

National Identity Cards: The View of the British Public

British Public Survey
commissioned by Detica
and conducted by MORI

April 2004





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ID Card Survey – Key Findings

- ❑ **The public say ‘yes’ to ID cards – civil liberties argument fails**
 - A massive 80% of people are in favour of ID cards
 - 73% of the population say they are unconcerned that ID cards will affect their civil liberties

- ❑ **Illegal immigration, not terrorism, cited as main reason for support**
 - 33% (unprompted) of those in favour say they favour the scheme because they believe national ID cards will prevent illegal immigration
 - Only half this number (16%, unprompted) are in favour because they believe national ID cards will prevent terrorism

- ❑ **Government still needs to build public trust**
 - Almost 60% have little or no confidence in the Government’s ability to introduce a national ID card scheme smoothly
 - Only 10% of those questioned felt *very* confident that the Government can be trusted to hold their personal details securely

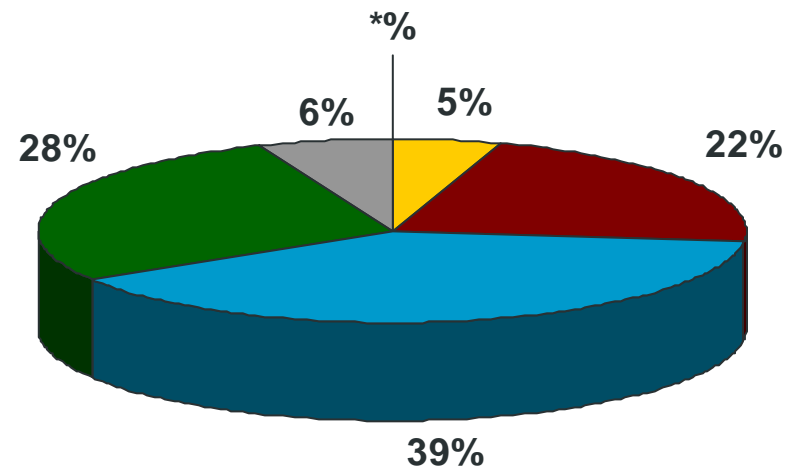
- ❑ **Payment could prove the biggest barrier, but public are happy to carry the cards**
 - 83% of the public are happy to carry a national ID card at all times
 - Almost half the population (48%) don’t want to pay at all, despite government estimates that biometric ID cards would cost at least £35





British public in the dark over national ID cards

“How much, if anything, do you know about the Government’s proposals to introduce a national identity card scheme for all UK citizens?”



- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Just a little
- Heard of it, but know nothing about it
- Never heard of it
- Don't know

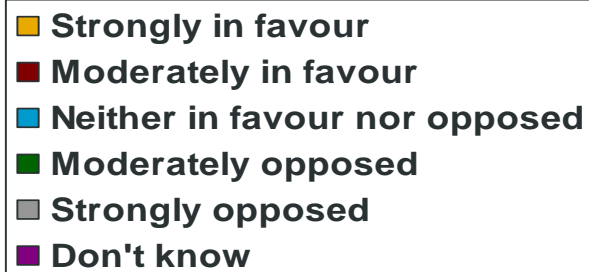
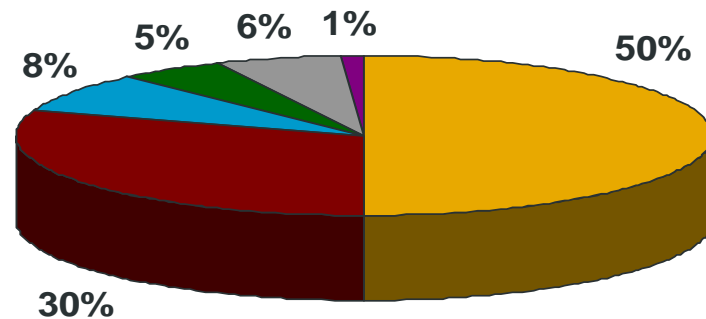
- Although 94% of people are aware of the scheme’s existence, two thirds (67%) have little or no knowledge of the Government’s national ID card proposals.





British public say “Yes” to national ID cards

“To what extent, if at all, are you in favour of or opposed to a national identity card scheme?”



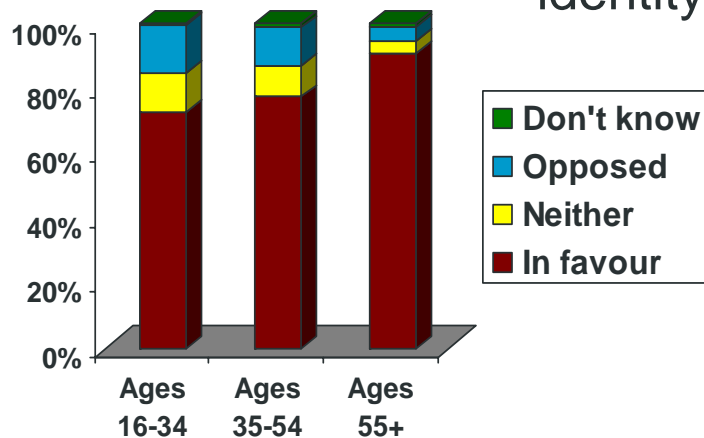
- Eight out of ten people are in favour of introducing national ID cards.
- Only 11% are either opposed or strongly opposed – the public seem to be ignoring well publicised civil liberties arguments against national ID cards.



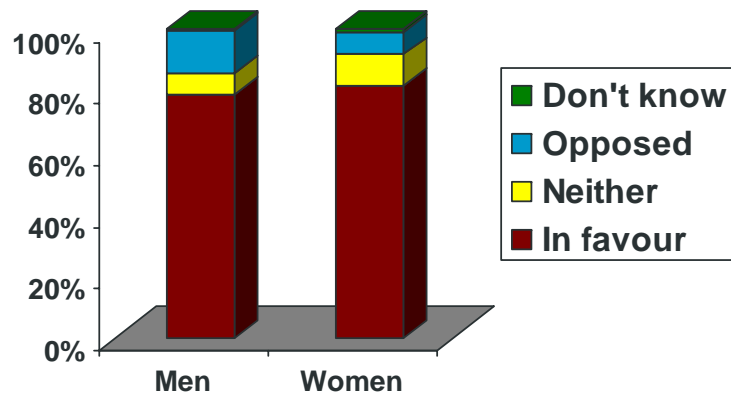


Over-55s most in favour of national ID Cards

“To what extent, if at all, are you in favour of or opposed to a national identity card scheme?”



- Older generations favour national ID cards more than younger generations.



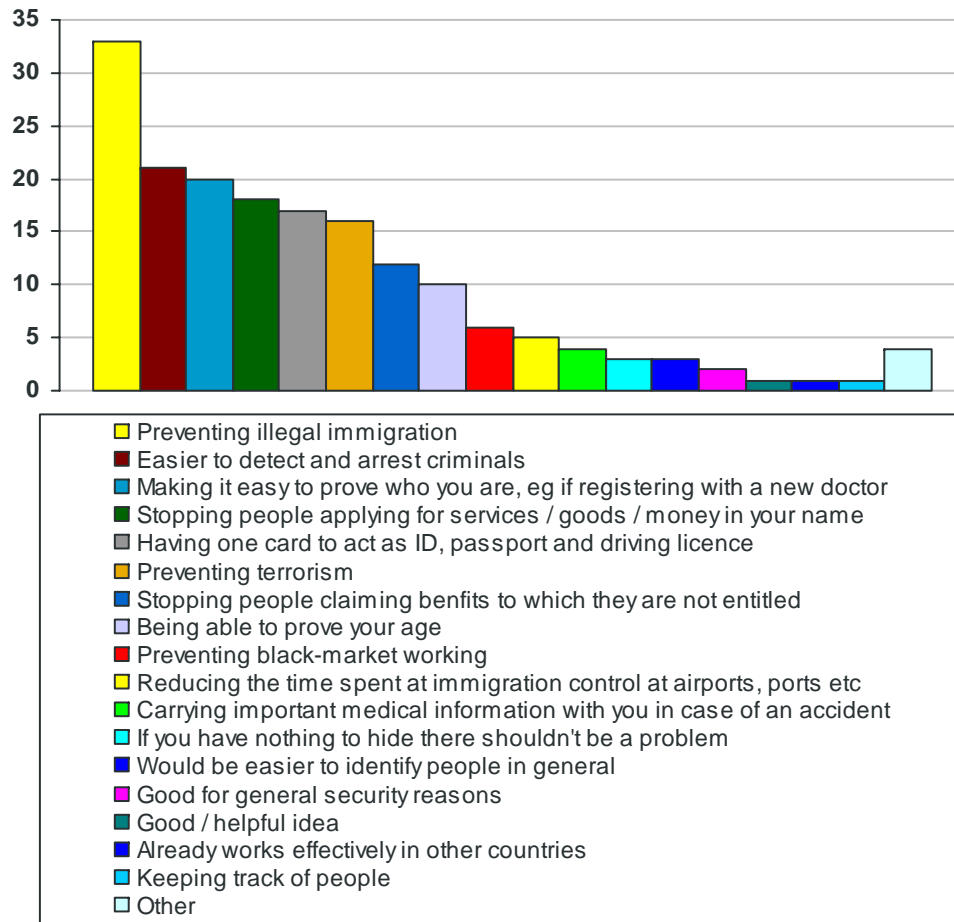
- Men are more opposed to national ID cards than women.





Illegal immigration is the strongest driver

“For what reasons are you in favour of a national identity card scheme?”
(unprompted responses)



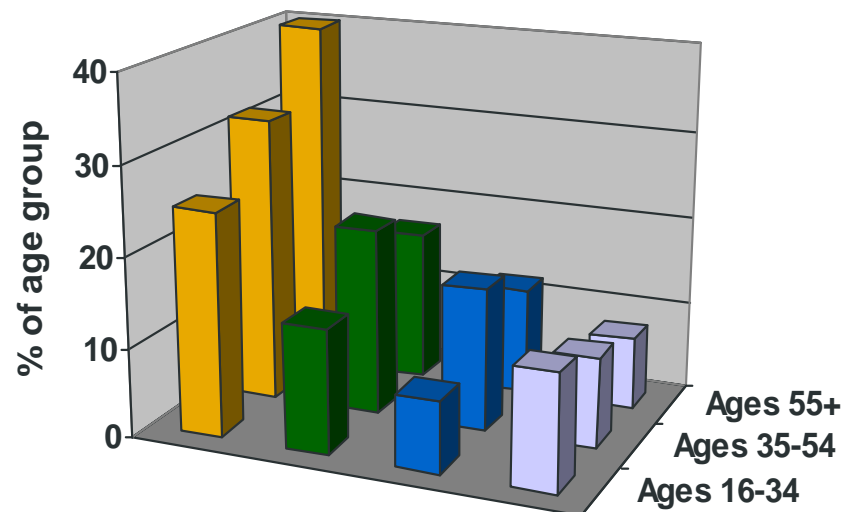
- Preventing illegal immigration is by far the biggest reason people are willing to adopt national ID cards.
- Preventing terrorism comes in BELOW preventing fraud and making personal identification easier.



Who favours the scheme and why?

“For what reasons are you in favour of a national identity card scheme?”
(unprompted responses)

Breakdown of selected reasons
by age



- Preventing illegal immigration
- Stopping people applying for services / goods / money in your name
- Stopping people claiming benefits to which they are not entitled
- Being able to prove your age

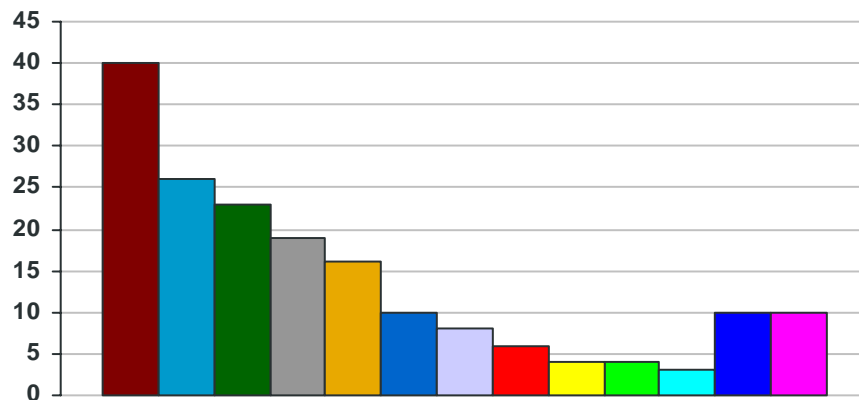
- Older generations favour national ID cards more than other age groups as a means of preventing illegal immigration.
- Middle generations favour national ID cards more than others to prevent identity and benefit fraud.





Don't infringe my personal freedom!

“For what reasons, if any, are you opposed to a national identity card scheme?” *(unprompted responses)*



- Infringes my personal freedom
- It would be the start of a police state / Big Brother
- Breaches my human rights
- It would not work
- Concerned about my personal data being used without my permission
- It would be too expensive
- I do not trust the Government
- It would discriminate unfairly against non-citizens
- Open to abuse / misuse
- It is undemocratic / unconstitutional
- It is un-British
- Other
- Don't know

- Of the 11% of the population who oppose a scheme the main concerns are centred around loss of personal freedom, fears over a 'Big Brother' state and breaches of human rights.

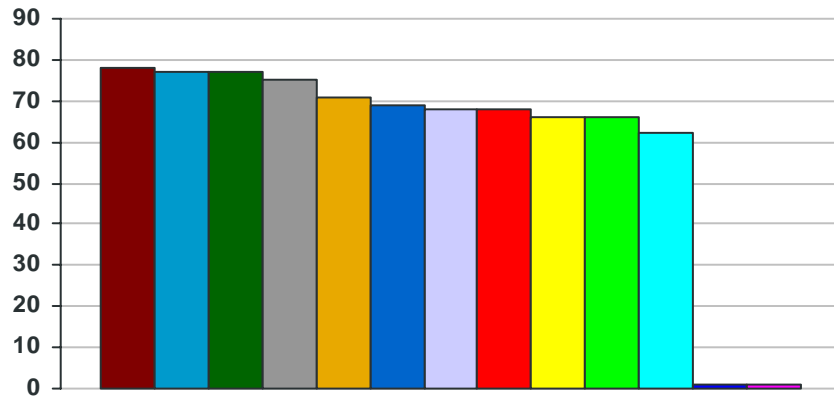




Perceived benefits of a national ID card scheme

“Which of the following, if any, would you consider to be important potential benefits of a national identity card scheme?”

(prompted responses)



- Stopping people applying for services / goods / money in your name
- Stopping people claiming benefits to which they are not entitled
- Carrying important medical information with you in case of an accident
- Making it easy to prove who you are, eg if registering with a new doctor
- Preventing illegal immigration
- Easier to detect and arrest criminals
- Having one card to act as ID, passport and driving licence
- Being able to prove your age
- Preventing terrorism
- Preventing black-market working
- Reducing the time spent at immigration control at airports, ports etc
- None
- Don't know

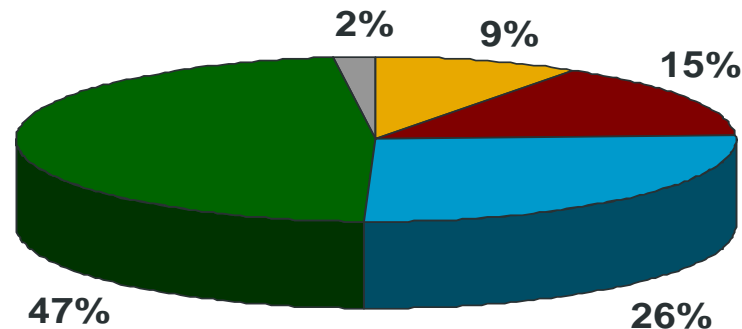
- The British public understand that ID cards will bring a range of benefits.
- Preventing identity/benefit fraud and stopping illegal immigration sit higher on people’s lists than preventing terrorism, the Government’s main argument for introducing the scheme.





How concerned are people about loss of civil liberties?

“How concerned, if at all, are you that the introduction of identity cards could have a negative impact on your civil liberties, by which we mean your personal freedom?”



- Loss of civil liberties – the primary argument put forward by those against the introduction of a national ID card scheme – has failed to impress. 73% of the British adult population are either not very or not at all concerned about this issue.

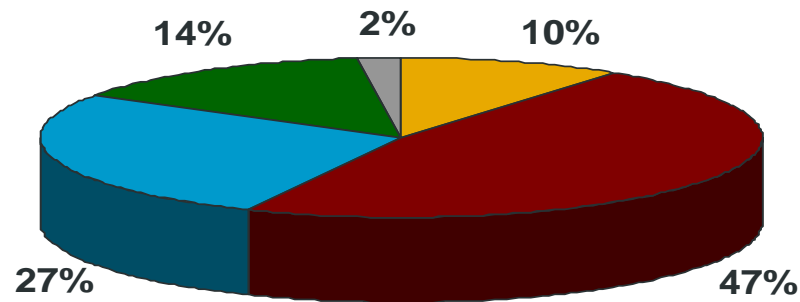
(note: Where figures do not sum to 100 per cent, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple codes or the exclusion of 'Don't know'.)





Security of personal information is the critical success factor

“Identity cards could contain a lot of personal information about you. How confident are you that the Government can be trusted to hold all this information securely?”



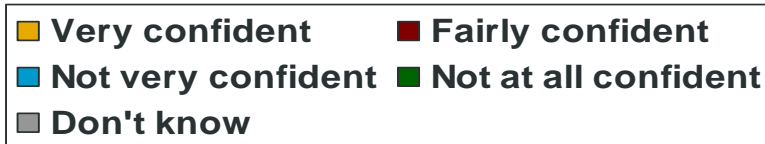
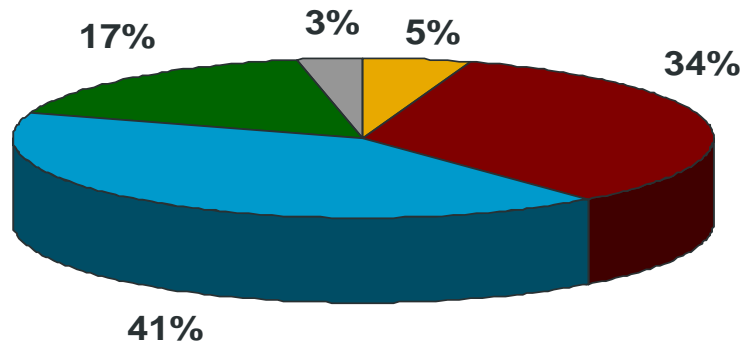
- 41% lack confidence in the Government's ability to store personal information securely.
- Only 10% of those questioned felt very confident in the Government's ability in this area.





Public doubt Government's ability to introduce a national ID card scheme smoothly

“And how confident, if at all, are you that the Government will be able to introduce identity cards smoothly?”



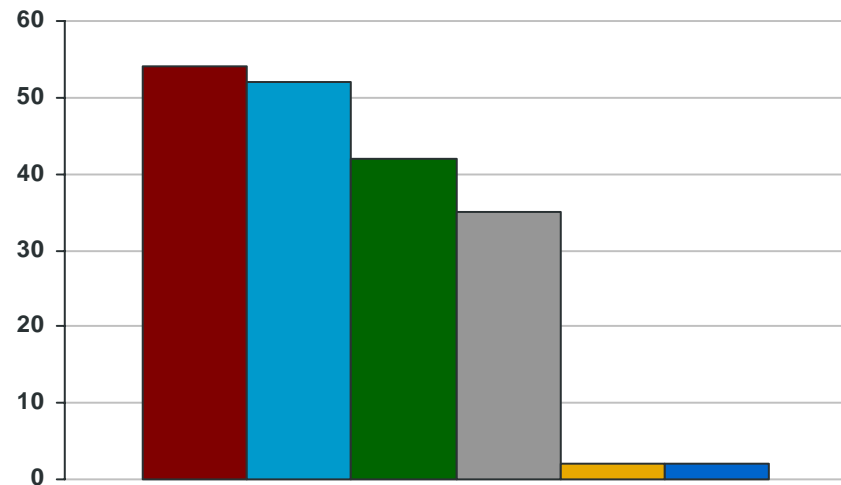
- Almost 60% people have little or no confidence in the Government's ability to introduce ID cards without hitches.
- Results suggest scepticism in the competence of the Government to manage large-scale technology projects.





Public open to high-tech means for ID cards to identify their holders

“How, if at all, would you prefer a national identity card to identify you?”



- A simple photo of you printed on the card
- A fingerprint stored on the card
- An iris (eye) scan stored on the card
- DNA details stored on the card
- None of the above
- Don't know

- Photo identification comes top of the list, proving the old method is still the favourite – but only just.
- The clear biometric favourite is fingerprinting, though 42% find the idea of iris scans acceptable and over 30% are happy for DNA fingerprints to be used.

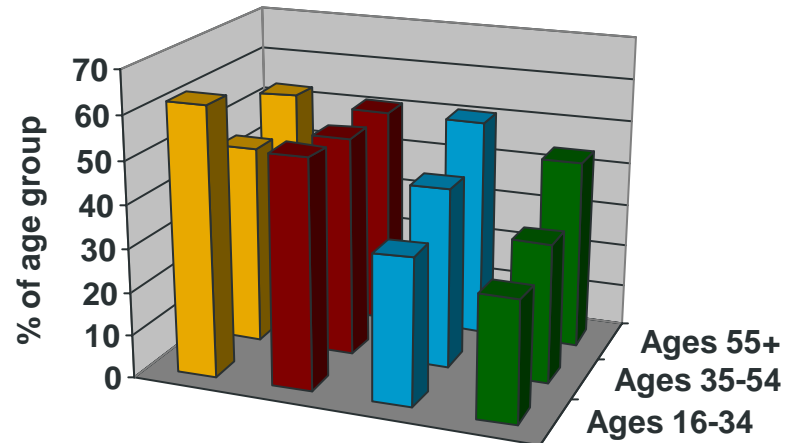




Older generations more open to hi-tech

“How, if at all, would you prefer a national identity card to identify you?”

Breakdown of identification technique by age



- Interestingly, older generations are more willing to try the newer technologies (iris scanning, DNA sampling) than the younger generations.

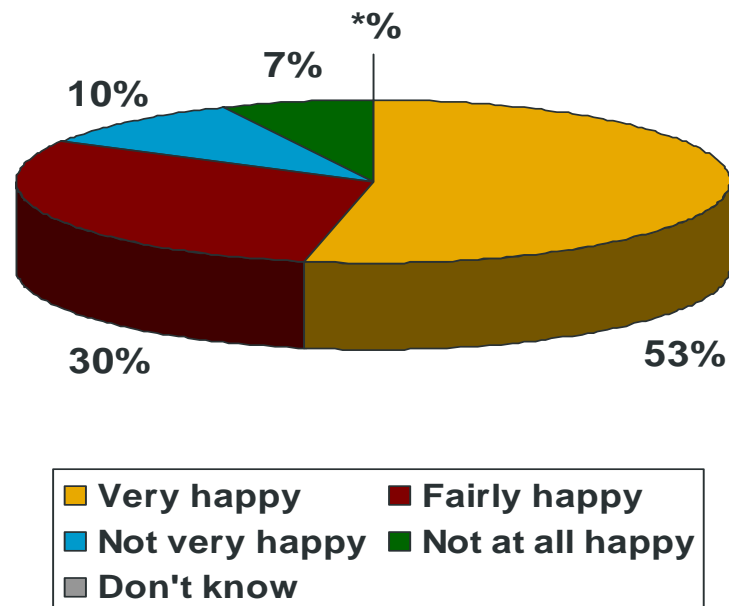
- A simple photo of you printed on the card
- A fingerprint stored on the card
- An iris (eye) scan stored on the card
- DNA details stored on the card





Public see no problem in carrying ID cards at all times

“How happy, if at all, would you be to carry your card with you at all times?”



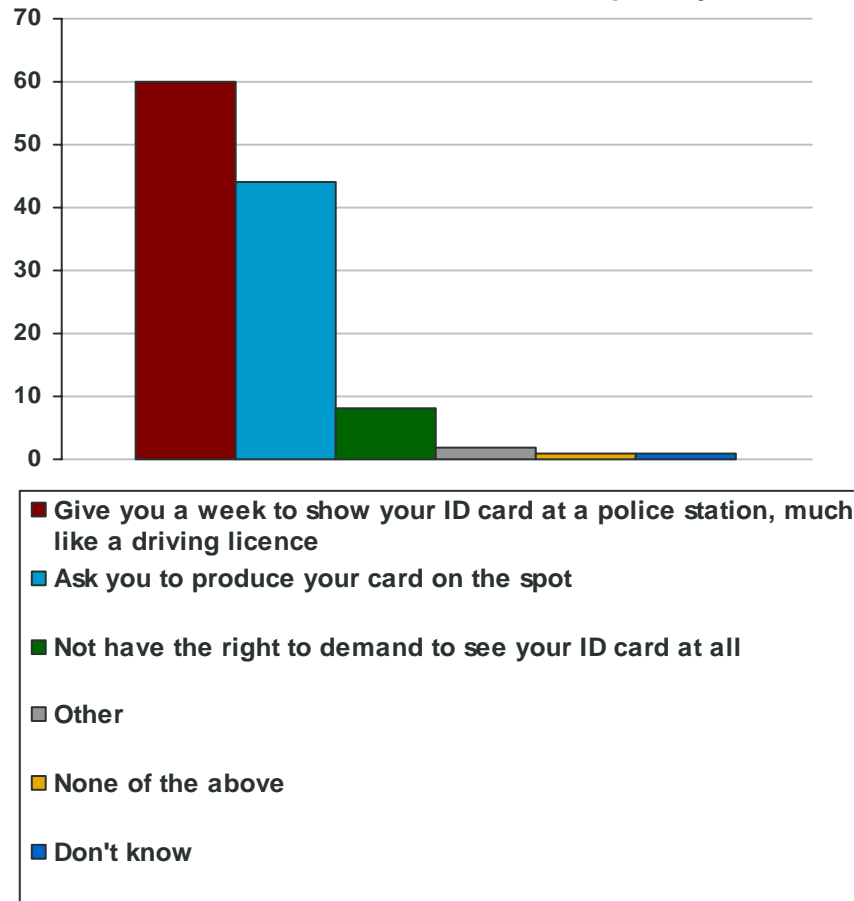
- Over 80% of the British adults are happy to carry identity cards with them at all times.
- This suggests no need for the Government's proposed compromise of making card-carrying optional until 80% of the population have one.





Presenting ID cards to the police is not a problem

“In which, if any, of the following ways should the police be allowed to compel you to prove your identity?”



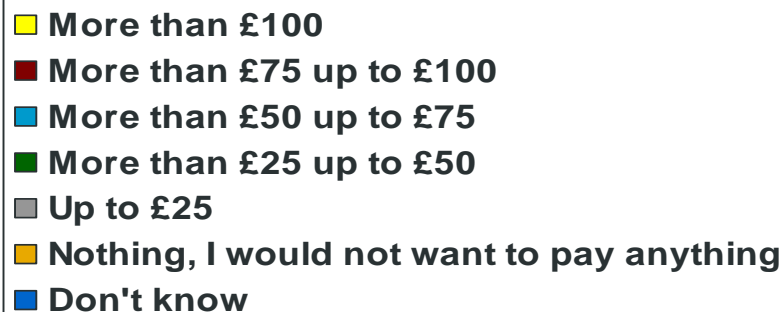
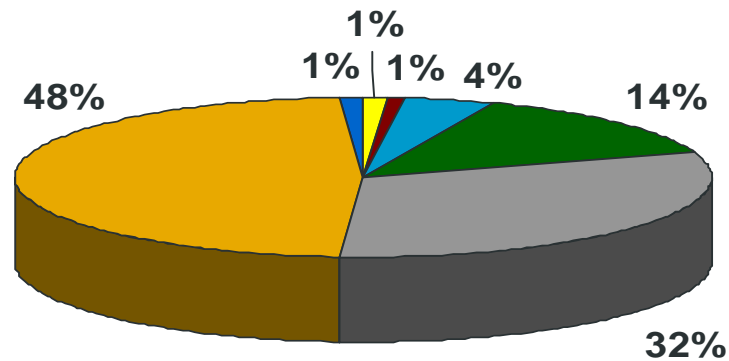
- The majority of people (60%) favour giving the police the power to ask people to present their ID card within a week, at a police station.
- 44% are also happy to give the police the power to demand to see the card on the spot.





Don't make us pay though!

“How much, if anything, would you be prepared to pay for a national identity card?”



- Almost half (48%) stated they do not want to pay anything towards a national ID card.
- A further 32% would only be willing to pay up to £25.
- Compare this against the suggested Government charge of £35 for a plain biometric ID card (£73 for biometric driving licence and £77 for biometric passport: *source: Government ID Cards – FAQs*).

(note: Where figures do not sum to 100 per cent, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple codes or the exclusion of 'Don't know'.)





In conclusion

- ❑ The research suggests that civil liberty campaigners have lost the argument. The British public **DO** want an identity card scheme. Not only that, but they don't mind carrying the cards at all times and over 40% are happy even to produce them on the spot if required. The theory that "if you have nothing to hide you have nothing to fear" rings true for the majority of British adults.
- ❑ The Government needs to consider whether to continue using counter-terrorism as their main argument for a national ID card scheme. The public are far more concerned about illegal immigration and fraud. The survey shows that the public don't need persuading anyway as the benefits are already clear to them.
- ❑ The Government still has a major problem securing public confidence:
 - It needs to concentrate on proving that it can roll out such a scheme and related IT requirements smoothly – previous IT programme failures may have damaged the public's perception of public sector IT projects.
 - The Government also needs to prove that the personal data it holds or collates is safe in its hands.
- ❑ Although in favour of the scheme, the public do not feel they should have to pay for it. The Government needs to look at ways to keep costs low by better utilising the data and technology already in place – Evolution rather than Revolution!





Methodology

- ❑ MORI interviewed a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults, aged 16+ between 18th and 23rd March 2004.
- ❑ Interviews were conducted by telephone using Random Digit Dialling. No incentives were offered to respondents.
- ❑ Data have been weighted to match the known population profile.
- ❑ Where figures do not sum to 100 per cent, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple codes or the exclusion of 'Don't know'.
- ❑ * represents a figure greater than zero but less than 0.5%.

