

2000 Opinion Survey Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance: Attitudes and Implementation - Key Findings

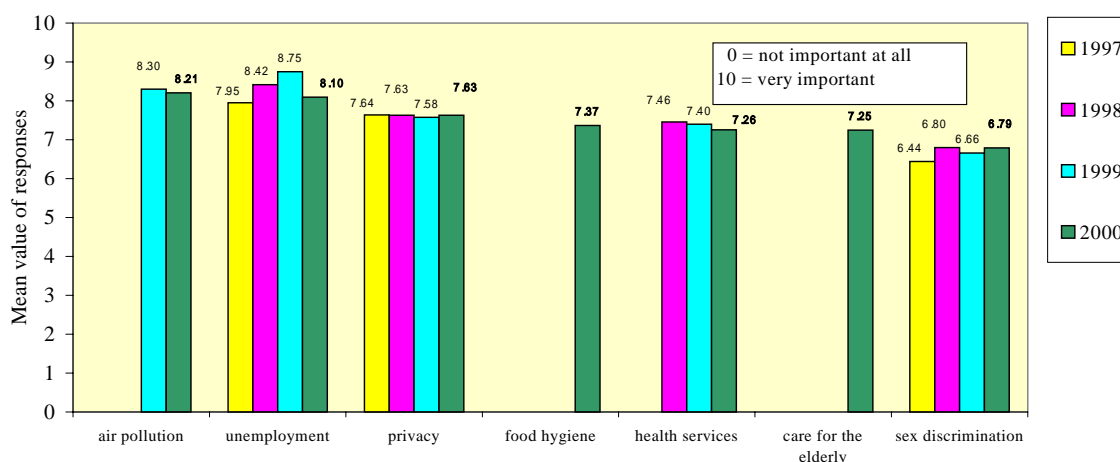
In 2000, the Hong Kong Privacy Commissioner's Office ("the PCO") invited the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong to conduct the fourth annual opinion survey. The aims of the survey were to assess individuals' attitudes towards personal data privacy issues, to obtain information on organisations' attitudes towards and measures taken to comply with the requirements of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance ("the PD(P)O") and to track any changes in such attitudes and measures. The survey also serves to gauge public reaction to some of the initiatives taken by the PCO during the course of the year.

The first part of the survey was a telephone survey of around 1,600 members of the community (aged 16 or above) and the second part was a postal survey that involved a self-administered questionnaire of 485 organisations drawn from 23 sectors. Both parts of the survey were conducted between March and May 2000.

Survey of Individuals

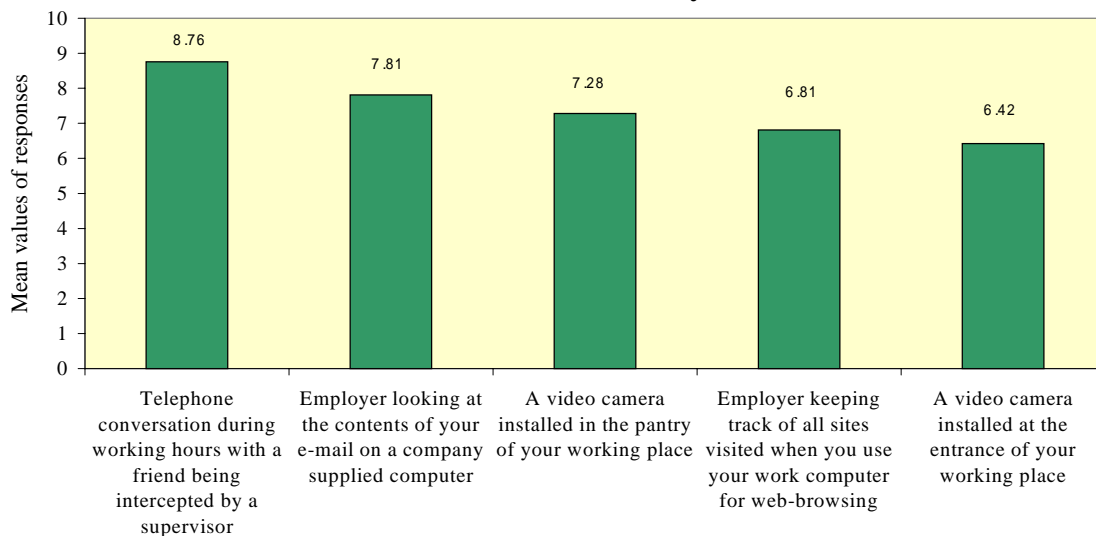
The 2000 survey found that the privacy awareness and the attitudes of individuals towards personal data privacy issues were largely consistent with the findings of previous surveys. In terms of its importance to the public as a social policy issue, privacy was given an average rating of about 7.6 out of 10 in the 2000 survey. The results indicate that, as a matter of social concern, privacy ranks just behind air pollution and unemployment but ahead of food hygiene, health services, care for the elderly and sex discrimination (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Importance of social policy issues in Hong Kong



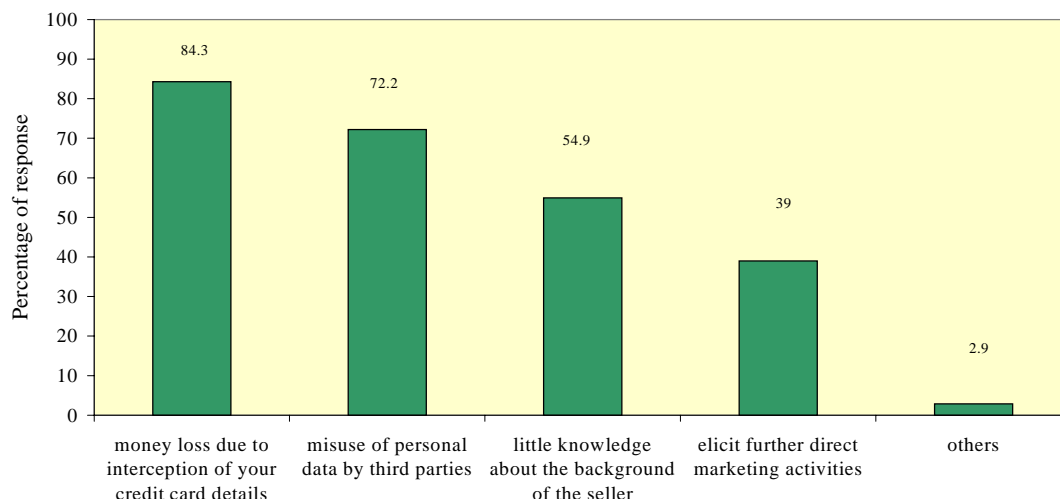
Respondents were also invited to comment upon the extent to which they regarded particular activities as constituting an invasion of their privacy. The listed activities included examples such as, "a supervisor intercepting a telephone conversation with a friend during working hours", and "an employer looking at the contents of a worker's E-mails on a company supplied computer". Irrespective of the illustrative examples used respondents indicated that they found such activities to be quite invasive of their personal privacy (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Invasion of Privacy



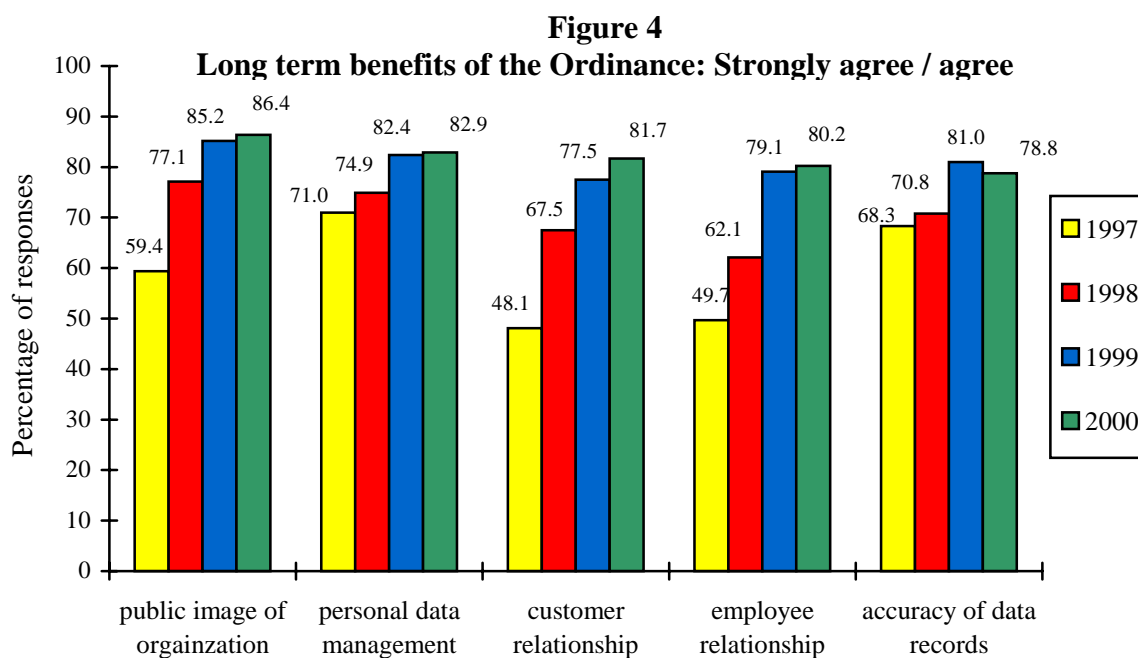
Among the respondents in the 2000 survey, 44% of them have made use of the Internet for personal purposes. The corresponding figure was 26% in the 1999 survey. Of these respondents, about 52% gave a rating of 8 or more on a scale of 0 to 10 to indicate their privacy concerns about purchasing on the Internet. The highest rated privacy concern was "money loss due to interception of your credit card" (84%), followed by "misuse of personal data by third parties" (72%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Privacy concerns over purchasing on the Internet



Survey of Organisations

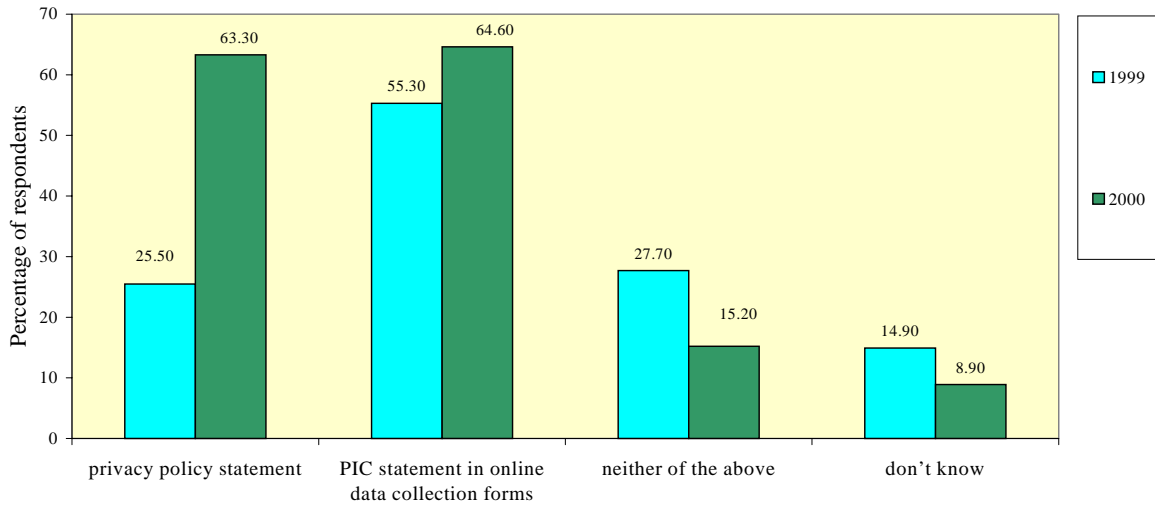
This survey targeted organisations (data users) in both the private and public sectors. The response rate was 49%, which was virtually the same as that recorded in 1999. Similar to the result of the 1999 survey, over 80% of organisations agreed with the view that there were long term benefits to be derived from compliance with the PD(P)O in terms of their public image, personal data management, customer and employee relations. The percentage agreeing with this view in the 1997 baseline survey was only 71% (Figure 4).



In general, the results of the survey showed an increase in efforts by organisations to comply with the requirements of the PD(P)O. Around 63% of respondent organisations claimed that their management had adopted written policies in personal data practices. In addition, around 68% and 70% of respondent organisations claim to have a personal data privacy policy (PPS) and a Personal Information Collection Statement (PICS) respectively. Around 50% of respondent organisations received data access requests over the course of the year with the public sector receiving significantly more than the private sector.

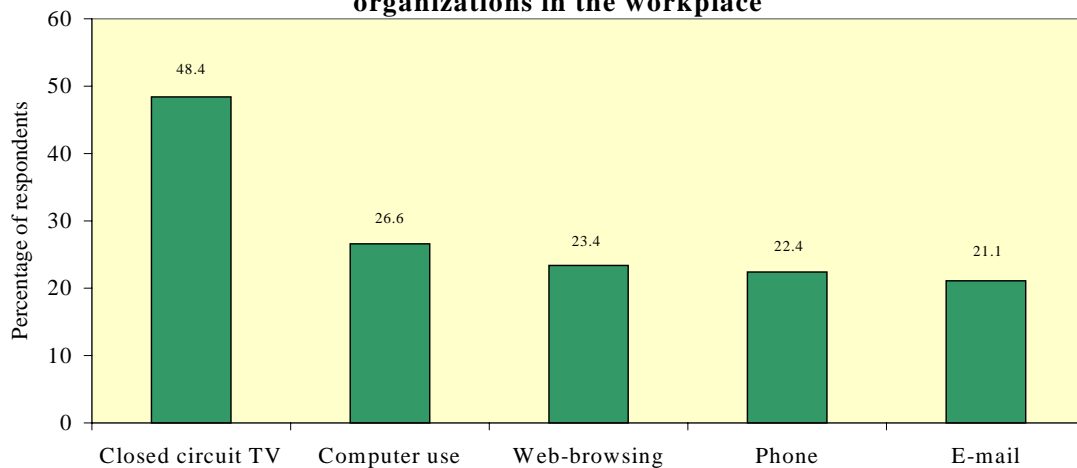
The survey also revealed that there was an increase from 20% to 27% between 1999 and 2000 in the number of respondent organisations that hosted web sites collecting personal data on-line. There were increases from 26% to 63% over the 1999-2000 period in those web sites posting a PPS on line, and an increase from 57% to 65% in the numbers posting a PICS on-line (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Online Statements provided in Organisational websites



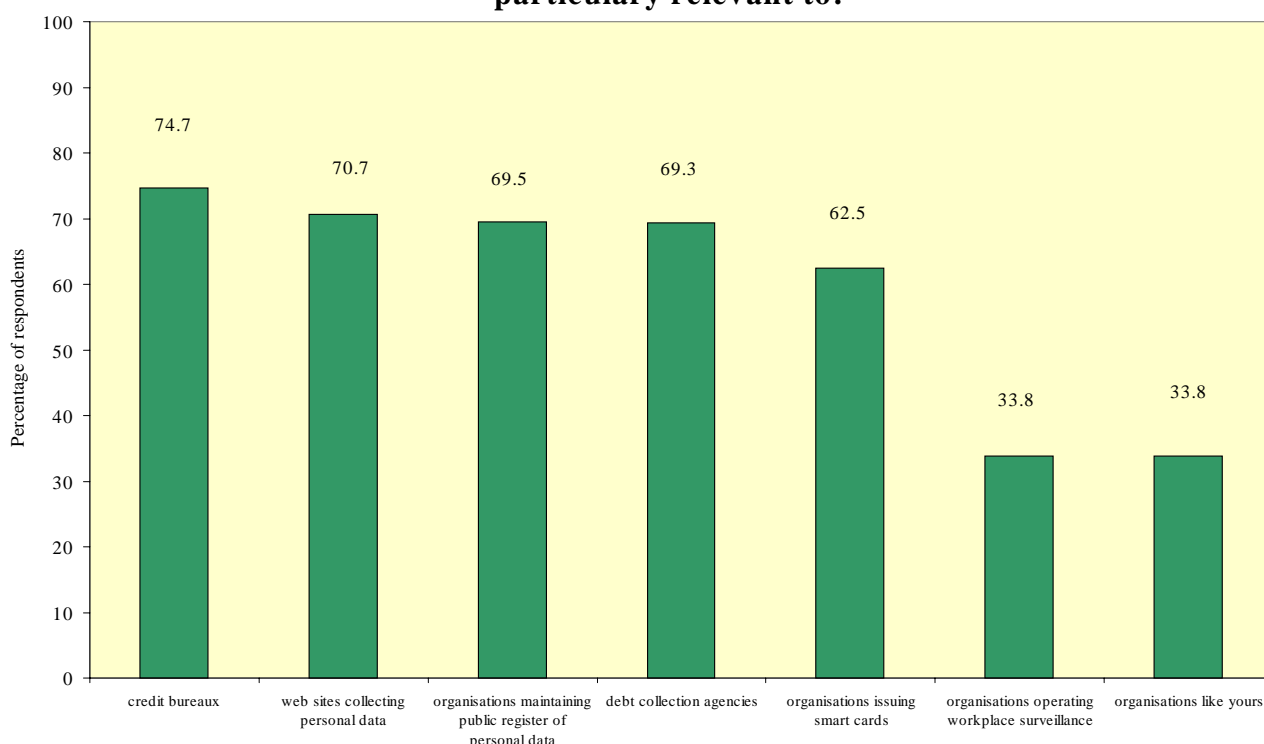
For the first time the 2000 survey investigated surveillance in the workplace and found that 64% of respondent organisations operated some form of surveillance, most often CCTV. Most surveillance systems were deployed for security purposes or to deter improper conduct and the misuse of resources e.g. personal web browsing during work time. Less than 20% of organisations that employed such systems had a written policy covering workplace surveillance (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Types of Surveillance facilities installed by organizations in the workplace



Another addition to the 2000 survey looked at the concept of a selective data user registration scheme. The majority of respondents felt that such a scheme, operated by the PCO, would be beneficial in terms of ensuring compliance with the PD(P)O, increasing consumer trust and confidence, enhancing corporate image and encouraging openness and transparency. Most were of the view that the scheme should be applied to credit bureaux, web sites collecting personal data, organisations maintaining public registers of personal data and debt collection agencies (Figure 7).

Figure 7
A data user registration system would be particularly relevant to:



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