

Cragg Ross Dawson

**Public perceptions of
identity/entitlement cards**

Qualitative Research Report

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A. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Research Background**

The Home Office is currently consulting on whether to introduce an entitlement card (also known as identity card) scheme.

Identity/entitlement cards could offer a range of benefits to individuals and public and private sector organisations, including:

- confirmation of residency status and eligibility to work in the UK
- a definitive record and validation of identity
- a record of entitlement to, and easier access to public and private sector products and services
- help in combating illegal immigration and employment and reducing identity fraud and other crime

Practical issues around the cards are currently being considered. The consultation paper suggested that the photocard driving licence and proposed new passport card could function as identity/entitlement cards. If this were the case, charges for passports and driving licences would be increased. A dedicated card would be available for those without a passport or driving licence; this would be cheaper than the combined alternatives. The cards may contain biometric information and digital photographs, and they may feature memory chips to store information.

Qualitative research was commissioned to explore perceptions of entitlement/identity cards among members of the general public.

2. Research objectives

The overall objective of the research was to explore public perceptions of the potential advantages and disadvantages of identity/entitlement cards, examine views of their possible uses, and gauge likely support for the idea.

Within this, the research was required to examine a number of specific issues:

- attitudes to the use of existing cards such as driving licence cards to function as identity/entitlement cards
- whether it should be compulsory to own and produce cards if requested in certain circumstances (but not to carry them at all times)
- how the cards might be used; for example, to access healthcare, education and benefit services
- concerns about privacy and data sharing by organisations which would use the information stored on the cards
- reactions to the idea of biometric information being stored on the cards
- views on the cost of the cards, including proposed increased charges for passports and driving licence cards and lower charges for those without driving licences or passports
- motivations and barriers to acceptance of identity/entitlement cards, and ideas about how they could most effectively be presented to the public in any future publicity campaign

B. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

1. **Methodology and Sample**

14 group discussions were conducted with members of the public, as follows:

- G1*: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE
- G2: ABC1, 31-45, London/SE
- G3: C2DE, 61-75, Midlands
- G4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales
- G5: ABC1, 31-45, South Wales
- G6: C2DE, 21-30, North
- G7*: ABC1, 46-60, North
- G8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland
- G9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland
- G10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland
- G11: C2DE, 16-20, Northern Ireland
- G12: Pakistani Muslim (male), 16-20, North
- G13: Hindu or Sikh (female), 31-45, Midlands
- G14: African-Caribbean (mixed sex), 21-30, London/SE

* One additional group was conducted following mis-recruitment in G1 and G7, with white British men and women, C1C2, aged 31-45, London/SE.

Qualifications to the sample were as follows:

- in the C2DE groups, a minority was out of work and claiming benefit
- in all groups a minority did not have a passport or driving licence
- anyone working in, or with close family or friends working in advertising, marketing, market research, PR, journalism, the Police, the Civil Service, Citizens Advice Bureaux or civil liberties or welfare rights organisations was excluded as representatives from these groups might be more familiar with some of the ideas than the general public and influence discussions disproportionately.

A copy of the recruitment questionnaire used to select respondents for the study is appended. Fieldwork was conducted 12th-22nd November 2002, and a spoken debrief of the findings was given on 12th December 2002. The researchers were Tim Porter, Catherine Woolcott and Rhodri Gilbert of Cragg Ross Dawson.

2. **Discussion format**

The groups began with a brief warm-up discussion on issues of current interest in the news. Following this, the issue of entitlement/identity cards was introduced using separate boards, one with *Entitlement cards*, one with *Identity cards*. After discussion of the meaning and interpretations of the two terms, respondents were asked for their views of the idea in principle (largely using the term *Identity cards* as this is the more recognised term among the general public), their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages and their questions and concerns. Further details about the proposals were introduced gradually via a series of statements covering the main features under consideration. Copies of these statements, along with the discussion guide used in the research, are appended to this report.

C. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. **The context**

News items in the public mind at the time of the fieldwork included a mix of national and international issues and gossip around public figures and celebrities. These changed over the period of the fieldwork, illustrating the ephemeral nature of much news. Identity cards were mentioned unprompted by one respondent.

Asylum seekers and immigration were sometimes raised unprompted at this stage, and were clearly not far from the surface for many people, both white and those from ethnic minority communities. Most were concerned about the effects of immigrants arriving in the UK, at national and local levels.

Underlying these and other concerns was an impression that many respondents felt the order and structure of life in the UK were breaking down. Established institutions no longer commanded respect and this resulted in an impression of diminishing national identity. This was sometimes linked directly to immigration and asylum seekers.

2. **Overall response to identity/entitlement cards**

Awareness and initial reactions

Awareness of identity cards was scattered; with prompting, many thought they had heard about identity cards of some type, with varying functions and purposes, issued by a range of organisations. A few had heard of fingerprinting being used to check identity and age in banks and bars.

Initial reaction to the idea of identity cards was varied. Many respondents were immediately accepting, some were immediately rejecting and most had queries and concerns. Those who were more positive felt that individuals and society would benefit; those with the greatest reservations believed the main beneficiary would be the state.

Of the alternative descriptors, *Identity cards* was largely preferred because it was familiar, though it had some negative associations. *Entitlement cards* was thought superficially softer and warmer, but less familiar and rather 'weasely'. From this point on in the discussions the idea was considered in terms of identity cards.

At this stage many respondents assumed the idea had been introduced as a government response to concerns about asylum seekers and illegal immigration, and/or terrorism. Some felt that these concerns were now so strong that identity cards would definitely be introduced; others believed that the idea had been raised by successive governments in the past and always dropped, and so did not expect it to go ahead now.

Differences between sample segments

Reactions to the idea varied between different sample segments. The majority of white British respondents welcomed it. They felt that in addition to tackling asylum, illegal immigration and terrorism it could help combat benefit fraud and other crime. A few who were themselves on benefit had reservations that identity cards might stigmatise them. A minority of white British people (all C2DE) held strongly racist views and was initially strongly in favour of the idea. They subsequently became less keen as they considered the possible inconveniences for themselves such as the need to produce the card to access services or prove their identification.

A white liberal minority was firmly against the idea of identity cards. They associated identity cards with repressive regimes and felt they would give the government too much control over individuals, alienate and exclude minorities and discriminate against asylum seekers in genuine need of help. People from ethnic minorities appeared to be cautiously accepting of the idea, but shared the concerns of the white liberal minority and worried that cards might be used by the police to justify increased street checks on them.

In Northern Ireland attitudes were slightly different in that immigration and asylum were less significant concerns, and people were more accustomed to being asked to produce identification.

Initial queries and concerns

A range of questions and concerns was expressed after the idea of identity cards was first introduced. These were to do with: whether cards would be compulsory; whether all residents would have to have them (British and non-British, homeless people); what their primary function would be; and how information would be accessed using the cards.

The fact that most European countries used identity cards of some kind was surprising, but tended to enhance acceptance of the idea. If they were used successfully and without diminishing civil liberties elsewhere, they could work in the UK.

3. Nature and format of the cards

The initial expectation was typically a dedicated identity card containing limited information. The options of combined identity card and passport or identity card and driving licence for those who wanted them were preferred to a dedicated card, and were thought more sensible and more functional. Familiarity with driving licence cards helped people understand how the cards might look. The combined identity card/driving licence was generally preferred to the passport option, primarily because driving licences were more likely to be carried on a day-to-day basis than passports, and had less special status.

4. Information on the card and on the database

Information to be included

This was a crucial consideration in acceptance or rejection of the idea of identity cards. Those most in favour felt there should be a wide range of detailed information, including criminal record, DNA details and previous addresses. Those who had the strongest reservations thought cards would only be acceptable if they contained the briefest of information –

name, photo and date of birth. Some who had initially accepted the idea became more negative as suggestions for more detailed information were put forward.

When it became clear that there would be a database containing information relating to the card, the tendency was to prefer only limited information on the card, and more detail on the database, with caveats about the security of the database. The general feeling was that information on the card should be restricted to name, date of birth and a photograph. Some respondents also felt a personal ID number would be useful; most rejected the idea of addresses being included, primarily for security reasons. The inclusion of signatures was acceptable to most, but was thought vulnerable to forgery.

Other information was expected to be on the database, not the card. Nationality was acceptable to most, but prompted concerns among some from ethnic minorities and people in Northern Ireland. Employment status was considered important, given the need to combat illegal working. Response to the inclusion of health information was ambivalent: some felt it could be useful and might even be life-saving; others regarded it as intrusive. The possible use of biometric information was treated with caution: those most keen on identity cards felt it would offer totally secure proof of identity; those who were less keen worried that it was too personal.

Access to the database

This was another key consideration. People who were well disposed towards identity cards in principle accepted the possible confidentiality risks inherent in a database and seemed unconcerned. Others, especially those with in-principle objections to identity cards, were worried about hacking and card fraud.

5. Benefits of the idea

The general view was that identity cards would be more of a benefit than a hindrance to the law-abiding majority of the population. Benefits identified

without prompting were: tackling the problem of illegal immigration, with consequent saving of money; reducing benefit fraud; easier confirmation of identity to allow faster checks on eligibility to work in certain occupations; easier verification of age; streamlining access to public and commercial services; and combating violent crime.

Response to other suggested benefits was varied. Combating identity fraud was thought to have some merit, though identity fraud was not universally understood. Efficient access to services was accepted but seen by some as limited, and prompted some concern about controls on eligibility to medical services. Combating crime was also accepted, with caveats about the types of crime that might be prevented. Easier electoral registration was welcomed by voters. Easier travel in Europe was not regarded as a significant benefit, and having fewer cards to carry was not particularly motivating.

6. **Disadvantages of the idea**

A number of disadvantages was raised unprompted, often in initial reaction to the idea. Some saw it as potentially restrictive and bureaucratic, especially the liberal minority. They were also concerned that it would stigmatise minority groups. This concern was echoed by minority groups themselves – those from ethnic minorities and people on benefit – though they tended to feel less strongly than the liberal white sample. Many people were anxious about what would happen if their cards were lost or stolen. There were worries about the security of the database and the consequences of illegal access. Some were concerned that commercial organisations would gain access to and abuse the database.

Other suggested potential disadvantages also prompted reservations. The security of the database, if not already mentioned, was acknowledged at this point, particularly in relation to biometric, health and financial information. The scale of the task in setting up an identity card system was thought a potential problem among a significant minority. A few also felt that the system would inevitably be abused by criminals; and that it

was unnecessary since driving licences effectively performed the same function.

7. **Universal vs voluntary**

The issue of whether identity cards should be voluntary or universal, if introduced, prompted mixed feelings. Those most in favour felt the idea would only work if cards were universal, and saw little point in making them voluntary. The minority with strong reservations regarded the idea as acceptable only if cards were voluntary. Some among the ethnic minorities felt that universality signalled that cards would be used to keep checks on them: although everyone would have to have them, a motive for this might be government wanting to pay particular attention to the activities of people from ethnic minority communities.

8. **Cost and funding**

Funding appeared to be a contentious issue. The initial assumption had generally been that identity cards would be funded by 'the government'. When people were told that there might be a charge, response varied. A substantial minority, particularly those who were keen on the idea of identity cards in principle, accepted this and considered it fair and reasonable. The remainder felt it was entirely unreasonable, given that, as they saw it, the main beneficiary would be the government. Some felt so strongly that they lost their initial enthusiasm for the idea.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The context

1. There are signs of concern over a declining sense of order and structure in society, exacerbated by the perception of rising crime, loss of respect for law and fundamental rules of civilised living. In addition to this there is growing concern about terrorist threats from within and without the UK.
2. Immigration (legal and illegal) and asylum seekers are major worries, and are linked to issues around loss of order and respect, crime and the terrorist threat. There is a belief that among those people arriving from other countries few have any affinity with British history and culture, and a small number are potentially dangerous.
3. For most white British people and some among the ethnic minorities, feelings about immigration are focused on what appear to be genuine concerns for the stability and future security of the country, rather than expressions of racism or xenophobia. However, a minority hold views that come across as blatant racism, and seem more about interest in denigrating and controlling ethnic minorities than bigger issues.

Response to the idea of entitlement/identity cards

4. Overall response to the idea largely reflects the context described above. There is general acceptance of the primary benefit of (re)-imposing order, with reservations about the detail of the scheme; and there is resistance among the few with concerns about the effect on individual freedom and state control.
5. For the accepting majority, identity cards represent a means by which the perceived loss of order and structure might be halted, and offer hope of a return to more secure times. They are not seen as a panacea but as something which could have both tangible benefits in tackling the problems and symbolic value in providing reassurance.

6. The impression is that underlying general acceptance of the idea is a feeling (unspoken) that after repeated discussion and dropping of identity cards, now might be the time finally to go ahead and introduce them: in spite of reservations, circumstances now demand it.
7. Initial reactions are also characterised by uncertainty and a plethora of questions and queries, especially in relation to the likely applications of the cards, practicalities and security of information. If the idea were pursued, it would be important to be clear about all these issues from the outset.
8. Given the generally favourable response to identity cards in principle, there is likely to be widespread acceptance of them being universal (to have, though not to carry) rather than voluntary. The objecting minority will express loud resistance to this but the popular belief is that voluntary cards will be a pointless half-measure.
9. Nevertheless, it would be important to explain the reason behind universality, and consider the implications for the cards' name: objectors feel that universality is unacceptable and that it does not fit with the spirit of 'entitlement'.
10. If the idea is introduced, take-up of a combined identity card and driving licence seems more likely than a combined identity card and passport. Driving licences fit better with the concept of a card to be carried and used on a day-to-day basis, and carry fewer of the negative associations of identity cards.
11. In relation to information carried on the cards and in the database there is a tension between maximising the value of the idea and minimising worries about security and privacy. The strategy of storing only basic and harmless information on the card would help acceptance, but there would need to be convincing reassurance about other aspects of information.
12. In particular, people would need to be persuaded that that the database would be secure against hacking, forgery, fraudulent use and illicit

commercial access, and that there would be strict controls on access among legitimate users and measures to prevent accidental cross-access.

13. If more personal information were to be stored on the database it would also be important to inform people that supplying these details would be voluntary (particularly health information), and that there would be simple, usable procedures in the event of cards being lost (emergency stop number, quick replacement).
14. Though responses to the possibility of individuals paying for identity cards are not clear cut, this could probably come to be seen as acceptable if presented carefully. In particular it would help to communicate that: individuals have always paid for driving licences and passports; government funding means we pay for them anyway, albeit indirectly; there would be exemptions and discounts for the less well off.
15. The short term approach of 'start-up' funding by government and subsequent individual funding might be an acceptable compromise.

Promoting and presenting the cards

16. If the government decided to proceed with the scheme it would need to establish the nature and format of the cards from the outset. Initial public reaction would be determined to a large extent by the terminology used. On balance, *identity card* is likely to be more understandable and frank than *entitlement card*, but the additional uses and benefits over and above being able to establish one's identity more securely would have to be spelled out.
17. The option of presenting the idea as driving licence plus identity card is more widely acceptable (to the majority with driving licences), but does not include the dedicated identity card for those without driving licences.
18. In presentation and promotion of the idea, it would be important to communicate that the intention is focused on the common good, not on

- benefits to any one party, and that the cards would be intended for us all to make our lives easier and more secure.
19. Any promotion of identity cards should attempt to foster a sense that benefits for individuals are synonymous with benefits for the state, and that the cards would not be to help government control or pry. It would also be important to prevent the racist minority 'hijacking' the idea, and to communicate that the cards would not be a tool to discriminate against immigrants, ethnic minorities, homeless people or benefit claimants.
 20. It may be worth considering the thought that supporting identity cards could equate to voluntarily participating in society, and might provide a way of expressing self-inclusion – a positive statement of belonging at a time when it is important for people to be mutually supportive. By implication, rejection of the idea might be seen as tantamount to a refusal to participate or belong.
 21. It would be useful to refer to positive experiences in other countries, particularly in relation to the feasibility of setting up any scheme, its likely benefits and any cost efficiencies resulting from any introduction of identity cards.

E. MAIN FINDINGS

1. **Contextual points**

Each discussion started with a brief conversation about topical issues. This aimed to determine whether identity cards or related issues of asylum seekers, illegal immigration and benefit fraud were in the public mind at the time of the research. Discussion suggested that these issues were not prominent at the time of the fieldwork.

The issues most commonly mentioned were: the fire-fighters' strike; the possibility of war in Iraq; threats to security in the UK (especially salient in fieldwork sessions in London); and questions around the Conservative Party leadership. There was also mention of various items of celebrity gossip, the ending of the trial of Paul Burrell, the oil spill off the coast of Spain and government measures regarding anti-social behaviour.

At this early stage of discussion, there was a strong impression of the ephemeral nature of much news. The issues evolved and moved on as the fieldwork unfolded (over a two week period) and recent stories (for instance, about the Royal Family) appeared to be quickly forgotten and replaced.

Identity cards were mentioned unprompted by one respondent at this point (a 16-20 year old Asian male). Immigration and asylum were sometimes mentioned unprompted, and concerns around these issues were clearly just below the surface for many white British (and some black and Asian) respondents. Concerns about immigration and asylum were evident throughout Britain, but not Northern Ireland.

In all British locations researched, immigration was regarded as both a national and a local issue. At the national level, there was concern about the consequences of the country becoming overpopulated, and more multi-cultural than most people felt they would like. At the local level, it was thought to impinge on people's everyday lives, especially C2DEs, via the impact on local services and jobs.

“There’s a lot of agency work in this area where they’re [immigrants] coming over and...they are just working all the hours God sends. But the companies are happy because they get cheap labour. So it is affecting our area because there are jobs there that we could do, but the companies are quite happy taking on these workers because they’re cheaper.”

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

For most, then, the worry focused on the country’s ability to absorb many more people, and on the risk of stretching local services. However, among a small minority, subsequent discussion of this issue in the context of identity cards prompted strong expressions of racism.

Underlying much comment at this stage in the discussions, especially among those aged over 30, was a sense of loss of order and structure to life; established ways of life were perceived to be under threat. There was anxiety that crime of all types was increasing, and a feeling of a loss of respect and increasing disregard for manifestations of established order. The police, government generally and politicians specifically all seemed to lack the status they had held in the past, and nothing was deemed to have replaced them.

This resulted in impressions of a diminishing sense of national identity, loss of certainties about life, and a loss of trust and knowledge of who or what to trust. In this context, there were signs of an emotional need to feel that something could and would be done to impose a sense of organisation and to regain control.

Generally, younger people felt less concerned about these perceived changes in society. There appeared to be structural reasons for this: younger people were probably subject to more control in and over their lives, whether this was exercised by their teachers at school/college, advisers in the benefit system or their superiors at work. It may also have been that they were simply less concerned about changes of this type.

For some respondents, this perceived change in society was linked to immigration and asylum seekers. Recent immigrants to the United Kingdom from certain countries were associated with criminal activities, particularly drugs and vice. More generally, people from overseas were

believed to lack knowledge or understanding of UK history and were thought to have a limited sense of, and respect for the established order.

2. Overall response to identity/entitlement cards

2.1 Awareness of identity cards

Awareness of identity cards as a news item was widespread, but far from universal. One or two in most groups felt that it had been in the news fairly recently. Some believed it to be a new proposal, only raised this year; more often, however, it was regarded as a perennial issue that came up regularly in response to problems such as crime and terrorism.

There were several strands to recall and awareness of identity cards that differed by age, ethnicity and area. These are outlined below.

Some respondents had heard about a smart card to hold information regarding health and employment.

“Wasn’t there something about having a smart card that holds all the information about doctors’ records, employment records, everything?”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

Others recalled hearing about cards to allow access to services and to claim benefits; some thought these were based on the new driving licence cards.

Older respondents (50 plus) often associated identity cards with the wartime/postwar period and tended to be more immediately accepting of the idea.

“We always had identity cards. We never had any trouble.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

In addition, there were scattered references to identity cards already in existence, for specific uses. Knowledge of these cards typically weakened resistance to their wider introduction, or improved acceptance of the idea.

A small minority of 16-20 year olds had Connexions cards. They felt that these were useful for proving their age, storing employment-related information, getting advice on training and career prospects, and perhaps most motivating, for getting discounts on commercial items.

"It is for young people and shows what type of training they want to do and things like this, and there is a website linked to it and a chip so every time you go there they know what your preference is for what type of job."

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim males, 16-20, North

"It is a proof of age card and it also gives you slight benefits like a larger burger for the same price as a regular burger."

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim males, 16-20, North

These 16-20 year olds (who were Asian) had school identity cards which gave them access to their school and its facilities; this also helped acceptance of the idea of an identity card.

"We have them at school to see if you belong to that school or not...if you are stopped by the security guard or teacher."

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim males, 16-20, North

In South Wales parents reported that a local council ran an identity card scheme for teenagers to allow entitlement to services, entry to venues and leisure facilities; this too, appeared to improve acceptance of the idea.

Discussion of identity cards often prompted consideration of technological developments in identification. A few respondents had seen requests for fingerprints from people paying for items with Barclaycard; this was generally not well regarded, and was considered futuristic and off-putting.

"It [an identity card] would save us a lot of problems. When you spend money on a Barclaycard they want a fingerprint. Well, it is easier to have an ID card than a fingerprint, isn't it?"

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

"Where I work they're introducing credit cards and they ask for a thumb print. Quite a lot of people reject it because they consider it to be an infringement of their personal space."

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

One or two had heard about commercial organisations using iris scans; it was unclear whether they felt this was already happening or was something that was some way off, but, like fingerprinting, it was generally considered off-putting.

"I read something about having your eyes scanned whenever you go to the bank!"

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland some had experience of fingerprinting as a voluntary additional means of proving identity when paying by credit cards in bars; there were mixed feelings about this. Some argued that an identity card would be less intrusive and less personal than requests for fingerprints.

2.2 Initial reactions to the idea of identity cards

First responses to the idea were mixed: many people were immediately accepting, some were immediately rejecting. Irrespective of their initial views, most responded with questions about the nature, format and purpose of identity cards.

The description used to introduce the idea significantly influenced perceptions. Two boards were used in the research to present the idea to respondents – *Identity cards* and *Entitlement cards* (see discussion format at section B 2. above).

The idea of *Identity cards* was familiar and had widespread appeal. For those who were accepting of the idea in principle it communicated that the cards could be used to confirm individuals' identities to beneficial effect. Against this, the term carried some negative associations among a vocal negative minority (see below). It was linked with repressive government, state control over individuals, police checks on minorities and persecution of non-conformists.

Entitlement cards came across as softer and warmer than *Identity cards* and in this sense it was more favourably received. Against this, *Entitlement cards* was less familiar, and often considered 'weasely' to the less accepting: it signalled to them something which was ostensibly positive and helpful in nature, but which was concealing the reality of its intention. It was also sometimes perceived as an idea only for benefit claimants and asylum seekers, and intended to distinguish them (negatively) from the rest of the population.

Respondents quickly adopted the term *Identity cards*, largely because it was more familiar, and this was used for the remainder of the discussions.

The initial tendency was for respondents to consider the benefits and drawbacks of identity cards for themselves as individuals, and then the implications for the country/society more widely. Those initially most favourable towards the idea argued that individuals and society would both benefit. Those with the strongest reservations believed the main beneficiary would be the state, and that individuals would lose, rather than gain from the wider introduction of identity cards.

Responses amongst various sample segments are discussed in more detail below (section 2.3), but the following generalisations can be made. Among the white British sample, reactions were broadly positive, with some reservations; a small minority had strong objections. Respondents from ethnic minority communities were not dismissive of the idea, but were less accepting than the white British majority, and were generally more wary and quicker to express reservations.

When the idea was introduced as *Identity cards*, initial reaction across the sample was often that it had been prompted by government concern about asylum seekers and illegal immigration.

“Wasn’t there a lot of talk about them coming in because of the illegal immigrants?”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

“It is all to do with illegal immigrants isn’t it? If you haven’t got one [an identity card] then how are you going to prove your citizenship?”

Group 5: ABC1, 31-45, South Wales

“The question is ‘Has something gone wrong so they need an identity card now? Are they not sure who I am? Is there a problem with immigrants coming in?’”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

There was also an assumption that the desire to introduce an identity card at this particular time was related to growing official fears about terrorism. It was commonly assumed that the government was anxious about the risk of terrorist attack in the United Kingdom, and that identity cards represented a means of combating this threat via closer monitoring of the population.

"It's to combat the threat of terrorism. Since September 11th, the debate started. I think David Blunkett has been in favour of it for quite some time."

Group 5: ABC1, 31-45, South Wales

"I think it is going to happen because we have got a lot of worries about terrorism, and it [identity card] is a very simple way of finding out where people are."

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

Expectations about if and when identity cards would be launched varied. Some thought that the government would introduce them irrespective of public opinion within the next few years, and believed that the political will was now behind the scheme, perhaps because it fitted with the current government's response to terrorism and asylum seekers.

"Every time the crime rates go up they seem to mention it; this time they seem to be quite set on it...they seem to be going ahead with it as opposed to before when they just mentioned it."

Group 5: ABC1, 31-45, South Wales

However, there was also a view that the idea would never be introduced. Some respondents said the issue had been raised by successive governments and had always been dropped in the face of prohibitive costs or resistance from the public and media. They expected this to happen again.

"Every so often they bring it up don't they? They say they are going to give people identity cards and then you don't hear about it for months."

Group 6: C2DE, 21-30, North

2.3 Response among different sample segments

2.3.1 *White British majority*

Among most white British people, especially (but not only) C2DE respondents, the proposed introduction of identity cards was welcomed.

Initial views of the implications and benefits of identity cards tended to focus on their potential to combat illegal and/or undesirable activity: the problems of asylum and immigration, benefit fraud and other fraudulent activity. These were all considered to be major and growing problems

which needed urgent attention; at this stage in the discussions, identity cards came across to many as a useful means of helping address them.

“Is it maybe to stop people doing the double or something...claiming benefits and working as well?”

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

“If we can cut down on the people who are abusing the system, then it gives more money to those that aren’t.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

“More and more countries are being affected by refugees or people who are determined to cause trouble. Here is a measure by which legal police forces can check up on you and find out what the situation is. This is an attempt to safeguard citizens in this country and I see no reason why it shouldn’t be adopted.”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

“There are so many asylum seekers coming in. We’ve got to guard against the likes of that. If the police stop them and there’s nothing to hide, there’s no problem.”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

“I think identity cards will help tremendously, especially in regard to security problems in industry. It would make it much easier for the average citizen to have a simple means of identification.”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

The majority who welcomed the cards felt that those who objected to the idea of an identity card would be those with dubious motives (illegal immigrants, those who supported and/or employed them, benefit cheats and so on) or those who were active in the civil rights debate and wanted to champion these people.

“Generally, it’s the people who have something to hide that don’t want it [identity cards]; people who are signing on and working.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

“You would only object to that [identity cards] if you weren’t supposed to be here; I don’t see why anyone would get in a stew about that.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

"I think, if we are to be frank, our generation cannot see anything wrong in carrying an identity card because we were brought up with it, we're used to it. But the younger generation, especially the bleeding hearts, the liberals, who think 'Big Brother is doing this and somebody is watching'... If you have nothing to hide, if you keep to the law of the land and the love of God, you don't have to be afraid of anything."

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

"It's the people who are here that shouldn't be here that are worried about that sort of thing."

"It's the civil rights people."

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

Subsequently, as more became known about the cards, many of this majority expressed qualifications to their acceptance, but most remained positive in principle.

A few of those on benefits had reservations that the cards would categorise them as separate from the general population, and increase feelings of alienation/exclusion. This view may have been more strongly felt than expressed: in larger numbers benefit claimants might well have expressed more negativity about the idea.

2.3.2 *Racist minority*

A racist minority was initially strongly in favour of identity cards. At first they saw identity cards as a means of preventing immigration (not only illegal immigration) and as a signal to other ethnic minorities that they were not welcome in the United Kingdom.

"I don't mean to be crude but if it stops Pakis (sic) working here then I think it is great."

"Stop one coming in and then the rest of their family will be stopped."

Group 6: C2DE, 21-30, North

As the discussion continued and they gave the matter greater consideration this minority came to have significant reservations. Their scepticism of any government initiative clouded their initial enthusiasm, and, as they learned more about the cards, they typically envisaged significant inconveniences for themselves that overshadowed the perceived 'benefits'. They were happy for other people to be asked to use

the cards to access services or prove their identity when, for example, opening a bank account, claiming for benefit or applying for a job, but they did not want to have to do this themselves.

2.3.3 *Liberal minority*

A small minority of liberal people (usually white) held strong objections to identity cards, for a variety of reasons. They saw identity cards as likely to result in a loss of liberty and a means of giving government control over the population, particularly those of non-British backgrounds. For some, the cards themselves were less a problem than the potential they gave the government to exert control over the people.

“By itself it looks innocuous, but I think it is part of a general move towards bringing us all under government control. I think that process needs to be reversed rather than accelerated. It worries me that the government is wanting to count us and number us and make us produce this documentation.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“They look simple but they are the symptom of something bigger which is that the government wants to know who you are, wants to control you. It wants to interfere and to know who everybody is and where they all are.”

Group 8: ABC1 61-75, Scotland

“There are no benefits for the individual to have an ID card; they are benefits for the government.”

“I don’t trust the government. I don’t like them having information about me.”

Group 2: ABC1, 31-45, London/SE

Some of those who felt most strongly believed that if identity cards were intended to combat illegal immigration and asylum seeking, this conflicted with the perceived duty of civilised society to help the oppressed.

“What about the people who are needing to come here in order to get away from somebody else that’s violent? They end up in this country and all of a sudden they become immediately obvious because they don’t have this little bit of paper.”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

This minority associated identity cards with repressive societies and regimes such as Nazi Germany and communist eastern Europe, and

linked the idea to other perceived (and growing) ‘infringements’ on individual liberty, for example CCTV.

“I don’t see how an ID card can really benefit us as individuals; that’s why it makes me think it’s for tracking people.”

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

These people also worried that identity cards might foster what they considered to be a growing anti-foreign feeling in the United Kingdom.

“Would it make people more prejudiced against foreign people? I think generally the UK is getting like that anyway.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

This sector of the sample also had a cynical view of government motives in considering the idea; they were suspicious that this was part of an electoral strategy to appeal to middle Britain by combating some of the issues that were of greatest concern to this sector of the population. Some also thought the cards could be used by government to gather information in support of unpopular decisions on public services, such as closing hospitals or post offices: they could be used to gather information on use of these facilities, and take action accordingly.

“What I can envisage is that you have got a hospital unit that might not treat many people and the government justifies shutting that down and making everyone go twenty miles further.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

2.3.4 *Ethnic minorities*

As mentioned, those from ethnic minorities did not embrace the idea of identity cards and were more likely to have reservations than the white British sample, but were rarely rejecting of the idea in principle.

Many acknowledged the need to tackle illegal immigration. Like the white British sample they worried about over-population by and loss of jobs and services to immigrants. Some, especially first generation immigrants, regarded illegal immigrants as a potential danger to what they saw as their own hard-won freedoms, and were keen that numbers should be controlled.

However, there was also concern amongst this sector about the applications of identity cards to their own circumstances. They feared that the cards might be used to justify increasing police checks on the non-white population, and result in increased chances of their being stopped in the street.

“If they introduce ID cards the police can stop people and ask them for an ID card; would they be more inclined to ask certain types of people? For example, with the terrorist thing at the moment, would they be more inclined to stop people with beards and turbans?”

Group 14: African-Caribbean, 21-30, London/SE

“It makes me think I may be stopped tomorrow for some reason, and be told to produce an ID card. Why do we need ID cards in the first place?”

Group 14: African-Caribbean, 21-30, London/SE

“If someone was stopped by the police and they found out he was from Iraq or Afghanistan, he would probably be delayed, or questioned more.”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

“Maybe you are walking along and you are stopped and the police say ‘show me your identity card’ and you don’t have it on you, maybe they would do something like lock you up.”

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

Even this was not always considered a negative, however. There was some sense that this might streamline identity checks, providing speedier confirmation of identity, reducing waiting time, and giving them some protection from the vagaries of the attitude of individual police officers.

“If a policeman stops you, instead of asking you all your details and it is really up to him to decide if you decide to tell him the truth or lie but if you show him the card and he can just punch in the detail into his computer and then it will have the details...”

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

Additionally, some of those from ethnic minorities expressed views about government control over the population that were similar to those of the white liberal minority.

“It’s this whole big brother thing that started with the CCTV thing. It’s not like an extra freedom to have an ID card. I think it’s just an element of repression.”

Group 14: African-Caribbean, 21-30, London/SE

"I just think it takes away from our privacy. It's like being in a fish bowl - they can see you from the outside, but you can't see them."

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

"I think the history of ID cards has always been quite repressive. You think about the Jews in World War Two, they were given ID cards."

Group 14: African-Caribbean, 21-30, London/SE

"What am I accepting if I accept an identity card? That the government has a right to demand an identity card for everybody? That the government can have everything on tap? I just think it's a little bit too extreme. It's asking too much and giving nothing back."

Group 14: African-Caribbean, 21-30, London/SE

2.3.5 Northern Ireland

As noted, in Northern Ireland immigration and asylum were not significant issues, and were not thought compelling reasons for introducing identity cards.

"I don't think anyone illegally immigrates to Northern Ireland!"

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

Against this, people in Northern Ireland were more accustomed to being asked to prove their identity and to carrying and showing driving licences (especially in the older age group); this typically weakened resistance to or improved acceptance of the idea. In addition they could see the potential benefits of combating terrorism and illegal activity associated with terrorism.

"I think in Northern Ireland we're used to handing over our driving licences as ID; it's not such a big thing."

Group 11: C2DE, 21-30, Northern Ireland

2.4 Initial queries and concerns about the introduction of identity cards

Introduction of the idea of identity cards prompted a wide range of queries that sometimes reflected, but often masked concerns and objections. Several questions were raised immediately in almost all groups about the intentions and the practicalities of the idea.

Respondents wondered whether the cards would be compulsory to have and to carry, and whether everyone would have to have one – including British people and non-British residents. They also queried the level and nature of the information contained – how detailed and how personal would it be? They wondered what the primary function of the cards would be: was it intended as a means of checking/proving identity or a way of storing information? Some also wanted to know how information would be checked at point of use – would relevant outlets have means of accessing information? If various outlets and organisations were able to check data, there were typically questions about data sharing and access

“Are we all going to have them? What about non-British people?”

“What about people who have just arrived seeking asylum?”

Group 8: ABC1 61-75, Scotland

“It depends what they’re really going to be for – is it about allowing us to use certain services, or keeping checks on people’s identity?”

Group 2: ABC1 31-45, Londonj/SE

“How many shops and whatever are going to install these ID cards? Surely there must be a scanner needed to go with the cards?”

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

Some, particularly those in the white liberal minority, were concerned about social exclusion; they wondered how homeless people would be included, assuming that card holders would need to provide a valid address.

Once unprompted questions had been exhausted, respondents were shown information boards with statements outlining the possible format and function of the cards. A number of other issues were raised in response to these statements; these are discussed in sections 3-8 below.

The fact that most European countries used identity cards was typically surprising, but was generally seen positively. Most felt that if a system of identity cards worked elsewhere, it might work here; some also felt that the cards would inevitably be introduced here, given their extensive use in other countries.

"It is going to come in eventually, because every other country has got it."

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

The fact that identity cards were so widely used abroad was reassuring to many. Among the liberal minority, however, response was polarised. Some felt reassured - if the cards could be used successfully without infringing civil liberties in other countries, then why not here? Others suggested that other countries were more used to state control than the United Kingdom, particularly those which had experienced the World Wars closer to hand than the UK; they saw the absence of identity cards here as a signal of a more equal and free society.

Overall, however, most felt that there could be useful lessons to learn, and that communication of the experiences of other countries might help overcome some objectors' reservations.

"I also think we really ought to know what the scheme is in other countries. If it is very similar to what we'd introduce then we'd probably be more content with it."

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

Some suggested that widespread use of the cards elsewhere might explain why the United Kingdom seemed to attract more illegal immigrants and asylum seekers than elsewhere in Europe; this theory was generally thought credible by other respondents.

"That explains why they're clamouring to get into this country."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

3. Nature and format of cards

Most initially expected a dedicated identity card, with a limited range of information and functions. When introduced, options for an identity card/driving licence and identity card/passport were generally seen as more sensible and more functional than the identity card alone. Most expected to prefer a combined card, but acknowledged the need for the dedicated identity card for those without a passport or driving licence. Those who had neither passport nor driving licence appreciated this option.

Most in this sample were familiar with driving licence cards, although only a minority had them. This familiarity helped generate an understanding of the possible format and function of the identity card.

Of the two combined options, most preferred the identity card/driving licence to the passport option. It was widely held that a driving licence was more 'everyday' than a passport; people were more prepared to carry their driving licence with them, affording a better fit with the nature of the identity card. A passport had a more special status, and there was more concern about carrying a passport than an identity card; most found it difficult to envisage using a 'passport' to access everyday services or to prove their identity. A reason for their preference for the driving licence option may have been that the idea of a passport card was not familiar to them in the way that the photocard driving licence was to many respondents.

"You don't want to have to carry your passport round with you all the time..."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

However, before the extent of the information potentially available on the card was made known to respondents, there was some tendency to see the identity card as duplicating the driving licence and passport in function. Both were believed to be accepted widely as a means of proving identity, and it was not clear at this stage what the additions to the card could offer.

4. Information on the card and on the database

4.1 General points

This was an area of major uncertainty and lack of clarity, and a key factor in gaining acceptance for or turning people against the idea of identity cards. Discussion and queries were focused on several important issues to do with the nature and extent of information included, and the access that would be allowed to this information. There was a wide range of views on the scope and level of detail of information to be included. Stimulus boards were used to prompt and focus response (*Basic Information* and *Extra Information*).

Those who were most in favour of the idea in principle wanted all the information suggested (on the *Basic Information* board) to be included (name and address, date and place of birth, signature, nationality and gender). They also thought that other detailed information would be worth including if the cards were to be used to maximum benefit: they thought that criminal record, DNA information and previous addresses would be useful (here, sex offenders were especially top of mind).

Those who were most opposed to the idea argued that only basic details should be included on the cards (for instance, photograph, name and date of birth and, sometimes, but with widespread reservations, address). Their resistance grew as the suggested volume and range of information grew.

In between these extremes the majority tended to lean towards having less rather than more information on the cards, particularly if there was a database running in parallel to the cards. It was notable that like the rejecting minority, some, particularly those from ethnic minorities, began to feel less keen on the idea as they learned about the extent and detail of information that could be included.

“At first when you said ID cards I was up for it, but now there is going to be too much detail provided. For me an ID card should have your name, address, and picture of you, and maybe your personal number...”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

There was considerable debate about what should be printed and visible on the card and what should be encrypted and accessible only from the database. There was a general tendency to become more cautious about the volume and nature of information printed on the card as the possibilities became known.

"We don't want our life stories on there. Basic things you want on there – name, address..."

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

4.2 Information on the card

There was general agreement that the holder's name, photograph, date of birth and possibly a personal number should be featured on the card. Many suggested including a photograph unprompted; elsewhere, this was regarded as a sensible identification measure, and considered no different from the new driving licence card and other specific identity cards.

A unique personal number was seen as helpful to confirm identity; some suggested that the National Insurance number could fulfil this function. However, there was also some feeling that this would be unnecessary if other means of identification were used, such as a photograph and/or signature, or biometric information.

"I don't think a personal number would be needed because there's enough personal information in that to pick out who I am."

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

As mentioned, many had reservations about the inclusion of an address on the card. Most people knew that the driving licence card featured the holder's address, and those who had it often did not carry it, partly for this reason; they worried about losing the card, or the card falling into the wrong hands.

"Having your address on it would bother me; everybody would know where you lived."

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

"Name, date of birth and nationality. Then you can prove you're eligible to work in this country, but you're not going to have your address."

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

"I would not like that at all. I don't want anyone knowing where I live."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

Place of birth was generally accepted, but was questioned by some ethnic minorities. There was some feeling that this would facilitate prejudice and stereotyping by authorities such as the police.

The inclusion of a signature on the card was acceptable to most (this was perceived to be no different from credit/debit cards), but a minority was concerned about forgeries. The inclusion of something that could be forged appeared to make the card more vulnerable to some.

The need to include information regarding gender was often queried, especially if a name and photo were included. This seemed to be too 'personal', and few could see good reason to include it.

Nationality was generally accepted, but a minority, including some from ethnic minorities, saw this as potentially discriminatory against non-UK citizens; they failed to see why this should appear on a card that was intended for British citizens. They were happier with its inclusion on the database, but uncertain of the rationale.

"Why does there need to be nationality if you are only given the card if you are British?"

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

In Northern Ireland there was resistance to the inclusion of nationality on the card. It was argued that this would indicate sensitive nationalist/loyalist leanings; this was considered more appropriate for the database, although there was some resistance even to this.

"In Belfast I don't think they should have nationality because if you carry an Irish passport or a British passport you are stating your nationality as you have the choice of which passport you have."

"Not everyone in Northern Ireland likes people to know which nationality they are."

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

4.3 Information on the database

All other information (see *Extra Information* board appended) was thought inappropriate for the card, and only suitable for the database, although there were also some reservations about this.

Including information on an individual's eligibility to work on the database was thought important by some to crack down on illegal working. They were familiar with this either from direct experience or from news stories, and felt it needed addressing.

"That is a good thing and it should be on the card – 'This man is a bona fide citizen and eligible to work' – so if you don't have the card you can't work."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

Others felt that this would be difficult to police, at the mercy of employers and even discriminatory (see 5.1 below).

Many were ambivalent about the idea of health information being included on the database. On the one hand it was regarded as sensible, useful and potentially life-saving to include certain information such as allergies, blood group, diabetes and epilepsy; indeed, many felt that this might sensibly be included on the card.

"If someone has diabetes or something then somebody would know how to treat them."

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

On the other hand, this information often appeared intrusive, and sometimes prompted worries about privacy; most concluded that this information should not be on the card. But, if the information were only included on the database and not on the card, how would it be accessed in the event of an emergency? Respondents wondered if ambulance crews and other emergency services would carry machines to swipe cards. Given widespread uncertainty about the practicalities, there was no consensus on whether the information should be on the card or only on the database, but most groups felt that inclusion of this medical information should be voluntary to ensure that it benefited the individual and did not encourage prejudice.

The inclusion of biometric information was welcomed by those most keen on the idea of identity cards; they imagined that this was the most secure and certain means of proving identity.

“Nothing could ever forge it so I suppose it is secure...it doesn't matter what your name is or where you live, that's you.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

However biometric information was often treated with caution, and response to this being included sometimes tipped the balance of response against the idea of identity cards. To many it sounded highly personal and reinforced existing reservations about the intrusiveness of the information demands.

“It just reminds me of supermarket scans, like having a barcode or something.”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

“It's a very private thing. You don't offer your fingerprint to everybody.”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

Iris scanning concerned some: the practice and the technology were unfamiliar, they were unsure how it worked and were instinctively anxious about the possibility of damage to the eyes. Additionally, some wondered whether this was likely to add significantly to the cost (of the scheme generally and to themselves as taxpayers). Perhaps the most common conclusion was that this was too futuristic for inclusion at this stage in the proposal.

Nonetheless, if biometric information were included, there was a general acceptance that there would be designated places to provide it. Most sought reassurance that these locations would be secure to minimise the risk of information being stolen. Respondents' suggestions for suitable locations included: post offices, town halls/council offices, GP surgeries and police stations.

4.4 Access to the database

The issue of allowing and controlling access to the database was invariably considered important. Many had questions about access; they

wondered who would have access, and to what level of detail (see 6.1 below).

Many who were well disposed to the idea in principle took a pragmatic view of this issue; they accepted that there were confidentiality risks and were largely unconcerned or resigned, primarily because they felt that there was little that was not already known about them.

“I still think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. I still think that we’ve filled in so many forms in our life that we don’t really know where this has all ended up. I don’t see any particular problem.”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

“Whenever you phone anywhere they say ‘What’s your postcode?’ and they can tell you then who you are right away.”

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

“Everybody must be on some sort of list somewhere. So what difference would it make whether you carry a card or a driving licence?”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

But many others, especially those who objected in principle, were unhappy about the risk of hacking, concerned about card fraud and about information being stolen and abused.

Several felt that the inclusion of a personal identification number (PIN) or password might help prevent illegal access, but many remained unconvinced; they argued that no system could be entirely secure against determined criminals.

“If they have got the technology to do it legally you can guarantee within days they will have the technology illegally.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

5. Benefits of the idea

5.1 Perceived benefits (unprompted)

There was a general view that identity cards would be more of a benefit than a hindrance to the law-abiding majority, and might help prevent some illegal activity.

"It is like CCTV cameras, most people don't worry about them. We know we are being photographed out there and unless you are up to something you don't worry about it do you?"

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

"I have got nothing to hide at all and I am a law-abiding citizen. If I had a card on me it really wouldn't make any difference at all; If they want to see my card they can have a look at it, no problem."

Group 5: ABC1, 31-45, South Wales

The accepting majority (and some others) perceived a range of possible benefits of the idea without prompting.

The key issue was thought to be addressing the problem of illegal immigration. They imagined that identity cards would confirm an individual's right of residence and make it more difficult for illegal immigrants to avoid detection, and perhaps act as a deterrent (see 5.2 below).

"It wouldn't stop them trying to get in here, but it would make it a lot simpler to identify them once they were here. Maybe knowing that they should have an identity card might deter them."

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

"If the card is done in the right way it will reduce...illegal immigration sufficiently if not totally. Of course there will be ways round it, but for the majority of criminals this will create a major problem. With the exception of going the whole hog and putting a chip inside everybody, the card is the next best thing."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

For some this translated directly into benefits for the individual: reducing these problems would save the country money which could be spent on improving public services.

“If it cuts down on illegal immigration and benefit fraud it’s bound to save millions.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“If you’re saving the country money you are going to benefit. Kids are going to benefit, their health, their education...all that money that we’re saving is going to get ploughed back in for us.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

Also top of mind was the possibility of reducing the number of illegal benefit claimants, by making it harder for them to claim using a false identity; some perceived an immediate, tangible benefit of reducing the burden on taxpayers.

“It will also save me money. At the moment I don’t know how much we lose in our wages for people claiming benefit, but I think it will cut it out immediately. You can’t sign on unless you have a card.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

“What it said on the news was that it could also be brought in to stop benefit fraud. That was one of the big things in the European countries; it would mean the right people got the right money.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“You know you hear of people claiming benefits in sixteen different names – if they had an identity card that would stop that straight away.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

Confirming identity to allow easier, faster checks on eligibility to work in certain occupations was also thought valuable; here, streamlining the checks on teachers was often top of mind.

“A few months ago there was a lot of problems with teachers. They could store that sort of information, swipe a card. At the moment what happens is one department deals with whatever then it goes to another department and goes back eventually. I think if you have one database it ensures speed.”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

“So that the police can check convictions quickly. Like earlier this year with the Soham murders when the police had to check all the teachers, it took forever.”

Group 11: C2DE, 16-20, Northern Ireland

“We were coming out of the factory on the work bus...and we were stopped and there was four of five social security people and they had to get us off and ask our name, postcode, date of birth, place of birth, nationality and what benefits you were claiming. Now that took about an hour and a half. They were taking your information and phoning their main office and checking with a woman on a computer. That could have been so quick if you had had an ID card.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

However, some queried the practicalities of keeping a check on people in work. Others saw this ‘benefit’ as discriminatory: they felt it would stigmatise people who were out of work and make it seem more acceptable to query and check their identity.

Verifying the age of young people was also thought possible and useful. Parents were especially positive, feeling that this would help control the sale of alcohol, tobacco, aerosols and fireworks to young people. Young people themselves also saw this as a potential benefit, particularly teenage females who had experienced problems with people not believing they were the age they said.

“As the mother of teenage children I am in agreement with it. I think it would be a good idea, particularly for young people.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

“Proof of age. Transactions would be faster. If you wanted to buy cigarettes and alcohol it would show your age.”

Group 11: C2DE, 16-20, Northern Ireland

This factor was also thought potentially helpful to those in the retail and licensing industries: it would make it quicker and easier to check ages.

For some there was a general, wide-ranging benefit in making it easier to achieve identification. There was also perceived to be a benefit in streamlining the process of providing identification in day-to-day transactions, such as obtaining services – the National Health Service, state benefits and voting were prominent

“I would carry one on the basis that it would be invaluable to me in many aspects of my life. Whether I was shopping, involved in an accident, stopped by the police...in many walks of life I could prove very simply and easily who I was.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“It would cut down a great deal of the time [involved], speed up the whole process. People often wait weeks and weeks before finding out they are entitled to aid. This system in a matter of hours would say ‘You are entitled.’”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

“I can see it as a benefit, definitely, insofar as so many people don’t vote, which is a mixture of lack of interest and also the archaic system we have of voting. Here would be a card that would entitle me to go and vote. I would put it in the machine, enter the number, vote for x, y or z. It would be so much simpler.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

Easier transaction of everyday commercial activities was also commonly mentioned, such as Post Office collection, video hire, leisure facilities and financial transactions such as opening bank accounts and gaining credit in stores.

“I think it just helps you every time you open a building society account or even use the video shop you have to have ID. If you had one card that was recognised as a government card, it would save all the utility bills you have to take each time.”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

“It will help with proving who I am without taking bills and whatever.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

“It might cut down on the queue in the post office because people can just walk up and slip their card in or whatever.”

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

There was widespread agreement that confirming identity in the event of a road accident or traffic offence was potentially helpful; this might help crack down on a perceived growing problem of dishonest behaviour amongst drivers.

There was some perceived potential to combat violent crime, particularly if the cards were used in conjunction with DNA samples. If everyone had an identity card and this could be used to access DNA or other health information, detection of crime could be much easier.

A minority raised unprompted the potential benefit of easier access to personal medical information in the event of an emergency.

“Imagine having on that card your blood group, imagine being in an accident...right away the doctor would know exactly the type of blood you need.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“It could show a medical condition and if you collapse then people will know straight away by looking at the card and they will be able to cure you quicker.”

Group 11: C2DE, 16-20, Northern Ireland

“I think it is good. It has everything a driving licence has got, but additional information that could be good for you, if you get into an emergency.”

Group 11: C2DE, 16-20, Northern Ireland

Although this was not generally particularly motivating, a few felt that an identity card could reduce the number of cards and documents people needed to carry.

“If it’s rolled into one it could be better. More space in my wallet. Instead of five separate cards saying five different things.”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

As often as this, however, other respondents felt that this would be an extra card to carry around; at this stage some had difficulty envisaging what the card might replace.

5.2 Response to other suggested benefits

Other potential benefits were put to respondents (see stimulus materials appended).

The potential to combat identity fraud was thought to have some merit. However, the concept of identity fraud was not always understood, and consideration was usually limited to credit card fraud.

“I think it will save the country a lot of money in credit card fraud.”

Group 11: C2DE, 16-20, Northern Ireland

Efficient access to services and benefits was accepted as a benefit, but seen by some as limited. The range of services and benefits was initially not clear to all and needed explaining. On consideration, there was some understanding that this might include a wide range of services, as mentioned above (5.1).

However, if this included medical services, it often prompted concern that the UK might be moving towards the United States model, where treatment was conditional on production of appropriate membership.

"I would be worried about the need to produce the card to access services. It is getting like America now where unless you have got insurance they won't treat you."

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

The potential of the cards to reduce crime generally was questioned by some at first, but gained acceptance. It was sometimes uncertain how the cards would reduce much typical crime, but most acknowledged that the cards might act as a means of reducing fraud, and particularly benefit and credit card fraud, since this was linked to the need to prove identity.

"The amount of credit card crime taking place in this country is enormous, mainly because the means of identification are so poor. That might be solved by the introduction of these cards."

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

"How can an identity card reduce crime? I can see how it could reduce identity fraud and therefore terrorism, but if you talk about crime, what sort of crime?"

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

Here, it was also believed to be a reasonable means of combating terrorism, for similar reasons.

More generally, as they gave the issue more consideration, some respondents argued that cards might be useful for reducing the risk of crime through easier checks on identity. A minority believed that the existence of cards, and the consequent ease of identifying individuals might deter potential criminals, particularly if the cards included biometric information.

"I think an individual will think twice before committing a crime if they know that at the end of it their card is going to be swiped and everything about them would come up."

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

"That would help crime a lot. If there's a record of everybody's fingerprints I think that would reduce crime. If that was all in the computer and a crime happened like somebody broke into your house, you've got the fingerprints."

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“If you get caught coming home with a video recorder under your arm and it turns out that you have got prior arrest records for things and an ID card helped you get caught...then it is not a bad thing.”

Group 5: ABC1, 31-45, South Wales

Benefits in the process of electoral registration and voting were welcomed by voters, but irrelevant to most non-voters.

“It would help you register. It could be used like a credit card when you vote and could be used for the census.”

“If you had a pin number you could vote from home.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

Easier travel in Europe was not a significant benefit for most, and was sometimes seen as a disadvantage: would this make it easier for illegal immigrants to enter the United Kingdom?

“You have an identity card at the moment – your passport. I can’t see how that [an identity card] will speed it up.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“It’s of no particular benefit once you are in Europe because you can travel all the way round Europe and nobody asks you anything.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

6. Disadvantages of the idea

6.1 Perceived disadvantages (unprompted)

A number of potential disadvantages to identity cards were raised on initial consideration of the idea, some general, some specific.

Some respondents saw the introduction of identity cards as restrictive and bureaucratic, especially the liberal white minority and some ethnic minorities. They envisaged a layer of bureaucracy that individuals would have to contend with that was intended to control them, rather than entitle them to things.

“It gives you the impression that it gives you access to things whereas it’s another layer of bureaucracy which we can do without.”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

These people also perceived a danger of stigmatising minority groups, particularly ethnic minorities and benefit claimants; they feared that these people would be asked to produce their card more often than others. This was also thought true when the term *Entitlement cards* was considered.

“It would imply you were scrounging off the government.”

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

A majority, including those most favourably disposed to the idea, were concerned about problems if the card were lost or stolen. They worried that this would mean risks to cardholders’ security because thieves or finders could obtain information from the card.

There were a number of specific concerns here. People were anxious about the danger of fraudulent use, the difficulty and anticipated expense of replacing the card and the danger of information falling into the wrong hands. The inconvenience was thought to be greater were the identity card attached to a passport or driving licence; it is worth noting here the widespread reluctance to carry a passport. However, many accepted that safeguards would not be difficult to implement and that these concerns did not undermine the value of the scheme.

“You can’t leave it at home in case you get burgled and you can’t take it with you in case you get mugged. What’s the point?”

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

“If the card gets into the wrong hands, what happens then? You might get the police knocking on your door, all this harassment.”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

“If you lose your wallet then the person could come round to your house or if you have a scrap with someone and you lose your wallet they will know where you live.”

Group 6: C2DE, 21-30, North

The security of the database was a particular problem. Many were uncomfortable with the idea of a large amount of information centralised in one system, unlike most information currently available which they believed was kept in separate places.

“All the information is going to be in one place. I mean normally everyone has different information about things like bank accounts; but not everyone banks, not everyone has a driving licence, so it’s kind of all over the place. But now it’s going to be all centralised in one place.”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

“Personally I am very concerned about all the information being kept in one place. I like the idea of it being spread about, then it’s difficult to access all of it.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

“Surely there is sensitive information stored about us which anybody could possibly get access to in various different places. This is surely bringing it together?”

Group 1: C2DE, 31-45, London/SE

This prompted some worries about the ease of access to databases; respondents pointed to the perceived availability of information to commercial and private sector organisations. There was widespread concern that businesses might be able to buy information on the lists, although many thought that this was unlikely.

“Once they have got your postal code they know exactly who you are.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

“They just take your name and your postcode and they know where you live. They could take that and pass it on to the next guy.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

Another worry here was criminals hacking into the database to obtain and misuse the information. It was often said that hacking was now a proven possibility, and that there were several recent examples.

“There was a guy who was arrested for hacking into America’s government files or something. If you can get in there you can get in anywhere.”

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

“People are hacking into the White House! How can they [government] tell us they can protect us?”

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

6.2 Response to other suggested disadvantages

Other potential drawbacks were shown to respondents via stimulus material (appended).

Of these, privacy and data sharing was a primary concern. The security of the database worried many, especially if biometric, financial and health information were included. Here, reference to the Data Protection Act was not entirely reassuring. Few knew what it was or did, and even fewer believed it was capable of protecting them. The reference to the Act in the information statements sometimes caused concern in itself; it suggested to some that the card was intended to be used by government for security purposes.

“We have no reassurance that it will be kept private. How will the Data Protection work?”

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

“You are never free from privacy. They will always be checking. People like MI5 and MI6.”

Group 11: C2DE, 16-20, Northern Ireland

“I’m trying to remember what the Data Protection Act is about. It makes me think it seems more serious and makes me think more about the idea of security.”

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

The possibility of having to carry or produce the card to access services (which was presented here as a potential disadvantage) was more often seen as a benefit if it controlled abuse of services. If people had to use their card to obtain services this would prevent fraudulent use. However,

if this meant the need to use the card to access medical services, this caused concern (see 5.2 above).

The scale of the task of introducing identity cards was generally not a concern for those well disposed to the idea. Most simply assumed that the government would have the resources and expertise to achieve it, and imagined that if similar systems had been set up in other countries, it could be done here.

However, this issue was regarded as a major obstacle by the rejecting minority. They felt that this was an enormous undertaking given the size of the population and the scope of the information suggested. They also felt that government had a poor record in creating and managing databases, and pointed to examples of the delays at the Criminal Records Bureau amongst others.

“They can’t even run the databases they’ve got. Only two out of fifty-seven projects on information technology that the government has launched have been successful and the rest have been scrapped.”

Group 7: ABC1, 46-60, North

6.3 Other reservations

In addition to these specific concerns, some respondents, again particularly the more rejecting, felt that the cards would have limited effectiveness in achieving the stated aims. They believed that those who currently abused the system would continue to do so, with or without identity cards. These people were, they thought, always one step ahead of the system, or close behind it; they had access to the technology required and would have no difficulty using it.

In this context they also felt that abuse of the system might be done in collusion with people in positions of power – disreputable employers who wanted, for example to use cheap illegal labour. They suspected that the system would be unable to prevent those most determined to take advantage of it – serious fraudsters and illegal immigrants intent on staying.

Some respondents also thought that the idea was unnecessary as far as benefits and disadvantages to the general public were concerned; they argued that driving licences already performed an identification function.

7. Universal vs voluntary

There were mixed feelings and much uncertainty about the implications of having to own or carry the card; it needed careful consideration before respondents felt they could express a definite preference.

Those most in favour of the principle of identity cards expected them to be universal, and argued that much of the benefit was lost if the card was a voluntary measure. They felt that the card and system would not function successfully as a means of keeping a check on residence and working status or identity if it were voluntary. Those who supported the idea most enthusiastically argued that it should be compulsory to carry, in order to maximise the benefits and immediate value.

“It would be pointless unless it was compulsory; it would defeat the object.”

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

“If they’re going to do it...it should be universal or not at all. I don’t think it should be a voluntary thing. If they said it was voluntary I don’t think anybody would opt for it.”

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

“I think if it’s voluntary there’s no point.”
“Yes, if it’s voluntary no one will have one.”

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

“What’s the point of bringing it out if people have the choice of whether or not to have one?”

Group 6: C2DE, 21-30, North

“What would be the point of it if you didn’t have to carry it round with you?”

Group 10: ABC1, 46-60, Northern Ireland

Those with reservations and objections in principle felt strongly that the cards should be voluntary; this was more acceptable and less intrusive. They regarded universality as reinforcing the impression of government control. However, they also believed that ‘voluntary’ could and would effectively mean ‘compulsory’ if the card made receiving entitlements significantly easier, or was needed to access services.

“If you need the card for the entitlement to products and services then it is not voluntary so if you go and you want to get Income Support and you can only get Income Support with your ID card then you have to get the card. It is negating the voluntary thing.”

Group 5: ABC1, 31-45, South Wales

Among ethnic minorities many regarded universality as signalling that the identity cards were intended to be used as a means of keeping checks on them. This reinforced worries that some had expressed earlier about the true intention of the cards.

8. Costs and funding

Funding was potentially problematic. Although not often raised spontaneously, when prompted, funding of the identity cards was a major issue in the acceptability of the idea as a whole.

Most had assumed that the identity card would be paid for 'by the government' from the taxation 'pot'. When they were informed that the government was considering an up front charge for identity only cards, and an increase in the cost of passports and driving licences, there were mixed reactions.

A substantial number regarded the prospect of paying for the card as acceptable. They were generally more accepting of the proposed funding mechanism if they accepted the card in principle and saw it as benefiting the individual; given these benefits they felt it was not unreasonable to pay. They used passports and driving licences as examples, and argued that it was not surprising that they would also be expected to pay for identity cards. They often pointed out that the alternative was funding via taxes, which meant that they would pay in some way.

"I think if you accept the basic principle of it then you don't mind paying, because you pay for your driving licence, you pay for your passport."

Group 13: Hindu or Sikh, Female, 31-45, Midlands

The possible premium of up to £10 over the current passport price often seemed reasonable to these people.

But there was also widespread resistance to the prospect of individuals paying for cards. Where opinion of the idea was less positive, this reinforced scepticism; and often undermined the initial welcome for the idea.

"I'm wholeheartedly in favour of it, but I don't want to pay for it..."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

Opinion was generally less positive where the advantages of the idea were perceived as all, or mainly, the government's; given this, it seemed unreasonable to ask individuals to pay.

"It's their idea [government], they should pay."

Group 12: Pakistani Muslim, Male, 16-20, North

"We shouldn't have to pay for that. If the government wants us to carry an identity card then they should foot the bill."

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

There was a sense amongst those who were less positive about the proposed funding of the card that the process of setting up the scheme would require much goodwill on the part of the public, and that it was therefore unreasonable to ask them to pay.

"I think they [government] should pay for it, because they've got money in a pot and if they could outlay that money..."

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland

They felt that if there were efficiencies and savings for government in the longer term through reduced benefit fraud and costs associated with illegal immigrants, why should the government not pay?

"There are so many benefits to the state; the state can absorb the cost because they're going to gain so much benefit. They're going to save billions, I think, if this card is used in the right manner."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

"They're going to get it back at the end of the day..."

Group 8: ABC1, 61-75, Scotland.

Regardless of opinion on this matter, it was seen as important to charge less for a dedicated identity card than for the passport or driving licence versions. It was also thought important to offer the card free of charge to the less well off. Opinion here was often vocal amongst those who were concerned that the card would make society more, rather than less unequal.

In discussion of funding, some saw an acceptable compromise in the government funding start-up costs, including the first card issued to an individual, with individuals paying for changes and subsequent cards.

"If the government want to introduce this they should put their hand in their pocket and pay for it as a one-off hit. If we have to pay for it in future years for a replacement or whatever then that's different; but first off the government must pay for it."

Group 9: C2DE, 21-30, Scotland

“One card should be provided to you free of charge by the government. If you lose it and there is a charge for it to be replaced it will make you more careful.”

Group 4: C2DE, 46-60, South Wales

Discussion of funding prompted questions about how long the card would be valid, how often it might need updating and so on. On the whole, unsurprisingly, there was greater acceptance of paying for the cards if the validity period was considered long-term.

APPENDICES

Contact questionnaire

Topic guide

Statements used in the groups

CONTACT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Address:

.....

Tel:

Sex: Male () Female ()

Occupation (HoH):

SeS: A() B () C1 () C2 () D () E()

Age: 16-20() 21-30 () 31-45 () 46-60 () 61-75 ()

Children living at home: No () Yes (write in ages).....

.....

GOOD MORNING/AFTERNOON, I WORK FOR AN INDEPENDENT MARKET RESEARCH COMPANY CALLED CRAGG ROSS DAWSON. WE ARE CARRYING OUT A RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT CURRENT AFFAIRS. I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF I COULD ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.

QA Do you, or any of your close family or friends work in any of the following occupations now, or have you or they ever done so in the past? (SHOWCARD A)

- Advertising () CLOSE
- Marketing () CLOSE
- Market research () CLOSE
- Public relations () CLOSE
- Journalism/broadcasting () CLOSE
- Police Force () CLOSE
- Armed Forces () CLOSE
- Civil Service () CLOSE
- Local council () SEE QUOTA
- Customs and Excise () CLOSE

IF ELIGIBLE GO TO QB. OTHERWISE CLOSE.

QB Have you ever attended a market research group discussion or interview?

Yes () QC

No () Q1

QC And have you attended such a discussion or interview in the last 6 months?

Yes () CLOSE

No () QD

QD What was/were the subject(s) of the discussion(s)/interview(s) you attended? WRITE IN BELOW.

.....
CLOSE IF RELATED TO THIS RESEARCH TOPIC. OTHERWISE GO TO Q1.

Q1 Thinking about your income, which of the following applies to you?

I am in full time paid employment ()

I am in part time paid employment ()

I am unemployed and receiving benefit ()

I am not in paid work and I am supported by my partner ()

I am retired and receiving a pension ()

TWO RESPONDENTS IN EACH OF THE C2DE GROUPS (GROUPS 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 AND 10) SHOULD BE UNEMPLOYED AND RECEIVING BENEFIT.

ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS SHOULD BE IN PAID EMPLOYMENT, OR SUPPORTED BY THEIR PARTNER, OR RETIRED AND RECEIVING A PENSION. TO Q2.

Q2 Would you mind telling me if you are a member of, or work for, any of these organisations?

Labour Party ()

Conservative Party ()

Liberal Democratic Party ()

Green Party ()

British National Party () CLOSE

Citizens Advice Bureau () CLOSE

Liberty () CLOSE

Welfare rights organisation () CLOSE

RECRUIT IF APPROPRIATE.

Topic Guide – Identity/Entitlement Cards

Background

5 mins

Age, make-up of household, employment status (if relevant).

Current events and issues

5 mins

What current events are in people's minds (e.g. school/education, jobs, the economy, terrorism, Northern Ireland, other)? *Moderator to listen for mention of issues such as asylum, immigration and 9/11, and move the conversation on if any single issue begins to dominate the discussion.*

Awareness of current proposals for identity cards/entitlement cards

10 mins

Have respondents heard about any current plans to introduce an identity/entitlement card scheme? Have they heard the term *identity card* or *entitlement card*?

If they are aware of any proposed scheme, what is their understanding of it? How and when did they hear about it? Who has suggested it? Why? Do they know any specific details of how it will work?

Identity/entitlement cards in principle (using *Identity Cards* board)

10 mins

What are people's initial reactions to this? What do they imagine would be its uses? What might be its benefits – to themselves and to society? Do they imagine there might be any disadvantages to it? Why do they think the idea is being considered?

What does the term *identity card* suggest about the idea? Supposing they were called *entitlement cards* – what might this suggest about them and would they seem different from something called *identity cards*?

What do they see as the primary function of the cards – identity, entitlement to products/services, validation of residence and work status,

other? Do they see them as something that would mainly benefit them as individuals, or society/the country as a whole?

Are they aware that every country in Europe except the UK, Ireland and Denmark has identity cards? How does this affect their views?

Practicalities (using *How would they work?* board) 10 mins

What do respondents think about these aspects of identity cards:

- information to be held on a central database

Do they have any concerns about this? Do they worry about privacy at this stage? If so, what are their worries?

- three alternative types of card:
 - combined with driving licence
 - combined with passport
 - identity-only card

What do they make of these options? What do they imagine would be their advantages and disadvantages? Which of these three options do they imagine they would choose and why, given a choice? (If helpful, moderator can describe current plan to introduce a passport card.)

Universal vs voluntary (using *Are they compulsory?* board)

5 mins

Do they believe identity cards should be universal for all adults or only for those who want them – what do people feel about this? What factors come into their minds in considering this? (*Listen for mentions of illegal immigration, asylum seekers, illegal working*).

What would be the advantages of making identity cards universal? What would be the benefits of leaving people to choose whether they wanted one or not? What do they think about the issue of owning a card vs

carrying one? If they had a card would they carry it and why/why not? If the scheme were voluntary, would they apply for a card at all?

Information on the cards (using *Basic Information and Extra Information?* boards)

10 mins

What information would they expect to be on the card – how detailed? What seems acceptable and unacceptable? Do they have any concerns about privacy at this stage?

Assuming the information on the card was the card holder's...

- name
- address
- date and place of birth
- signature
- nationality
- gender
- photograph

...how would they feel about this? Does this seem reasonable? Would they have worries about any of these pieces of information being on the card? In particular would anyone be worried if their address was on their card, and if so why? Does the fact that the holder's address is already on the current driving licence affect their views? Is there anything else they feel should be on it?

Supposing the card also contained...

- unique personal number
- eligibility to work
- smartcard chip (containing some or all of this information)
- biometric information (fingerprints and/or iris scanning)
- voluntary emergency health information (e.g. allergies, donor information)

...what would they think about this? What would be the advantages of each of these being on the card? Would there be any disadvantages? If biometric information were to be on the card, would they prefer the fingerprint or iris scan? Why? If there were to be a smartcard chip, what information would they like to be printed on the card, and what held on the chip? Would they have any concerns about privacy in relation to these possible features? Is there anything else they feel should be on the card?

Are any of the younger age groups aware of the existing Connexions card, and if so how do they see this fitting in with it? Is there any sense of duplication across the two? If any have a Connexions card, how useful do they find it?

Benefits of the idea (using *Benefits of cards boards*) 10 mins

What do people imagine would be the main benefits of identity cards – to themselves and to the country?

(Individually) How significant do they feel these benefits are:

- combatting identity fraud
- combatting illegal immigration and working
- making sure everyone has easy access to benefits and services
- reducing crime
- providing proof of age
- reducing the number of cards people need to carry (if necessary, use examples of library cards and supermarket loyalty cards)
- making electoral registration and voting easier
- being able to travel in Europe using just your passport/id card?

How do these benefits influence the way people feel about the idea? Do they enhance or diminish their interest/acceptance? How would they prioritise them – which are more beneficial and which are less so, and why? With regard to entitlement to and receipt of benefit, how does this system compare with the current arrangements? Does it seem any fairer?

Possible disadvantages (using *Disadvantages?* Board) 10 mins

What do they see as the disadvantages (if any) of the idea?

(Individually) Do any of these aspects of the cards concern them...

- privacy and data sharing by those with access to information
- need to produce card to access services, even if not compulsory
- risk of cards being lost or stolen
- card fraud
- biometric information being on the cards
- the likely time and cost involved in implementing the idea
- the government's ability to set it up?

How serious are their concerns on any of these issues? How could these be allayed? What would reassure them?

(If they have concerns about security/card fraud): Do they think that the current DVLA and passport systems/databases are secure? Would they have any reason to be more or less concerned about the security of the identity card system?

Personal visits to apply

How would they feel about having to make personal visits to acquire card if applying for 'passport' model? Where would be acceptable and convenient to go to apply for the card (post office, town hall, other)? How far would they be prepared to travel?

Supposing the cards included biometric information – would they be willing to make a personal visit to provide this information, and would they have any concerns about this?

Cost/funding (using *Funding the scheme* board)

10 mins

How would they expect the scheme to be funded? What would they think if it was paid for by increasing the cost of passports and driving licences? (Do they know the current prices of passports and driving licences?)

What do they feel is a fair price to pay for a card that was also a passport? Or for a card that was also a driving licence? And what would be a reasonable amount for an identity-only card?

Suggest a £10-15 increase on the current price for a passport/driving licence (£33 and £29 respectively), spread over 10 years. How would they feel about this? How would they feel about paying for the card in instalments (e.g. over one year)?

How do they feel about the cost if identity/entitlement cards have the benefits discussed above, especially helping reduce illegal immigration and working?

Instead of an identity card scheme, what would they think about the price of passports/driving licences being increased by around £7 anyway, to make them more secure (e.g. biometric information, more rigorous checks on applicants)? If this were to happen, passports/driving licences would be more consistently accepted as identification – how would people feel about using them / carrying them for this purpose?

Launching the scheme

If the scheme was launched and accompanied by a communications campaign, what should the messages be? Which are the top three advantages on which the campaign should focus? Which are the three main areas for concern where reassurance is needed?

Summing up

5 mins

What do they feel about identity/entitlement cards now? Has their overall attitude towards identity/entitlement cards changed during the discussion?

In what way? Having discussed the idea, do they now see them as Identity or entitlement cards?

Have any of their concerns been allayed by what they have learnt about the proposals, or have any of the perceived benefits been undermined? Why/why not? Have any of the points they raised not been addressed?

How would they now feel about the government introducing a scheme of this nature? How do they imagine they would feel if they were asked to apply for one? Can they think of any other uses/applications for identity/entitlement cards?

If respondents believe they are a good idea, what would they say to people to encourage acceptance and take-up of cards? If people are not convinced they are a good idea, what, if anything, might change their views?