18+



NOTE: Slightly Amended answer scale in 2013 - no direct comparison to 2008

14. Q.9 When you consider the personal information held about you by organisations, to what extent would you agree or disagree that:



Overall, the survey indicates that there is no real difference in the levels of confidence held by those surveyed with regard to security controls in the public sector as opposed to the private sector.

We noted that the survey shows that over one third of respondents indicated that they 'strongly agree' that appropriate security controls are implemented in both the public and private sectors with the net agreement (slightly agree/strongly agree) 70% approximately.

10. Attitude to accessing medical records

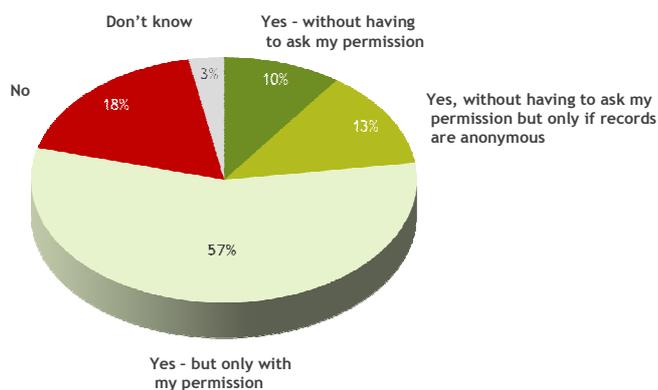
The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 allow, under certain strict conditions, for access to medical records for health research purposes in certain situations.

Should your Medical Records, be made available for the Purpose of Advancing Medical Research?

The majority are in favour but, only with permission

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Base: All Aged 18+



15. Q.10 In relation to your health or medical records...

MilwardBrown

Overall, the majority of respondents were in favour of the release of their medical records for the purpose of advancing medical research but only with their permission.

The survey results reveal strong opposition to the release of medical records for health research purposes without the permission of the patient. 18% voiced an outright 'no' and 57% of those surveyed indicated that they would permit the release of their medical records to health researchers but only with the consent of the patient. We also asked respondents if their medical records could be made available for medical research without consent if the records were anonymous. 13% indicated their agreement in this scenario.