

progressive

SCOTTISH OPINION

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Scottish Information Commissioner Public Awareness Research November 2007

Background

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOISA) 2002, introduced a new right of access to information held by Scottish public authorities. Subject to certain exemptions, anyone that requests any information from a public authority is entitled to receive it. Everyone is entitled to this regardless of their age, gender or country of residence.

The Scottish Information Commissioner is the independent public official responsible for promoting and enforcing the right to access public information in Scotland.

Public awareness studies have been conducted since 2004 to measure levels of awareness and knowledge of FOISA 2002 and the Scottish Information Commissioner. This report details the findings from the fifth wave of the research, drawing comparisons with previous phases.

Research Objectives

The key aim of the research is to inform the Commissioner's promotional work and to provide evidence of the progress of freedom of information in Scotland.

The specific research objectives are:

- To measure awareness and sources of awareness of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act which came into force in January 2005
- To measure public awareness of the role of the Scottish Information Commissioner
- To understand public awareness of the right to request information held by Scottish Public Authorities
- To determine whether members of the public have previously requested information from Scottish Public Authorities

In addition to these core objectives, some new objectives have been added for the 2007 research:

- To understand the outcome of any information requests and what action (if any) was taken by those whose requests were wholly or partly unsuccessful
- To establish key reasons for not requesting information
- To establish benchmark levels of awareness of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations

Methodology

As a representative sample of Scotland was required for this project, Progressive Scottish Opinion used a telephone Omnibus methodology, consistent with the previous four phases of the study. All interviewing was completed in Progressive's in-house telephone unit. The Omnibus (known as Scottish Opinion) is a daily Omnibus service.

The questionnaire used in this wave was amended slightly as a result of changes to the research objectives. Wherever possible comparability has been maintained with previous data and any impact on the comparability and interpretation of the results has been highlighted throughout this report. Any demographic or geographic variances amongst sub-samples are highlighted only where a statistically significant difference exists i.e. beyond the margin of error for each sub-sample. This ensures that the differences reported have not occurred by chance.

Sample

A total of 1012 respondents were interviewed between 16th and 23rd October 2007. The sample used in Scottish Opinion is taken from the electoral register. The data gathered was then weighted to the Scottish population statistics to ensure that a fully representative sample was achieved. Throughout this report, analysis is conducted on the weighted base.

The total sample of 1012 provides a dataset with a maximum standard error of +/- 3.1%, calculated at the 95% confidence level.

The profile of the sample is shown in the table below.

Age	%	Gender	%
18-24	11%	Male	48%
25-34	19%	Female	52%
35-44	20%		
45-54	17%	Location	
55-64	14%	Central	5%
65+	20%	Dumfries	3%
		Fife	7%
Socio-Economic Grouping		Grampian	8%
AB	19%	Highlands & Islands	8%
C1	27%	Lothian & Borders	17%
C2	22%	Strathclyde	44%
DE	32%	Tayside	7%
Disability			
Yes	12%		
No	84%		
Unsure	1%		
Refused	3%		

Summary of Key Research Findings

- There has been a steady increase in respondents' awareness of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) since the first survey was conducted in October 2004. While overall awareness levels remained static over the last year (74% compared to 73% for 2006), there has been a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who stated that they were definitely aware of FOISA.
- The main sources of awareness of FOISA are reported as being indirect communication methods, such as newspaper editorials, TV programmes and through employment. It should be noted that no direct advertising of freedom of information in Scotland has been commissioned by any authority since 2005.
- The majority of respondents requesting information from public authorities report that they received all of the information they requested (73% - 46 out of 63 respondents). Those who hadn't received all of the information (17 respondents) tended not to take further action.
- Respondents who are aware of FOISA are more likely to:
 - understand they have rights to access information both generally and as a result of the Act;
 - have made requests for information held by public authorities;
 - be aware of the Scottish Information Commissioner and,
 - more accurately (though not exclusively) identify the duties undertaken by the Scottish Information Commissioner.
- The proportion of respondents who are able to correctly identify their legal rights under FOISA has increased incrementally over the five waves of the research, peaking in October 2005 (following campaign activity). However, around a third of respondents remain confused by their rights to information and feel that they are only entitled to see personal information held about themselves.
- Respondents generally feel that FOISA has brought more public authority information into the public domain and that public authorities are becoming more open and accountable.
- There is a continued degree of cynicism that authorities will find a way to get round the Act, however the legislation is nevertheless perceived as being valuable.

Main Findings

The following section details the key findings from the study. Significant differences across demographic groups are highlighted throughout. Where no demographic variances are mentioned it should be assumed that there are no statistically significant differences.

In this wave the introduction to the Omnibus has been changed to clarify the definition of 'public authorities', in order to ensure that respondents shared a common understanding of the term. Furthermore in Q2 a written request was clarified as being by letter, fax or e-mail. In light of these changes there may be some impact over the comparability of questions using this terminology, however as the essence of the question has not changed, this is likely to be minimal.

Q1) Have you ever requested information from a public authority?

This question was added to the study for the current phase to allow a comparison to be made of the proportion of people making requests in a written format with those who use other routes to access information.

Base (All): 1012

<i>Answer</i>	<i>October 2007</i>
	S5
Yes	23%
No	76%
Unsure	1%

Of the 23% who made requests for information, those in the AB socio-economic grouping were the most likely to have made a request (33% vs. 23% of C1C2 and 17% of DE).

Q2) Have you ever made a written request, by letter, fax or e-mail, for information that a public authority holds?

Those respondents who had made a request for information were asked whether this had been undertaken in writing. A total of 41% (95 of 232 respondents) of those making requests for information had done so in writing.

Last year, Q2 was the first question to be asked of respondents, therefore is based on the total sample. In order to make comparisons with last year's data, the results from 2007 have been expressed in the table below as a proportion of the total base.

Base (All): 1012

<i>Answer</i>	<i>April 2005</i>	<i>October 2005</i>	<i>October 2006</i>	<i>October 2007</i>
	S2	S3	S4	S5
Yes	4%	8%	6%	9%
No	96%	91%	93%	89%
Unsure	-	1%	1%	3%

The proportion of respondents that have made a written request for information that a public authority holds has therefore increased since the previous wave of the study. This is a similar level as was recorded in October 2005, although this is not a statistically significant change. The proportion of the population that has made a written information request remains comparatively small.

Although there were some differences in the proportion of individuals who had made any request for information, these demographic differences were not reflected in the proportions making written requests for information. In fact there were no statistically significant differences in terms of age, gender, social grade or region in this wave. However, those who were aware of FOISA were significantly more likely to have made a written information request (45% of those aware vs. 21% of those unaware). This confirms that a correlation exists between awareness of the Act and propensity to request information.

Q3a) Has any request been made since the start of 2005?

Base (All those who have made a written request for information): 95

<i>Answer</i>	<i>October 2005</i>	<i>October 2006</i>	<i>October 2007</i>
	<i>S3 (base=83)</i>	<i>S4 (base=63)</i>	<i>S5 (base=95)</i>
Yes	37%	57%	66%
No	63%	43%	30%
Unsure	-	-	4%

Of those respondents who had requested information in the past, two thirds (66%) had made this request since 2005. When this is expressed as a proportion of the total base, this means that in 2007 66% of the population said they had made a written request for information from a public authority since the Act came into force in 2005, vs. 43% in October 2006 and 37% in October 2005.

The base sizes for this question were too small to allow sufficiently robust sub-group analysis to be undertaken by demographics or region. There were also no significant variances in terms of the awareness of FOISA.

Q3b) Which of the following types of authority have you requested information from?

Base (Those who have made written requests for information since 2005): 63

Question: Prompted, read-out list

	<i>S4 (Oct 06)</i>	<i>S5 (Oct 07)</i>
A council	51%	42% (26)
The Scottish Executive / The Scottish Government	10%	27% (17)
A health authority / the NHS	26%	24% (15)
A police force	20%	18% (11)
A university or college	16%	16% (10)
Other	16%	9% (6)
Unsure / Can't remember	5%	-

Others: SEPA (2), Air Training Corps, School, Social Services, Sheriff Courts

This question was asked only of those who had made a written request for information. As the question was changed from a spontaneous to a prompted question in October 2006, the data from this wave can only be compared directly with the last stage.

The results from the most recent wave of the study indicate that there appears to be a slight shift in the type of information being requested, away from requesting information from Local Authorities and towards requests for information from the Scottish Government. As previously highlighted this is an indicative finding only as the base of 63 respondents is too small to allow more accurate conclusions to be drawn.

There were no significant differences in terms of demographics or levels of awareness of FOISA.

Q3c) Could you tell me roughly what type of information you asked for?

This question was also asked only of people who had made a written request for information since 2005. Respondents were able to provide multiple answers to this question. A new code was added for this wave to capture requests for statistical information, including crime statistics. This is unlikely to affect comparability with previous years because the question includes an "Other" option, thereby allowing this data to be gathered in previous waves, albeit in a slightly different format.

Base (Those who have made written requests for information since 2005): 63

Question: spontaneous, multi-code possible

	S3 (Oct 05)	S4 (Oct 06)	S5 (Oct 07)
Planning information	19%	26%	29% (18)
Information about myself	59%	11%	26% (16)
Environmental information	6%	2%	15% (9)
Medical Records	47%	24%	12% (8)
Statistical information, including crime statistics	-	-	11% (7)
Local authority grants and benefits	14%	17%	8% (5)
Public authority finances	25%	2%	3% (2)
Other (specify)	5%	34%	29% (19)
Can't remember	2%	5%	2% (1)

Just as slight differences have been noted in the authorities from whom information was requested, there has been a corresponding shift in the types of information requested over time. There appears to be a declining trend in the proportions of individuals requesting medical records, with only 12% of respondents indicating that they requested this information in 2007. In contrast, the proportion of respondents requesting planning information has increased continually since October 2005, with this type of information being the most frequently requested in this phase of the research. The proportion of respondents requesting information about themselves has also increased slightly since last year, with just over a quarter (26%) asking for this, though again the base sizes are too small for this to be a statistically significant difference. Statistical information was sought by 11% of respondents.

This year has also seen a significant increase in the proportion of people requesting environmental information. The low base figure however, means that this finding should be treated with caution. There was no correlation between awareness of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations and the likelihood of making a request for environmental information

Although 19 respondents requested other types of information, these were very varied and no more than 2 respondents mentioned the same enquiry. Examples of the information sought included information on various aspects local amenities, housing and general advice on issues within an individual's local community.

Q3d) Did you get the information you asked for?

Base (Those who have made written requests for information since 2005): 63

Question: spontaneous

	S4 (Oct 06)	S5 (Oct 07)
Yes, all the information I asked for	66%	73%
Yes, some of the information I asked for	10%	13%
No	24%	14%
Unsure/can't remember	-	-

The table above shows that almost three quarters of the 6% of respondents who had made a written request for information since 2005 received everything they asked for. It is interesting to note that there has been a decrease (-10%) against previous waves in the proportion reporting that they didn't receive any of the information they were looking for. While this is not statistically significant, it will be useful to monitor this trend over time.

Q3e) What did you do having received none or only some of the information you requested?

This question was added for the current wave of research with the aim of determining what action, if any, was taken following a refusal to provide information.

Base (Those who received some or none of the information requested): 17

Question: Prompted, read out list

	S5 (Oct 07) (Absolute Numbers)
Nothing, I was satisfied with the outcome	3
Nothing, but I was dissatisfied with the outcome	6
I wrote to the public authority asking it to reconsider its decision	5
I complained to the public authority, but not in writing	-
<i>Other (specify)</i>	
Going to complain	1
Wrote again to complain	1
Went ahead with plans regardless	1
Unsure/can't remember	1

As we have seen, only a small proportion of this subset of respondents indicated that they did not receive all of the information they were looking for. The action taken was mixed, but around half (9 individuals) took no further action and only 5 respondents made a formal appeal in writing. However, it should be noted that of the 9 respondents who took no further action, 6 were dissatisfied with the outcome. In order to fully understand the reasons for this it may be interesting to research this topic further.

Q4) Why have you not made a request for information?

An additional question was asked in 2007 with the aim of identifying any underlying reasons preventing individuals from requesting information. This question was asked of those who had never requested any information from a public authority (identified from the responses to Q1, 76% of the total sample).

Base (Those who have never requested information): 769

Question: spontaneous

	S5 (Oct 07)
I have never had any reason to seek information	79%
I wasn't sure how to ask for information	7%
I didn't know I could ask for information	6%
I didn't think the organisation would have the information I needed	3%
I didn't think the organisations would allow me access to the information I wanted	2%
Other (specify)	1%
Unsure/can't remember	2%

The table above indicates that 3 in 4 of those who have not submitted an information request have simply never had reason to seek information. Those who selected the "Other" category generally indicated that they accessed information via other routes therefore did not have to make requests in writing.

Amongst the 21% of those who did perceive a barrier, 60% (99 people) were unsure how to request information or were unaware of their rights to request information (13% of the total sample not requesting information). These tended to be younger respondents in the 18-24 age group (10 of 22 indicated they were unaware and 8 of 22 said they were unsure what to do). This corresponds with a slightly lower level of awareness of FOISA amongst this age group (50% definitely aware vs. 63% of over 25s). Although significant, due to the small base sizes these demographic variances should be treated with caution.

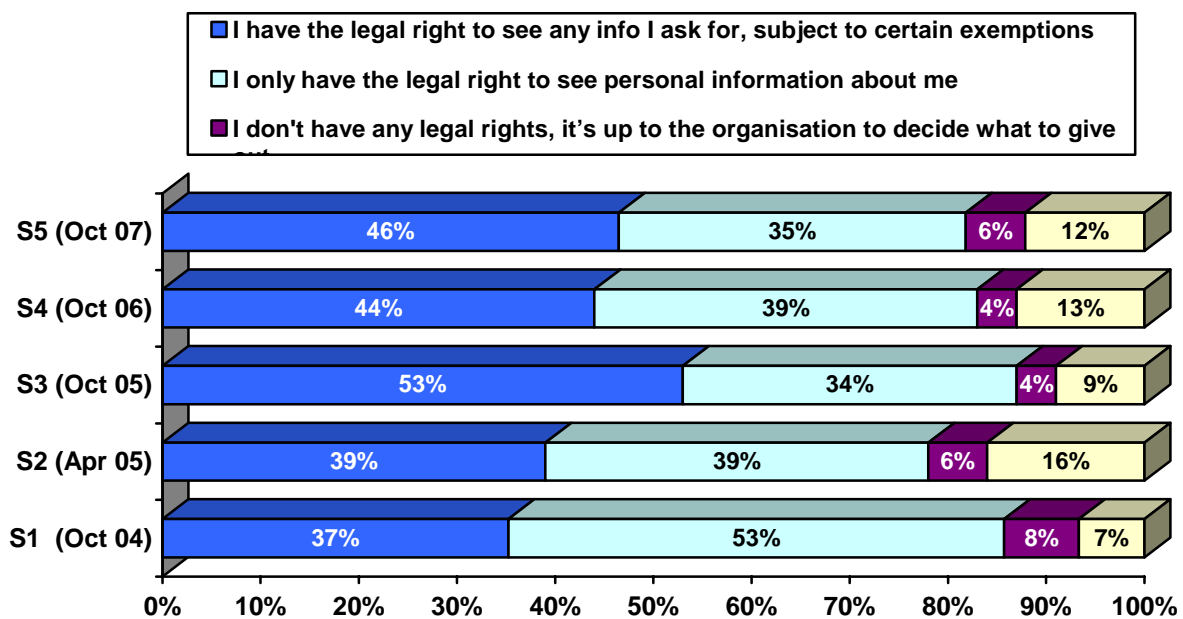
Q5) In your opinion what legal rights do you have to see information held by public authorities?

The aim of this question is to measure respondents' understanding of their general legal rights to see information.

The first statement reflects the rights afforded by FOISA and is therefore correct (with the exception of wave 1 when the study was undertaken before FOISA was implemented). The second statement correctly reflects rights afforded by the DPA but incorrectly implies that this is the only information an individual is legally entitled to receive. The wording of this option was changed slightly in 2007 for the purposes of clarity. This means that there may be some impact on comparability with previous phases, though this is likely to be minimal. The third statement is incorrect.

Base (All): 1012

Question: Prompted, read-out list



Others: Not bothered about my rights (2), people can see your phone bill (1), can see anything held on a computer but not hand-held or personal information (1), not aware of any legal rights (1).

The chart above indicates that almost half of respondents correctly identified their legal rights to see any information they request. This is a very slight increase from October 2006, though as this is not a statistically significant difference it is more likely that the level of understanding has been maintained over the last year. This corresponds to the finding that awareness of FOISA has also remained steady in 2007. Over time there has been an incremental increase in the proportion of respondents who correctly identified their legal rights under FOISA. This peaked at 53% in October 2005, which is likely to be the result of the heavy advertising activity at that time to raise awareness of the new legislation.

As with last year, there is a correlation between understanding of the rights afforded by FOISA and awareness of the Act, with 52% of those aware of FOISA correctly identifying their rights compared to 29% of those unaware of the Act. Awareness of the Scottish Information Commissioner did not show any greater likelihood to understand the rights covered by FOISA.

There were few demographic differences in levels of understanding this wave. Understanding of the full rights of the Act peaked amongst 45-54 year olds (56%) and those in the AB social grouping (55%). Those in the DE social group were least likely to believe this statement (39%). This is broadly consistent with the findings from last year. In terms of geography, awareness

peaked in the Highlands & Islands region (58%), though due to the smaller base sizes involved this finding should be treated with caution.

Over one third (35%) of respondents felt that legally they were entitled to see only information held about them, therefore incorrectly attributed their rights under the DPA to the rights afforded by FOISA. There has been no significant change in the proportion making this assumption since April 2005. Women (39%) were more likely than men (32%) to believe this was the case.

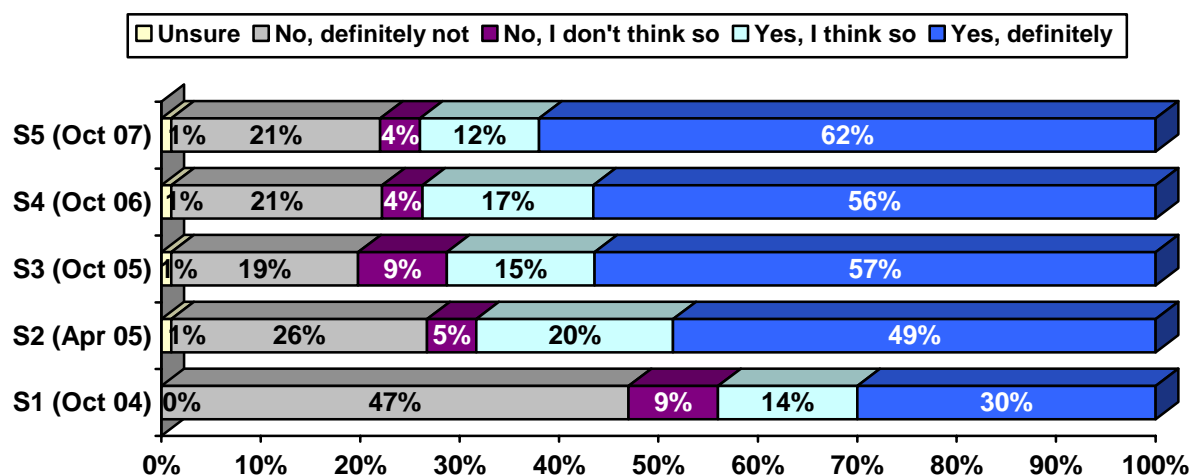
It is reassuring to note that only 6% of the population thought that they have no legal rights to any of the information held by public authorities. This again is broadly consistent with previous stages of the study. Those most likely to believe this statement were men (8% vs. 5% of women) and within the DE socio-economic group (9% vs. 5% of other groups).

Q6a) Have you ever heard of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act?

The graph below tracks the levels of awareness of FOISA since October 2004.

Base (All): 1012

Question: spontaneous



The results overall show an increasing trend in the levels of awareness of FOISA, with 74% indicating that they are aware of the Act in 2007. While overall levels of awareness have remained static from the 73% who were aware last year, it is encouraging to note that there has been a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who indicated that they were definitely aware of FOISA since 2006. This denotes an increasing trend in the proportion of respondents who are definitely aware of the FOISA legislation.

Awareness of FOISA was slightly lower amongst disabled respondents than for the rest of the population; however this is based on a small sample size and was not statistically significant. Awareness levels were highest amongst 45-64 year olds (71% definitely aware vs. 50% of 18-24 year olds, 62% of 25-44s and 54% for over 65s) and those in the ABC1 socio-economic groups (74% vs. 57% of C2 and 47% of DE respondents). In terms of gender, men (80%) were more likely than women (68%) to be aware of the legislation. This is consistent with the findings from October 2006. In terms of region, awareness of FOISA also peaked in the Highlands & Islands, with 73% indicating that they were definitely aware of the Act, compared with the average of 62%. Again this should be treated with some caution due to the bases involved.

Respondents who were aware of the Scottish Information Commissioner were also marginally more likely to be aware of FOISA (83% of those aware of FOISA were aware of the Commissioner vs. 73% of those unaware of FOISA).

Q6b) Where do you recall seeing or hearing about the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act?

This question was also added for the current phase of the research in place of the previous question asking about sources of awareness of the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Base (Those aware of FOISA): 750

Question: spontaneous, multi-code possible

Source	S5 (Oct 07)
Newspaper editorial	31%
TV programme	30%
Through work	20%
Newspaper advertising	13%
Radio	8%
TV advert	7%
Word of mouth	6%
Internet	3%
School/ College/ University	3%
Leaflet	1%
Citizens' Advice Bureau	1%
Billboards	0%
Other	3%
Unsure	12%

The most common sources of awareness of FOISA are newspaper editorials (31%) and TV programmes (30%). A fifth of respondents (20%) were also aware of the Act through their work. This indicates that awareness is largely being maintained by indirect communication routes. It is interesting to note that awareness levels of FOISA have remained high in 2006 and 2007 despite no advertising activity having been undertaken since 2005.

There were no significant differences in terms of sub-groups, though indicative findings suggest that those most likely to find out about FOISA through work tend to be women, 25-34 and in the C1 socio-economic group. This is in contrast to those who found out about FOISA through newspaper editorials and TV programmes, who tended to be older and those aware through radio, who tended to be men and in the AB social group. Those in the DE socio-economic group tended to hear about FOISA through word-of-mouth, while younger respondents (18-24s) were most likely to find out about the legislation through school, college or university. These tendencies suggest that different types of people become aware of FOISA through different routes.

Q7) What rights do you think the Freedom of Information Act might give you?

Responses to this question were spontaneous and unprompted, then categorised into the options in the table below. Historically this question allowed multiple answers to be given, however in the most recent wave respondents were allowed to give only one answer. This information therefore provides respondents' immediate understanding of their rights according to FOISA. However, as no further probing was made the results cannot be directly compared with previous waves of the study.

Base (All): 1012

Question: spontaneous, single code

	S1 (Oct 04)	S2 (Apr 05)	S3 (Oct 05)	S4 (Oct 06)	S5* (Oct 07)
To see any general information held by a public authority	32%	29%	52%	45%	34%
To see any personal information a public authority holds about me	42%	40%	46%	45%	28%
To see any general information held by a private company (Not true)	7%	3%	7%	10%	6%
To see confidential information which is held by public authorities	8%	6%	9%	11%	3%
To see any personal information a private company holds about me	24%	12%	20%	16%	2%
Other	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%
Unsure	41%	40%	25%	26%	24%

**Single code only: limited comparability can be made with previous waves*

While no direct comparisons can be made with the previous stages of the study, it should be noted that the pattern of responses in 2007 closely reflects those recorded in previous stages. In light of this it can be broadly assumed that there has been no real change in the levels of understanding of the rights of FOISA in the last year. Those who coded "Other" to this question tended to state very specific answers. Only 3 individuals indicated that their rights covered public and private organisations, which suggests that respondents tended not to give multiple concepts as an immediate, unprompted response.

Overall a third (34%) of respondents correctly identified their rights according to FOISA legislation. There were few demographic variances, however there tended to be higher levels of awareness among men (38% vs. 30% of women) and lower awareness amongst those in the DE social group (23% vs. 41% of ABC1 and 34% of C2 respondents). As expected, those who were aware of FOISA were more likely to mention one of the first two options, i.e. they recognised that information covered related to public authorities.

A significant proportion of respondents (28%) believed that the primary purpose of FOISA gave the right to request personal information held by public authorities. This may indicate that some confusion exists relating to the distinction between the rights of FOISA and those afforded by the DPA. However it should be noted that as this question establishes spontaneous understanding of the legislation rather than using a prompted list, it is difficult to determine the extent to which this is the case.

Q8a) Have you ever heard of the Scottish Information Commissioner?

Base (All): 1012

Question: spontaneous

Awareness	S2	S3	S4	S5
Yes definitely	4%	10%	8%	6%
Yes, I think so	5%	10%	6%	8%
Total Yes	9%	20%	14%	14%
No, don't think so	14%	20%	11%	9%
No, definitely not	76%	58%	71%	75%
Total No	90%	78%	82%	84%
Unsure	1%	2%	4%	3%

As with previous years, awareness of the Scottish Information Commissioner is much lower than that of FOISA itself. Overall the proportion of respondents aware of the Scottish Information Commissioner has remained static in the last year.

Respondents who had heard of the Commissioner were more likely to be aware of FOISA (16% vs. 9% of those unaware). There were no differences in awareness in terms of age, gender or socio-economic grouping, however it is interesting to note that awareness was slightly higher in the Fife region (18% indicated they thought they were aware of the Commissioner compared with an average of 8%). This could be due to the location of the Commissioner's office, potentially driving higher awareness in the surrounding region.

Q9) Which of the following duties do you think the Scottish Information Commissioner carries out?

There are a wide range of duties carried out by the Commissioner and respondents were asked to identify some of these duties from a list of options. The responses marked with a star (*) in the table below denote some of the duties that the Commissioner does undertake.

Base (All): 1012

Question: prompted, read out

Research Stage:	S3	S4	S5	S3	S4	S5	S3	S4	S5
Answer	Yes, carries out			No, does not carry out			Unsure		
Telling people about their right to see information held by Scottish public authorities*	64%	54%	63%	15%	7%	10%	21%	39%	27%
Investigating complaints when people don't get the information they request from public authorities*	65%	55%	67%	12%	7%	10%	23%	37%	23%
Dealing with complaints about DP legislation	54%	46%	54%	20%	12%	16%	27%	42%	31%
Making sure that public authorities comply with FOISA*	68%	58%	70%	10%	5%	7%	22%	37%	23%
Providing information about public services	45%	42%	51%	29%	19%	24%	26%	39%	25%

Statements one, two and four in this question reflect the role of the Scottish Information Commissioner. Dealing with complaints about the DPA is the jurisdiction of the (UK) Information Commissioner. The Scottish Information Commissioner does not have responsibility to provide information about public services.

In 2007 the proportions of respondents correctly identifying the Scottish Information Commissioner's duties has increased to similar levels recorded in October 2005. The majority of respondents recognised that the Commissioner is responsible for enforcing compliance of FOISA (70%) and investigating complaints when requested information is not provided (67%). A slightly lower proportion (63%) was aware of the Commissioner's role in informing the public about their rights. As with last year, younger (18-24) respondents and those in the DE socio-economic group tended to be least likely to recognise these duties, while those in the AB social group were most likely to correctly identify them. However, it should be noted that overall it appears that those in the AB socio-economic group were more likely to state an opinion, whereas 18-24 year olds and those in the DE social group were more likely to state that they were unsure.

The proportions of respondents who assumed that the Commissioner had responsibility for dealing with complaints about Data Protection legislation and for providing information about public services also increased in 2007, with over half of respondents agreeing that the Commissioner was involved in these activities. There were few demographic differences in terms of these two statements. Only 24% of respondents correctly stated that the Commissioner did not provide information about public services and even fewer (16%) recognised that the Commissioner had no responsibility regarding Data Protection complaints. Furthermore, for each of the five statements around a quarter of respondents indicated that they were unsure whether the Commissioner has responsibility for the task. This highlights the fact that there is a lack of detailed understanding about the role of the Commissioner amongst the general public. This lack of knowledge is also

evident in the questions relating to the rights afforded by FOISA.

Respondents who were aware of FOISA (71% vs. 59% of those unaware) and the Commissioner (76% vs. 67% of those unaware) were more likely to believe that the Commissioner was responsible for dealing with complaints when requested information was not provided. Similarly, those who were aware of FOISA (27% vs. 13% of unaware) and the Commissioner (36% vs. 22% of unaware) were also marginally more likely to believe that providing information about public services is *not* the Commissioner's responsibility.

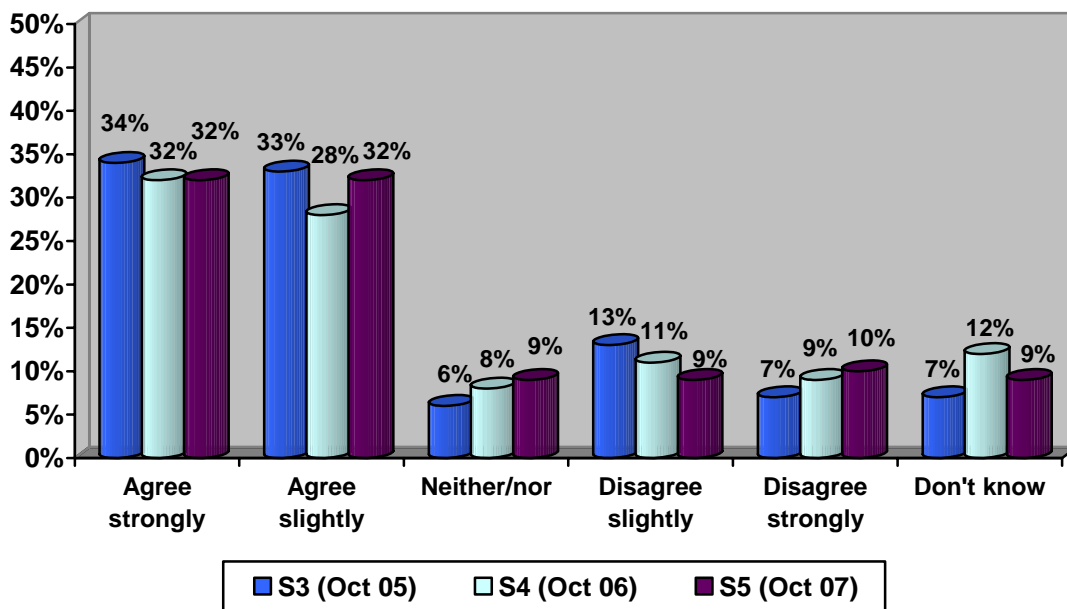
Those who were aware of the Commissioner were more likely to agree that telling people about their rights to information is one of the Commissioner's responsibilities (70% of those aware agreed compared with 52% of those unaware). However, those aware of the Commissioner were also more likely to think that the Commissioner deals with complaints relating to Data Protection legislation (70% of those aware compared with 52% of those unaware). This suggests that awareness of the Commissioner does not necessarily equate to detailed understanding of the Commissioner's role.

Q10) How much you agree or disagree with each statement (even if you aren't aware of the Act or Freedom of Information generally)?

The following question asked respondents the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements relating to the impact of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act. The wording of statements (d), (e) and (f) was changed slightly in 2007 to clarify meaning and avoid ambiguity. However, as with the other changes to the wording of the questionnaire it is anticipated that any impact on comparability would be minimal as the same meaning is being conveyed. A new statement (c) has also been added for this wave, comparing Scottish public authorities with those in the rest of the UK.

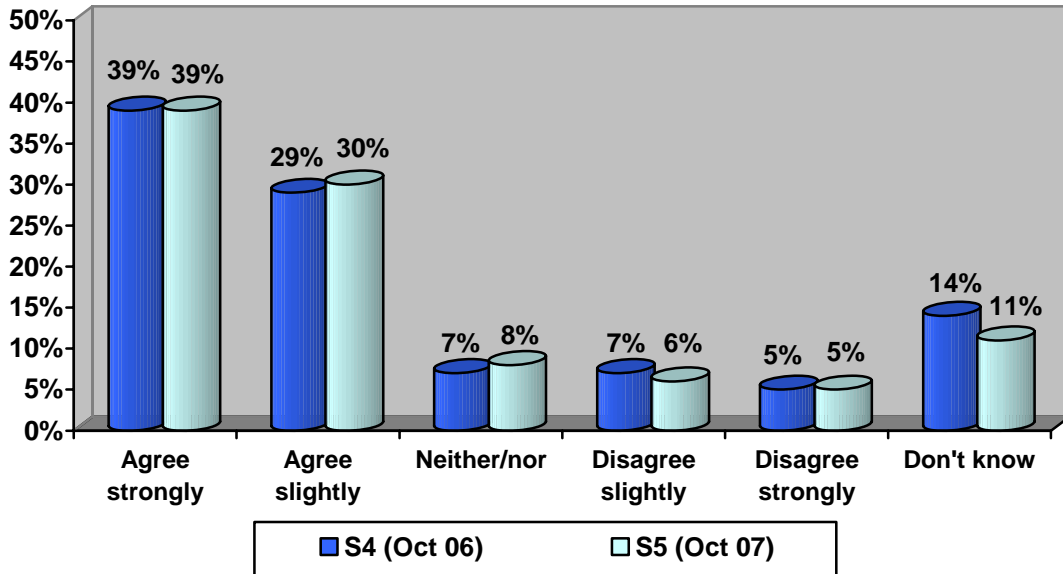
Base (All): 1012

Q10a) As a result of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act – Public authorities are becoming more open and accountable.



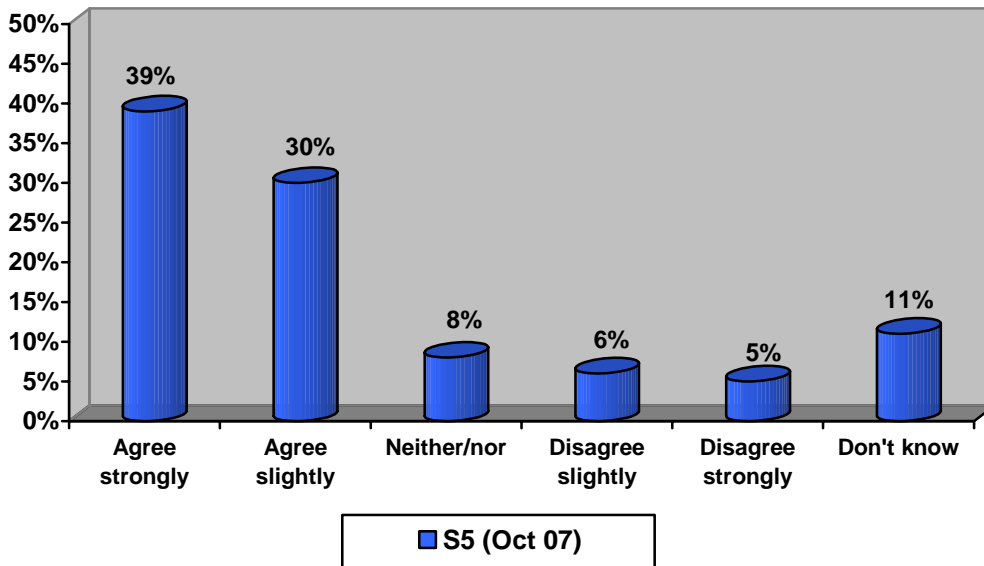
The chart indicates that 64% agree that public authorities are becoming more open and accountable as a result of FOISA. This represents a slight (not significant) increase from last year, when 60% agreed. In terms of demographics, 18-34 year olds were most likely to agree with this statement (72% vs 60% of over 35s). Those aware of FOISA were also slightly more likely to agree.

Q10b) As a result of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act – More public authority information is available now than before.



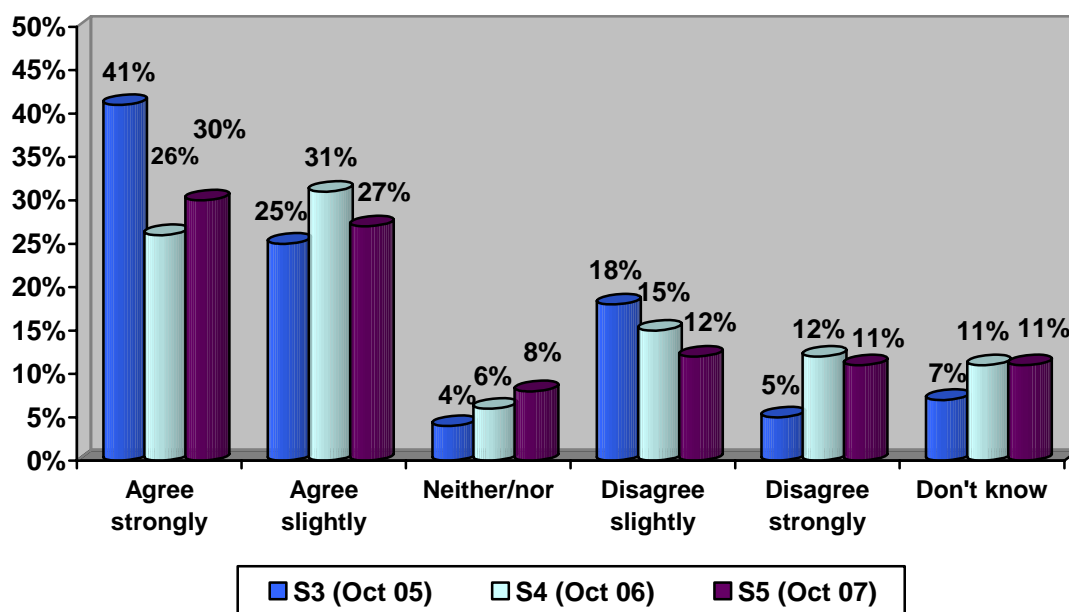
This statement was added for the first time in October 2006. Overall, 69% agreed that more information is available from public authorities than before. This finding is consistent with the results from last year. There were few significant variations in opinion by demographics, however those who were aware of FOISA were again slightly more inclined to agree.

Q10c) Public authorities are more open and accountable than their equivalents in the UK.



This statement was added for the most recent stage of the research. Again the majority (69%) of respondents agreed that Scottish public authorities were more open and accountable than others in the UK. Those aware of the Act were more likely to agree (43%) than those who were unaware (31%). It is important to note that this finding represents the perceptions of the Scottish population therefore does not necessarily reflect any knowledge or experience with wider UK public bodies.

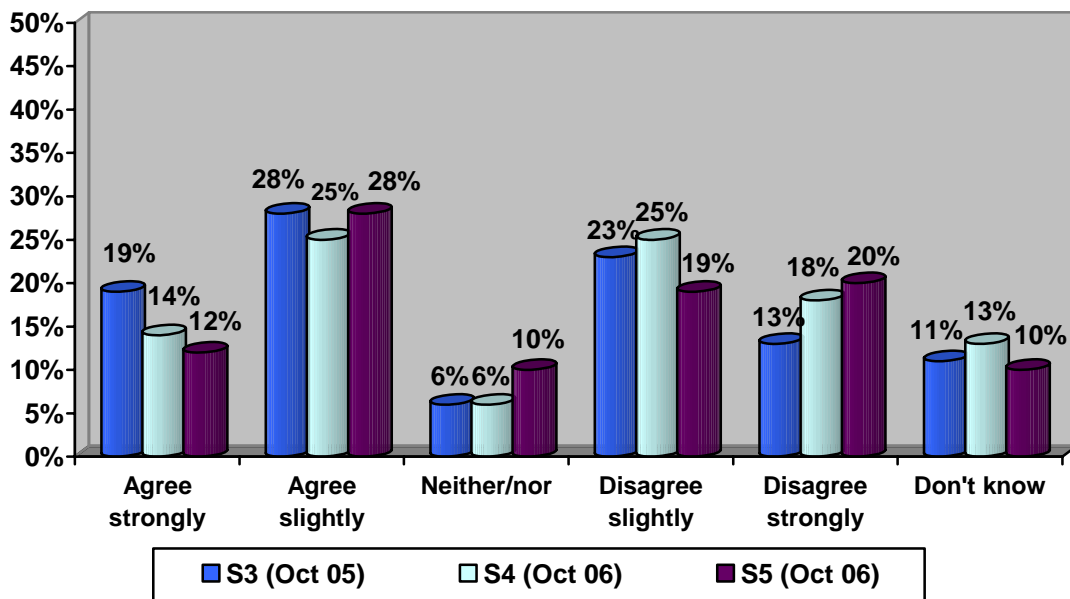
Q10d) Public authorities will find a way round the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act and won't provide any information they don't want to.



Over half (57%) of respondents agreed that public authorities would find a way around FOISA. This is consistent with the results from the previous wave. It is also interesting to note that 61% of those who recognised the Commissioner's role in ensuring public authorities comply with FOISA still agreed that these bodies would find a way to avoid providing information.

Younger respondents were slightly less inclined to agree with this statement (33% of 18-24 year olds disagreed compared with 22% of older age groups). Awareness of FOISA did not show any variances in opinion.

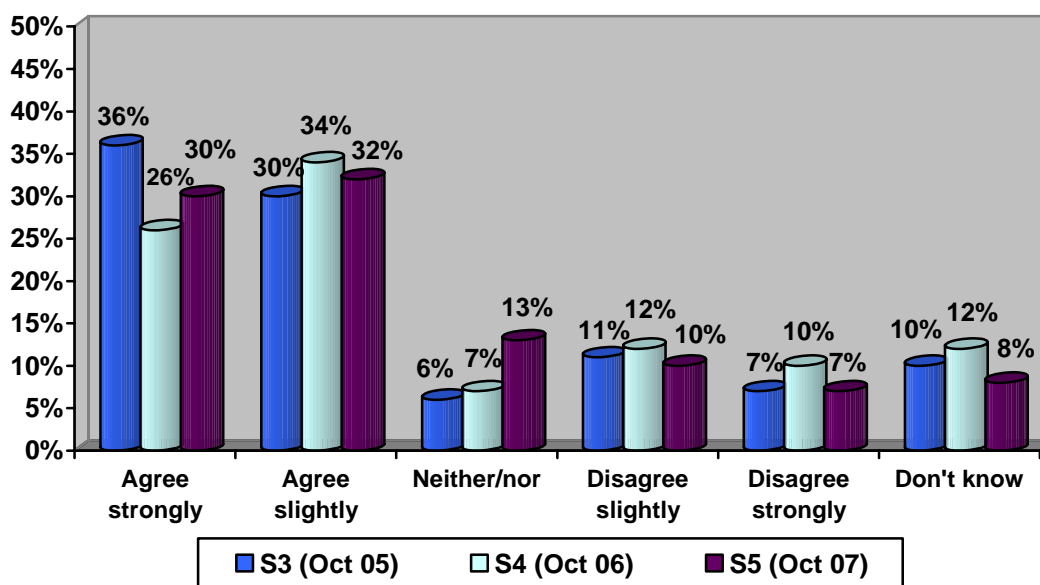
Q10e) No one bothers to use the rights provided by the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act.



Agreement with this statement was polarised, with 40% agreeing that nobody bothered to use their rights to information and 39% disagreeing. At an overall level there has been little change in the levels of agreement since 2005, though the proportions of those agreeing strongly has declined in favour of those who strongly disagree. It will be interesting to continue to monitor these opinions over a longer time period to determine whether this represents a gradual shift in attitudes.

Those aware of FOISA were more likely to disagree with this statement (45% vs. 21% of those unaware), while 18-24 year olds were more inclined to agree strongly (23% vs. 11% of over 25s). Similarly, those who had made a request for information since the Act came into force in 2005 were more likely to strongly disagree with this statement (35% (22 of 63) strongly disagree compared with 8% of those who had not requested information).

Q10f. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act is useful to me.



Overall 62% of the population agreed that FOISA was useful to them. This is in contrast to the 9% of the population who reported that they had made a written request for information, and the 40% who agreed that nobody exercised their right to see public authority information, highlighting the fact that the legislation is valued by the majority of the Scottish population.

Those in the AB socio-economic group were most likely to agree strongly (36% vs. 32% of C1, 27% of C2 and 25% of DE respondents). Similarly, those aware of FOISA were more likely to agree that the legislation was useful (67% agreed vs. 49% of those unaware).

Q11) Have you ever heard of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations?

This was a new question added with a view to establishing benchmark levels of awareness of these regulations.

	S5 (Oct 07)
Yes, definitely	11%
Yes, I think so	8%
Yes	19%
No, I don't think so	10%
No, definitely not	68%
No	78%
Unsure	3%

As can be seen in the table, just under one in 5 respondents were aware of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, and over two thirds (68%) stated that they were definitely unaware. This information can provide a benchmark level of awareness if future communications are planned. Those who were aware of FOISA were slightly more likely to be aware of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations (12% of this group were definitely aware vs. 7% of those unaware of FOISA). There were no other significant differences noted.