



FACTUM

British Columbians' Views on Freedom of Information and Privacy

BC residents strongly oppose private companies profiting from the sale of their personal health information.

Vancouver, BC January 25, 2023 – These are the results of an online poll conducted on behalf of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA). The poll examines British Columbian public opinion with respect to freedom of information and privacy in BC.

OIPC Report Reaction

Nearly nine-in-ten (88%) British Columbians say that addressing gaps and recommendations in the recent report from The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner is important for the BC provincial government, including six-in-ten (59%) who say it is very important and three-in-ten (29%) who say it is somewhat important. Very few residents rate this as not very important (4%) or not at all important (1%) for the provincial government.

Prior to answering this question, survey respondents were told that “The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) recently released a report highlighting significant gaps in the protection of personal Health Information in the Provincial Health Information System.”

Private Companies and Personal Health Information

Nine-in-ten (90%) British Columbians agree that “It is important for private companies to protect your personal health information” (70% strongly agree, 20% somewhat agree), compared to only 6% who disagree (2% strongly disagree, 4% somewhat disagree).

Only about two-in-ten (18%) BC residents agree that “private companies should be able to profit from the resale of your personal health information” (6% strongly agree, 12% somewhat agree) compared to nearly eight-in-ten (78%) who disagree (68% strongly disagree, 10% somewhat disagree).

Prior to answering these questions, respondents were told that “research by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives highlighted the expanding government subsidization of private health care in British Columbia.”

Reducing Processing Times

Most British Columbians (85%) say it is important for the BC government to reduce its average processing time and meet its legislated requirements with respect to freedom of information requests, including more than four-in-ten (44%) who say this is very important and four-in-ten (41%) who say it is somewhat important. Only one-in-ten (9%) say reducing times is either not very important (9%) or not at all important (<1%) for the provincial government.



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Prior to answering this question, respondents were told that “the average processing time for the Government of BC to process a general freedom of information request is 65 days” and that “the legislated requirement is for requests to be processed in 30 days.”

Fee Requirements to File Requests

A majority of British Columbians (57%) do not believe people should be required to pay a fee to file a freedom of information request for information, compared to about half as many (28%) who think there should be a fee. Fifteen percent are undecided.

Prior to answering this question, respondents were told that “some governments do not require a fee to file general information requests to public bodies” and that “the BC provincial government currently charges a \$10 application fee for any general request.”

Knowledge of Access to Information Privacy Rights

Close to half of British Columbians say they are aware of BC's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (47%) and aware that they can request access to their personal information and general information from public bodies (47%).

Fewer than four-in-ten (37%) are aware of the right to file a complaint relating to the handling of their personal information and about three-in-ten (31%) say they are aware of BC's Information and Privacy Commissioner.



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About the Study

These are the findings of an Ipsos online poll of 800 adult British Columbians conducted December 22-27, 2022 on behalf of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA). These data were statistically weighted by region, age, gender and education to ensure the sample composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to Census data. The precision of Ipsos polls containing online data is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the overall poll is accurate to within +/- 3.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all adult BC residents been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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