GLOBAL RESEARCH

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Public Perceptions

Research Report

Information Commissioner's Office

February 2021

METHOD

Global Research & Strategy Group Ltd. used Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) to interview a representative sample of 410 Bermuda residents aged 18 years and over.

The reported data was collected in a stand-alone survey.

All interviews were conducted from February 15th – 21st 2021.

The results reported are compared to those obtained in March 2016, March 2017, March 2018, February 2019, and February 2020.

Any questions on the methodology of this research study should be directed to Dr. Leslie Steede, Director of Research for Global Research at leslie@globalresearch.bm or 604-360-4051.

The aim of the research was to provide insights into the following areas:

- Public awareness of PATI and the Information Commissioner's Office
- Public awareness of the rights that PATI gives everyone regarding access to information held by Bermuda authorities
- Public understanding of the term "Bermuda Public Authority"
- Whether residents have requested information from Bermuda public authorities
- Whether residents would like to make such requests in the future
- Whether residents believe in PATI and that it will be respected by public authorities

The results will assist the Information Commissioner's Office in understanding the marketing and public education needed to ensure that the public are aware of and understand the importance and role of PATI.

KEY FINDINGS

Public Requests: Past & Future

- 23% had asked for a copy of recorded information that a public authority holds (vs. 24% in 2020).
- Residents were more likely to recall requesting information from the Registrar General and the Bermuda Police Service.
- 87% were satisfied with the response received from a public authority, a 5-point increase from 2020.
- 11% were likely to ask for information from a public authority next year (vs. 17% in 2020).

Public Awareness

- Consistent with 2020, eighty one percent (81%) had heard of the PATI Act.
    - Younger residents aged 18-24 and residents 55 years and over were less likely to have heard of the PATI Act.
- 41% had heard of the Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda (vs. 46% in 2020).

Function of Information Commissioner's Office of Bermuda

- Compared to 2020, awareness of the duties of the Bermuda Information Commissioner's Office declined marginally for all duties.
- Residents were most likely to believe that the ICO was responsible for "making sure that public authorities comply with the PATI Act" (35% vs. 42% in 2020) and "investigating complaints when people don't get the information they requested from public authorities" (35% vs. 38% in 2020).
- They were least likely to believe that the ICO was responsible for "issuing legally binding decisions to public authorities concerning the release of information" (28% vs. 30% in 2020) and "dealing with requests to amend a personal record held by public authorities" (16% vs. 18% in 2020).

Confidence in PATI

- Eighty-one percent (81%) of residents believed that the PATI Act was important to them (vs. 88% in 2020).
- Compared to 2020, residents were marginally more likely to believe that "public authorities will find a way round the Act and won't provide any information they don't want to" (62% vs. 58% in 2020), that "public authorities will become more open and accountable" (64% vs. 55% in 2020) and that "members of the public will have more confidence in the decisions made by public authorities" (59% vs. 49% in 2020).
- Consistent with 2020, 57% believed that the Act would be useful to them.

Conclusions/Next Steps

- The majority of residents (81%) were aware of the PATI Act, but less than half (41%) were aware of the Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda.
- Younger residents aged 18-24 years and older residents over 55 years were less likely to be aware of the PATI Act.
- Satisfaction with the response received from public authorities increased by 5 points.
- Compared to 2020, confidence in the PATI Act had improved in some areas. Residents were more likely to believe that public authorities would become more open and accountable and that members of the public would have more confidence in the decisions made by public authorities; however, residents were also more likely to believe that public authorities would find a way around the act and not provide any information they did not want to, and that no one would bother to use the rights provided by the act.

❖ *The Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda should aim to increase public awareness of the ICO and its activities.*
❖ *The ICO should increase awareness of the PATI Act among the youngest and oldest adult residents.*
❖ *The ICO should consider providing "real world" examples of how individuals could take advantage of the rights provided by the PATI Act, and how the ICO can ensure public authorities remain accountable for their activities and decisions.*

DETAILED FINDINGS

Q1: Which of the following organizations that I am going to read out to you would you say is a public authority?

Residents continued to believe that the Bermuda Police Service was a public authority (84% vs 87% in 2020), followed by H.M. Customs (73% vs. 75% in 2020) and the Ministry of Education Headquarters (52% vs. 57% in 2020).

There were marginal declines in awareness that these organizations were public authorities.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Bermuda Police Service	90%	86%	88%	89%	87%	84%
H.M. Customs	74%	78%	77%	77%	75%	73%
Ministry of Education Headquarters	64%	60%	57%	60%	57%	52%
Corporation of Hamilton	56%	46%	46%	48%	50%	45%
The Bermuda Archives	41%	44%	37%	32%	31%	31%
West End Development Corporation	41%	31%	30%	34%	31%	29%
Devonshire Parish Council	37%	27%	27%	29%	33%	25%
Bermuda Red Cross	13%	8%	15%	16%	19%	18%
Bermuda National Trust	20%	20%	23%	22%	23%	17%
BELCO	14%	8%	10%	8%	12%	16%
None of the above	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%

- Residents aged 55-64 years were less likely to believe that Bermuda Police Service, HM Customs and Ministry of Education Headquarters were public authorities.

Q2: Can you think of any other organizations that are public authorities?

The top three organizations that residents also believed were public authorities were Bermuda Government/Government Departments, Bermuda Fire Service and Bermuda Regiment.

	Total		Total
# of responses	279		279
Bermuda Government/Government Departments	42	Customs	2
Bermuda Fire Service	41	Airport Authority	2
Bermuda Regiment	25	Schools	2
Bermuda Hospital Board/KEMH	17	Coast Guard	2
Prisons/Dept. of Corrections	12	PALS	1
Bermuda Monetary Authority	11	Department of Child and Family Services	1
Department of Immigration	11	Fisheries/Maritime Administration	1
Bermuda Regulatory Authority	10	Works & Engineering	1
Quangos	10	Ministry of Finance	1
Bermuda Transport Control/aviation/ships/public transportation	9	Ministry of Education	1
Department of Health	9	Department of Social Insurance	1
Bermuda Tourism Authority	8	Bermuda Cancer & Health Centre	1
Bermuda Land Development Company	6	Accountant General	1
Corporation of St. George's	5	Skyport	1
Bermuda Courts/Supreme Court/Judicial system	4	RA electric	1
Bermuda Housing Authority	4	Social services	1
Postal Services	3	Housing Corporation	1
Office of Ombudsman	3	Health clinics	1
Registrar General	3	Bermuda College	1
Parish Councils/Churches	3	Communications Authority	1
PATI	3	Human Rights Commissioner	1
Ambulance Services	2	Youth and Sports	1
Bermuda Health Council	2	Workforce Development	1
Bermuda Library/National library	2	Bermuda Artillery	1
Public Works	2	Bermuda Tax Commission	1
PLP/OBA/MP's/Cabinet Office	2	Chamber of Commerce	1

Q3: Have you ever asked for a copy of recorded information that a public authority holds (by information I do not mean things such as phoning a hospital for visiting hours or checking the availability of a book from your local library, but copies from the records or documents that a public authority might hold)?

Twenty three percent (23%) had asked for a copy of recorded information that a public authority held (vs. 24% in 2020).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Yes	10%	22%	19%	21%	24%	23%
No	88%	77%	78%	77%	74%	70%
Don't Know	2%	1%	4%	2%	1%	7%

- Residents aged 18-24 years were less likely to have requested recorded information from a public authority.

Q4: Can you please name the public authority(ies) that you requested information from?

The most popular places that residents recalled requesting information from included the Registrar General, Bermuda Police Service, Department of Immigration and Bermuda Government.

	2021
Total responses	*95*
Registrar General	18
Bermuda Police Service	17
Department of Immigration	13
Bermuda Government	13
KEMH/Urgent Care/Bermuda Hospitals Board	11
Land Registry/Land Tax	5
Bermuda Archives	5
Department of Planning	2
Registrar of Companies	2
Ministry of Education	2
Courts/Justice/Supreme Courts	2
Library	1
Social Insurance	1
Department of Statistics	1
Ministry of Finance	1
BELCO	1

Q5: Thinking about your most recent request, which of the following best describes the response that you received?

Eighty seven percent (87%) were satisfied with the response received from a public authority (vs. 82% in 2020).

Residents were least satisfied with the response received from the Department of Planning.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Registrar General	Bermuda Police Service	Depart-ment of Immigra-tion
Sample	*39*	*92*	*75*	*85*	*100*	*95*	*18*	*17*	*13*
Top 2	79%	90%	87%	86%	82%	87%	89%	76%	92%
Very positive, I got information I asked for promptly	33%	49%	45%	41%	39%	40%	33%	47%	31%
Satisfactory, I was given the information but it took some time	46%	41%	42%	45%	43%	47%	56%	29%	62%
Unsatisfactory, they replied but I didn't get the information I requested	18%	7%	8%	8%	12%	7%	0%	12%	8%
Poor, they didn't reply to my request	3%	2%	0%	2%	4%	1%	0%	0%	0%
None of the above	0%	1%	5%	4%	2%	4%	11%	12%	0%

	KEMH/ Urgent Care /BHB	Bermuda Govern-ment	Land Registry/ Land Tax	Bermuda Archives	Depart-ment of Planning	Other
Sample	*11*	*13*	*5*	*5*	*3*	*10*
Top 2	91%	85%	80%	100%	67%	100%
Very positive, I got information I asked for promptly	73%	23%	20%	60%	0%	50%
Satisfactory, I was given the information but it took some time	18%	62%	60%	40%	67%	50%
Unsatisfactory, they replied but I didn't get the information I requested	9%	8%	20%	0%	33%	0%
Poor, they didn't reply to my request	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%
None of the above	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

*Note – The Other column includes the combined results of public authorities that were mentioned once.

Q6: Have you ever heard of the PATI Act?

Consistent with 2020, eighty one percent (81%) had heard of the PATI Act.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Top 2	71%	80%	77%	82%	81%	81%
Yes, definitely	56%	65%	58%	65%	65%	55%
Yes, I think so	16%	15%	19%	17%	16%	26%
No, don't think so	13%	12%	14%	13%	12%	14%
No definitely not	15%	6%	6%	4%	6%	4%
Unsure	1%	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%

- Younger residents aged 18-24 and residents 55 years and over were less likely to have heard of the PATI Act.

Q7: The PATI Act came into effect in April 2015. To the best of your knowledge, what rights do you think the Act entitles you to?

Residents were most likely to believe that the PATI Act entitled them to documents of a public nature/public records.

	2021
Total responses	*416*
Access to any documents of a public nature/public records (information that is not confidential)/right to information	177
Allows people to request information/certain documents/public information	88
Provides access to any information in my name	14
Freedom of access to information/freedom of speech	12
See how much is being collected and spent by Government	7
The ability to investigate actions of public entities	7
General questions requested about businesses (financial information, planning)	6
Transparency of operations and accountability	3
Population statistics/request general stats pertaining to Bermuda	3
Privacy of information	3
Public records from court cases/legal records	2
Very little	1
Don't Know/Unsure	93

Q8: How likely are you to ask for information from a Bermuda public authority next year?

Eleven percent (11%) were likely to ask for information from a Bermuda public authority next year (vs. 17% in 2020).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Top 2	22%	13%	15%	14%	17%	11%
Very likely	7%	3%	2%	5%	6%	3%
Quite likely	15%	10%	13%	9%	11%	8%
Neither / Nor	12%	22%	22%	22%	22%	21%
Quite unlikely	36%	42%	39%	40%	31%	34%
Definitely unlikely	19%	11%	11%	11%	15%	10%
Unsure	11%	11%	13%	13%	14%	23%

Q9: Have you ever heard of the Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda?

Forty one percent (41%) had heard of the Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda (vs. 46% in 2020).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Top 2	37%	42%	38%	44%	46%	41%
Yes, definitely	24%	22%	18%	26%	27%	22%
Yes, I think so	13%	20%	19%	18%	19%	19%
No, I don't think so	34%	36%	43%	39%	37%	42%
No, definitely not	27%	20%	16%	15%	15%	12%
Unsure	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%

- Residents 55 years and over were less likely to have heard about the Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda.

Q10: Where do you recall seeing/hearing about the Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda?

The News/Newspapers/The Royal Gazette was the most popular place that residents recalled hearing about the Information Commissioner's Office for Bermuda.

	2021
Total Responses	*195*
News/Newspapers	86
The Royal Gazette	30
Online/Social Media	14
At work	11
Media (did not specify)	10
PATI website/PATI Act/Presentation	7
Radio	7
Word of mouth/public knowledge/family	6
Television	5
Bernews	5
Government/gov.bm	4
On the government van	2
Brochures	2
In legal documents	2
Email (from ICO or Bermuda Government)	1
Information stand in Washington Mall	1
When the Commission was named	1
Information that they provided	1

Q11: I am going to read out a list of duties that may be carried out by the Bermuda Information Commissioner's Office. How aware would you say that you are that these duties are in fact carried out by the Bermuda Information Commissioner's Office?

Compared to 2020, awareness of the duties of the Bermuda Information Commissioner's Office declined marginally.

Residents were most likely to believe that the ICO was responsible for "making sure that public authorities comply with the PATI Act" (35% vs. 42% in 2020) and "investigating complaints when people don't get the information they requested from public authorities" (35% vs. 38% in 2020).

They were least likely to believe that the ICO was responsible for "issuing legally binding decisions to public authorities concerning the release of information" (28% vs. 30% in 2020) and "dealing with requests to amend a personal record held by public authorities" (16% vs. 18% in 2020).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Making sure that public authorities comply with the PATI Act.	46%	41%	34%	42%	42%	35%
Investigating complaints when people don't get the information they request from public authorities.	43%	37%	32%	40%	38%	35%
Telling people about their right to get copies of information held by Bermuda public authorities.	50%	36%	33%	43%	36%	33%
Providing information about public services.	38%	35%	33%	37%	35%	30%
Hearing appeals when people do not receive requested information from public authorities.	32%	29%	27%	34%	32%	31%
Issuing legally binding decisions to public authorities concerning the release of information.	28%	30%	24%	29%	30%	28%
Dealing with requests to amend a personal record held by public authorities.	21%	15%	15%	19%	18%	16%

Q12: I am going to read out some statements about the PATI Act and ask you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Even if you aren't aware of this Act, it's your impression that I am interested in. As a result of the PATI Act…?

Compared to 2020, residents were marginally more likely to believe that "public authorities will find a way round the Act and won't provide any information they don't want to" (62% vs. 58% in 2020), that "public authorities will become more open and accountable" (64% vs. 55% in 2020) and that "members of the public will have more confidence in the decisions made by public authorities" (59% vs. 49% in 2020).

Consistent with 2020, 57% believed that the Act would be useful to them.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Public authorities will find a way round the Act and won't provide any information they don't want to.	52%	54%	55%	57%	58%	62%
This act will be useful to me.	53%	54%	57%	59%	57%	57%
Public authorities will become more open and accountable.	76%	59%	67%	66%	55%	64%
Members of the public will have more confidence in the decisions made by public authorities.	62%	54%	60%	59%	49%	59%
No one will bother to use the rights provided by the act.	25%	21%	20%	18%	16%	29%

Q13: The PATI Act gives Bermudians and Bermuda residents a right to access records held by public authorities. How important is this right to you?

Eighty-one percent (81%) of residents believed that the PATI Act was important to them (vs. 88% in 2020).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
Top 2	79%	87%	86%	87%	88%	81%
Very important	48%	48%	51%	55%	55%	46%
Somewhat important	31%	38%	36%	33%	32%	35%
Neither / nor	9%	7%	7%	7%	7%	12%
Somewhat unimportant	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Not at all important	5%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Don't Know	4%	2%	4%	2%	1%	3%

Q14: Which of the following best describes your opinion of the PATI Act?

Eighty percent (80%) of residents (vs. 79% in 2020) believed that creating and enforcing the PATI Act was a very important public investment.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sample	*400*	*401*	*400*	*405*	*402*	*410*
I believe that creating and enforcing the PATI Act is a very important public investment.	77%	80%	76%	80%	79%	80%
The PATI Act is not important and the public funds required for creating and enforcing PATI should be spent elsewhere.	5%	3%	5%	4%	5%	2%
Don't Know	19%	17%	19%	16%	16%	17%

- Residents aged 45-64 years were more likely to believe in the importance of the investment.
- Residents aged 18-24 years were less likely to believe in it.