

Fleishman–Hillard SME Identity Theft Survey – August 2006

Populus surveyed the opinions of 201 senior employees in SMEs by telephone between 3rd and 10th August 2006. 61% of respondents worked for companies with between 1 and 49 employees, 14% worked for companies with between 50 and 99 employees, 13% worked for companies with 100–149 employees and 11% worked for companies with between 150–250 employees.

Background

An SME is defined as a company with fewer than 250 employees and either annual turnover not exceeding €50m or a balance sheet totalling €43m, and which is not part of a larger enterprise that would fail these tests”).

According to National Statistics, of the 4.3 million private sector business enterprises in the UK (as at the beginning of 2004) 99.3 % – around 4.3 million – were small (0 to 49 employees), 26,000 (0.6%) were medium sized (50 to 249 employees) and 6,000 (0.1%) were large (250 or more employees).

Populus conducted a survey of SMEs on behalf of Fleishman Hillard into attitudes and practices towards the handling of sensitive information about either employees or customers.

1. In carrying out your job, do you have access to sensitive or personal information – such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – about other employees or customers?

	Company size (number of employees)				
	Total	1–49	50–99	100–149	150–250
Yes	89%	85%	100%	92%	91%
No	11%	15%	-	8%	9%

Those who answered yes were asked:

Are there clear guidelines for how this information should be handled – including how it should be disposed of?

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	89%	87%	83%	96%	100%
No	11%	13%	17%	4%	

2. Recent studies have shown that identity theft, which involves a criminal using someone else's sensitive or personal details to apply for loans or credit cards, is becoming an increasingly serious problem in the UK. How seriously do you think the company you work for takes the issue of identity theft?

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Very seriously	67%	67%	66%	65%	70%
Quite seriously	26%	24%	31%	31%	26%
Not very seriously	7%	9%	3%	4%	4%
Not at all seriously	-	1%	-	-	-

3. I am going to read out some things that have been said about the handling of confidential information in the workplace, thinking about where you work in each case please could you say whether each of the following statements are true or untrue:

	Yes	No
There are clear guidelines issued by the company explaining how different types of waste – including sensitive or personal information such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – should be disposed of.	88%	12%
All documents containing sensitive or personal information – such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – are always disposed of separately from every day waste.	82%	18%

All documents containing sensitive or personal information – such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – are shredded before being disposed of.	91%	9%
Documents containing sensitive or personal information – such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – are often left on desks overnight.	8%	92%

- (a) **There are clear guidelines issued by the company explaining how different types of waste – including sensitive or personal information such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – should be disposed of.**

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
True	88%	86%	86%	96%	87%
Untrue	12%	14%	14%	4%	13%

- (b) **All documents containing sensitive or personal information – such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – are always disposed of separately from every day waste.**

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	82%	82%	76%	88%	78%
No	18%	18%	24%	12%	22%

- (c) **All documents containing sensitive or personal information – such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – are shredded before being disposed of.**

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	91%	92%	86%	92%	87%
No	9%	8%	14%	8%	13%

(d) Documents containing sensitive or personal information – such as home addresses, bank account details or credit card numbers – are often left on desks overnight.

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	8%	8%	7%	12%	4%
No	92%	92%	93%	88%	96%

4. How many shredders are there in your office?

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
None	4%	4%	7%	4%	4%
1-2	75%	82%	66%	54%	74%
3-4	15%	11%	28%	19%	17%
5 or more	5%	3%	-	23%	4%

5. Does your company employ a shredding service which either takes confidential waste away and shreds it or else provides a shredding service on site?

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	31%	24%	52%	35%	39%
No	67%	74%	48%	65%	57%
D/k	1%	2%	-	-	4%

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all concerned and 5 means very concerned, how concerned are you that company, employees' or customers' sensitive or personal information might get into the hands of identity fraudsters?

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
5 (very concerned)	28%	33%	31%	15%	9%
4	12%	10%	17%	4%	26%
3	14%	12%	28%	12%	9%
2	18%	15%	10%	42%	17%
1 (not at all concerned)	28%	30%	14%	27%	39%

7. How confident would you be that if someone went through all the waste thrown out by your company no sensitive or personal information belonging to the company, its employees or its customers would be discovered?

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Very confident	56%	63%	31%	65%	43%
Quite confident	35%	32%	52%	31%	39%
Not very confident	7%	4%	17%	4%	17%
Not at all confident	1%	2%	-	-	-

8. Again, thinking about your company, please say which of the following statements best reflects your view about the measures taken by your company to combat identity theft:

	All	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
The company should be doing a great deal more to combat identity theft	1%	1%	-	4%	-
The company should be doing a bit more to combat identity theft	25%	23%	34%	27%	26%
The company is doing enough at the moment to combat identity theft	64%	67%	62%	50%	65%
Identity theft is not much of a threat and I think the company overestimates the threat to employees and customers	10%	10%	3%	19%	9%

9. How worried are you (a) personally and (b) professionally about identity theft?

(a) Personally

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Very worried	17%	18%	14%	19%	17%
Quite worried	41%	42%	34%	38%	43%
Not very worried	33%	28%	41%	38%	39%
Not at all worried	9%	11%	10%	4%	-

(b) Professionally

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Very worried	14%	16%	14%	12%	9%
Quite worried	37%	35%	48%	35%	35%
Not very worried	37%	37%	31%	38%	48%
Not at all worried	11%	12%	7%	15%	9%

10. Do you know who your company's data controller is?

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	74%	74%	72%	73%	74%
No	26%	26%	28%	27%	26%

11. Finally, a number of statements about your personal experience of identity theft. Please say in each case whether it is true or false:

(a) I have been a victim of identity theft

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	10%	7%	17%	4%	22%
No	90%	93%	83%	96%	78%

(b) I know someone who has been a victim of identity theft

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	36%	33%	38%	42%	39%
No	64%	67%	62%	58%	61%

(c) My company has been a victim of identity theft

	Total	1-49	50-99	100-149	150-250
Yes	3%	2%	3%	-	13%
No	97%	98%	97%	100%	87%