

A National ID Card in Canada: Public Perceptions and an Inevitable Future?

Emily Smith

Abstract

The prospect of introducing a national identity card has arisen several times in Canada. The idea received the greatest attention following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001. The proposed introduction of a national identity card in 2002, required to be carried by all Canadians, was intended to spark a national debate. Since that time, the program was set aside, due mainly to the enormous economic burden that the system would create, as well as privacy concerns. However, with increasing pressure from the US to introduce a national identity policy, the issue has received renewed attention and there is now a sense of inevitability over the introduction of a Canadian national ID card. This paper begins by highlighting the character of discussions over national identity cards in Canada. The second section outlines the various legislative developments in Canada and the US on national identity policy. This will be followed by an analysis of the role that previous Canadian public opinion polls on national ID cards have played within the debates. Focus will be placed on the context of the issues addressed as well as the government and business interests involved in the collection of this polling data and the influence it has had on national ID card policy. The final section of the paper will address the GPD survey and the results from the national ID card questions in Canada. In particular, questions 9 and 10 will be examined, cross-tabulated with question 5, 17, 18 and the demographic variables of age (E), gender (F), and ethnicity (47). Early analysis of these GPD questions reveals that trust in government has the strongest link with acceptance of national ID cards.

The National Identity Debate in Canada

Canadian citizens do not currently have a single national identity card. Several ID documents are used in Canada, such as birth certificates, drivers' licences, passports and citizenship cards. These are all considered foundation documents that can be used to secure other identity cards, with the birth certificate being the most important. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration currently have three existing identification systems to recognize Canadian citizens: passports, the Permanent Resident's Card (sometimes called the Maple Leaf Card) and the Citizenship Card. Creating one national ID card is a politically charged topic that has come in and out of national discussion at various times in Canadian parliament. The idea of a national ID card was initially proposed in Canada to replace social insurance number (SIN) cards, which are used for administering government programs and are a requirement to work in Canada or receive government benefits. This was proposed as a solution to prevent the abuse of SIN cards, which were originally meant for federal government use only, but government control was lost and the cards evolved for other uses (such as verifying cheques). The idea of national identity cards received the greatest attention in the months following the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11th, 2001. After this catastrophic event,

finding a solution to the secure identification of citizens became a renewed issue in the United States, and ultimately in Canada as well. The dialogue and possible development of national ID cards in Canada is largely tied to US policies and pressure.

The Canadian discussion of national identity cards was led by the government department of Citizenship and Immigration, who suggested that a card should be used for immigration and border control. Denis Coderre, former Liberal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration from 2002 to 2003, introduced a proposal in November of 2002 that all Canadians should be required to carry a national identity card and called for an open discussion of the cards (Standing Committee 2003). Coderre was a strong advocate for the cards, arguing that they would meet the US demands for increased border security after 9/11, enhance document integrity, combat terrorism and identity theft, as well as make it easier to cross the US border. He claimed that a plastic card would include biometric information that could not be contained in a paper passport (CTV 2006).

In October of 2003, the Canadian Government sponsored a high profile conference held in Ottawa on the topic to which experts from around the world were invited (Brown and Brook 2003). The keynote speaker was Harvard Professor Alan M. Dershowitz, a strong proponent of national ID cards (CIPPIC 2003). After this conference, the ID card program was set aside. This was mainly due to the House of Commons Standing Committee's Interim Report, which cited the enormous economic burden that the system would create (estimated between \$5 and 9 billion), function creep, technical problems with using biometrics and severe privacy concerns (Zureik 2004). Robert Marleau, interim Federal Privacy Commissioner at the time, concluded that Coderre had failed to make a convincing case for ID cards, regarding the high cost, minimal security benefits, and claimed that a national ID card database would capture very few terrorists and offer little protection against sophisticated criminals. Marleau suggested that a better idea would be to improve the quality of current identity documents, such as birth and death certificates, and by limiting the collection of personal information that businesses and government often fail to protect (Travers 2006).

The ID card issue has recently received renewed attention due to pressure from the US requiring Canadians to show passports to cross the Canada/US border, and with the British adoption of legislation for a government issued ID card. There is increased sentiment that it is only a matter of time before Canada will follow suit. The current Federal Minister of Public Safety, Stockwell Day, who, after meeting with the United States Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, suggested in February of 2006 that the introduction of ID cards in Canada is inevitable (Dugas 2006). Day stated that the card is for "law-abiding people to have smooth and quick access at all border points- not just North American, but international", as well as "to be able to stop people who are a menace or a threat from getting in or getting out" (CTV 2006). This reflects the strong influence from other countries, especially the US, to implement a card for security provision. Following this, Denis Coderre again called for a national debate on the issues, also claiming that it is only a matter of time before the other nations follow Britain's lead. Coderre remains a strong advocate for the introduction of ID cards in Canada, he claims "Three years ago we were in the avant-garde, but right now we're trailing" (Dugas 2006). There is an overarching sense by these politicians that we must keep pace with the technology being introduced elsewhere.

In April of 2006 Stephen Harper met with George W. Bush in Cancun, Mexico. Among the issues discussed was the requirement for cross-border travellers to carry a passport or high tech ID card by 2008. After this meeting, Stephen Harper and Stockwell Day again indicated that it is not a matter of whether citizens will be required to carry a passport or ID card, but of how and when the controls will be introduced (Travers 2006). The Canadian Government is asking for more time to implement the ID requirements.

There is now discussion over whether Canadian passports will be the only ID card requirement to cross the US border, or if another form of ID card will be introduced. Some are in support of another form of secure ID card that Canadians could use at the American border. For example, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Tourism Minister Jim Bradley are urging the Federal Government to reconsider creating an alternative ID card the Americans would accept that is easier to obtain and less expensive than a passport to prevent losses in cross-border business and tourism. Stockwell Day has claimed the Federal Government will not produce an alternative ID card because passports are already available, and passport office resources would need to be improved to expedite the process of obtaining a passport. Stephen Harper does not believe that another form of ID card is the best use of money, he told reporters in Winnipeg that “Before we would proceed in that direction we would want to be sure that that is the best use of money and in particular that the Americans are going to be fully committed to their own type of electronic card” (Ferguson 2006). Currently, the Federal Government is rejecting the idea of a national ID card for Canadians, arguing that it would be too expensive to produce, although Harper has indicated that he will consider all options including issuing a national ID card once new travel document laws in the US take effect (Freeman, Harding, and Howlett 2006).

National ID Card Policy in Canada and the US

Numerous legislative changes have occurred between Canada and the United States that influence the proposed development of national identity cards within each country. Several government reports in Canada and the US have been released since 9/11 that reveal many security failures within computer and IT systems. In Canada, Auditor General Sheila Fraser released a report on the state of the public sectors’ IT security policies and practices in April of 2002¹. Some of her findings indicated inconsistency in application standards, security policies, a failure to detect intrusion and poor incident response standards (Canton 2005). In the US, the Congress assigned a D-plus grade to the security of computer systems in many of the largest government agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). These reports demonstrated that the government systems are not secure; however, instead of implementing strategies to fix the existing program failures, it has been the objective of both the Canadian and US governments to implement new procedures that involve increased storage and sharing of private citizen information. Included in this are proposals to authenticate citizen ID.

The first of such documents was the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), which was passed by US Congress in 2004. This legislation includes the ‘Smart Borders’ initiative which stipulates that all travellers entering the US from Canada must

¹See: Auditor Generals Report on ‘Information Technology Security’, 2002, Available at: <http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/0203ce.html>

carry either a passport or another approved secure ID document. Originally, Canadians would have been required to have passports or a special secure ID when crossing the Canada/US border by air or sea by January 2007 and at land borders by January 1, 2008. These initial plans have fallen far behind schedule and the Canadian government was not fully consulted on how the WHTI would be carried out. On May 30th, 2006, an international summit on North American issues was held in Gimli, Manitoba with US, Canadian and Mexican politicians and diplomats. Overall concern was expressed by Canadian politicians that the lack of preparedness for introducing secure credentials by the dates specified could lead to severely hampered trade and tourism between countries. Prime Minister Stephen Harper claimed that the Canadian government was urging the US to delay enacting the law, but would be prepared if they do not.

The US Government Accountability Office (GAO), an independent congressional agency, also released a report on May 30, 2006, revealing that the DHS and the State Department have not made several key decisions essential in order to proceed with the WHTI. Richard Stana, GAO director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues, claimed that there was a long way to go to implement the WHTI (Freeman et al 2006). As a result of the GAO report, the US Senate recently passed an amendment that would delay the implementation of these rules for the land border by 17 months- until June 1, 2009 (Alberts 2006). This amendment is awaiting approval by the House of Representatives. The Harper government has been clear that the law will still take effect, but that this delay gives Canadians more time to develop an implementation plan.

The WHTI sparked great debate on either side of the issue. Those against the new ID requirements cite economic costs, privacy concerns, and loss of human rights. Economic concerns over ID card requirements to cross the Canada/US border involve the loss of cross-border travel and the discouragement of trade, tourism and commerce. Many believe these travel document requirements will reduce spontaneous travel across the border and severely hurt the economy. The cost of obtaining a Canadian passport is \$87 for adults age 16 and over, \$37 for children 3-15, and \$22 for children under 3 (Passport Office 2006). This means it would cost a family of 4 approximately \$250 to acquire proper documentation to cross the Canada/US border. Similarly, the cost of passports in the US is more than \$350. Only 39% of Canadians currently have a passport, and this percentage is lower in the United States (estimates range from 25-34%) (Ferguson 2006).

Many individuals also see benefits in having the cards, such as improved security and quicker lines for regular border traffic. Many companies also have a vested financial interest in the creation and implementation of national ID cards. Those with the most to gain would be commercial interests, such as biometrics, document security and data management industries. If a card was introduced nationwide to every citizen, this could create billions of dollars of revenue for these industries. These companies could be involved in card manufacturing, setting up and maintaining databases, network infrastructure, distribution of card readers and scanners (CIPPIC 2003).

After the WHTI, several new identity card document laws were introduced in the US. In June of 2005 the US Congress approved the Real ID Act, established by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which requires state motor vehicle agencies in the US to use a “common machine-readable technology” and other federal ID standards in driver’s licenses by 2008, but it is not clear what these technologies will be. The requirements passed in this legislation were an attempt to create a secure ID card that can

be used as an alternative to passports for crossing borders. It was designed to be cheaper and easier to obtain than a passport, and would require the additional collection of biometric information and a computer chip. There is currently no indication that Canada will implement changes to drivers' licenses like the US. However, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord are both advocating for drivers' licenses with enhanced security features to be introduced as an alternative to passports. They claim this will be a more affordable alternative to passports.

NEXUS and FAST (Free and Secure Trade) programs were introduced in the United States for American commuters and truckers who frequently crossed the Canada/US border. It is estimated that only 1 percent of Americans that cross the Canadian border actually participate in these programs and they have been found to be as costly and time consuming as passports (Freeman et al 2006). The US also introduced the PASS (People Access Security Services) card, another less expensive alternative for US citizens to prove their citizenship when re-entering the US- instead of obtaining a passport or driver's license. The details of this proposed legislation have also not been worked out, including whether PASS cards will replace NEXUS and FAST cards and what their cost will be.

Recently, the current US Administration has been enforcing its southern border with Mexico. This has included passing legislation to build an 11,000 km security fence and sending 6,000 National Guard soldiers to seal the border to prevent illegal immigration. Initially this legislation included proposals for construction of a security fence along the Canadian border, which was struck before reaching the Senate. In May 2006, President Bush reassured Canadians that he will not be deploying troops or building security fences along the Canadian/US border. He claims that he wants a new ID document that will not be too restrictive and hamper trade and tourism involved in cross-border travel, but that will be informational, and that the US want a border security solution that is compatible with US and Canada's needs (Alberts 2006).

In Canada, it is more difficult to uncover what developments have been made since the passing of the WHTI. It appears that the government is considering the use of various biometric security features within identity documents. The Passport Office is pilot testing the use of facial-scan photo-matching technology, which they claim is to screen and prevent terrorists from obtaining travel documents. The technology involves using a computer program that compares facial images with thousands of others within a database to find possible matches. Numerous reports have indicated that this technology has questionable effectiveness (Bronskill 2005).

The Canadian Press also uncovered documents through Access to Information requests that the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) has commissioned private consultants to submit internal government reports in March of 2005 on security techniques that measure physical characteristics including scanning of face, finger, hand iris, voice or signature. These biometrics technologies are being tested as measures to enhance security, create cost savings and ease of use. The report found many disadvantages to the facial-scan systems, including: questionable accuracy, use of disguises fooled the computer, variable effectiveness in matching based on the ethnicity of the person, and public association of the technique with criminal photo taking (Bronskill 2005). The benefits of the technology were also cited, including the lack of intrusiveness of the technology and the potential to use existing databases of photos.

Photos are also widely used in identification documents and accepted by the public. Preliminary tests of the facial-scan matching technology only correctly matched 75-90 percent of the images, due to image quality and number of images in the database. This raises concern for false positives. The report also points out that the US government is pushing for use of the facial-scan technology in identification applications, despite doubts of its effectiveness. The Federal Privacy commissioner has been consulted on the use of this technology. The report also stresses the importance of protecting personal information when using biometrics and that biometrics technologies are always problematic for a small number of people who have bodily features that cannot be measured (ibid).

What is interesting in all of these developments is that there remains the underlying assumption by politicians that identity cards are inevitable in Canada. Instead of protesting against their implementation, the Canadian government is asking for more time to make the changes required by US authorities. Ultimately, the United States is deciding what form our identity cards will take, and when they will be required.

Public Opinion Polls on National ID Cards in Canada

As Oscar Gandy points out (2003), government and business often sponsor the collection of public opinion polling as a means of assessing public will and to influence policies and laws in the country on a range of issues. With an awareness of these concerns, the results from the various surveys on the topic of national ID cards are highlighted in the next section, keeping in mind where possible the context of the debates around the issues addressed, the influence of the survey sponsors, methodology, question types and wording, intentions and the character of results. The polls highlighted are not meant to be exhaustive, but a cross-section of the types of surveys taking place on national ID card issues from 2001 to the present. It is difficult to obtain the original questionnaire and raw data from these surveys, thus in most instances the published summaries of findings must be relied upon. The methodology of these surveys can be found in the footnotes below, where they were available. In general, most findings presented in public opinion polls on national identity cards indicate that the majority of Canadians support their implementation. However, when examining the design and order of questions, as well as how the results were reported, it becomes very clear that these results have been strongly influenced by the interests supporting these surveys.

Public opinion polls conducted immediately following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 led to extreme differences in opinion across the board. It is a well-documented effect that a serious event and can sway opinions for a short time. For example, Ekos Research Associates conducted a survey on ‘Security, Sovereignty and Continentalism: Canadian Perspectives on September 11’ on September 27th 2001. At this time they found that 77% of Canadian respondents agreed with the statement “I think that our lives will be deeply and permanently changed by these terrorist attacks” (Ekos 2001)². This study also found that 59% of respondents would not mind giving up some of their national sovereignty to

² This was a Canadian national random sample involving a telephone survey of 1,228 members of the general public. Results were considered valid within +/-2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Data was statistically weighted to ensure regional, gender and age composition would reflect the Canadian population according to Census data.

increase the overall security of North America (ibid). Likewise, in October of 2001 an Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll³ released findings that the majority of respondents (58%) believed that “terrorism threats to individual Canadians currently outweigh the protection of their individual rights and freedom and due process of law -- and that everything should be done to provide the police and intelligence officials with the tools they say they need to protect collective safety of Canadians against terrorism” (Ipsos-Reid 2001). Thirty-eight percent of Canadians did not agree with these statements. This poll also found that while half of respondents thought it would be necessary to give up some of their civil liberties (46% do not believe it would be necessary), they would not agree to officials intercepting their mail (74%), monitoring their telephone and email (71%) or credit card and financial transactions (61%) without being told (ibid).

In 2001, during this time of heightened security concerns, public support for national identity cards in Canada was found to be extremely high. When asked whether or not they supported or opposed various initiatives to be applied to all Canadians, not just newly arrived immigrants or those awaiting to obtain their citizenship, 80% of respondents supported this statement “You would submit yourself to providing fingerprints for a national identity card that would be carried on your person at all times to show to police or security officials on request”, and only 19% opposed (Ipsos-Reid 2001, see chart 1 in the appendix). This is the highest level of support reported within the polls examined. Breakdowns by region, gender and age were provided for these responses. The most support for this provision was from Atlantic regions (87%), Quebec (82%), and Ontario (81%), with Saskatchewan/ Manitoba, British Columbia and Alberta not far behind (at 76 and 77%). Older respondents were more likely to support these provisions (84%), followed by middle aged (82%) and younger people (75%). More women (85%) than men (76%) would submit fingerprints for ID cards in this poll (ibid).

During the height of the 2003 debates in Canada over introducing a national identity card, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) commissioned Ekos to conduct a national public opinion poll on biometrics and national ID cards (Ekos 2003)⁴. This poll was designed to test how receptive the public was towards adopting ID cards despite privacy concerns. The findings of this survey were presented at the CIC sponsored conference mentioned above. This survey found that the majority of respondents supported the idea of the federal government issuing ID cards to Canadians⁵. Sixty per cent supported the idea of voluntary ID cards, while 59% supported issuing mandatory cards. This support was higher for cards that contained biometrics, such as fingerprints or eye scans, with 71% support for voluntary cards, and 66% for mandatory cards. However, this increase in support can be explained by the leading wording of the question; “What if a new national ID card contained a copy of the cardholder’s fingerprint or eye scan *to ensure that the card could not be used by anyone else?*” (Ekos 2003, my emphasis). The italicized part of the question inherently implies the success of

³ This poll was conducted between October 2nd and 4th, 2001 with a randomly selected sample of 1,000 Canadian adults. The results are considered accurate within +/-3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The data was statistically weighted to reflect the regional, age, and gender composition of the Canadian population according to 1996 Canadian Census data.

⁴ Conducted in February of 2003, methods...

⁵ When asked, “Would you support or oppose the idea of the federal government issuing [voluntary/mandatory] ID Cards to Canadians?”

using biometric technology within national identity cards; this section of the question should have been eliminated to obtain a less biased response. (See chart 2)

These same questions were placed at the end of the survey and elicited 10 to 15% higher support for ID cards and ID cards with biometrics, which clearly indicates the influence of other questions asked throughout the survey (see chart 2). Participants at the CIC conference raised methodological concerns about this survey⁶. Interestingly, in 2004 the Government of Canada's Privy Council Office presented review of survey findings on 'Public Opinion on Privacy Issues' to the ADM Privacy Committee. They reported the findings of this Ekos 2003 study that Canadians appear to strongly support national ID cards, but claim that further analysis reveals that this seems to be when the card is not actually used, because respondents do not see the card as being 'for them' (Government 2004). They found that concern over privacy issues increases the more that Canadians see themselves as personally affected (ibid).

Ipsos-Reid also conducted a survey on national ID cards in Canada and the US later in 2003, and reported Canadian support for national identity cards⁷. When asked, "Due to increased concerns about terrorism, everyone living in [Canada/the US] should have a government-issued national identification card that they must carry on them at all times and present when asked to by police or members of other Canadian security forces. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?" Ipsos-Reid reported that 47% of Canadians strongly (22%) or somewhat agree (25%) with this statement, compared to 40% of Americans (strongly agree 19%, somewhat agree 21%). However, 42% of Canadian respondents, and 59% of American respondents also somewhat or strongly disagreed (37% of Canadians strongly disagree, 15% somewhat disagree, 14% of Americans somewhat disagree, 45% of Americans strongly disagree) (Ipsos-Reid 2003, see chart 3). Thus, there are almost as many respondents in disagreement with issuing national identity cards, and the greatest response of Canadians is of those who strongly disagree at 37%.

EDS Canada conducted a *Privacy and Identity Management Survey* over the internet in partnership with Ipsos-Reid in 2005⁸. EDS is a company that provides a wide range of identity management solutions for information-technology business, including the use of biometric technologies. Their survey focussed on Canadian consumers' expectations for security of information they provide to businesses over the phone or internet. They indicate in a white paper on their findings that "As the need for privacy, security and strong identification management is stressed in virtually every aspect of our lives, it becomes increasingly important for organizations to shoulder the responsibility of

⁶ See Elia Zureik 2004, "Globalization of Personal Data Project- International Survey Concept Paper", January, p.2.

⁷ Methods.

⁸ This study involved the same survey being administered to two separate consumer groups over the internet between January 13 and 17, 2005 and targeted a broad demographic distribution of the Canadian population. Group A was asked to respond to questions as if the organization in question was one that they had a pre-existing trusted relationship. Group B were asked to respond as if the organization in question was one that they had no pre-existing trusting relationship. This was to determine whether consumers provide different amounts and types of information to these organizations. The total number of valid consumer survey responses was 1,735, with 887 in group A and 848 in group B. This study also provided the demographic distributions of respondents by region, income group, age, internet experience, gender and household composition. Results are accurate plus or minus 2.4 19 times out of 20.

addressing customer's requirements in those areas" (EDS 2005,1). With these goals in mind, they carried out their consumer survey and reported that the results from this survey showed that the public strongly support a private and secure credential with biometrics to provide a high degree of identification/ authentication. They also found that consumers have a strong expectation for the security of information that they provide to businesses over the phone and internet, and are willing to provide more personal information to businesses they trust than ones that they have no prior relationship or are not familiar with (ibid, 4).

Not surprisingly, the EDS survey has the most blatantly biased question wording and findings. One of their main findings was that Canadians appear to strongly support the use of a private and secure credential. The question wording was very leading: "A private and secure credential *is an effective way to protect your information*. Would you prefer to have one private and secure verification credential that will be accepted by all organizations to verify who you are before providing access to your records or systems?" (EDS 2005, 8, my emphasis). Sixty-two percent of survey respondents answered yes, only 17% responded no and 22%, a high percentage, were unsure (Ibid, see chart 4).

Similarly, EDS found that Canadians were strongly in support of biometrics to deliver both security and convenience. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents indicated an acceptance of the use of biometrics, 16% found them unacceptable and 19% were unsure (EDS 2005). Fingerprints and iris scanning had the greatest acceptance at 40% and 34%. Of those that accepted biometrics, when asked for the reasons to use biometrics, the majority (89%) cited increased security, 54% chose convenience and 39% wanted to speed up their transactions. Of the 12% that opposed the use of biometrics, 43% were fearful of the information being accessed by criminals, 32% were suspicious about how biometrics work and 28% did not believe in their accuracy. The interests of EDS are further emphasized when they suggest that these concerns "are likely to be alleviated by the increasing use of biometrics in various national security programs" (Ibid, 8). From these results, EDS claims that customers strongly support a single identification credential and that biometrics would be a highly acceptable complement to provide authentication. Clearly, the business motivations of EDS strongly influenced the question design and reporting of results. They conclude their report with tips for consumers and chief privacy officers about how to protect the information of clients and how EDS can provide these requirements.

Another business-oriented survey was recently conducted by TNS, a custom market-information company, and TRUSTe, an online privacy provider, in March and May of 2006 on the topic of national identity cards⁹. This study also reported strong public support for national ID cards with biometrics. This survey found that 7 in 10 Canadians would support a new national identity card issued to every citizen (69%), while 2 in 10 (22%) would oppose it, 1 in 10 were undecided (Kapica 2005). When asked the same question, only half of Americans responded that they would support a new national ID card, and one third would be against it, 17% were undecided. They claim that Canadians expressed slightly more support for including biometric information on

⁹ This was a survey of 1,157 Canadian and 1,003 American internet users. The survey was conducted between March 17-25 in the US and between May 26 and 30 in Canada. Survey results are representative of the online US and Canadian adult population and are considered accurate to within 3 percentage points (3.1 in the US and 2.9 in Canada) 19 times out of 20.

government-issued documents and less support for private-sector uses of biometric data. However, although Canadians were seen as more in favour of biometric ID in government-issued documents, they were worried that the costs might be prohibitive and that governments could abuse the system (ibid).

This survey uncovered strong support for biometrics in identity documents because the question linked the use of biometrics with the importance of identity documents. For example, the poll found that 85% of Canadians and 79% of Americans support the idea that “the passport is the most important identifying document and therefore the most appropriate for adding biometric identifiers” (Kapica 2005). Other than passports, other identity documents that received strong support for including biometric data were drivers’ licenses, social insurance cards (social security cards in the US), and provincial health insurance cards. Reporting on the study claimed that the public perceives biometric data, such as fingerprints and retinal scans, as a way to help prevent fraud and id theft, but the question wording was not available. This survey was conducted while governments in both countries are planning to introduce biometrics into ID cards.

The most recent poll that addresses biometric identification was carried out by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and was reported on in the UK. This poll is part of an annual tracking to assess public opinion on immigration policy¹⁰. The poll found that overall, support for immigration levels is steady, while in recent years there has been increased concern (by several percentage points) over the use of fraudulent identity documents. Importantly, the poll findings indicate that Canadians show a limited understanding of biometrics, with 38% of respondents claiming they know ‘nothing’ about biometrics, and only 2% being able to define fingerprint analysis and eye scans as biometrics. However, respondents supported government use of biometrics for national security- to prevent prospective immigrants from using fraudulent identity to enter the country, or for convenience when travelling. The majority of respondents in this poll said that protecting national interest is more important than protecting privacy (Workpermit 2006). However, the poll questions were not available for review.

It becomes very apparent that the question wording, placement, types of survey- public or private funded, reporting and world events strongly impact the outcome of results on the above questions about national identity cards. The majority of these polls were used by various organizations and government that have a stake in the outcome of the national identity card debates to provide evidence of public support for issuing national identity cards. While almost all of these surveys attempted to obtain samples of respondents that were representative of the demographic variables of the Canadian population, very few breakdowns in results based on these factors were analysed.

The GPD Survey Results

The international survey on privacy and surveillance conducted under the umbrella of the Globalization of Personal Data Project is a unique source for polling data on national ID cards. The GPD is a network of researchers that investigate the flows of personal information in various contexts and what the social, political and economic

¹⁰ There was a margin of error of 2.8%.

consequences of these flows are. One of the main aims of the GPD project is to investigate the responses of ordinary citizens to the increased travels of their personal information in all aspects of their lives, as employees, consumers, citizens and travellers. The international survey was designed to reveal complex cross-cultural attitudes to issues relating to privacy and surveillance. Construction of the survey instrument was an intensive process that included focus group interviews in the nine countries of the survey: Canada, US, Mexico, Brazil, China, Japan, France, Hungary, and Spain. The focus group results were summarized and analyzed and extensive background reports were prepared in each of the nine countries. Cross-cultural comparative work on values and attitudes were examined. Using all of this background information Elia Zureik, the lead researcher for the international survey, oversaw the design of the questionnaire in consultation with numerous other researchers in the field. This is the first survey of this magnitude to be conducted on the topic within nine countries and is unique in that it originates in an academic setting, without business or government influence.

In constructing the questionnaire, one of the issues to be addressed was the topic of national identity cards. This was due to the increasing relevance of national ID cards in surveillance and security studies¹¹. In the end it was decided that not only a question of whether respondents would support the introduction of a national identity card, but also how their opinions would change if they were aware that this meant there would be a database of information stored about them. The advantage of this survey is that results from these questions can be examined among numerous other relevant topics within the survey, including trust, information sharing by government and demographic variables. The section below examines some of these findings.

Question 9: Government-Issued National ID Cards

Question 9 regarding the acceptance of a national identity card asks: “Some have suggested that everyone should have a government-issued national ID card that they must carry on them at all times and present it when asked by police or other security forces. To what extent would you agree or disagree with this idea?” Just over half of respondents in Canada (52.9%) agreed with this statement, with 22.6% choosing strongly agree, and 30.3%, the largest number of respondents, choosing somewhat agree. Just over one-third (37.8%) disagreed with this statement, more of whom strongly disagreed (23.2%) than somewhat disagreed (14.6%). Almost ten percent (9.3%) selected ‘don’t know/not sure’. Thus, a slim majority of Canadian respondents agreed with the idea of a government-issued national ID card, with most of those in agreement only somewhat agreeing while those who disagreed were more likely to strongly disagree. (See chart 5)

Demographic variables also reveal some variations in results. When broken down regionally, some interesting trends emerge in response to question 9¹². The strongest support for identity cards comes from Quebec and Manitoba/Saskatchewan. Just over sixty percent of Quebec respondents agreed with the idea of national ID cards (61.8%),

¹¹ At one point there were more than two questions on the topic in the survey, however due to space limitations and the great spectrum of topics that were desired to be addressed these questions were almost cut! Thankfully, several researchers fought for the inclusion of these questions on the final version of the survey.

¹² When viewing demographic breakdowns in results it must be kept in mind that demographic variables were weighted to Canadian Census data, meaning there is not equal representation within each category.

almost equally divided among the strongly (28.2%) or somewhat (33.6%) agreeing categories. This is followed closely by Manitoba/Saskatchewan (59.4% being in support of ID cards), who had fewer strongly in agreement (24.6%) than somewhat agreeing (34.8%). The Atlantic Provinces were the next greatest supporter of ID cards, at 56.3%, with 26.3% strongly agreeing, and 30% somewhat agreeing. Followed by Ontario at 50.8%, of which 19.2% strongly agreed and 31.6% strongly agreed. The strongest opposition to identity cards came from Alberta and British Columbia. Just over half of Albertan respondents (54.5%) were in disagreement with question 9, with more in strong disagreement (31.7%) than in somewhat disagreement (16.8%) that there should be a government-issued national identity card. Under half of BC residents (44.7%) were in opposition to the card, with 28.5% strongly disagreeing and 16.2% somewhat disagreeing. Ontario (40.6%) and Atlantic Canada (37.6%) also had significant numbers in disagreement with the cards. (See chart 6)

When breaking down responses by age, very slight differences emerge. The strongest age predictor in response is that those over 65 were the most likely to be in agreement that everyone should have a government-issued national ID card, at 64% either strongly (28.3%) or somewhat (36.5%) agreeing with this idea. This was followed by 18-24 year olds (53.5%), 45-54 year olds (53.1%), and 35-44 year olds (51.7%). The age group most likely to disagree with the ID cards was the 55-64 year olds, at 46.2%, followed by 25-34 year olds (41.7%) and 35-44 year olds (39.9%). Therefore, the oldest (especially) and the youngest (slightly) age categories are most in agreement with the idea of a national ID card. (See chart 7)

In terms of gender, there were almost negligible differences in response. Somewhat more men than women strongly (men 25.3%, women 20.3%) or somewhat (men 32.2%, women 28.5%) agreed with the idea of ID cards, while slightly more women than men somewhat (women 15.1%, men 14%) or strongly (women 23.9%, men 22.4%) disagreed with the idea. (See chart 8)

There were also no significant findings in relation to ethnicity in response to question 9. Those who identified themselves as of mixed ethnic background and as Asian/Pacific Islanders were the most in agreement with a government-issued national ID card, at approximately 60 percent. This was followed by respondents who identified themselves as Caucasian/White (53%), another population group (52.3%) and Black/African (50%). The strongest disagreement with the cards came from those in another population group (41.7%), Caucasian/White (37.8%) and Black and mixed ethnic backgrounds (33.3% each). The highest non-response rates were from those identified as North American Indian Inuit (21.4%) and Black/African (16.7%). (See chart 9)

Results from question 9 were cross-tabulated with results from question 5, which asked: "When it comes to the privacy of personal information, what level of trust do you have that the Canadian government is striking the right balance between national security and individual rights?" This comparison was made in order to determine how the level of trust in government protection of individual rights influenced responses to whether or not the government should issue a national identity card. A strong pattern emerged when cross-tabulating these results. Those that had very high or reasonably high levels of trust that the government is striking the right balance between national security and individual rights also agreed strongly or somewhat with the idea that the government should issue a

national identity card. Similarly, those who had fairly low and very low levels of trust in the government striking the right balance also disagreed somewhat or strongly that there should be a government-issued ID card. (See chart 10)

Even stronger relationships were found between results were found when comparing Question 9 and 17. Question 17 asks: “The government of Canada has enacted laws aimed at protecting national security. To what extent do you believe laws aimed at protecting national security are intrusive upon personal privacy?” Those that believed laws aimed at protecting national security are highly intrusive upon personal privacy also strongly disagreed with the idea that everyone should have a government-issued national ID card, at 44.1%. And the opposite cross tabulation was also true, those who strongly agreed with the idea of a government-issued ID card also believed national security laws are not intrusive at all on personal privacy, at 49.1%. This clearly shows that individuals that are concerned about laws to protect national security intruding on personal privacy are opposed to issuing a national ID card and those that are not concerned at all about laws protecting national security intruding on personal privacy are in agreement with the idea of a national ID card. (See chart 11)

Comparing results of question 9 with question 18 also shows corresponding results. Question 18 asks: “To what extent do you think it is appropriate for a government agency to share citizen’s personal information with third parties, such as other government agencies, foreign governments and the privacy sector?” Those that believe it is the government’s right under all circumstances, or if the citizen is suspected of wrongdoing, to share citizen’s personal information with other government agencies, foreign governments and the private sector also strongly or somewhat agree with government-issued national ID cards. Respondents that strongly disagree with government-issued ID cards are also more likely to say that it is only appropriate for a government to share citizen’s personal information with other government departments, foreign governments and the private sector under no circumstances or if the government has the expressed consent of the citizen. (See chart 12-14)

Question 10: Effectiveness of Protecting Personal Information in a National ID Card Database

Question ten in the GPD survey dealt with the effectiveness of government at protecting citizen’s national identity information held within a database. The question was asked as follows: “In order to put national ID cards into use, the government would need to have a national database containing personal information on all citizens. This information could include address, gender, race, and tax information. How effective do you feel efforts to protect this type of information from disclosure would be?” Just over forty percent (42.9%) of all Canadian respondents believed this would be effective. Of this number, there were far fewer respondents who felt strongly that efforts to protect this information from disclosure would be very effective (10%) and more feeling that they would be somewhat effective (32.8%). While just under forty percent (37.4%) found it would be not very effective (25%) or not effective at all (12.4%). A high percentage (19.7%), almost 1 in 5, answered don’t know or not sure. Therefore, respondents were more clustered around the middle range answers to this question, indicating that they were not as confident that personal information held in national ID card government databases would be protected from disclosure. (See chart 15)

In terms of regional differences in responses, the Atlantic Provinces were the most likely to agree that efforts would be very (8.8%) or somewhat (40%) effective at protecting this type of information from disclosure, at almost half of respondents (48.8%). This was closely trailed by Manitoba/Saskatchewan (44.9%) and Quebec (44.6%). Interestingly, Ontario, Alberta and BC respondents were equally split between agreement and disagreement with this statement, 41.8% for Ontario, 40.6% for Alberta and 40% for BC. (See chart 16)

Only minimal variations in response to question 9 emerged for age breakdowns. Those 25-34 were the most likely to believe that efforts to protect information from disclosure would be very or somewhat effective (67.8%), followed by 18-24 year olds (62.6%) and 45-54 year olds (59.3%). Those most likely to believe these efforts were not very effective or not effective at all were 35-44 year olds (36.7%), 18-24 year olds (34.8%) and 45-54 year olds (33.7%). The most notable age predictor was 18-24 year olds believing the efforts to protect databases would be somewhat effective at 43.6%. (See chart 17)

Again, there were minimal differences in response to question 10 by gender. Yet, the same pattern emerged with slightly more men than women choosing very effective (men 24.5%, women 25.5%) and somewhat effective (men 38.3%, women 31.8%), and more women than men believing these efforts would be not very effective (women 15.9%, men 13.4%). More women (8.4%) than men (5.6%) responded 'don't know/not sure'. (See chart 18)

Half of those who identified themselves as Black/African were the most in agreement that efforts to protect databases from disclosure would be very or somewhat effective (50%), followed by 48.5% in another population group, and 42.9% of Caucasian/ White. The Black/African group was also the most in disagreement at 41.6%, followed by mixed ethnic backgrounds at 40.6% and in another population group at 39.4%. The most significant discovery in examining the ethnicity of respondents on question 10 is the high non-response rates from those who identified themselves as North American Indian/Inuit (35.7%), Asian/Pacific Islander (30%) and mixed ethnic backgrounds (21.9%). (See chart 19)

Again strong connections in responses were made when cross tabulating results from question 10 with question 5. Very high and reasonably high levels of trust that the Canadian government is striking the right balance between national security and individual rights corresponds with beliefs that efforts to protect personal information in a national government databases from disclosure would be very or somewhat effective. At the same time, fairly low and very low levels of trust correlate to beliefs that efforts to protect information from disclosure would be not very effective or not effective at all. The strongest connections were with very high and reasonably high levels of trust and belief that efforts would be somewhat effective. (See chart 20)

When comparing question 17 responses with question 10, these two questions do not have the same strength as they do with question 9. Those that found laws aimed at protecting national security intrusive on privacy also believed that efforts to protect national government ID card databases would be effective. The strongest comparisons can be made between those believing laws are somewhat intrusive and those believing databases would be somewhat effective (45.6%). Though, respondents claiming that laws are not intrusive also found efforts to protect databases would be effective. There was

also a relationship between those who agreed database protection would not be effective and those who agreed laws are not intrusive. The strongest comparison can be made with not very effective and not very intrusive at 27.7%. This demonstrates that individuals were not as sure of their responses. (See chart 21)

A relationship is also shown with question 18 and 10. Respondents that believe it is the government's rights under all circumstances, or if the citizen is suspected of wrongdoing, to share citizen's personal information with other government agencies, foreign governments and the private sector also claims databases will be very or somewhat effective from disclosure. Those that believe databases are not very effective or not effective at all from protecting personal information from disclosure are also more likely to say that it is only appropriate for a government to share citizen's personal information with other government departments, foreign governments and the private sector under no circumstances or if the government has the expressed consent of the citizen. (See chart 22-24)

Preliminary Conclusions

Thus, in examining the GPD survey results in relation to various demographic variables and questions related to government trust and information sharing, a more nuanced picture of public attitudes in Canada towards national ID cards emerges. Although a slim majority of citizens support the introduction of a government-issued national identity card, a significant number also oppose it. When asked about storing national ID card information in a government database belief in the effectiveness of protecting personal information is not as strong. The Canadian public becomes much less sure of their responses to ID cards when databases are involved. This shows that the public needs more information on what national identity cards would entail, in order to better understand the risks involved in storing their information.

Demographic variables reveal considerable variation in results, especially by region, with the Quebec and Manitoba/Saskatchewan more in support of government-issued ID documents and BC and Alberta most objecting. There were some findings for age, with the oldest and youngest age groups in support of ID cards, and for ethnicity, with high non-response rates from North American Indian/Inuit, Asian/Pacific Islander and mixed ethnic backgrounds. Very minimal effects were found for gender, with men faintly more in support of ID cards and women more opposed. It is evident from GPD survey results that the most interesting finding is that citizen trust in government can be used as a great predictor in whether or not Canadians will support the introduction of a government-issued national ID card and whether or not their efforts to protect the database to protect this information will be effective. Further quantitative analysis is needed on the strength of these predictors.

It will be interesting to see if responses to the national ID questions elicit the same results cross-culturally, to determine if citizen trust is always the best informer of whether or not individuals agree that they would accept government-issued national identity cards. Additional study on how public responses would change for having biometric information stored on the cards would also be valuable.

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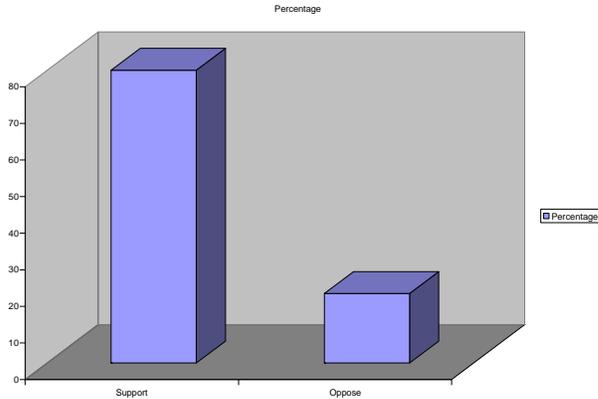
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**Appendix:
Canadian National ID Card Polls: Charts**

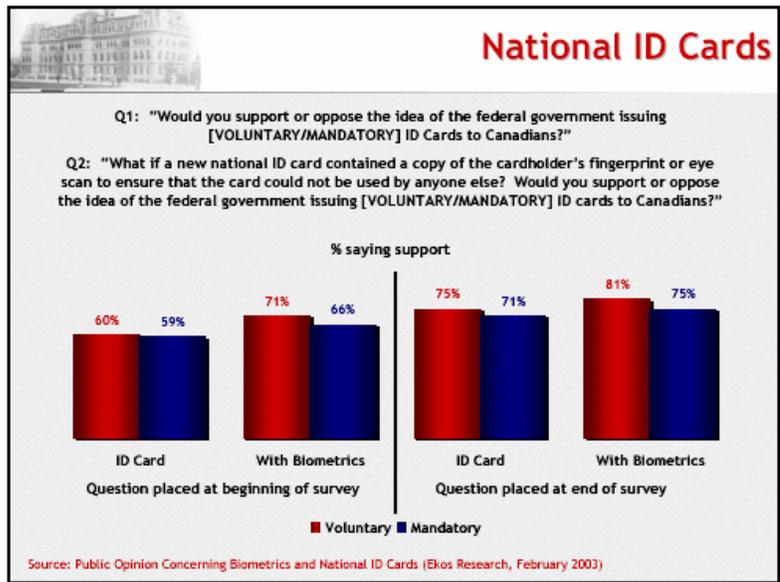
Chart 1: Ipsos-Reid 2001

Question: When asked whether or not they supported or opposed various initiatives to be applied to all Canadians, not just newly arrived immigrants or those awaiting citizenship, statement “You would submit yourself to providing fingerprints for a national identity card that would be carried on your person at all times to show to police or security officials on request”



Source: Chart reproduced from results found in: Ipsos-Reid/The Globe and Mail/CTV. (2001). Press Release: “Majority (58%) Say Terrorism Threats Outweigh the Protection of Individual Rights, Freedom and Due Process of Law”, October 5, 2001.

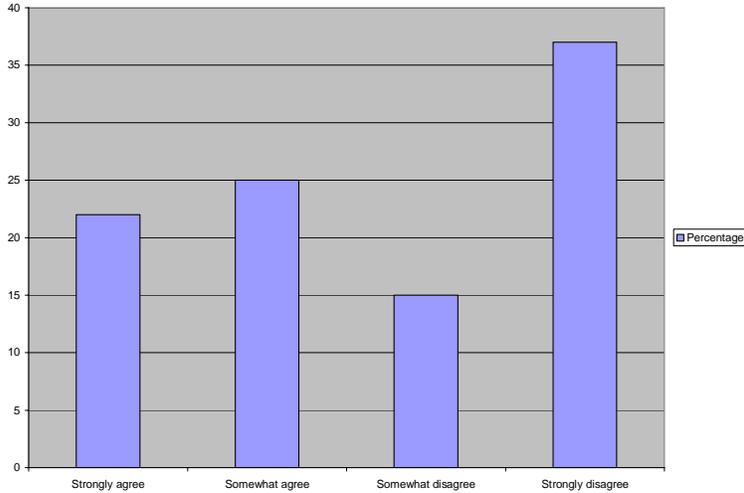
Chart 2: Ekos 2003



Source: Ekos Research Associates. (2004). *Public Opinion on Privacy Issues*. Commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and presented to the Privy Council Office.
Chart from: Government of Canada (2004). *Public Opinion on Privacy Issues: Presentation to the ADM Privacy Committee*, Privy Council Office, May 2004.

Chart 3: Ipsos-Reid 2003

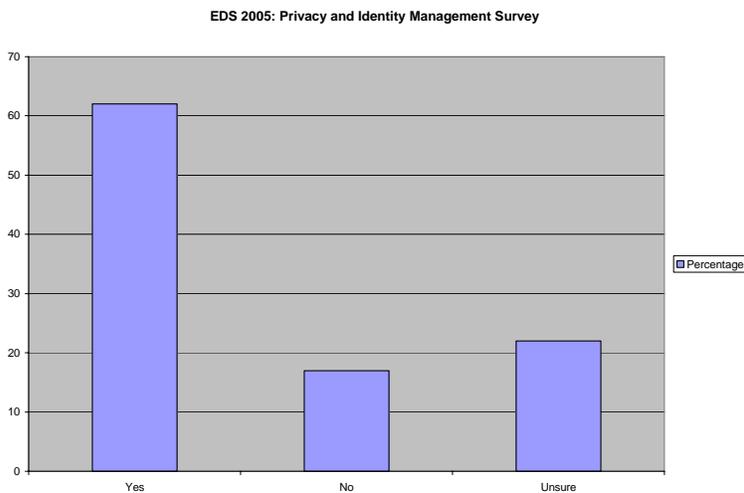
Question: “Due to increased concerns about terrorism, everyone living in Canada should have a government-issued national identification card that they must carry on them at all times and present when asked to by police or members of other Canadian security forces. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree?”



Source: Chart reproduced from results found in: Ipsos-Reid. (2003). National ID Cards, October 7-9.

Chart 4: EDS Canada 2005

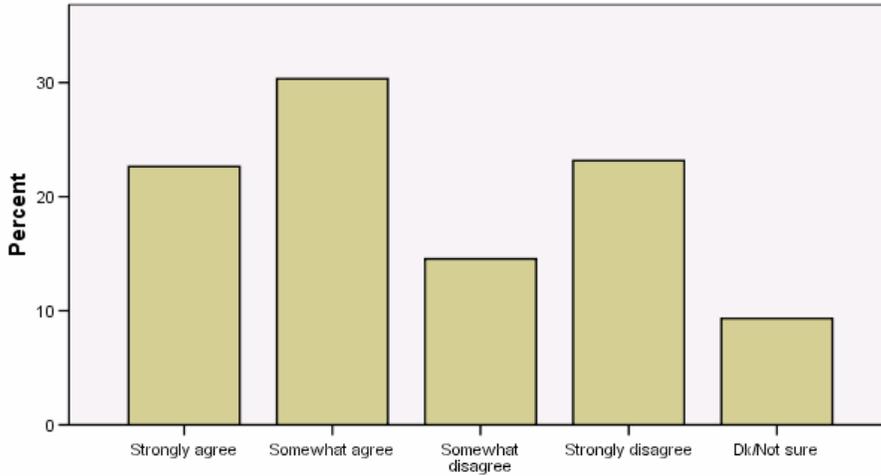
Question: “A private and secure credential is an effective way to protect your information. Would you prefer to have one private and secure verification credential that will be accepted by all organizations to verify who you are before providing access to your records or systems?”



Source: Chart reproduced from results found in: EDS Canada. (2005). *EDS Canada Privacy and Identity Management Survey: White Paper- Summary of Results and Findings*. In partnership with Ipsos-Reid, January 31 2005.

Chart 5: Canadian Results for Question 9 on GPD Survey

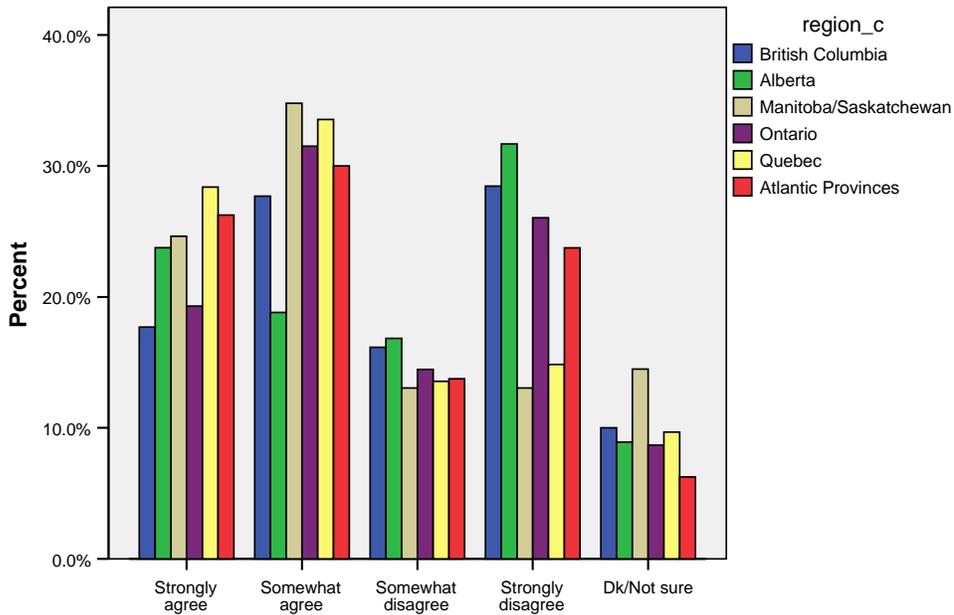
q9. Some have suggested that everyone should have a government-issued national ID card that they must carry on them at all times and



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Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 6: Regional Breakdown of Responses to Question 9



q9. Some have suggested that everyone should have a government-issued national ID card that they must carry on them at all times and

Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 7: Responses to Question 9 by Age

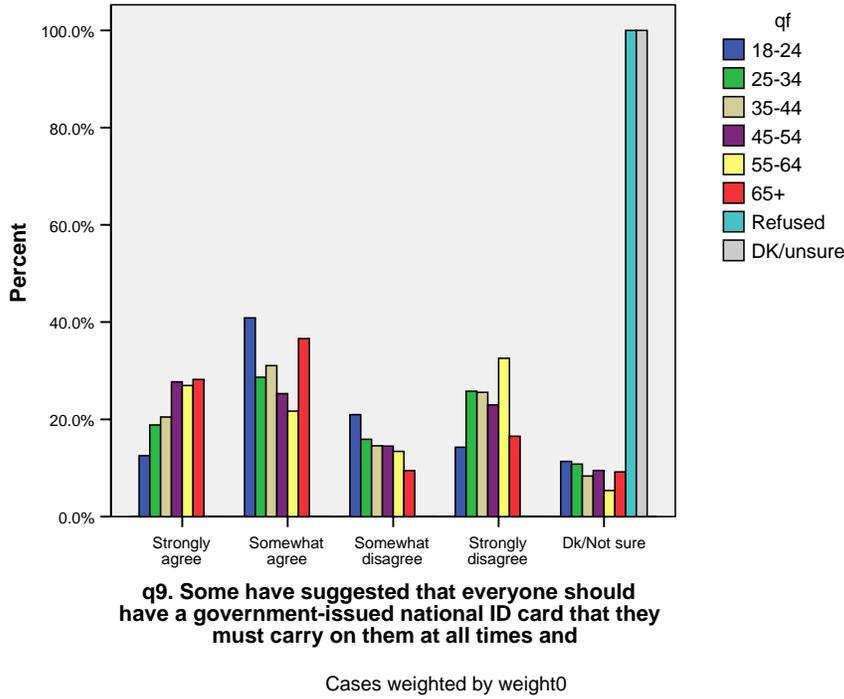


Chart 8: Responses to Question 9 by Gender

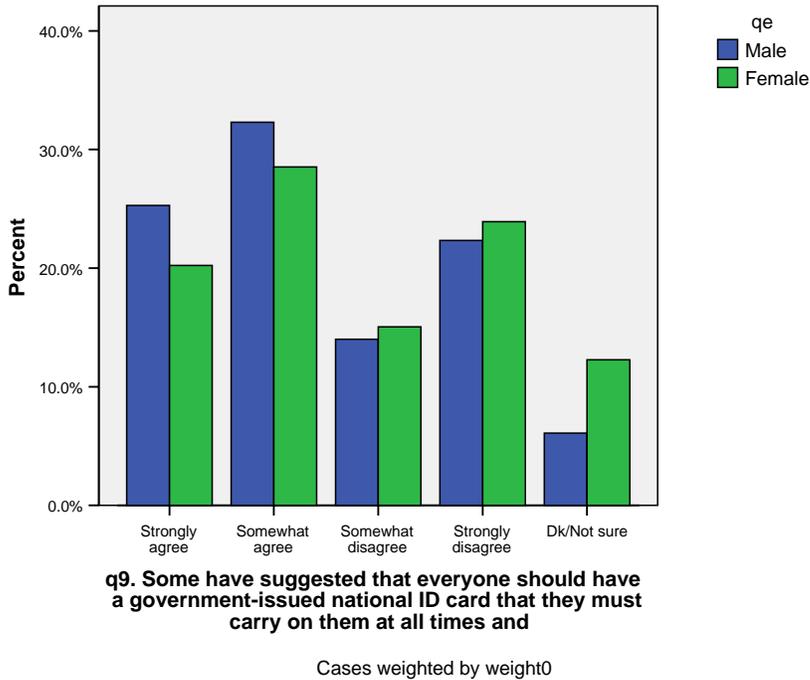
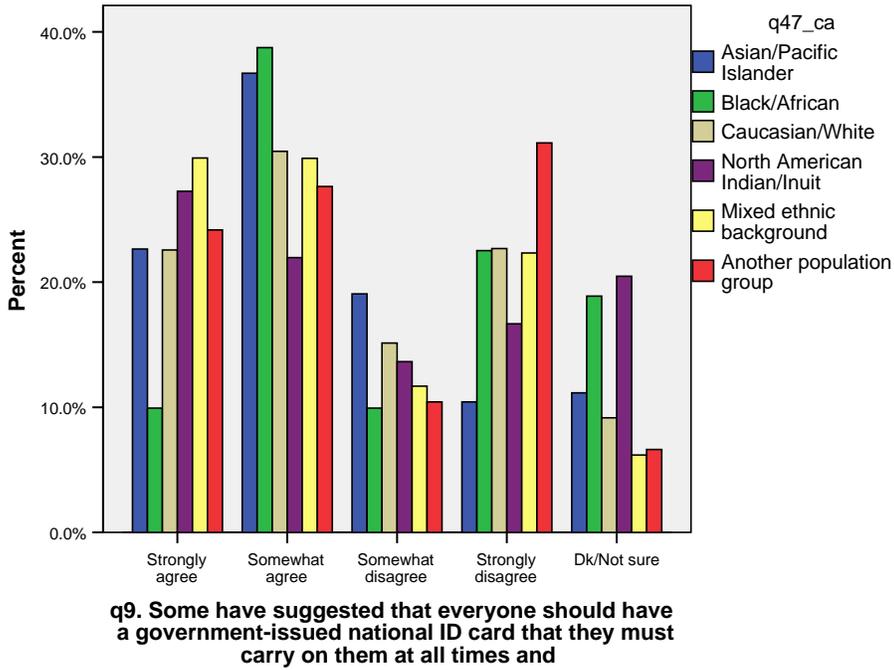
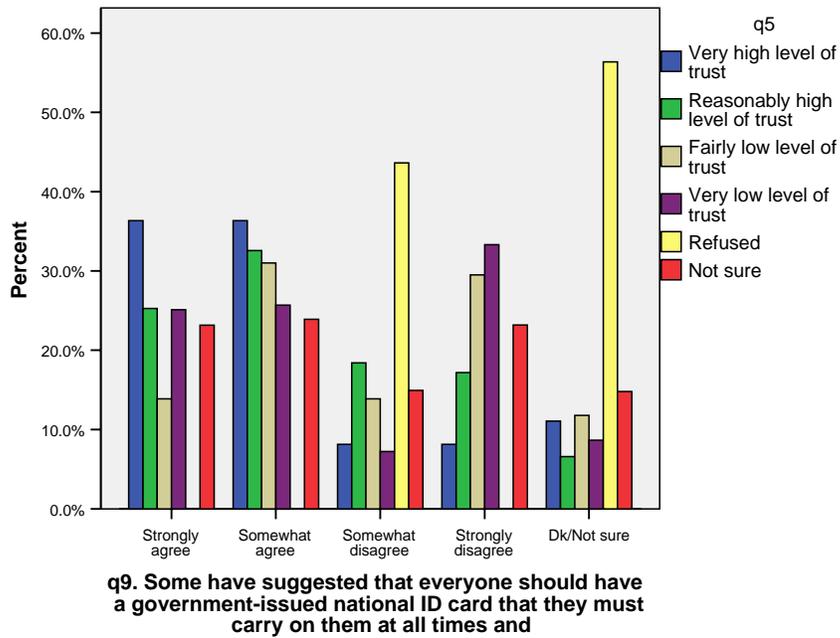


Chart 9: Responses to Question 9 by Ethnicity



Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 10: Cross-Tabulation of Question 9 and 5



Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 11: Cross-Tabulation of Question 9 and 17

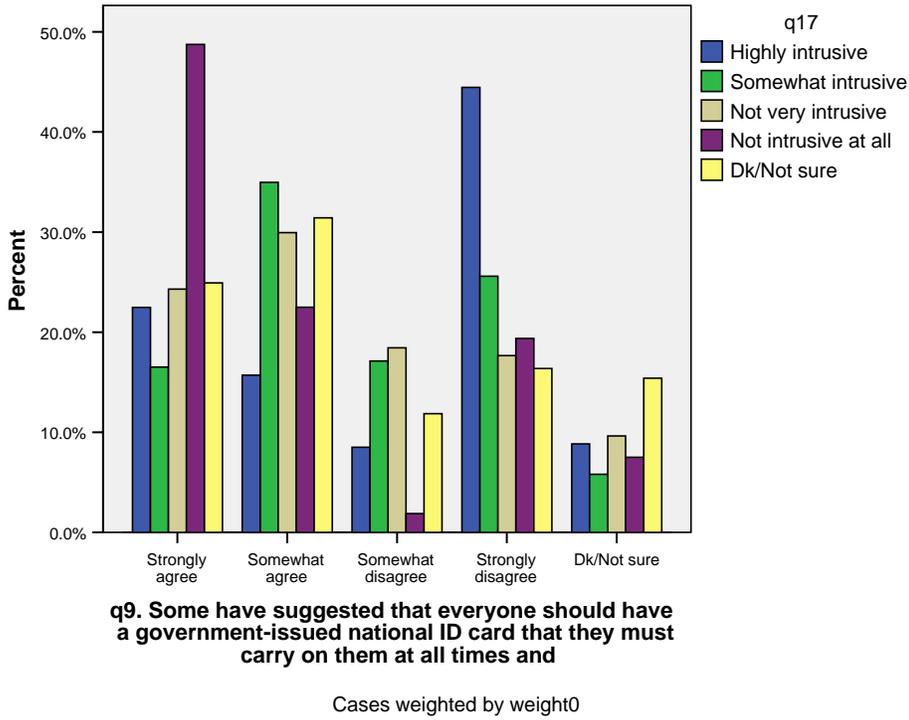


Chart 12: Cross-Tabulation of Question 9 and 18a

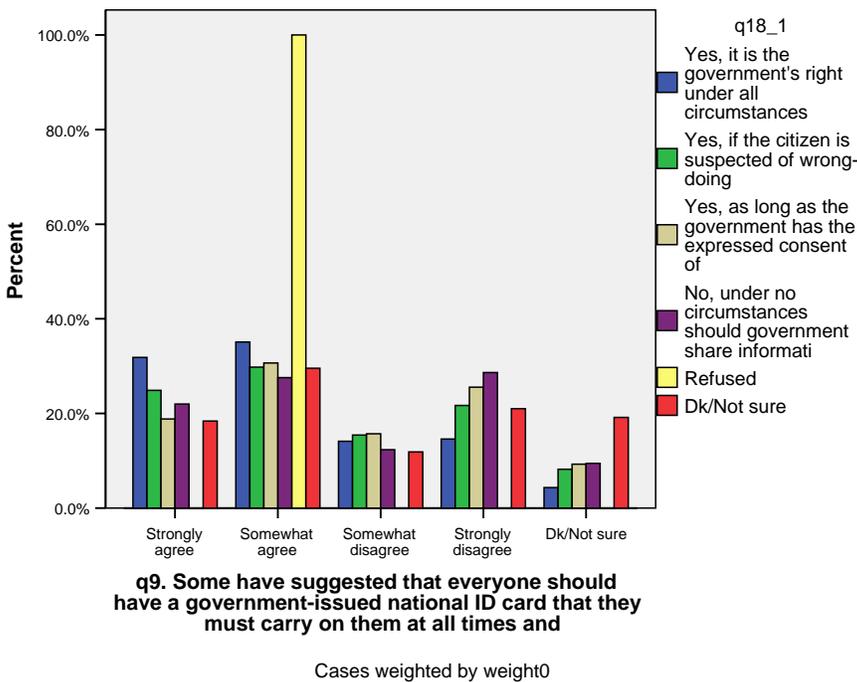
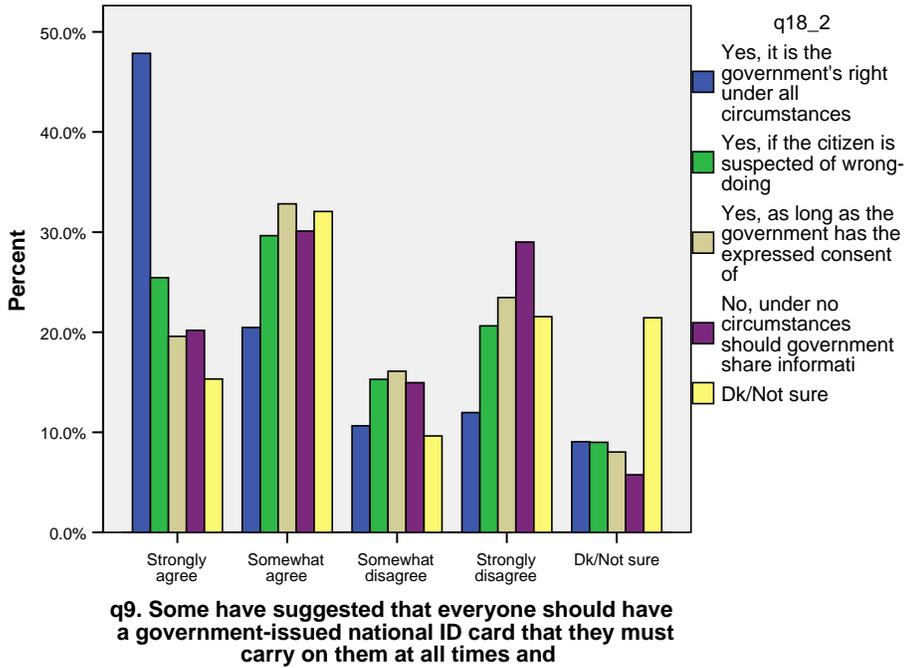
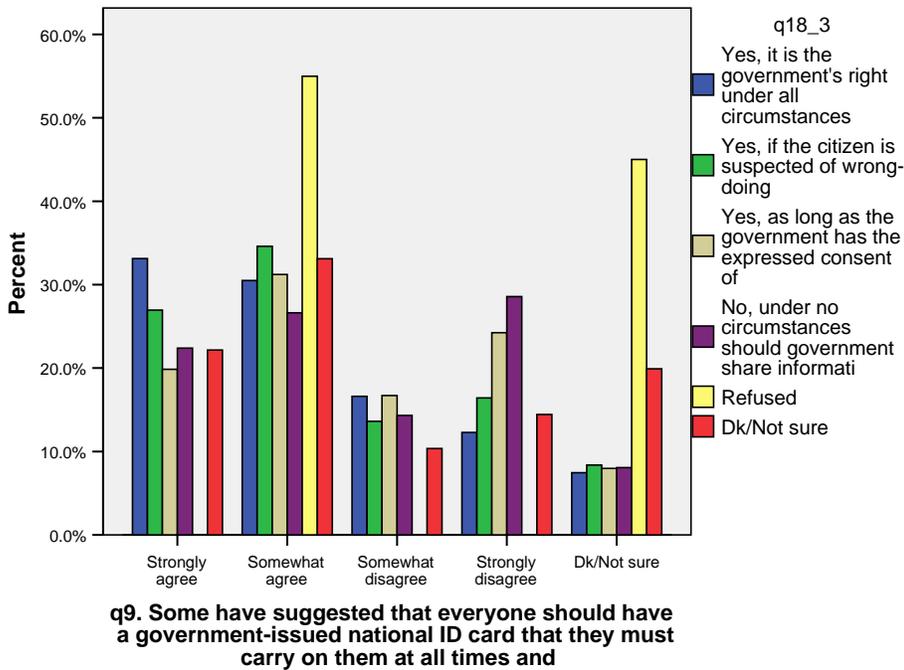


Chart 13: Cross-Tabulation of Question 9 and 18b



Cases weighted by weight0

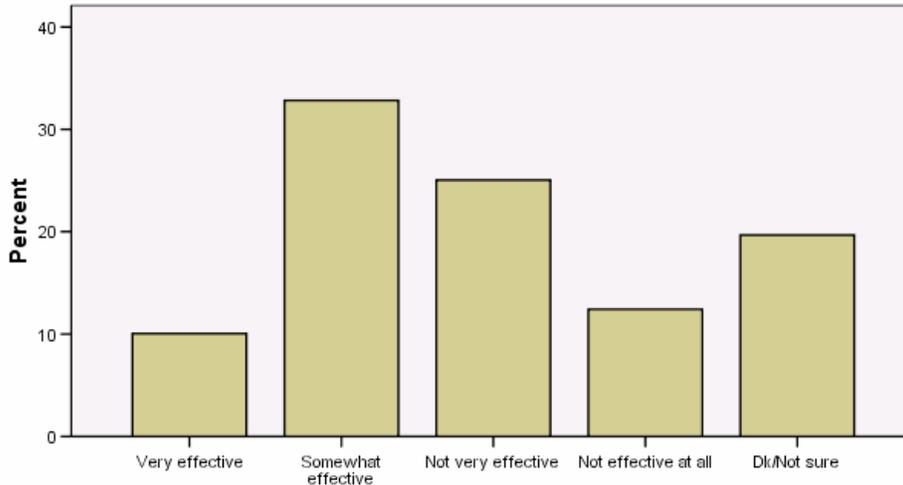
Chart 14: Cross-Tabulation of Question 9 and 18c



Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 15: Canadian Results for Question 10 on GPD Survey

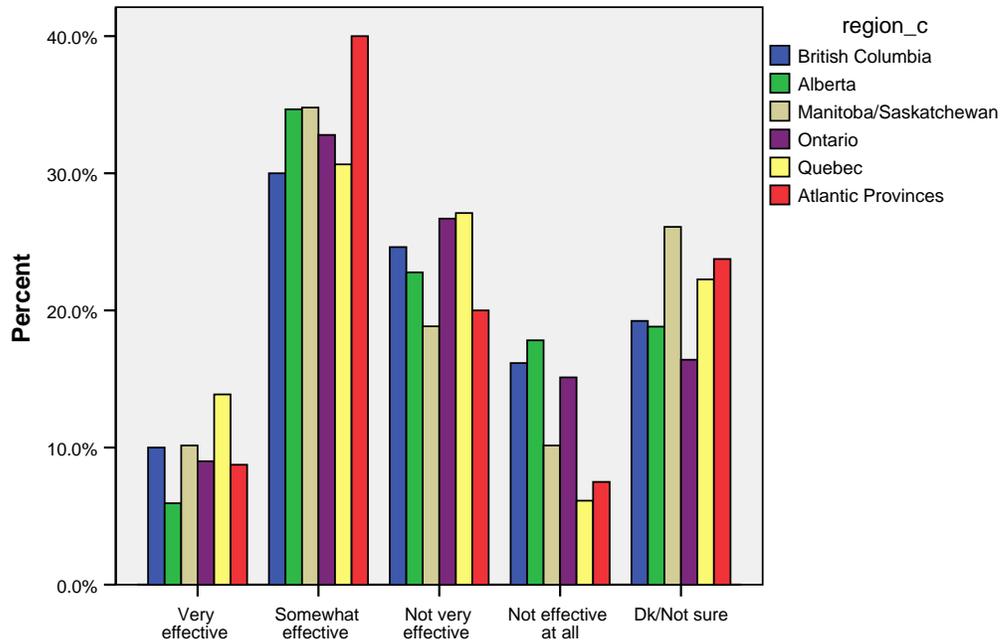
q10. In order to put national ID cards into use, the government would need to have a national workbase containing personal information on



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Cases weighted by weight0

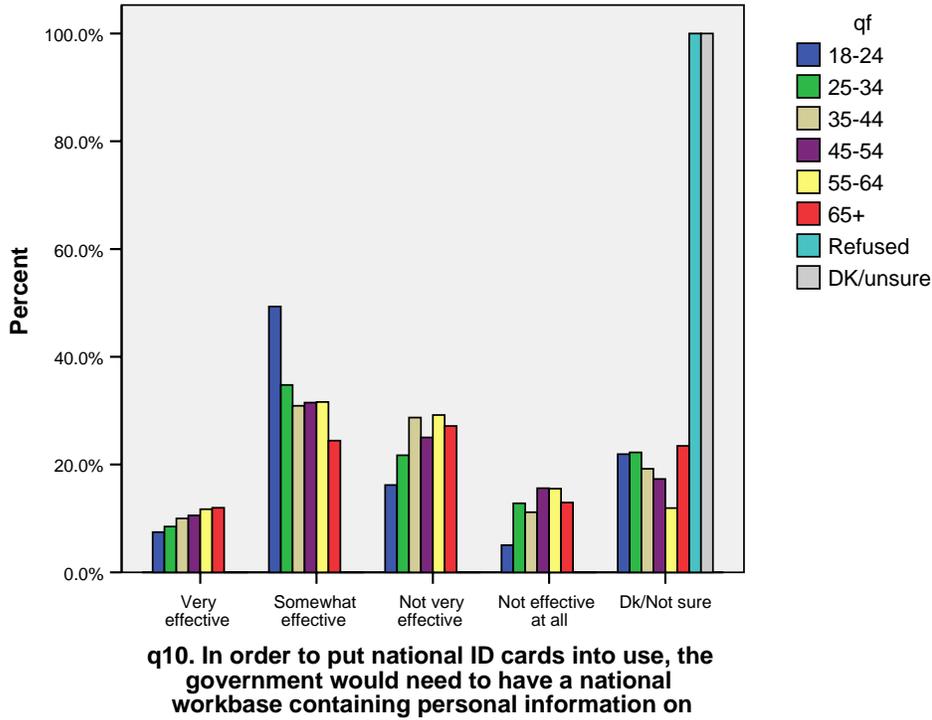
Chart 16: Regional Breakdowns of Question 10



q10. In order to put national ID cards into use, the government would need to have a national workbase containing personal information on

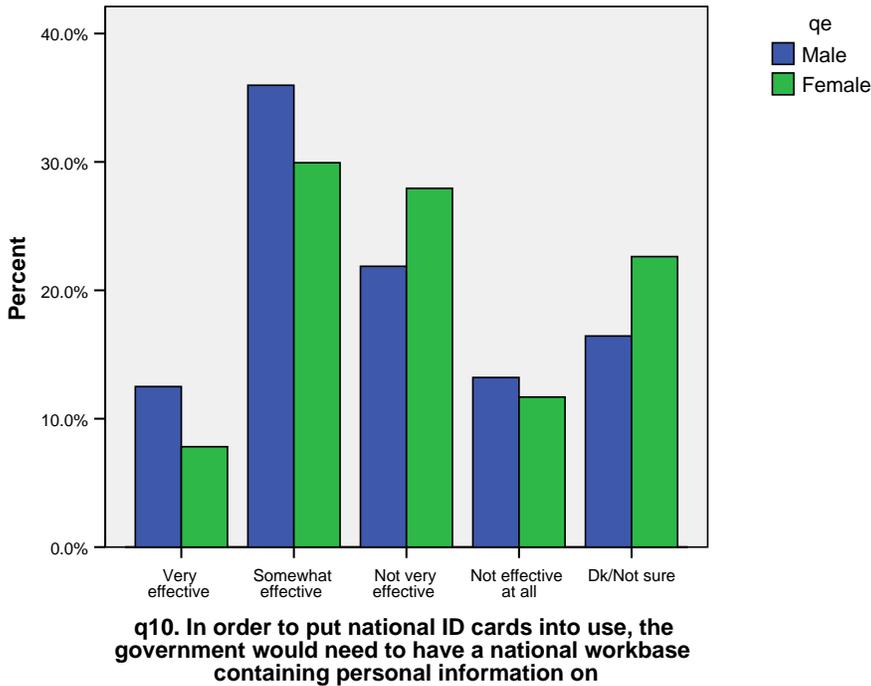
Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 17: Responses to Question 10 by Age



Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 18: Responses to Question 10 by Gender



Cases weighted by weight0

Chart 19: Responses to Question 10 by Ethnicity

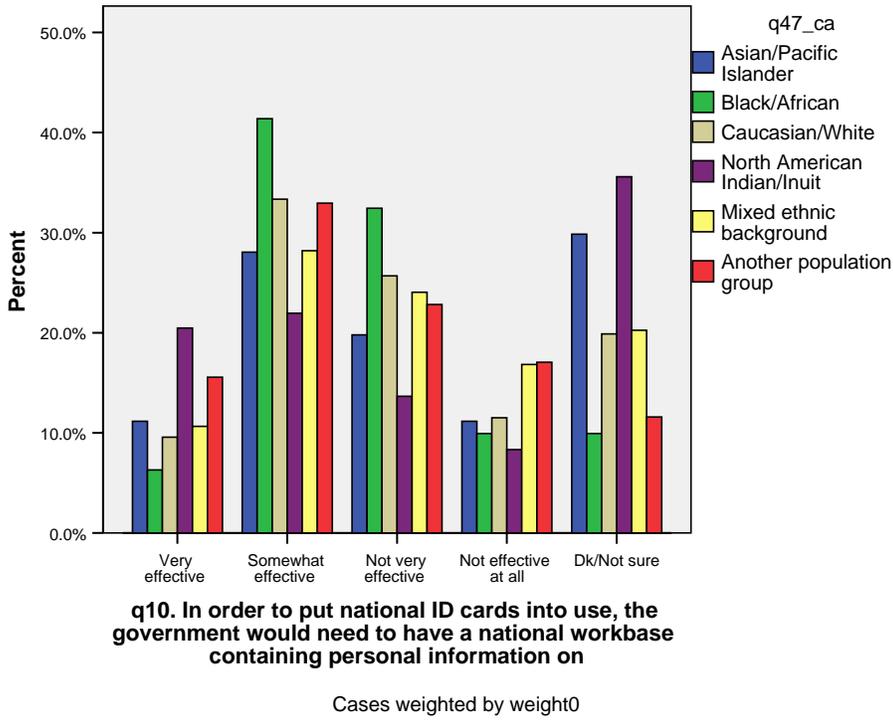


Chart 20: Cross-Tabulation of Question 10 and 5

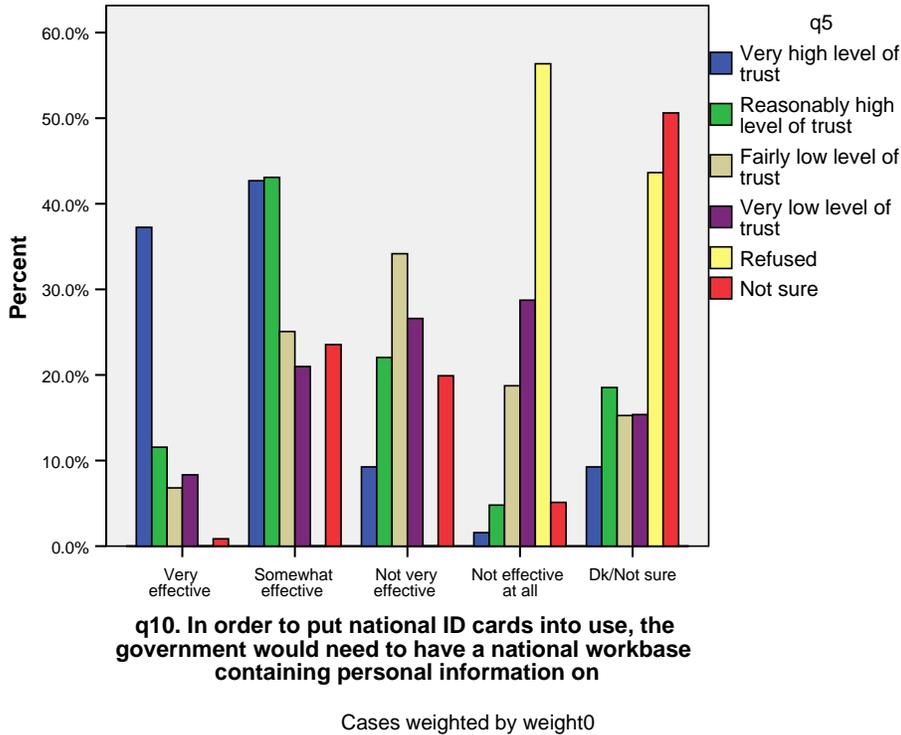


Chart 21: Cross-Tabulation of Question 10 and 17

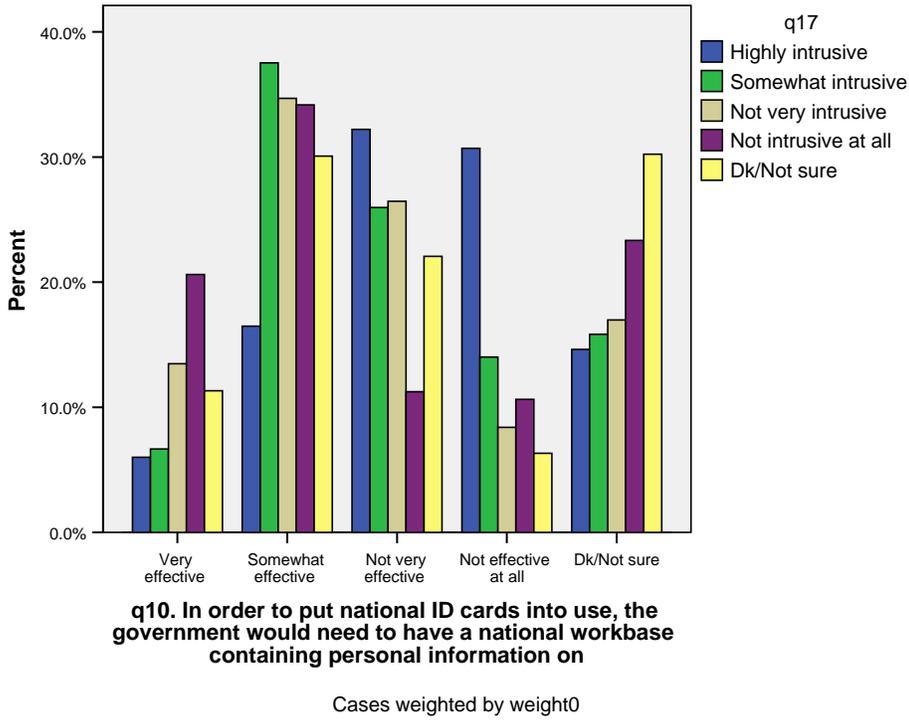


Chart 22: Cross-Tabulation of Question 10 and 18a

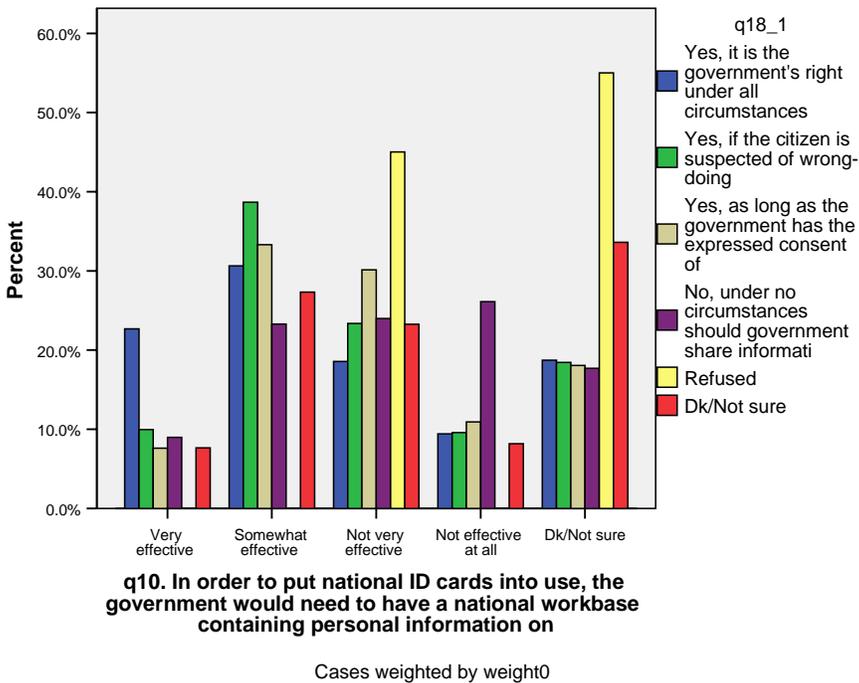


Chart 23: Cross-Tabulation of Question 10 and 18b

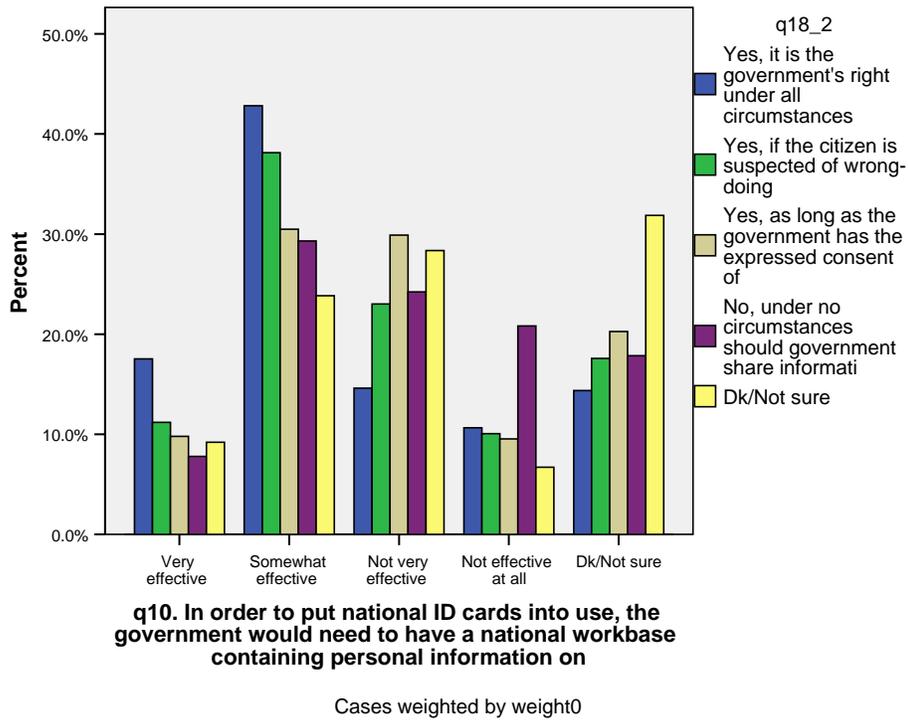


Chart 24: Cross-Tabulation of Question 10 and 18c

