

Small Enterprise Research Report

Work-Life Balance

July 2004



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Business

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Small Enterprise Research Report

Work-Life Balance

July 2004 - Vol.1, No.3

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WEB VERSION: INTRODUCTION

The Lloyds Bank/TSB-sponsored series of small business management reports commenced in 1992, and concluded in 2009. In total, 53 reports were published over a period of 17 years.

Our target audience comprised the owner-managers of independent small businesses, typically employing fewer than 50, and based in mainland UK.

The series originated from a longitudinal study of small business management, undertaken by the Polytechnic of Central London (now University of Westminster), and culminating in: *The Management of Success in 'Growth Corridor' Small Firms*, (Stanworth, Purdy & Kirby, Small Business Research Trust, 1992).

THEMES

The themes were wide-ranging – including such as entrepreneurship, work & stress, employment strategies, and the environment – a full list is shown overleaf.

INSIGHT

In addition to asking questions and supplying the respondents with a range of answer options, the corresponding questionnaire was included as an appendix to each report so that readers would know exactly what questions had been put to respondents.

We also sought qualitative information – in the form of verbatim comments about the key theme – to help elaborate on whatever related challenges respondents felt they were facing at the time.

Finally, the findings are primarily intended to be indicative rather than definitive – partly due to the sample size, which is, on average, 111 for the 2003-09 reports.

PUBLISHING FORMAT

The reports were published in hard copy form, obtainable via subscription. Initially

by the Small Business Research Trust, and from 2003, by the Small Enterprise Research Team (SERTeam), both research charities based at the Open University.

Regrettably, SERTeam ceased operating in 2009, and so in 2010 the authors felt that the more recent reports would find wider interest if they were made freely available in Acrobat format via the Internet – especially with the UK economy set for a protracted journey out of recession, and with the government in turn refocusing on smaller businesses to aid the recovery.

It is worth mentioning that the series commenced as the UK economy emerged from the early 1990s recession.

In 2015, the earlier reports were also converted (1993 to 2003), with the full series made available at Kingston University: <http://business.kingston.ac.uk/sbrc>

SUPPORTING INFORMATION (WWW)

In later years – as the world-wide-web developed and an increasing number of sources of information became more readily available – suggestions for online sources of related material were included.

N.B. For reports 2003 onwards - where successfully validated, the web links (URLs) were enabled in 2009. And in the case of many invalid web links, an alternative was offered, but not where the organisation appeared defunct and an obvious replacement was not traced.

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1994 (Vol.2)

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- 3 Crime Against Small Firms June 2003

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Small Enterprise Research Report
ISSN 1742-9773 No.2 (Vol.1) onwards

2003-04 (Vol.1)

- 1 Small Firms And PoliticsOctober 2003
- 2 Pensions February 2004
- 3 Work-Life Balance July 2004

2004-05 (Vol.2)

- 1 Education & EnterpriseOctober 2004
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- 1 Owner-Manager Flexible Working December 2006
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2008-09 (Vol.5)

- 1 The London 2012 Olympic And Paralympic Games April 2008
- 2 Competition: Small Firms Under PressureJanuary 2009

WEB VERSION PUBLISHING

<http://business.kingston.ac.uk/sbrc>

Certain content needed to be re-set, e.g., the figures in the earlier editions, but the report body content is intended to be identical to that in the printed original. This web version - an Acrobat document - is derived from the original DTP text and will permit searching.

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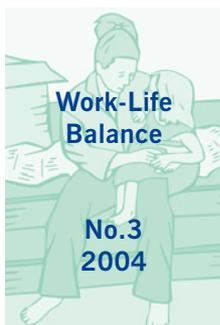
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The Small Enterprise Research Team is particularly pleased to acknowledge the generous support provided by Lloyds TSB in sponsoring the research, analysis and presentation of this report. However, it is important to note that any opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Lloyds TSB.

Report Author – Professor John Stanworth (University of Westminster)
Series Editor – David Purdy

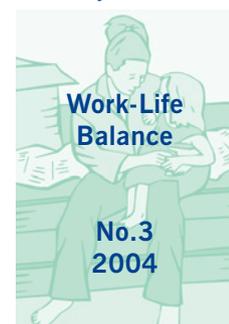
HIGHLIGHTS

This is the third in a new series of small business management reports based on surveys of a panel of small firms, mainly in manufacturing, retail/distribution and business services. The focus of this survey was on **Work-Life Balance**, and the principal findings were as follows:

- **Range of flexible working options offered** – **Part-time working** was most frequently mentioned (67% of respondents), followed by staggered hours, flexible working locations and flexitime.
- **Range of flexible working options offered and gender** – **Female owner-managed businesses were slightly higher on staggered hours** (46% against 40% for males) and **very much higher on flexitime** (39% against 19%).
- **Range of flexible working options and industry sector** – Some noticeable differences were evident: for instance, **business services indicated a greater use of flexibility in working locations** (including working from home) than did manufacturing and retail/distribution. Perhaps most noticeably was the disinclination of firms in retailing/distribution to opt for flexitime working.
- **Benefits of flexible working – Female respondents were noticeably more optimistic that flexible working paid dividends.** On each of eight benefits stated – retains valuable employees, makes employees feel valued, generates a reputation for being a good employer, maximises available labour, attracts a wider range of candidates, offers a loyal and motivated workforce, reduces absenteeism and increases productivity – female respondents were more widely in agreement.
- **Benefits of flexible working and employee size** – One benefit deriving from flexible working was that of being perceived as a good employer. This varied from 37% for firms in the 0-4 employee size band, up to 56% for those employing 20-49 staff.
- **Benefits of flexible working for employers, too ?** – Respondents sometimes felt that the introduction of flexible working was one-way traffic and usually from the viewpoint of employees. Nonetheless, most respondents claimed to make attempts to accommodate employees' non-work responsibilities and interests.
- **Benefits of flexible working and gender** – Female respondents were more favourably inclined, with 63% saying that they 'always try to accommodate staff', compared with 49% of male respondents.
- **Attitudes towards prospective employees with major 'caring' commitments** (e.g., a young family or elderly parents) – An emphasis on reasonable work-life balance by the government did not appear to have favourably influenced respondents' attitudes: **not a single respondent was now more likely to employ such candidates.** Over two-thirds (69%) claimed no change in attitude, but worse still, 28% claimed that such exaltations made them less inclined to employ such people.
- **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) exemptions for small firms employing fewer than 20 employees** – These disappear this year, but most respondents were basically dismissive of this extension of rights for the disabled, feeling that it was either 'ethical but too much of a burden', 'unnecessary' or 'an empty measure, impossible to monitor'. **Only 18% were wholeheartedly in favour, agreeing that the extension was 'ethical and reasonable'.**

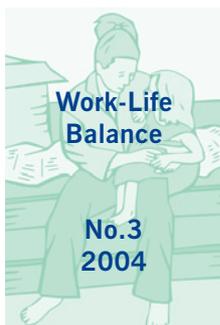
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- **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) exemptions for small firms employing fewer than 20 employees, and respondent age – Rejection of the impending extension of rights increased with the rising age of respondents.** For example, of those selecting either ‘unnecessary’ or ‘an empty gesture, impossible to monitor’, just 10% of the 35-44 years age group were dismissive this way, but this rose to 40% for the 55-64 age group.
- **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) impact on respondents – A majority of respondents (52%) felt it to be largely irrelevant.** A further 18% indicated that it was ‘expensive/troublesome to implement’, as did another 15% who felt that it ‘created another layer of administration’.
- **Employment policies governing staff with disabilities – Nearly one-quarter (24%) said that they already had such policies, and almost a half (46%) did not but would consider implementing one at some time in the future.** The incidence of disability policies was more prevalent amongst the larger employers (36% of 20-49 employee firms), but still represented a minority of those in the corresponding size band.
- **Employment policies governing staff with disabilities, and gender – Female respondents were less likely than their male counterparts to already have formal systems in place. But their businesses were typically smaller than those of their male counterparts, although they were also likely to feel favourably inclined to consider setting up such a policy.**

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MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The emphasis of the management reports is on monitoring the key management problems and practices of smaller business, with an emphasis on survival and success. Accordingly, each issue of the report addresses one or more highly topical small business management issues. In this survey we focus on **Work-Life Balance**. The report is produced three times a year.

THE SAMPLE

This report is based on the responses received from a panel of over 350 small businesses situated in the northern, midland and southern regions of Britain. Respondents are predominantly small firms with fewer than 50 employees, drawn mainly from the manufacturing, business services, and retail/distribution sectors of the economy. The precise distribution of firms varies from survey to survey, but typically over half of the participants employ fewer than 10 people.

RESULTS

The questionnaire completed by sample firms appears at the end of this report as an appendix. This survey was carried out between March and May 2004.

BACKGROUND

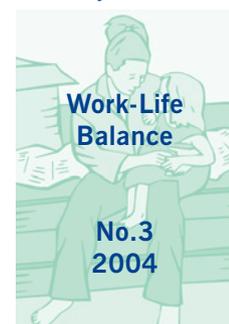
The report originates from a longitudinal investigation into the development of small firms undertaken by the University of Westminster (then the Polytechnic of Central London) on behalf of the Department of Education & Science, between 1988 and 1992.

PAST SURVEYS

2003-04 (Vol.1)

- No.1 Small Firms and Politics
- 2 Pensions

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WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The advanced Western economies have currently reached a stage of development hitherto unknown on this planet. With the advent of birth control, female emancipation and dual-income family units, we are witnessing pressurised life-styles based on mass consumption. Couples are valuing life-style, travel and consumption as never before.

The indigenous populations of Western Europe are delaying family building and cutting their family sizes. Work, careers and the life-styles they support have moved centre-stage in a manner never previously known. But we still have children (if increasingly only one) and increasingly we have to face up to school and university bills as well as supporting parents into their eighties and even their nineties.

Of course, work is not only a means to an end – we don't work simply to consume. Work is a means of expression and self-fulfilment and, in its current form, is still a relatively new expression of independence for women, even in the Western world.

However, in the age of 'presenteeism' and 'work intensification', time is precious. In the

era of the Global Economy and '24/7', we yearn for 'quality time' with partners, children and parents. We want to travel, visit restaurants, join clubs, watch football. Increasingly we feel there's a lot to see and not much time to see it in – life is short.

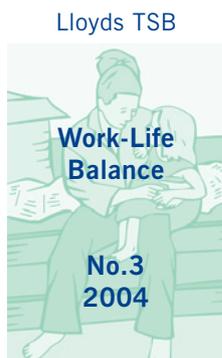
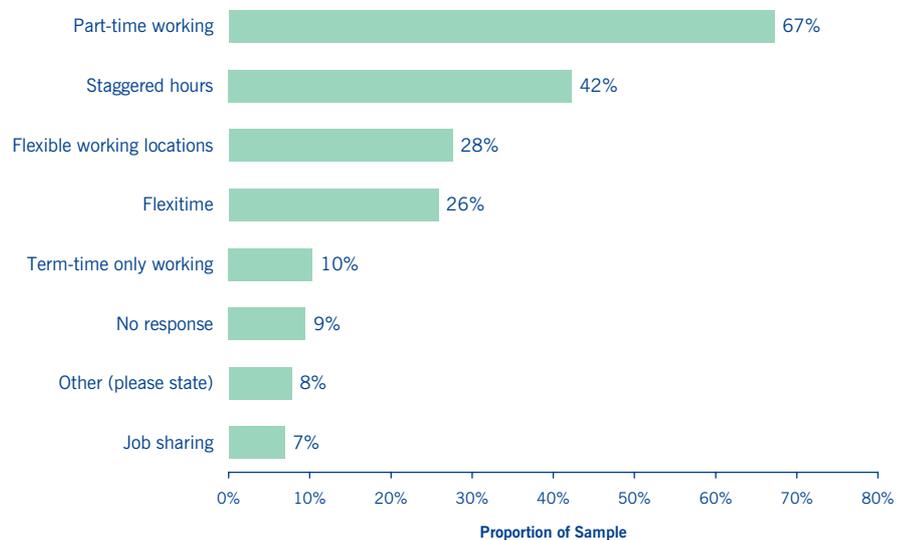
Increasingly, we hear discussion of the notion of 'Work-Life' balance. Few people on their death beds wish they had spent more time at the office. Employers and employees sign up for 'Work-Life' balance initiatives. But they still have to meet output deadlines and employees still want to maintain their earnings levels.

One solution is flexible working hours. This strategy has many manifestations embracing flexitime, job sharing, part-time, staggered hours, term-time only working, and so on (see the questionnaire at the end of this report for descriptions of these various schemes).

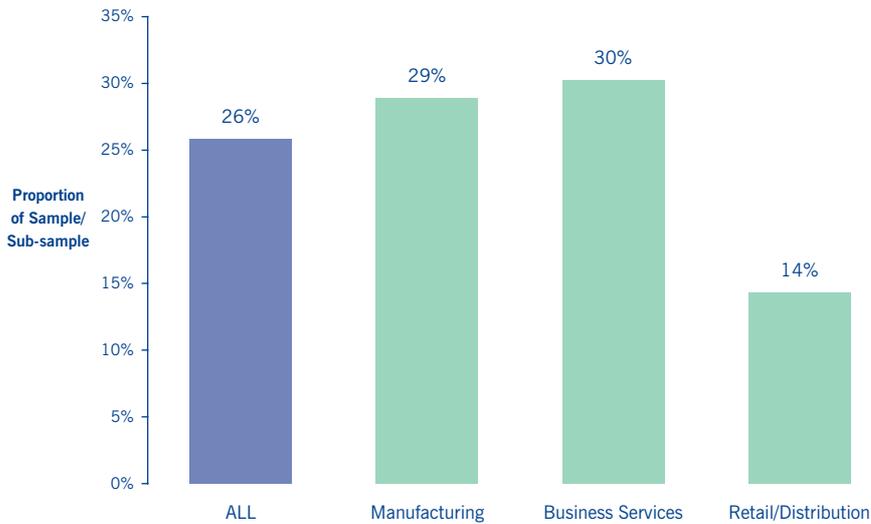
Flexible Working

Respondents were asked to identify which, if any, of a range of options for flexible working they operated in their own firms, part-time working was most the frequently mentioned (by 67%), followed by staggered hours, flexible working locations and flexitime

Figure 1 - Modes Of Flexible Working Used By Respondents



**Figure 2 - Modes Of Flexible Working:
Proportion Of Respondents Using Flexitime - By Sector**



Retail and distribution respondents were less inclined towards flexitime

(Figure 1). Female respondents were slightly more in evidence regarding staggered hours (46%, against 40% for males) and much more so for flexitime (39%, against 19%).

There were some noticeable differences in flexible working patterns between different business sectors. For instance, the business services sector responses indicated a greater use of flexibility in working locations (including working from home) than was the case for manufacturing and retail/distribution. Perhaps most noticeable here was the disinclination of firms in retailing/distribution to opt for flexitime working (this involves giving people a choice about their actual working hours, usually outside agreed core hours) (Figure 2).

The following comments regarding 'other' options included:

- A meeting had been held to discuss the issue, and it was agreed with the staff the times that they wanted to work
- A part-timer leaves work early to collect her child
- Flexible hours are not offered as the business operates 6:00 am - 2:00 pm and 2:00 pm - 10:00 pm shifts
- Flexible working locations are offered at various outlets

- Normal working hours are subject to flexibility as agreed and the time is made up in lieu
- Overtime is taken as flexitime
- The respondent firm operates a staggered 4-day shift pattern
- Another operates a standard week with 2 hours flexible per day for certain departments

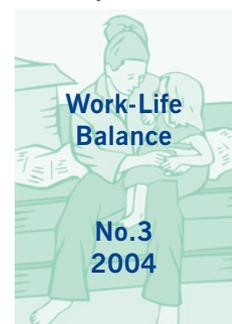
Some firms appeared to engage very few options for flexible working:

"It is difficult enough to maintain an efficient level of staff resources with holidays, sickness, etc. Exposure to further absence due to (people's) outside commitments is not easy for SMEs to accommodate."

"We do not do 'flexible working'. We have to be in the office for access to computers, library, checking drawings, etc. People can work at home for special reasons, short periods, etc."

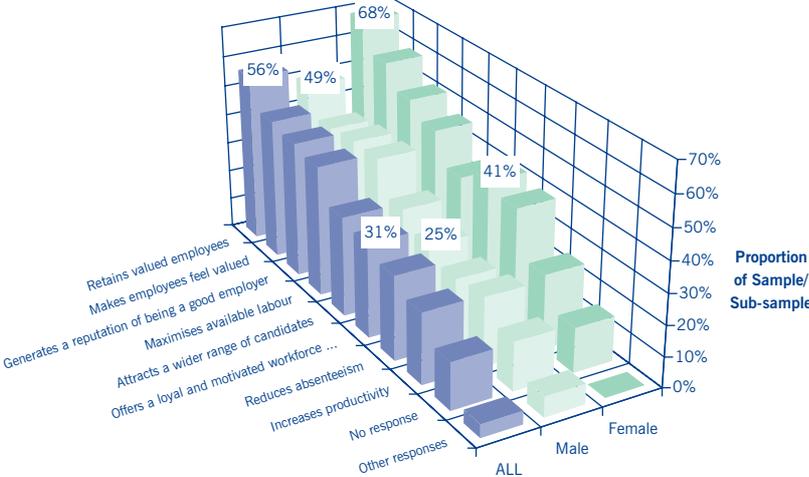
"We have put a 4-day week in place in our factory. Workers work 36 hours but have a 4-day weekend every fortnight."

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41% of female respondents feel that they have a loyal and motivated workforce

Figure 3 - Flexible Working Benefits To The Respondent Firms: By Gender



Benefits Deriving from Flexible Working

On the issue of benefits deriving from flexible working, female respondents were noticeably more optimistic that flexible working paid dividends (**Figure 3**).

For all of the eight benefits stated (retains valuable employees, makes employees feel valued, generates a reputation for being a good employer, maximises available labour, attracts a wider range of candidates, offers a

loyal and motivated workforce, reduces absenteeism and increases productivity) female respondents were more strongly in agreement.

One benefit deriving from flexible working, as perceived by our respondents, that varies with size of firm (**Figure 4**) was that of being perceived as a good employer. This varied from 37% for firms in the 0-4 employee size band, up to 56% for those employing 20-49 staff.

Figure 4 - Flexible Working Benefits: Respondent Firms Selecting 'It Generates A Reputation Of Being A Good Employer' - By Employee Size

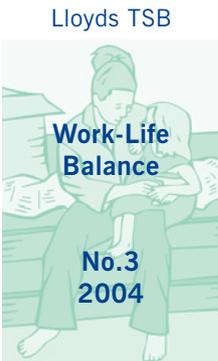
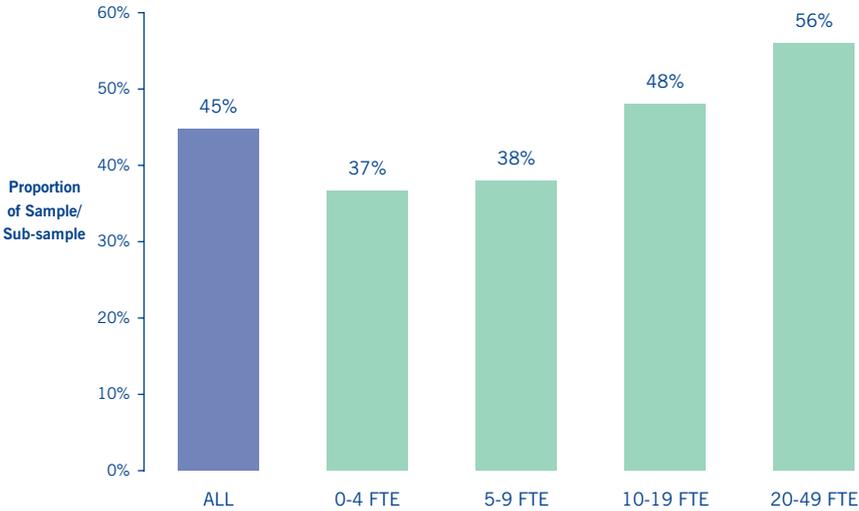
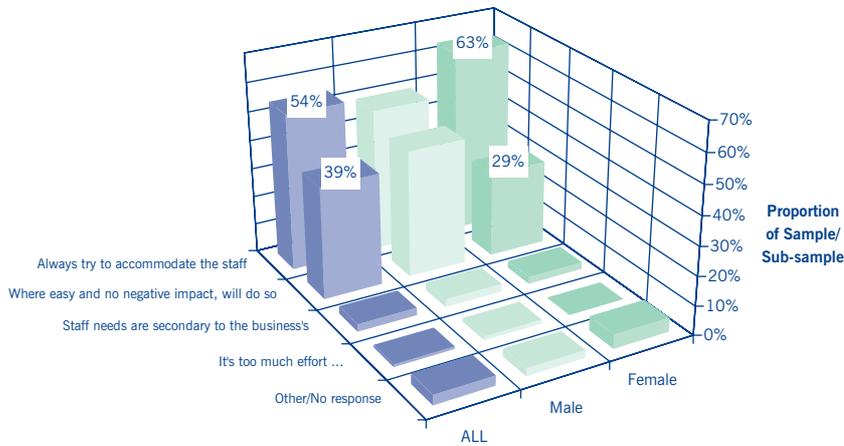


Figure 5 - Respondent Attitudes Towards Employees' Outside Responsibilities/Commitments: By Gender



The following comments regarding 'other' options included:

- Actually I favour the employee working hours to suit the business
- It attracts qualified part-timers or early retired
- I work the hours I can have kids

generally and the complexities enormous."

"Yet more advantages for employees which is good, but not many for small businesses with customer deadlines to keep."

Accommodating Staff

Respondents were asked to what extent they took employees' outside commitments/ interests/responsibilities into account in organising working hours. Some respondents indicated relatively little flexibility here:

"It seems to make no allowance for companies whose activities are dictated by the operating times of their clients, thus precluding the opportunity to provide any flexibility in working hours to employees."

"Ideally we would like to operate more flexible working. This we find difficult. If it suits the individual, then 'yes', they are very happy to work flexitime or fewer hours, but if the company wants to introduce flexitime to help with variable workload, the response is 'zero'

Thus, respondents sometimes felt that the introduction of flexible working was one-way traffic and usually adopted for the benefit of employees. Nonetheless, **Figure 5** indicates that most respondents claimed to accommodate employees' non-work responsibilities and interests. It is notable here that female respondents were more favourably inclined towards this stance, with 63% saying that they 'always try to accommodate staff', compared with 49% of male respondents.

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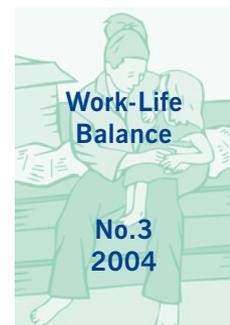


Figure 6 - Attitudes Towards Prospective Employees With Major 'Caring' Responsibilities, As Influenced By The Government's 'Work-Life Balance' Campaign

The government's influence has been arguably counter-productive amongst smaller employers

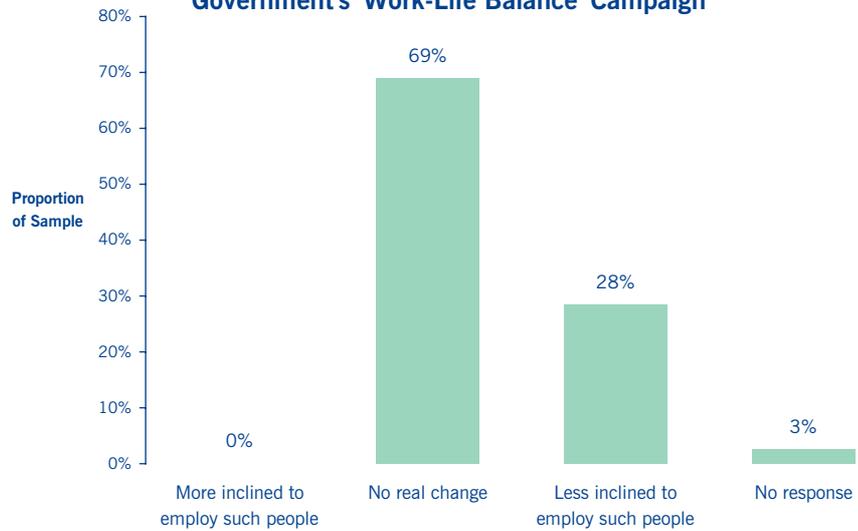


Figure 6 shows the impact of the government's emphasis on work-life balance regarding attitudes towards prospective employees having major 'caring' commitments (e.g., a young family or elderly parents). Interestingly, not a single respondent from any of the different sectors or size ranges claimed themselves now more likely to employ such people. However, 69% claimed no change in their attitudes, whilst 28% claimed that such exhortations actually made them **less** inclined to employ such people. Feelings were often quite strong:

"If our society wishes employers to support these 'middle class' cultural values, we should be supported by government and not be expected to be financially responsible for implementation."

"It is disastrous to expect small businesses to finance and bear the brunt of politically-driven social engineering policies."

"People should be able to choose who they employ, how they employ them and when – as employees can choose who, how and when."

Removal of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Exemptions

Exemptions for small firms employing fewer than 20 employees disappear this year and respondents were asked their views on this extension of rights for the disabled. As can be seen from **Figure 7**, most respondents were opposed to the move, feeling that it was 'ethical but too much of a burden', 'unnecessary' or 'an empty gesture, impossible to measure'. Respondents' comments included the following:

"We have consistently supported disability but we have never been approached – in 28 years – to employ a disabled person."

"Just more interference by government. I think they run my business, not me."

"People should be employed because they can do the job, not because they bring the disabled/able-bodied ratio up to the 'approved' percentage."

"The Disability Discrimination Act is an important and worthwhile piece of legislation. But, as with all problems

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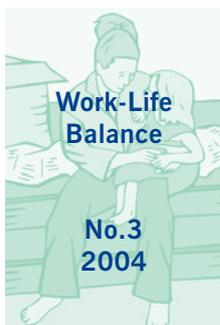
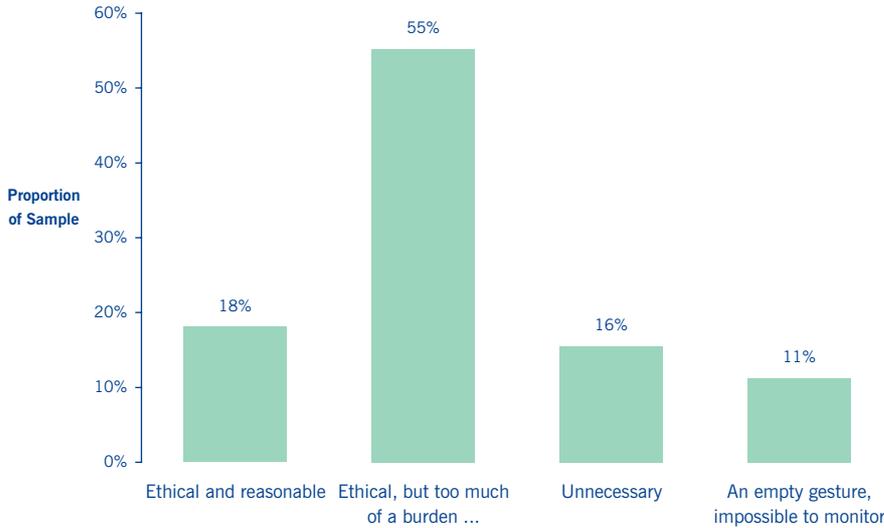


Figure 7 - Attitudes Towards The Extension Of DDA Rights To Include Businesses With Fewer Than 20 Employees



of this nature, it must be tempered with common sense and not regarded as a stick for the abuse of position.”

“The location of our office could not facilitate a potential employee who is wheelchair-bound or has walking difficulties due to no lift to the second floor.”

Figure 8 indicates some very distinct differences in response patterns between respondents of varying age bands. When combining the ‘unnecessary’ and the ‘an empty gesture, impossible to monitor’ responses, just 10% of the 35-44 years age group feel this way. But this rises to 40% for those aged between 55-64. Only 14% of the older group felt that the statutory change was ‘ethical and reasonable’, in contrast to 23% of the younger group (35-44 years).

Figure 8 - Attitudes Towards The Extension Of DDA Rights To Include Businesses With Fewer Than 20 Employees: Respondents Saying 'Unnecessary/Empty Gesture' - By Age

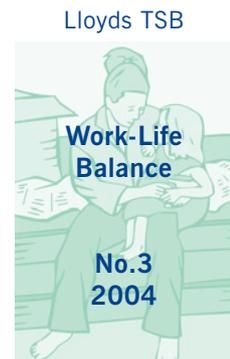
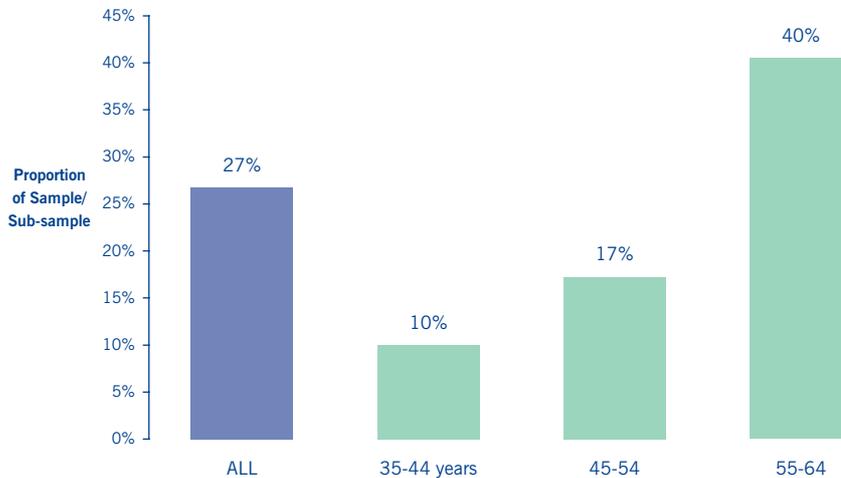
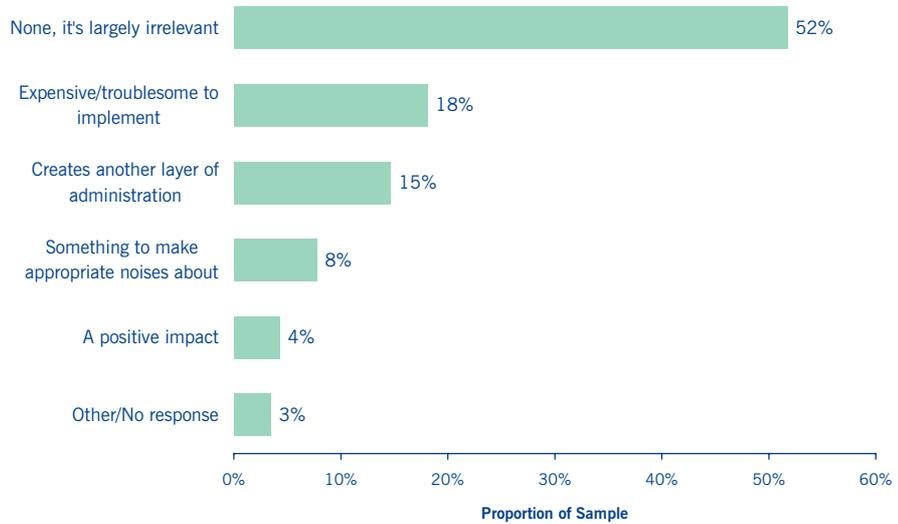


Figure 9 - Impact Of Disability Discrimination Act On Respondents



Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Impact

Respondents were asked what impact the legislation will (for firms employing less than 20 employees) or already does (for firms employing 20 or more employees) have.

Figure 9 shows that a majority of respondents felt it to be largely irrelevant.

When considering variations in respondent firm size (Figure 10), it can be seen that,

amongst firms employing over 20 staff and thus subject to the legislation for some time, those claiming it to be largely irrelevant in its impact was even higher at 60%. The only other size group responding similarly were those with 0-4 employees (63%).

Formal Disabilities Policies

When asked whether their firms did or did not have a formal policy on the issue of coping with disabled workers, nearly one-

Figure 10 - Impact Of Disability Discrimination Act On Respondents: Those Selecting 'Largely Irrelevant' - By Employee Size

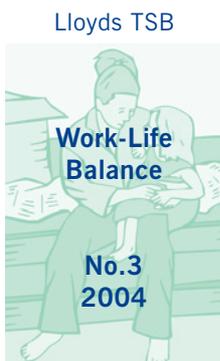
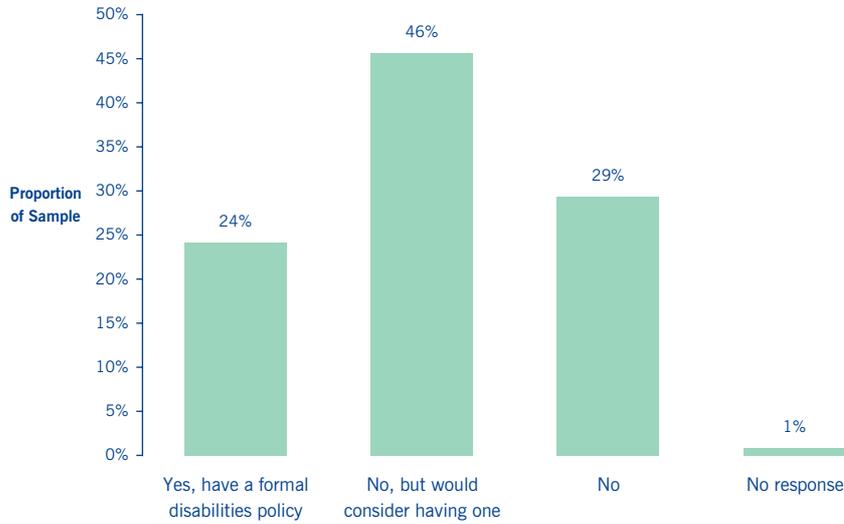


Figure 11 - Current Policies Towards The Employment Of People Having Disabilities



Many smaller firms do not appear fundamentally opposed to the employment of disabled staff

quarter (24%) said they did whilst nearly half (46%) said they did not but that they would consider implementing one at some time in the future. A further 29% gave an emphatic 'no' (Figure 11).

in place anyway and, secondly, these firms have already been covered by the legislation for some time. But again, even here, those with such a formal policy in place were in a minority.

Perhaps not surprisingly (Figure 12), the findings suggest that the existence of formal policies was more prevalent amongst firms with 20 employees or over. This might have been expected on two grounds. Firstly, larger businesses tend to have more formal systems

Figure 13 suggests that female respondents were less likely than their male counterparts already to have formal systems in place. This finding needs to be set against the fact that, generally, their businesses were smaller than those of their male counterparts. However,

Figure 12 - Respondents With Current Policies Towards The Employment Of People Having Disabilities: By Employee Size

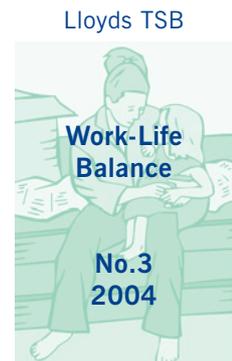
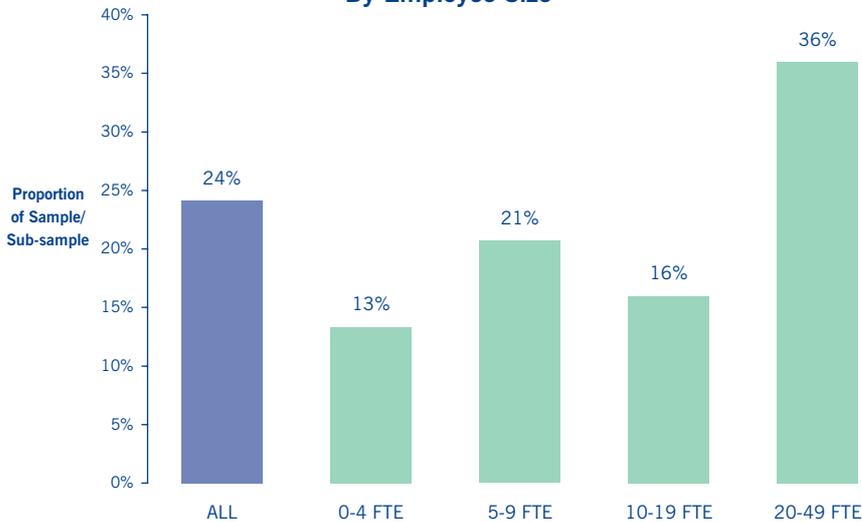
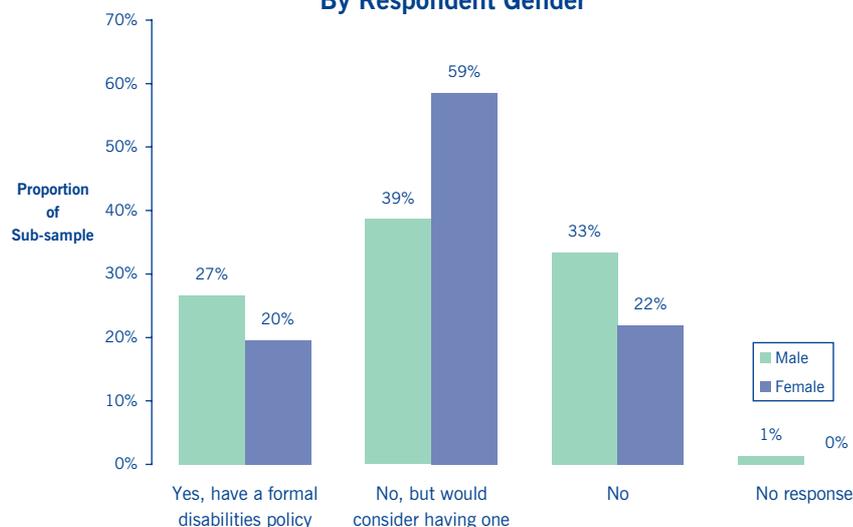


Figure 13 - Current Policies Towards The Employment Of People Having Disabilities: By Respondent Gender



they were also likely to feel more favourably inclined to consider setting up such a policy.

Notable comments in this context were:

“In small companies, many of the employment relationships are non-formalised and based on mutual trust and respect, taking into account each other’s requirements and needs. Government formalisation tends to have a negative impact ... the law is created for mass non-personal decision-makers.”

“I think government agencies have no comprehension of the difficulty that small business has to make any profit nowadays. Administration/ bureaucracy is out of control. This business is closing down now – all staff are being made redundant.”

“Running a business within the global economy whilst hamstrung by increasingly pointless legislation is making UK plc far less competitive. Workers in Mexico get 52 days off a year – every Sunday!”

“There would be many benefits for the introduction of discipline

amongst the under 21 year-olds.

They currently start work life with the attitude of ‘rights’. Where is the work ethic amongst the young ?”

RESPONDENTS’ COMMENTS

These commence in verbatim form on p.17.

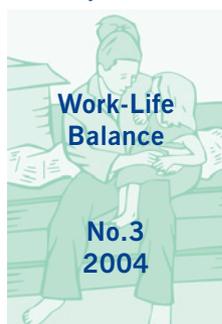
REFERENCES: WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The following references are offered as an aid to readers interested in seeking further information via the world-wide-web. The coverage is not intended to be definitive, and inclusion here should not imply either agreement or disagreement with the views expressed via these sources. Some web sites have appeared before, but there is usually a section noted with interests relevant to the theme of this report.

Special care should also be taken with material obtained from **outside** the UK, for example, the USA, where different legal issues may apply.

N.B. Some pages may contain links to other WWW pages offering related material. Tip: The WWW links were functional at the time of going to print, but the world wide web is in a state of constant change. So if later

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problems arise with a link, edit the link back to the 'home page' – e.g., truncate <http://www.bized.ac.uk/fme/xyz.htm> back to <http://www.bized.ac.uk/> – and look for a similar topic heading there.

- **Carers Online**

“Carers Online is a partnership website. It provides carers, those supporting them and others with national and local information.” Offers information about: Support Carers UK, news, publications and policy, training and professional practice, forums.

www.carersonline.org.uk/

- **Department for Work and Pensions**

The Disability Unit says: “We want to help you find out about your rights as a disabled person, and to learn more about the legislation that exists to help establish fully comprehensive and enforceable civil rights for disabled people in the UK.” Available online: *An Introduction for Small and Medium-sized Businesses: Rights of Access to Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises (Disability Discrimination Act 1995)*.

www.disability.gov.uk/

- **DTI Work-Life Balance Campaign**

“The Government introduced the Work-Life Balance campaign in 2000. The campaign was to help employers to recognise the benefits adopting policies and procedures to enable employees to adopt flexible working patterns. This would help staff to become better motivated and more productive because they were better able to balance their work and other aspects of their lives.” Includes online information about ‘Employer Benefits’ and ‘Employee Benefits’, and ‘Developing a business case’. Also links to research material, such as: *The Second Work-Life Balance Study: Results from the Employer Survey*, by the National Centre For Social Research.

<http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/>

- **Disability Rights Commission**

“The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is an independent body established in April 2000 by Act of Parliament to stop discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.” It produces policy statements and research on disability issues; and publications on rights and good practice for disabled people, employers and service providers.

www.drc.org.uk/

- **Employers’ Forum on Disability**

The Employers’ Forum on Disability is an employers’ organisation focused on the issue of disability in the workplace. It is funded and managed by employers.

www.employers-forum.co.uk/

- **Employers for Work-Life Balance**

“Employers for Work-life Balance (EfWLB) aims to help all UK organisations implement and continuously improve sustainable work-life strategies which meet customer needs, corporate goals and enhance the quality of life for individuals. EfWLB is a one-stop work-life resource for: Large organisations; Small and medium sized organisations (SMEs); Policy makers and journalists; Individuals”. It has a useful list of links to other related web sites. Online material includes, *Where’s daddy? The UK fathering deficit*, commissioned by The Work Foundation, BT and Management Today magazine.

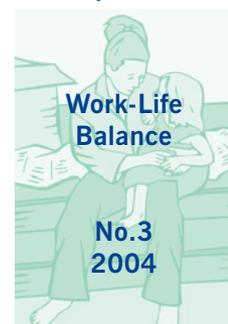
www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/

- **Family Policy Studies Centre**

“The Family Policy Studies Centre is an independent organisation set up to analyse and disseminate information about the family. It explores the association between family trends and public policy. In particular, it aims to interpret demographic trends and contemporary family patterns and analyse the impact of public policy on different types of families.”

www.fpssc.org.uk/

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- **Gingerbread**

“The leading support organisation for lone parent families in England and Wales. Gingerbread was started in 1970 and is a registered charity maintained by lone parents. At this site you will find valuable information about support for lone parent families.”

www.gingerbread.org.uk/

- **Institute of Directors**

The “Work Life-Balance” Revisited, Institute of Directors Employment Comment, updates an earlier report and offers the viewpoint of a employers’ lobby group, responding to such issues as “Britain has a long hours culture” and “The workplace makes people unhappy and ill”.

www.iod.co.uk/

- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

“The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is one of the largest independent social policy research and development charities in the UK. It supports a wide programme of research and development projects in housing, social care and social policy.” It offers a number of related publications, including, *Combining self-employment and family life*, and *Employed carers and family-friendly employment policies*.

www.jrf.org.uk/

- **Parents at Work**

Useful site offered by a registered charity that has sources of information and advice to help children, working parents and their employers find a better balance between work and home responsibilities. There are three zones to explore: the parent zone, the employer zone and the awards zone.

www.parentsatwork.org.uk/

- **Telework Association**

Also known as the TCA, it is “Europe’s largest organisation dedicated to the promotion of teleworking. Over 2,000 people and organisations have joined us since we started in 1993. The TCA believes that teleworking can benefit

people by increasing the quality of life and improving access to work.”

www.tca.org.uk/

- **Work-Life Balance Centre**

A virtual resource that aims to raise awareness and promote discussion of work-life balance issues, promote and disseminate best practice in achieving work-life balance and conduct research into working practices and issues.

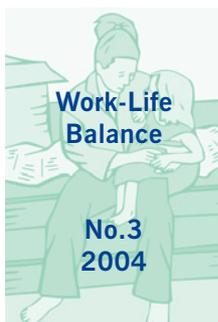
www.worklifebalancecentre.org/

- **Working Families**

Registered charity, “Our goal is to create a working world which satisfies the needs of children, working parents and their employers”. Has an SME/Small Employers web page, offering guides to download, such as: *Adoption Leave Obligations*, *Leave for Caring Purposes*, *Maternity Leave Obligations*, *Paternity Leave Obligations*, *Flexible Working and the Law*, and, *Managing Flexible Workers*.

www.workingfamilies.org.uk/

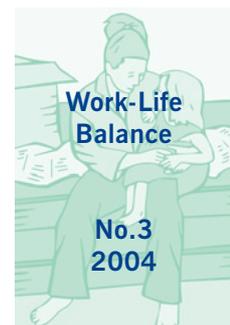
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MANUFACTURING

Design, Printing & New Media	<i>"The government needs to realise that small businesses need a lot of financial help to offer a proper work-life balance to their staff."</i>
Fabrication, Welding, Machining, Special Purpose Machines	<i>"1) [We] Have consistently supported 'disability' and have been invited to meetings with Ministers and various promotion agencies. But [we] have never been approached - in 28 years - to employ a disabled person. I'm on their side but they have never come up with the goods. I have told them this and still nothing ! 2) Ideally we would like to operate more flexible working, but to suit the company. This we find very very difficult. If it suits the individual, yes, they will be very happy to work flexitime or fewer hours, but if the company wants to introduce flexitime to help with variable workload the response is zero generally and the complexity enormous."</i>
Furniture Restoration	<i>"Regs Regs Regs. Too many things to do to meet the Regulations. Red Tape !"</i>
Grain Silos & Water Tanks	<i>"The work-life balance and diversity is a good thing, but it can be to the detriment of the employee if he/she enforces it in the workplace."</i>
Kitchen & Furniture Manufacturers	<i>"Yet more advantages for employees which is good, but not many for employers who have small businesses and deadlines to keep for customers."</i>
Manufacture Diving Suits	<i>"Just more interference by government. I think they run my business, not me."</i>
Manufacturing Broom Clamps and Holders	<i>"We have a working environment (manufacturing) that is not conducive to employing disabled persons."</i>
Pneumatic Connectors/Valves	<i>"It is difficult enough to maintain an efficient level of resources with holidays, sickness, etc. To inherit exposure to further absence due to outside commitments is not easy for SMEs to accommodate."</i>
Printed Circuit Board Manufacture	<i>"It will add to our wage bill and administration costs."</i>
Reprographics	<i>"As a very small business, we struggle every day - whilst [it's] all very ethical, surely the 'employment' should come first. If our society wishes employers to support these 'middle class' cultural values, we should be supported by government and not be expected to be financially responsible for implementation."</i>
Steel & Aluminium Fabrications	<i>"[It] Seems to make no allowance for companies whose activities are dictated by operating times of their clients, thus precluding the opportunity to provide any flexibility in working hours to employees."</i>

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MANUFACTURING continued

Toys/Educational Products

"In small companies, many of the employment relationships are non-formalised and based on mutual trust and respect, taking into account each other's requirements and needs. Government formalisation tends to have a negative impact, e.g., a disabled person could work in a certain area of a company but would not be able to in others due to a lack of access, etc. By over-riding local and personal agreements, the owner is put in a position of unnecessary difficulty because the law is created for mass non-personal decision-makers."

Water Boilers

"We have put a 4-day week in place in our factory. Workers work 36 hours but have a 4 day weekend every fortnight."

BUSINESS SERVICES

Accountancy and Taxation Services

"I think government agencies have no comprehension of the difficulty that small business has to make any profit nowadays. Administration/bureacracy is out of control and it is impossible now to work cost effectively. This business is closing on 30/6/04 - all staff are being made redundant."

Architect

"Don't know. As a sole trader architect the only impact on my business is on the drawing board - designing for commercial and business clients."

Architects

"We do not do 'flexible working'. We have to be in the office (based) for access to computers, library, checking drawings, etc. People can work at home for special reasons, short periods, etc."

Chartered Surveyor

"The Disability Discrimination Act is an important and worthwhile piece of legislation. But, as with all problems of this nature, it must be tempered with common sense and not regarded as a stick for the abuse of position."

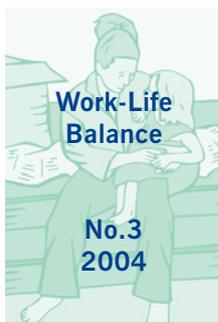
Computer Consultancy

"People should be employed because they can do the job, not because they bring the disabled/able-bodied ratio up to the 'approved' percentage."

Computer Software For Exporters

"New maternity/paternity legislation will make small businesses inevitably reluctant to take on people likely to take advantage of its provision. It is disastrous to expect small businesses to finance and bear the brunt of politically-driven social engineering policies."

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BUSINESS SERVICES continued

Computer-Aided Drafting Services *"The location of the office could not facilitate a potential employee who is wheelchair-bound or [has] walking difficulties due to no lift to the second floor."*

Insurance Brokers *"We are financial services employers."*

Insurance Brokers *"EEC law is burdening us with too many obligations and making the task of running a business too heavy. This has a negative impact on profit and our capacity to employ more people."*

I also feel more frightened about rule breaking and the rights of employees. As employers there is little protection for us. [It is] Counterproductive. Government needs to stop the Compensation Culture by limiting indulgence in bad law carried out by solicitors."

International Freight Forwarding Services *"Yet another layer of cost and administration that has to be borne by small businesses."*

Message Handling *"At [our business] we believe that it is important (crucial) to achieve the best work-life balance model for each and every employee."*

Recruitment *"People should be able to choose who they employ, how they employ them and when - as employees can choose who, how, and when."*

Recruitment - Contract & Permanent *"Running a business within the global economy whilst hamstrung by increasingly pointless legislation is making UK plc far less competitive."*

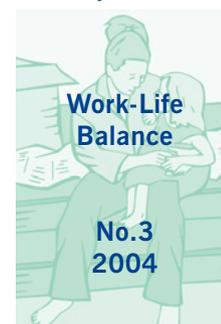
Workers in Mexico get 52 days/year off - every Sunday !"

Recruitment Agency *"At the end of the day - if the business isn't run properly and efficiently, then it will not make money and therefore employees will be out of a job."*

Textile Marketing *"It is not the responsibility of the business community to concern itself with social engineering. It must be free to select the best candidate for a job and be able to ensure that the job is executed as the business requires. **Our future success is dependent upon this principle.**"*

How can this country have got itself into the situation where work is regarded as a pastime, the employer has to shoulder domestic responsibilities on behalf of employees, and unsuitability for a job is confused with discrimination ? We have spawned a generation disinclined to shoulder individual responsibility, and it is no wonder jobs are being lost abroad, many more will go if this attitude persists."

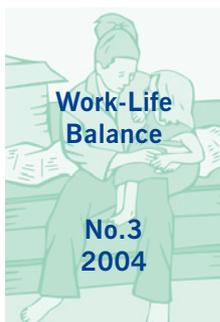
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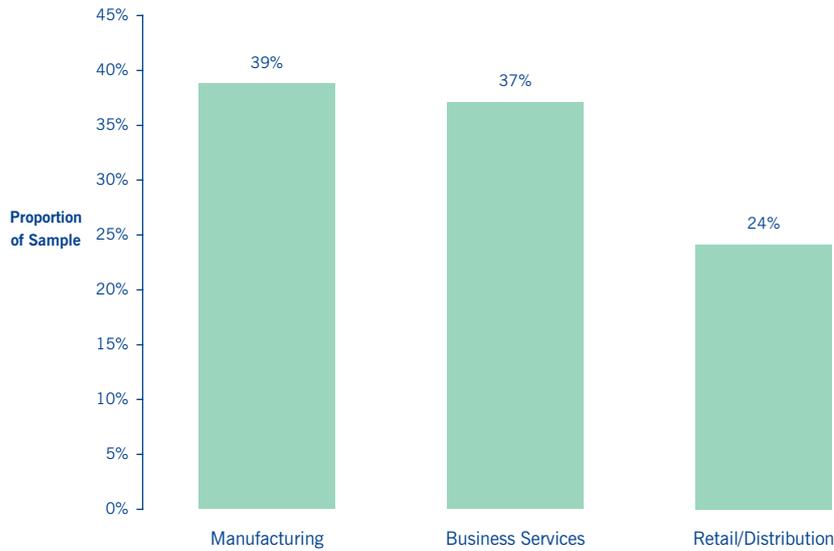
RETAIL & DISTRIBUTION

- Computer System Reseller** *“There would be many benefits for the introduction of discipline amongst the under 21 year olds - [they] currently start working life with the attitude of ‘rights’. What is the ‘work ethic’ amongst the young ?”*
- Garage Services & Car Sales** *“[The] Needs of each business differ, i.e., how can a motor mechanic bring work home ? Neither can they work outside for safety’s sake.*
No request by an employee has been turned down. My business is only as good as my employees and I’ve been in business since 1960.”
- Hardware and Pet Store** *“Nil demarcation, multi-tasking, multi-responsibility and adaptability are criteria that have to be applied in small businesses. Without versatile working partners this small business would not exist ! Government and E.C. employment regulations have ensured that this small business does not want the hassle of being bigger.”*
- Health Foods and Herbal Remedies** *“Tax breaks should be given to implement changes. Cost of compliance is a big issue and as always SMEs are hit yet again.”*
- Retail House Furnishers** *“[There is] Far too much bureacracy and regulations for small businesses to cope with ! I must break the law every time I open the shop ! (unintentionally)”*
- Tool Plant & Equipment Hire, Sales & Repair Service** *“I need my staff more than they need me. I cannot run my business without secure talented happy backup. It is a team effort but it is harder to maintain.”*

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**Figure 14 - Profile Of Sample:
Respondents By Industrial Sector**



APPENDIX 1 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

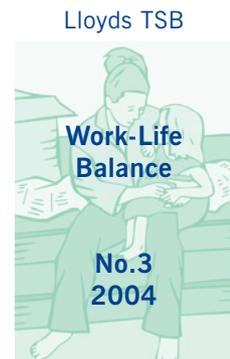
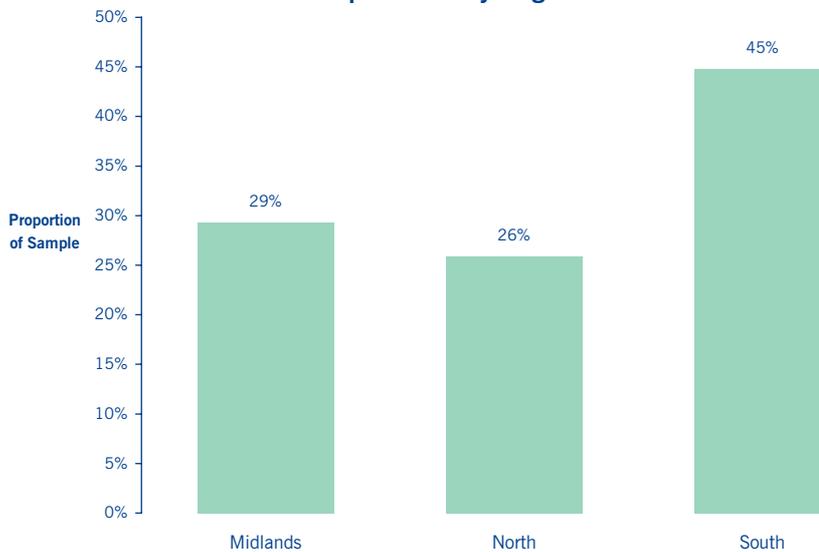
As an aid to the interpretation of the various figures (histograms), we have included some further information about the firms responding to this survey.

The analyses involve key variables, and **industry sector** and **employee size** are those most frequently used as they are reasonably reliable indicators and less prone to

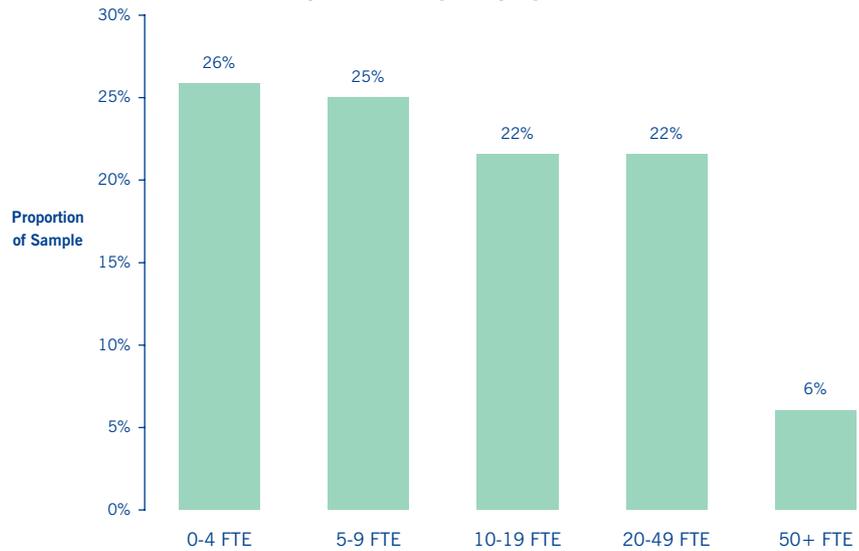
misinterpretation. Other variables have also included **region, sales growth, respondent age** and **sex**.

Industrial sectors – based on the descriptions supplied by respondents, each firm is coded according to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 1980). Firms are then grouped into manufacturing, business services, retail/distribution. Firms falling outside these 3 bands – which would otherwise be classified as ‘other’ – are allocated

**Figure 15 - Profile Of Sample:
Respondents By Region**



**Figure 16 - Profile Of Sample:
Respondents By Employee Size**



to the foregoing sector which offers the closest match.

Regions - firms are also classified according to their physical location, namely, North, Midlands and the South.

Employee size - finally, firms are placed in bands according to the number of employees. Each part-time employee is assumed to be equivalent to 40 per cent of a full-time employee ('FTE' = full-time equivalent). All of the surveys to date have received only a small number of responses from firms with 50 or more FTE employees. These responses have been **included** in the breakdowns for the **sectoral** and **regional** analyses, but have been **excluded** as a '50+FTE' band in the **employee-size** analyses (the 'All' band in each histogram includes all usable responses regardless). This is because a percentage breakdown band based on just two or three firms may not be representative of this size of business.

Distribution of firms

The highest proportion of respondents is in manufacturing (39%, compared to 43% for the previous report), see **Figure 14**.

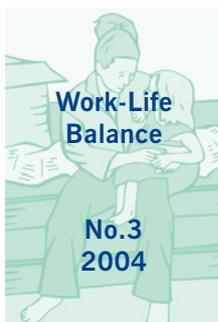
The South region has the largest representation, with 45% of the sample's respondents (39% previously), see **Figure 15**.

Manufacturing and business services firms in samples can tend to be larger, in terms of employees, whereas the firms in retailing/distribution may have fewer full-time equivalent employees. Likewise, the sample is biased towards the smaller businesses – but not the very smallest (sole traders), of which there is a preponderance amongst the small firms population generally. The employee size distribution for the sample is shown in **Figure 16**.

In terms of respondent age, they are predominantly 35 years or older, with the bulk between 45 and 64 years' old.

Finally, the sample is predominantly male (65%, compared to 78% previously).

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Small Enterprise Research Report WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Report No.3 - 2004 - Sponsored by Lloyds TSB

*This questionnaire will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete – most answers require only a single tick.
All information received will be treated in complete confidence. PLEASE RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.*

1a Workforce size - Please indicate the total number of people working in your business (including yourself):

Full-time..... A
Part-time (16 hrs/wk or less) B

1b Respondent age - Your age last birthday:

16-24 years A
25-34 B
35-44 C
45-54 D
55-64 E
65 or over..... F

1c Respondent gender - Your gender:

Male A
Female B

2 Flexible working for staff - Please indicate which of the following modes of flexible working are presently used by your firm:

✓ All which apply

Flexible working locations - at home or on the employer's premises A
Flexitime - giving people a choice about their actual working hours, usually outside agreed core times B
Job sharing - two people carrying out the duties of a post that would normally be done by one person C
Part-time working (less than 30 hours/week) D
Staggered hours - employees have different start, finish and break times E
Term-time only working - employees remain on a permanent contract, either on a full or part-time basis, but can have unpaid leave of absence during the school holidays F
Other (please state) G

3 Flexible working benefits - Which of the following benefits do you feel that your policy towards flexible working brings:

✓ All which apply

Attracts a wider range of candidates, such as older part-time workers and carers A
Generates a reputation of being a good employer B
Increases productivity..... C
Makes employees feel valued D
Maximises available labour E
Offers a loyal and motivated workforce in a less stressful environment F
Reduces absenteeism..... G
Retains valued employees..... H
Other (please state) I

4 Employees' life beyond work - When it comes to work-life balance and taking into account employees' outside commitments/interests/responsibilities, which ONE of the following best describes your approach:

Just one ✓ only

I always try to accommodate the needs of the staff where possible A
Where it's easy to do so and I can't see a negative impact on the business then I'll do so B
The needs of the staff are secondary to the needs of the business C
It's too much effort trying to organise things around the staff; at the end of the day I have a business to run D

5 Work-life balance and recruitment - Regarding prospective employees with major 'caring' commitments outside work (e.g., with a young family or elderly parents), would you say that the emphasis on work-life balance by government has made you:

Just one ✓ only

More inclined to employ such people A
No real change..... B
Less inclined to employ such people C

6 Disability Discrimination Act exemptions - The exemptions for small firms employing fewer than 20 employees disappear in 2004. Do feel that, on balance, this extension of rights for disabled persons is:

Just one ✓ only

- Ethical and reasonable..... A
- Ethical, but puts too much of a burden on SMEs/businesses B
- Unnecessary..... C
- An empty gesture, as it will be impossible to really monitor its implementation D

7 Disability Discrimination Act impact - What predominant impact will/does the Act have on you and your business ?

Just one ✓ only

- Creates another layer of administration A
- Expensive/troublesome to implement B
- None, it's largely irrelevant C
- Something to make the appropriate noises about when asked D
- A positive impact E

8 Employment of staff with disabilities - Does your firm presently have a formal policy of employing such people (where suitable) ?

Just one ✓ only

- Yes..... A
- No, but would consider doing so..... B
- No..... C

9 'Work-Life Balance and Diversity' - If you have any strong views, especially if you feel that any aspect is not fully appreciated by important sections of the business community (such as the government help agencies or the financial services sector), then please comment:

Thankyou for your co-operation. Please return the completed questionnaire using the accompanying pre-paid envelope, to:

**Ms. Beverley Porter-Blake
 Small Enterprise Research Team
 Open University Business School
 Michael Young Building
 Walton Hall
 Milton Keynes MK7 6AA**

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