

Freedom of Information and Privacy in British Columbia
Survey for the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association

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Survey for the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association

Vancouver, BC – A new Ipsos poll, conducted on behalf of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA), shows that the vast majority (96%) of British Columbians say it is important that provincial government officials are legally required to keep accurate and complete records of what they do on the job (duty to document) (78% ‘very important’, 18% ‘somewhat important’). A total of 3% say this is not important (2% ‘not very important’, <1% ‘not at all important’) and 2% say ‘don’t know’.

- A perception that it is ‘very important’ for provincial government officials to have a legal duty to document is higher among women (82% vs. 75% of men), older residents (87% of 55+ years vs. 76% of 35-54 years, 71% of 18-34 years), and residents of the North/Interior (84% vs. 74% of Metro Vancouver, 81% of Vancouver Island).

A large majority (84%) say they think that government officials who interfere with access to information rights should face penalties (4% say ‘no’ and 12% say ‘don’t know’).

- A perception that government officials who interfere with access to information rights should face penalties is higher among older residents (90% of 55+ years vs. 82% of 35-54 years, 78% of 18-34 years).

When asked about their views on when governments should have a duty to release information, 56% say ‘whenever there is a public interest’, 30% say ‘only in emergency situations’, and 13% say ‘don’t know’.



- A perception that governments should have a duty to release information 'whenever there is a public interest' is higher among men (62% vs. 51% of women) and older residents (65% of 55+ years vs. 53% of 35-54 years, 49% of 18-34 years).

Overall, 85% of British Columbians say they think it is important that reforms (including both a legal duty to document and penalties for those who interfere with information rights) to the information and privacy law be passed before the next BC election in 2017 (48% 'very important', 37% 'somewhat important'). Another 5% say this is not important (4% 'not very important', 1% 'not at all important') and 10% say 'don't know'.

- A perception that it is 'very important' to pass these reforms to the information and privacy law before the next BC election is higher among those who are 35 years of age or older (includes 51% of 35-54 years, 58% of 55+ years vs. 33% of 18-34 years).

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between January 15 and 18, 2016, on behalf of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association. For this survey, a sample of 802 British Columbians from Ipsos' online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within +/- 3.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all British Columbian adults 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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