

mylifemyid Report



The screenshot shows the mylifemyid.org website. At the top left is the site logo with the tagline 'Have your say about Identity.'. Navigation links include 'Contact us', 'Privacy', 'Help/FAQ', and 'T&Cs'. A search bar is present on the right. Below the navigation is a 'Welcome' section with a photo of three people and a list of points: 'We want to know what you think, so contribute contribute contribute. Don't be shy.' and 'You must first register if you want to add your comments - it takes only a couple of minutes.' Below this is a section titled 'ID Cards in Other Countries' featuring a globe and a list of topics for discussion: 'NIS compared to other countries', 'What impact have these schemes had on their countries?', and 'What do countries without ID Cards do instead?'. On the right side, there is a 'Click here to register.' button and a list of information types visible on an ID card: Date of Birth, Address, Photo, Fingerprints, Ethnicity, Place of birth, and National Insurance number. A login form is visible on the left side of the page.

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Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
1.1	Key Findings	1
1.2	Key Recommendations.....	1
2	Background and Objectives	3
2.1	Research Objectives.....	3
2.2	Research Topics	3
3	Methodology.....	4
3.1	Online Research Communities.....	4
3.2	mylifemyid	4
3.3	Site Activity	4
3.4	Source of Members	5
3.5	Site Moderation.....	6
3.6	Launching the Community	6
3.7	Scope of the Research	7

1 Executive Summary

The National Identity Scheme Delivery Plan 2008 was published on 6 March 2008. It sets out how the Government intends to deliver the National Identity Scheme (NIS). In the plan it is proposed to issue identity cards on a voluntary basis to young people from 2010. This initial piece of research was therefore commissioned to provide in-depth understanding of young people's lives and how an identity card can help make their lives easier to inform the on-going development of the young people's propositions.

This was the first time the Identity and Passport Service had used web 2.0 technology to undertake a piece of research, and was possibly a first for government as well.

The research was conducted from 9th July to 15th October 2008, using mylifemyid, an online research community created by Virtual Surveys.

The members of mylifemyid took part in discussion forums, online polls, and surveys as part of the process.

The community comprised 1147 members, who were British residents and aged 16 – 25 years old. The community was open to anybody who met the screening criteria. The mylifemyid site was open for viewing to any Internet user. The site was visited by 27,368 people. For more details of the methodology, see section 3.0.

1.1 Key Findings

Young people have to prove their identity regularly. They employ a number of different solutions to do this, and members felt that the solutions they already use are satisfactory. Therefore many do not see an ID card as giving them any additional benefit that a driving licence or passport does not already give them.

Opinions towards ID cards were mixed amongst the members of this community. However those who favoured the scheme were much less motivated to post or to take part in the online discussion. Therefore most posts were opposed to the NIS, and relatively few were in favour.

From these it is clear that opposition to the NIS and the Delivery Plan falls into two broad categories: those with philosophical objections to an identity card and/or the NIR, and those with practical objections to the NIS.

Whether initially pro or anti, most members did not change their mind about the NIS over the three months of the research, despite being exposed to a considerable amount of information and discussion.

1.2 Key Recommendations

1. IPS should seek to make those who are currently in support of the scheme more aware of the benefits. However, this will not be easy as these people are less likely to be interested in being informed.
2. Amongst those who are opposed to the scheme, IPS should concentrate on meeting the practical objections. Key issues that IPS should seek to provide assurance/information on are IT competence, cost issues, the oversight system, and how abuse will be prevented.

3. IPS should seek to clarify the role the NIS plays in combating terrorism as this is a re-occurring issue in the discussions. People feel that the NIS has been partly developed as a response to the terrorist threat, but they cannot see how the NIS will help, particularly if the card is not compulsory.

2 Background and Objectives

The Identity Card Act 2006 passed into law the creation of the National Identity Scheme (NIS), including the introduction of an ID card and the National Identity Register (NIR).

The publication of the National Identity Scheme Delivery Plan on 6 March 2008, set out how the Government will deliver the National Identity Scheme, how the Scheme will work, and how it will be operated. The Plan also began the process of consultation with stakeholders and partners and communication with the public.

The Identity and Passport Service (IPS) is currently in the process of developing the young people's proposition and require research to input into the development of this work.

2.1 Research Objectives

The key research objective is to provide in-depth understanding of young people's lives and how an identity card can help make their lives easier. This will inform the on-going development of the young people's propositions, as well as providing a mechanism to undertake concept testing of these propositions.

2.2 Research Topics

The research topics, specified in the brief, were to explore the following items in terms of 16-25 year old young people:

- Understanding of young people's lives;
- Their views on identity;
- When and where do young people have to prove aspects of their identity: age/date of birth, name, address;
- Sharing their personal information with the government and other people;
- The National Identity Scheme.

3 Methodology

The research on behalf of the Identity and Passport Service (IPS) was conducted amongst 16 to 25 year old British residents, using a site called mylifemyid, an online research community.

The community ran for three months and comprised 1147 young people, who took part in polls, online forums, and surveys.

3.1 Online Research Communities

A research community is a specialised form of an online community. A research community is created to use the tools of Web 2.0, to provide a new medium for listening to people and for generating insight.

Although a research community looks, in many ways, like a natural online community there are differences. The key difference is that a research community has a specific job to fulfil. This reason may be a short term one, such as researching a new look for a service, or it may be ongoing, for example assessing customer satisfaction and engagement.

3.2 mylifemyid

This is one of the first instances of a government department setting up a piece of research using web 2.0 technology. The mylifemyid site was created as an open research community, open both in terms of viewing and joining. In this respect mylifemyid was different to most brand related research forums which tend to be closed, both in terms of viewing and in terms of joining.

Membership was open to anybody who was aged 16 to 25 years old, who was a UK resident, who completed the sign-up survey (see appendix), and who agreed to abide by the Terms and Conditions.

Because the membership was open to anybody who met the site's membership criteria, the community cannot be taken as a representative reflection of any specific group or population. The insight generated by this type of research is a product of the quality of discussions, not through statistical representativeness.

The site was moderated in both the research and community sense of the word. The research moderation comprised the posting of research questions and the probing of responses to elicit insight into the views of the community. The community moderation included answering members' queries, removing abuse, and ensuring that members abided by the site's Terms and Conditions.

3.3 Site Activity

The mylifemyid site was open from 9th July to 15th October 2008.

The community was visited by 26,378 people. It had 1147 members who posted 3885 comments. A detailed breakdown of the demographics of the members of mylifemyid is available in the Appendix.

During the three months the community was operating, there were 388 separate discussion threads. Of these threads, just 59 were created by the research team; the other 329 threads were created by the members.

The appendix includes a detailed breakdown of the statistics for the site, including the number of members, posts, threads, and visits.

3.4 Source of Members

Members for mylifemyid were mainly sourced from two routes, through advertising and via links on other websites.

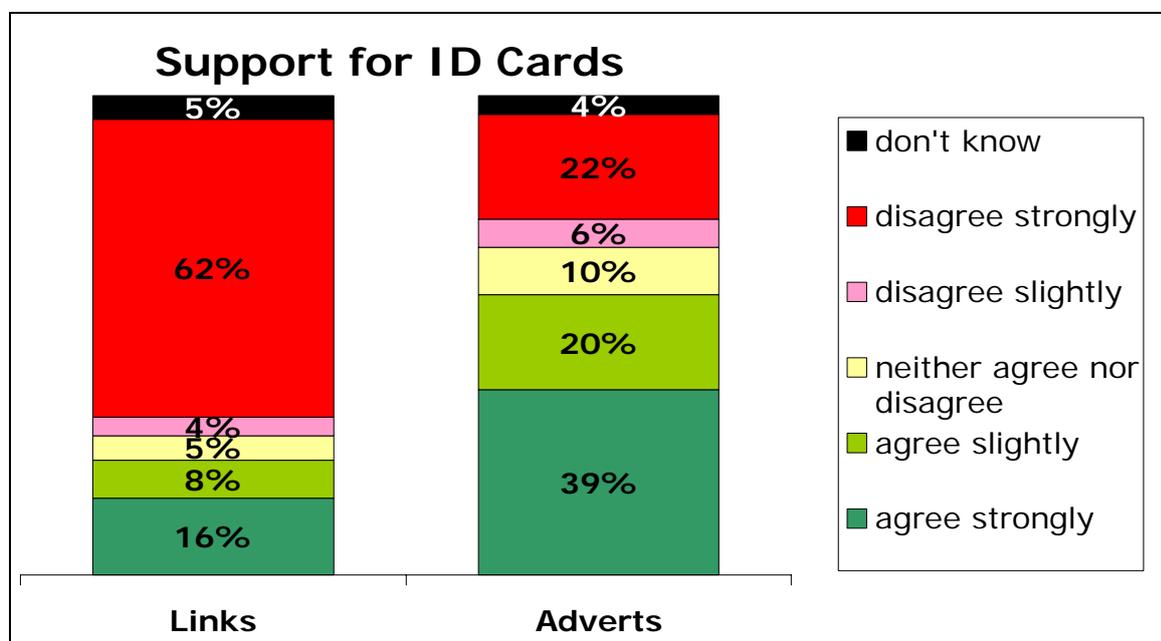
The advertising route comprised 50 million online ads, which were mostly placed on social network sites, such as Facebook. These 50 million adverts resulted in 537 members (i.e. people who visited the site, clicked on the registration link, entered their details, completed the online survey, agreed to the Terms and Conditions, and who answered the validation email).

The other 610 members arrived via links that were on various sites on the Internet. Some of these links were on government websites such as the IPS and Direct.gov websites, others were on neutral sites (such as the Scouts), and others were on sites that were either unfavourable to the NIS (such as The Register) or were actively opposed to the NIS (such as No2ID website).

There was also an attempt to attract members via SMS. This campaign was conducted via Blyk and included the use of 50,000 messages. However, SMS messages did not prove very successful and only a handful of members were recruited this way.

The source of the community members proved to have a major impact on whether they were supportive or opposed to the introduction of the NIS.

The chart below shows the responses, during the sign-up survey, of the members to a question asking whether they agreed with the introduction of the scheme, including the ID card.



Of the members who were attracted to the site by the online adverts, 59% were in favour of the scheme, mirroring IPS's own quarterly tracking research. However, amongst the people who came direct from links, two-thirds opposed the scheme, and only a quarter were in favour.

3.5 Site Moderation

The site was moderated for thirteen hours a day (9am – 10pm), seven days a week. The role of the moderator included:

- To articulate the discussion guide, to ensure that IPS's research subject matter was investigated;
- To stimulate debate;
- To respond to member queries and to help members use the system;
- To prevent abuse and to protect members from bullying;
- To analyse the discussions and to produce a report for IPS.

The appendix has details of the moderation of member activity, including details of members banned, threads deleted, and posts edited.

3.6 Launching the Community

The community was launched on 9th July at an event at Shooters Hill College in Greenwich. The event was attended by the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, the project team from the Identity and Passport Service, and Virtual Surveys. The purpose of the launch event was to provide publicity for the mylifemyid website and to seek feedback on identity issues from sixth formers at the college.

Over 20 students attended the event. They took part in round table discussions about ID cards and also used the mylifemyid website to fill out a short survey about identity and ID cards. The topics covered in this session included:

- How big a problem is it to you personally having to prove your identity e.g. age etc?
- How concerned are you about having personal details about yourself stolen and used by someone else?
- How much do you know about the proposals for the National Identity Scheme?
- How often do you get asked to prove your identity?
- Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the government's plan to introduce a National Identity Scheme?
- Which of the following have you ever used to prove your identity?
- Which one of the following would be the worst thing someone could steal from you?
- Tell us what you think might be advantages and disadvantages to you personally of having a national identity card?

Students then discussed their views on ID cards in a question and answer session with Jacqui Smith. This session was led by TV presenter Jeff Leach. The event lasted for over an hour and a news report can be found at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/7498223.stm>.

3.7 Scope of the Research

It should be noted that the research project was not asked to assess whether the National Identity Scheme (NIS) should proceed, as this issue had already been determined by Parliament in 2006 when it passed the UK Identity Cards Act. However, many members of the community wanted to discuss this issue and chose to make a large number posts on this point.