

Small Enterprise Research Report

Owner-Manager Flexible Working

December 2006



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Business

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Small Enterprise Research Report

Owner-Manager Flexible Working

December 2006 - Vol.4, No.1

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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.

**John Stanworth, Emeritus Professor,
University of Westminster**
<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/schools/business>

**David Purdy, Visiting Fellow,
Kingston University**
<http://business.kingston.ac.uk/sbrc>

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2006-07 (Vol.4)

- 1 Owner-Manager Flexible Working..... December 2006
- 2 The Ageing Workforce..... April 2007
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2008-09 (Vol.5)

- 1 The London 2012 Olympic And Paralympic Games..... April 2008
- 2 Competition: Small Firms Under Pressure.....January 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.

LIABILITY DISCLAIMER

The information and analysis in each report is offered in good faith. However, neither the publishers, the project sponsors, nor the authors, accept any liability for losses or damages which could arise for those who choose to act upon the information or analysis contained herein. Readers tracing web references are advised to ensure they are adequately protected against virus threats.

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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 tenth in a 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 **Owner-Manager Flexible Working** and the principal findings were as follows:

- **Flexible working practices – Most respondents were reasonably content with their ability to adopt flexible hours/flexible location working for themselves:** 62% said they adopted flexible working to the extent that they wished to, and a further 9% said they were able to but chose not to.
- **Flexible working practices and sector variations** – Noticeable differences were encountered with **manufacturing respondents least likely to adopt flexible working** to the extent that they wished, and business services respondents most likely to.
- **Flexible working practices and respondent age variations** – **A high proportion of respondents aged 65 and over (63%) said that they were able to work flexibly to the extent that they wished**, but another 25% were unable to. Thus there may be two distinct groups working beyond standard retirement age: one on a voluntary basis motivated largely by personal interest and involvement, and another simply pressurised by economic need.
- **Flexible working practices and firm size variations** – **The owner-managers of the smaller firms claimed to enjoy most flexibility** (those with workforces having fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees).
- **Perceptions of indispensability to the smooth running of respondent businesses** – **Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) felt that they were indispensable.** This varied with firm size, ranging from 85% of the smallest firms (0-4 FTE employees) through to 57% of largest (20-49 FTE employees).
- **Working hours** – 39% of respondents reported that they worked 50 or more hours a week on average, or, conversely, 60% worked fewer hours per week.
- **Working hours and gender variations** – **69% of female respondents worked 50 hours or less each week** (compared with 57% of men), reflecting the increased likelihood of women working part-time, whether in employment or self-employment.
- **Working hours and respondent age** – Perhaps unsurprisingly, **longer working hours were more common amongst younger respondents:** 53% of respondents aged 35-44 years worked 50 hours or more each week, compared with just 6% of those still working aged 65 or more.
- **Attitudes towards flexible working** – **A sizeable minority of respondents were clearly interested in working flexibly**, with the most common responses being: 'Working flexibly allows me to pursue interests outside work' (44%); 'I am satisfied with my work-life balance' (42%); and, 'I take advantage of flexible working where possible' (37%).
- **Attitudes towards flexible working and other variations** – **Respondents in manufacturing were least likely to feel that flexible working presented them with opportunities to pursue outside interests or spend more time with their families.** Smaller firm respondents were more inclined to agree that flexible working was beneficial, as did older respondents. Women respondents were particularly likely to feel that it was more important to accommodate the flexible working needs of others.
- **Flexible working methods adopted by respondents** – 'Home working' (46%), Technology assisted modes, e.g., home broadband (38%), 'Flexitime' (22%) and 'Part-time working' (18%) were most common.

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- **Flexible working methods adopted by respondents and variations** – Part-time working was popular amongst those aged over 65 and in the business services sector.
- **Flexible working methods adopted by staff** – Most common were: ‘Part-time working’ (52%), ‘Home-working’ (29%), ‘Flexitime’ (28%), and ‘Staggered hours’ (24%).
- **Flexible working methods adopted by staff and variations** – Major differences were linked to sector. On almost all counts, the business services respondents were more likely to see flexible working practices adopted by their staff. In the case of ‘Part-time working’, ‘Home-working’, ‘Flexitime’, and ‘Technology-assisted’ working, the responses were markedly higher than for the other sectors.
- **Barriers to flexible working** – ‘Customer-service’ (42%) and ‘Staff shortage’ (40%) issues were the most common, and the latter especially amongst the smallest businesses.
- **Activities that might be pursued if a better ‘work-life’ balance were possible** – Most popular would be: spending more time with friends and family (47%), sport (38%), reading (37%) and voluntary work (19%).
- **Activities that might be pursued if a better ‘work-life’ balance were possible (variations)** – The main variations included older respondents wanting to spend more time reading, learning new skills and visiting theatres/cinemas/galleries. Respondents from larger firms wished that they could spend more time with friends and family. **Female respondents** registered a greater interest than males on just about all counts, especially with a desire to read more. And both sexes aspired to ‘Play more sport or take up a new sport’ ahead of most other activities.

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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 **owner-manager flexible working**. 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 September and October 2006.

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**
- 3 **Work-Life Balance**

2004-05 (Vol.2)

- 1 **Education & Enterprise**
- 2 **Made In Britain**
- 3 **Management & Gender Differences**

2006 (Vol.3)

- 1 **Local or Global ?**
- 2 **Managing IT**
- 3 **Networking In Business**

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OWNER-MANAGER FLEXIBLE WORKING

Owner-managers tend to work longer hours than the workforce at large – this we know from official statistics gathered from owner-managers themselves on a self-reported basis. Yet, one of the desires underpinning the motive for self-employment is ‘independence’ and, it would appear, at first sight anyway, that part of this takes the form of determining personal working patterns – in a nutshell, ‘flexible working’.

Some of the respondents were in no doubt in their claims to work out a balance between their work and non-work lives whereby, on occasions, work prerogatives were sacrificed to those of leisure, family and other social obligations:

“What is the point of running your own company if you cannot enjoy taking time off – or trust others to run it in your absence?”

“Flexible working is ‘the’ plus point that keeps me going as an owner-manager rather than an employee.”

“To date, my position has been Managing Director/Senior Partner, but in order to improve my work/life balance, I have appointed a new Managing Director and myself become Chairman/Financial Director. It is the new MD who now has the work/life problem !”

“As a 69-year old owner-manager, I do 3 days each week now whilst the junior management finds its feet. My son will take over from the current MD in a year or so when the current MD will work part-time in my place.”

“Flexible working keeps you interested and focussed in my opinion.”

“Everybody is different. You need to adapt your time to what is going on around you.”

“It is vital to be available for contact by your office personnel when working from home, in order to ensure seamless customer service and also to avoid the perception of ‘taking it easy.’”

“I’d rather work to live than live to work.”

“We adopted flexible working and the biggest impact was that staff became aware of every minute worked. They were then less likely to stay a little bit over to finish a job. Staff conditions improved and they appreciated flexible working, but it costs us more as employers. Some staff do try to abuse it but generally the system works well.”

“Having a 4-day week (4x10-hour days) and a 3-day weekend is incredibly liberating. I have convinced many other owner-managers to do it.”

“You are the boss and therefore be able to set the agenda. All work and no play really does make Jack a very dull, stressed, unfit and generally unhappy boy.”

However, others felt less confident of their autonomy to adopt flexible working practices:

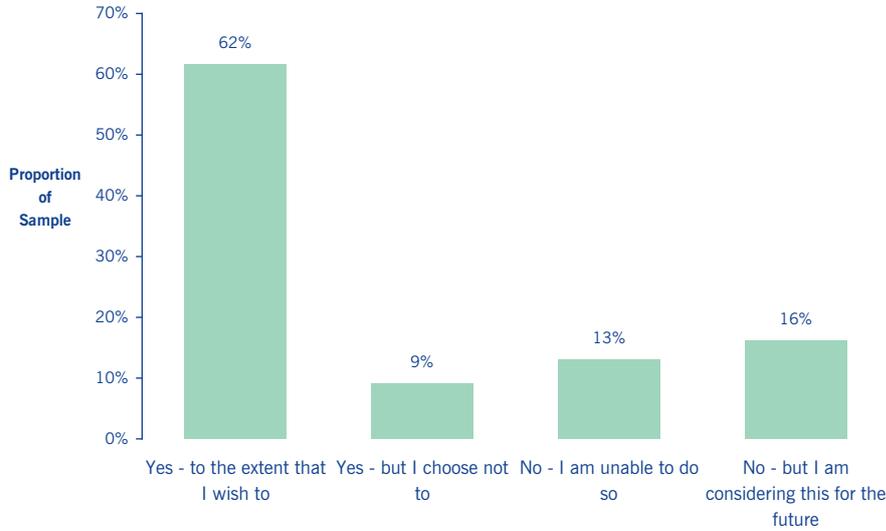
“As an owner-manager of a project-based small business, flexible working is a joke. If I have work, then I work 110%. If I don’t have work, I work 120% to get some. Flexible working is a non-issue for survival businesses.”

“Owner-managers work 40 to 50 hours each week and spend their leisure time thinking about work.”

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Figure 1 - Do Respondents Feel Able To Adopt Flexible Working Practices Personally ?



“I think the type of business dictates whether flexible working hours would be helpful or not.”

“Nice idea – but never totally guaranteed as the buck stops with the boss. If others can’t do things, you have to, and cancel domestic plans in order to keep your business running on a day-to-day basis.”

“We find the concept of ‘Work-Life Balance’ difficult to comprehend. One’s livelihood depends upon an income which has to be earned and, in the case of most small private companies means ‘Hard Graft’. Yet this trendy term (‘Work-life Balance’) suggests that work can become subsidiary to leisure time. It is inconceivable that owner-managers can consider what is, in effect, part-time working. The first priority is to do the job, not plan an early getaway.”

Do Owner-Managers Feel Able to Adopt Flexible Working Practices Personally?

Figure 1 suggests that most respondents were reasonably content with their ability to adopt flexible hours/location working. For instance, 62% said they adopted flexible working to the extent that they wished to. A further 9% said they were able to but chose not to.

Figure 2 indicates that there were noticeable differences between business sectors here with manufacturing respondents least able to adopt flexible working and business services respondents most able to.

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Business services may offer respondents better opportunities for flexible working

Figure 2 - Do Respondents Feel Able To Adopt Flexible Working Practices Personally ? 'Yes - To The Extent That I Wish To': By Sector

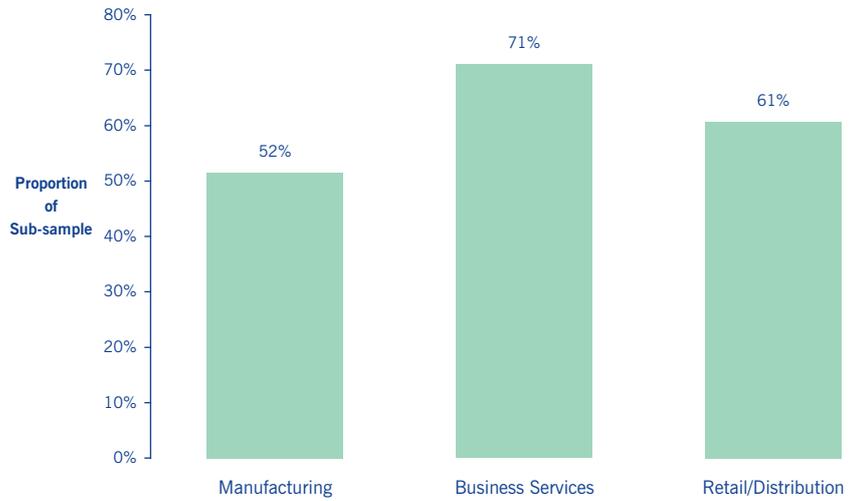
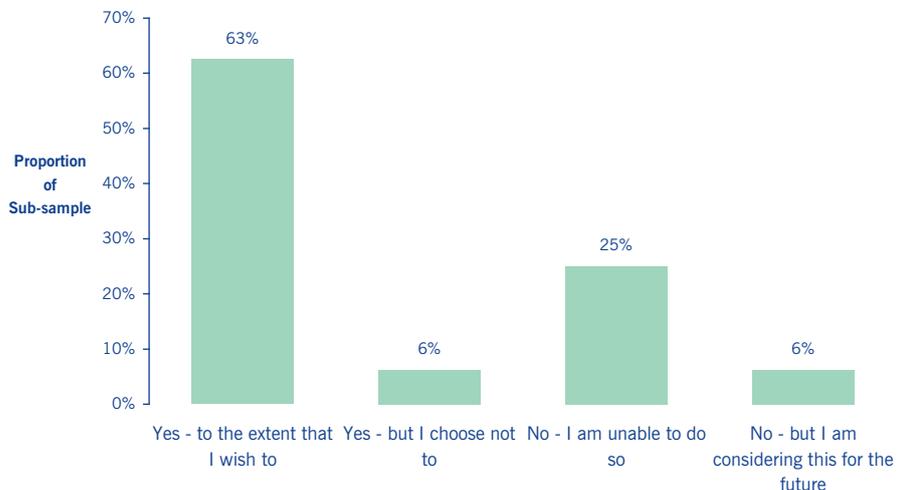


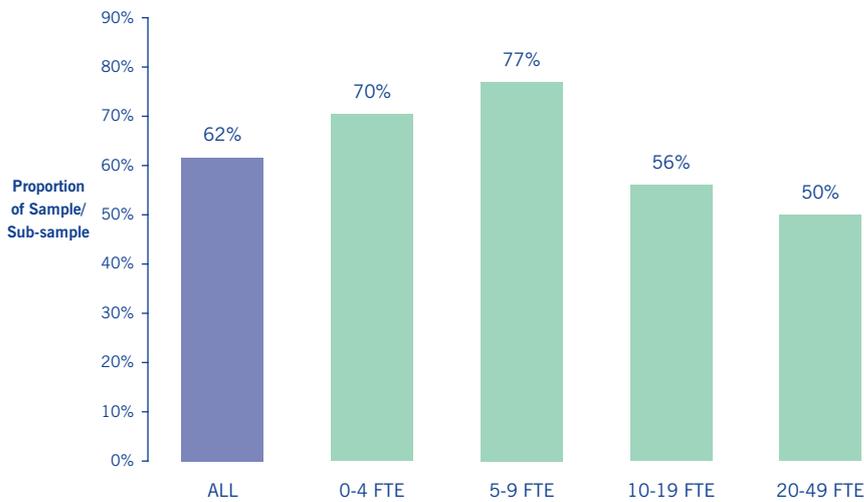
Figure 3 shows some fairly dramatic responses amongst respondents aged 65 and over. A high percentage (63%) said that they were able to work flexibly to the extent that they wished whilst 25% said that they were unable to (this value was higher than for any other age group). This finding would appear to feed into an interesting ongoing debate on older owner-managers. For instance, it has long been known that self-employment rates are relatively high amongst those exceeding normal retirement age. This was initially

explained by failure to make adequate financial provision, but more recently by the fact that no corporate employer can 'down-size' them. Thus in Figure 3, there might well be two separate groups here – one still working on a voluntary basis motivated largely by personal interest and involvement, and another group simply pressurised by economic need.

Figure 3 - Do Respondents Feel Able To Adopt Flexible Working Practices Personally ? : Respondents Aged 65 And Over



**Figure 4 - Do Respondents Feel Able To Adopt Flexible Working Practices Personally ?
'Yes - To The Extent That I Wish To': By Employee Size**



Greater scope for flexible working amongst smaller firms ?

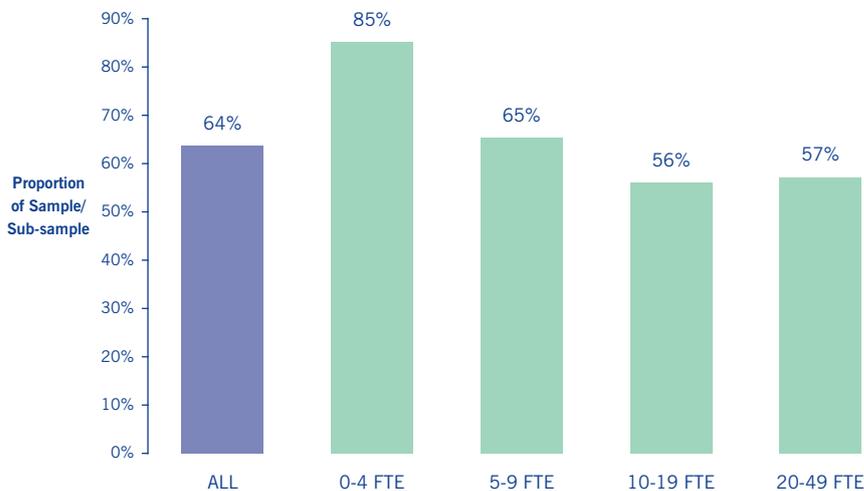
Figure 4 compares proportions able to adopt flexible working practices by size of firm. Perhaps surprisingly, it was the owner-managers of the smallest firms that claimed to experience most flexibility. It might be hypothesised that larger firms would have had a bigger cadre of managers and thus been more able to dispense with the services of their owner-managers for certain periods of time. The picture to emerge here then is certainly one of owner-managers of the larger businesses being very much 'hands-on'.

Indispensable ?

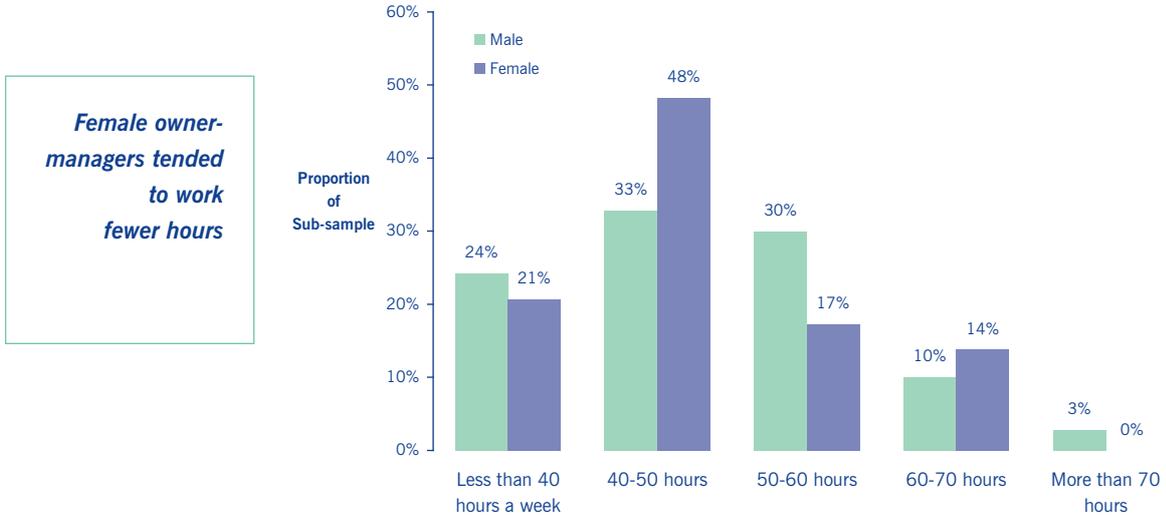
When asked if, generally speaking, respondents felt they were indispensable to the smooth running of their firms, 64% reported that they were.

Affirmative responses varied with firm size (**Figure 5**) ranging from 85% of the smallest firms through to 57% of the largest. These results are not surprising given that, as firms grow, owner-managers represent a smaller

**Figure 5 - Do Respondents Feel Indispensable To The Smooth Running Of Their Firm ?
Respondents Saying 'Yes': By Employee Size**



**Figure 6 - Average Hours Worked Per Week:
By Respondent Gender**



proportion of their firm's human resource assets.

(‘February 2006 Assessment’, ONS Labour Market Trends, March 2006).

Hours Worked

39% of respondents reported that they worked 50 or more hours a week on average, or, conversely, 60% worked fewer than 50 hours per week. For comparison, the average actual weekly hours of work is 32.1 hours for everyone in employment – employees and self-employed, full and part-time workers

Figure 6 illustrates a marked gender difference, with 69% of female respondents working 50 hours or less each week (compared with 57% of men) and 43% of men working 50 hours or more per week (compared with just 31% of women). This is not surprising since women’s position in the self-employed workforce tends to replicate their position in the workforce more generally,

**Figure 7 - Respondents Working 50+ Hours Per Week:
By Respondent Age**

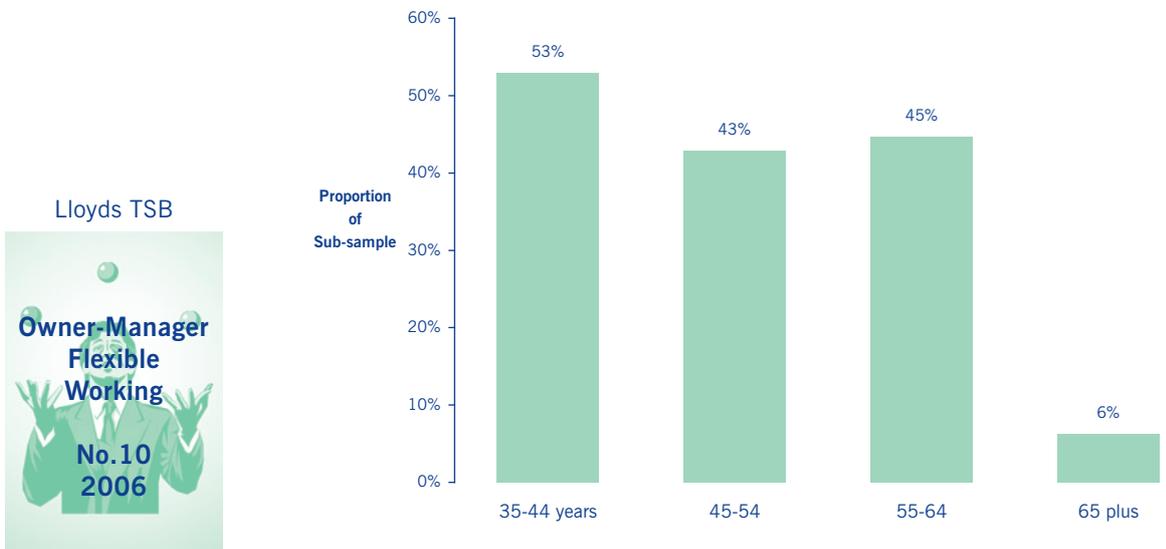
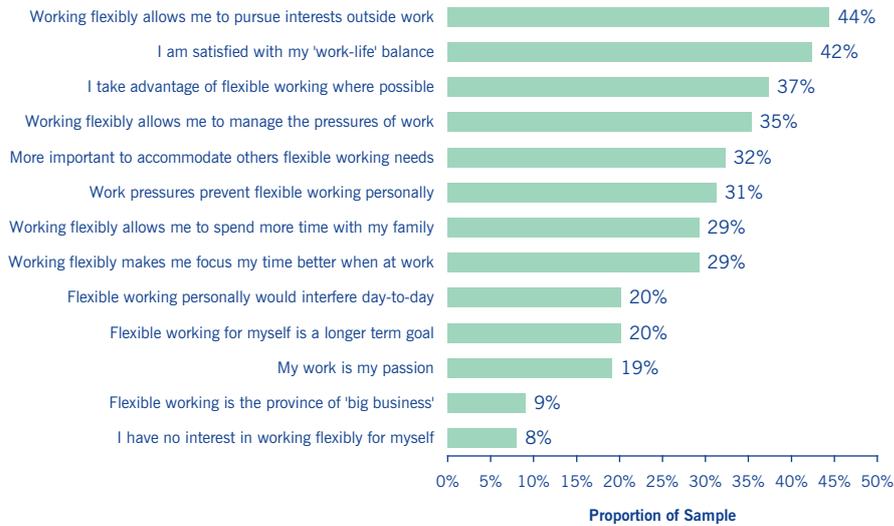


Figure 8 - Attitudes Towards Flexible Working



Many respondents appear to have a positive disposition towards flexible working

including their being more likely to work part-time, whether in employment or self-employment.

Figure 7 indicates a dramatic fall in long-hours working amongst the oldest respondents. In fact, 53% of respondents aged 35-44 years worked 50 hours or more each week compared with just 6% of those aged 65 or more.

Attitudes Towards Flexible Working By Owner-Managers

Respondents were offered a series of statements and asked to indicate those with which they agreed (**Figure 8**).

Breaking down the sample by sector, size, sex and age, it was evident that those from manufacturing were least likely to feel that flexible working presented them with opportunities to pursue outside interests

Figure 9 - Flexible Working Options Adopted By Owner-Managers

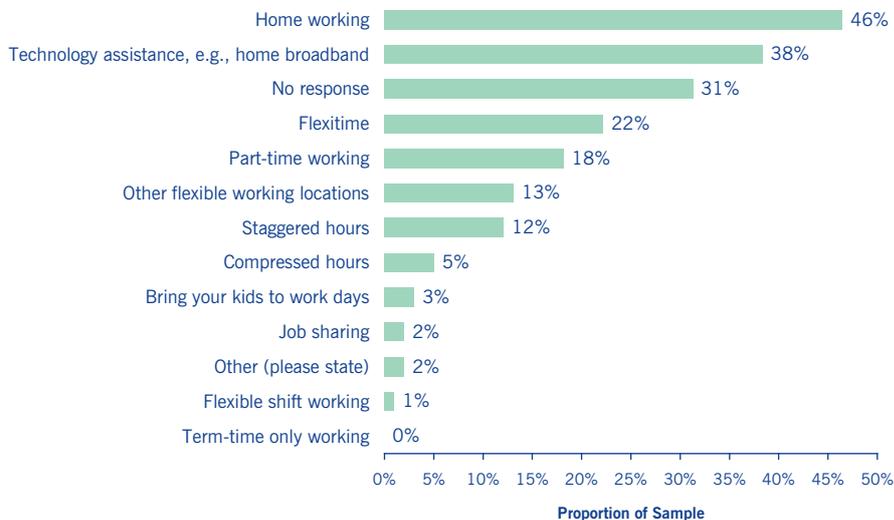
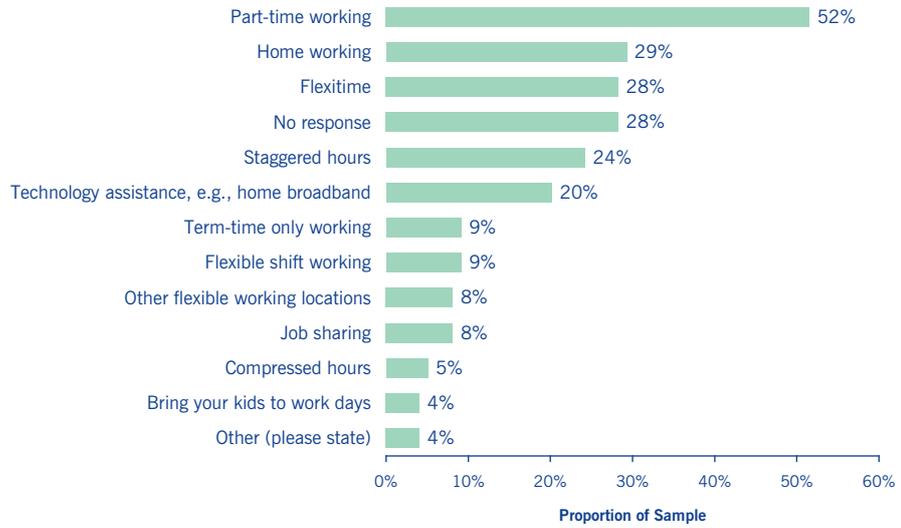


Figure 10 - Flexible Working Options Adopted By Respondents' Staff



or spend more time with their families. Smaller firm respondents tended to agree that flexible working was beneficial here, as did elder respondents. Female respondents were particularly likely to feel that it was more important to accommodate the flexible working needs of others.

by themselves (Figure 9). As can be seen, 'Home working', 'Technology assisted modes', 'Flexitime' and 'Part-time working' were most common. Interestingly, 'Home working' appeared no more popular amongst women respondents than men. Part-time working was popular amongst those aged over 65 and in business services firms.

Flexible Working Options Adopted

Respondents were asked to identify what modes of flexible working had been adopted

When asked this question in respect of their staff, as opposed to themselves (Figure 10), the major differences were those linked to

Figure 11 - Barriers To Flexible Working For Owner-Managers

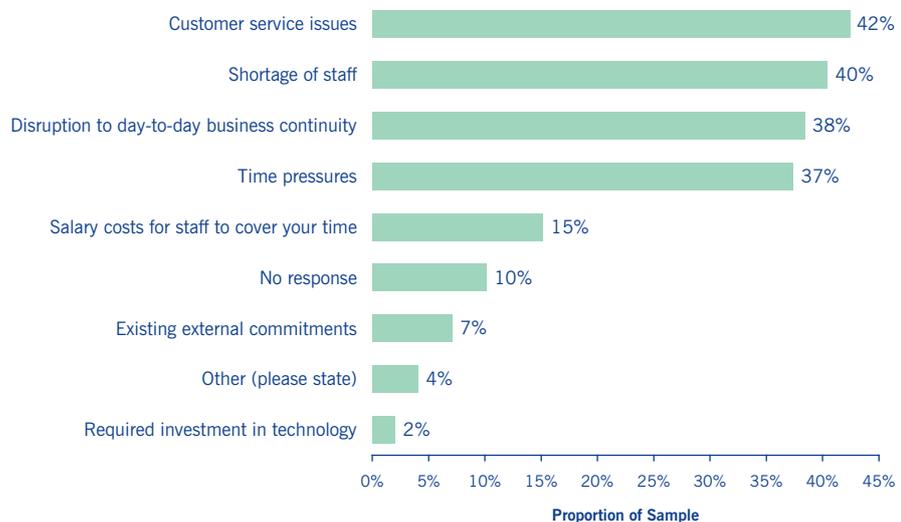
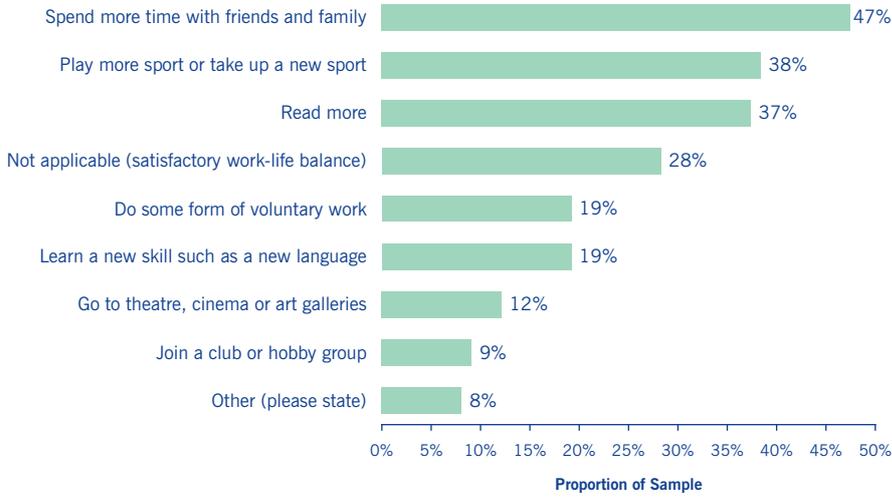


Figure 12 - Activities That Owner-Managers Would Most Like To Pursue If A Better 'Work-Life' Balance Were Possible



Friends and family might benefit from a better work-life balance amongst owner-managers

sector. On almost all counts, respondents from the business services sector were more likely to see flexible working practices adopted by their staff. In the case of 'Part-time working', 'Home-working', 'Flexitime', and 'Technology-assisted' working the rates were markedly higher than for the other sectors. The same finding appeared true as firms increased in size.

Barriers To Flexible Working

Figure 11 shows the responses to a question on barriers to flexible working. 'Customer service' and 'Staff shortage' issues were the most common, with the latter most evident in firms of a smaller size.

What Activities Would Respondents Most Like To Pursue ?

If a better 'work-life' balance were on offer

Figure 13 - Activities That Employees Would Most Like To Pursue If A Better 'Work-Life' Balance Were Possible (DTI, 2004)

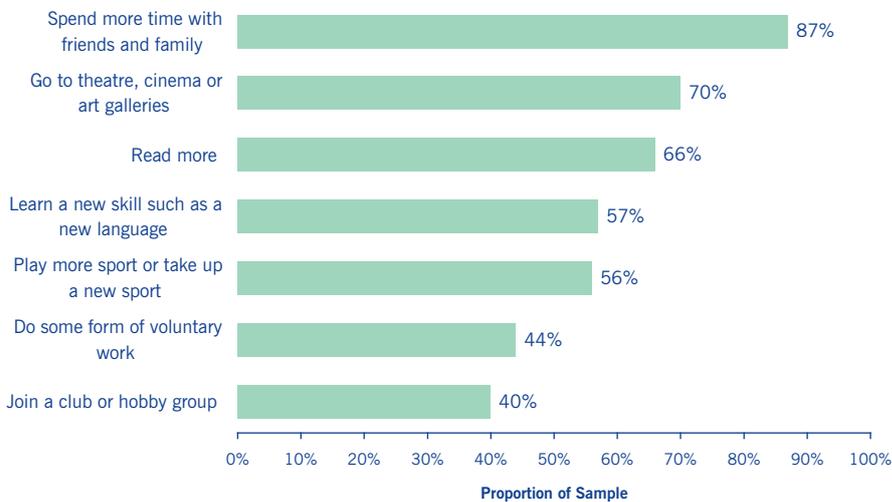
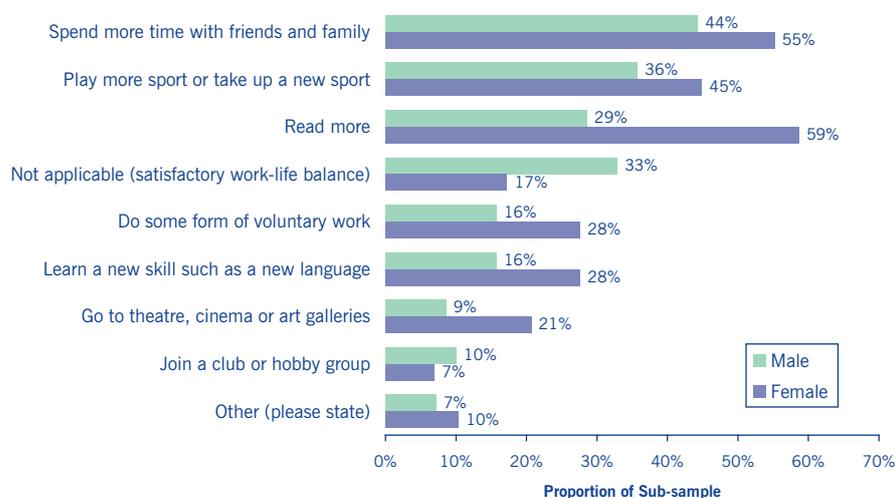


Figure 14 - Activities That Owner-Managers Would Most Like To Pursue If A Better 'Work-Life' Balance Were Possible: By Respondent Gender



to the respondents, what activities would they most like to pursue? **Figure 12** shows that the most prominent were: spending more time with friends and family, sport, reading, voluntary work, learning new skills, and visiting theatre/cinema/galleries. Notable differences amongst segments of the sample included older respondents wanting to spend more time reading, learning new skills, and, visiting theatres/cinemas/galleries, and respondents from larger firms wishing to spend more time with friends and family.

The corresponding question was drafted in order that the owner-manager responses could be compared with those from a survey of employees undertaken by the Department of Trade & Industry, also investigating work-life balance issues (**Figure 13**, 'Britain's Workers Crave More Time With Friends In 2004', DTI, January 2004).

The strong desire of both small firm owner-managers and employees to spend more time with friends and family is noteworthy - ranked first in both cases - and might suggest that the economic necessity of earning a living comes at a cost of weakened personal relationships and family commitments, regardless as to whether those affected are employers or employees. However, 28% of the owner-manager respondents indicated

that they already enjoyed a satisfactory work-life balance.

The next most popular option amongst owner-managers was 'play more sport or take up a new sport', which ranked only fifth amongst employees. Whilst being conscious that the response selections represent aspirations rather than actual behaviour – and therefore might or might not come to pass should the opportunity arise – the wide potential interest in sport amongst owner-managers ahead of other activities is still noteworthy and may be a reflection of a competitive tendency (registered by 36% of male respondents, and 45% of females, **Figure 14**).

Generally speaking, female respondents registered a greater interest than males on just about all counts, especially with a desire to read more. Other interests and comments noted by owner-managers included:

- Be involved in other business interests and play more golf
- Do a Degree
- Get a life [for the respondent]
- Golf
- Ride my horses more !
- Take O.U. [Open University] course
- Travel

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RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS

These commence in verbatim form on p.18.

REFERENCES: FLEXIBLE WORKING & 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 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.

● **BT.com Business club**

A web site aimed at small and medium-sized business (SMEs) and offers articles on flexible working, e.g., a factsheet entitled: *Work from home, as if you're in the office.*

<http://businessclub.bt.com>

● **Carers UK**

"The voice of carers. Carers provide unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner." Offers a web page relating to 'Caring and work', and publications include: 'Carers at work' and 'Juggling work and care - for employees'.

www.carersuk.org/

● **Department of Trade & Industry (DTI)**

"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." The related web pages are headed 'Flexible Working and Work-Life Balance'. Online information includes: 'Employers' Top 10 Questions' and 'Employee's Top 10 Questions'. There is also the report: *Flexible Working: The right to request and the duty to consider - A Guide For Employers And Employees*. Responses to the public consultation on draft Flexible Working Regulations are available, e.g., those from various lobby groups, including the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses, and the Institute of Directors.

www.dti.gov.uk/

● **Department for Work and Pensions**

Offers research material, e.g., *A question of balance: lone parents, childcare and work*: "Examines lone parents' attitudes towards and experiences of childcare; their decisions about childcare and work; how they manage and negotiate childcare; and their views and experiences of recent and imminent policy initiatives and changes."

www.dwp.gov.uk

● **Employers and Work-life Balance (EaWLB)**

"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 ... EaWLB is a one-stop work-life resource for: Large organisations, Small and medium sized organisations (SMEs), Policy makers and journalists, Individuals." For SMEs, the resources include: a benchmarking questionnaire

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for SMEs, case studies, a factsheet, and links to the latest research (although much of it appears to be geared towards medium-sized firms. i.e., those with 51-500 employees).

www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/

- **Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)**

A non-departmental public body, dealing with “sex discrimination and inequality related to gender, including good practice in the fair and equal treatment of men and women”. A policy statement on work-life balance says: “Unless we can achieve a better work-life balance across all organisations and sectors of employment, women are likely to be held back and be unable to realise their full potential. Employers will be unable to use their staff in the most effective ways, and fathers will be unable to develop the close relationship they want with their children. The same applies to carers. This is why the work-life balance is a priority for the EOC”. “Many employers have introduced part-time work, but opportunities for flexible or part-time work in managerial and professional work are often limited. The Work and Parents Taskforce has recommended the introduction of a new right to request a reduction or change in working hours for parents of children aged under 6. From April 2003, employers will be obliged to give serious consideration to such requests, and only refuse requests where there are genuine business reasons for doing so.” (referring to flexible hours)

www.eoc.org.uk/

- **Employment Research Institute**

Based at Napier University, Edinburgh, and has produced *Work Life Balance: Literature and Research Review* (2003), “The aim of the publication is to make academic and other policy research more accessible to employers, advocacy groups and policy-makers. Changes to labour market demographics, work intensification and stress and the changing needs of individuals and

organisations are covered as well as the future direction of work-life policy and research.”

www.napier.ac.uk/depts/eri/HOME.htm

- **Institute of Directors**

Has produced *The “Work Life-Balance” Revisited*, an Institute of Directors Employment Comment, updating an earlier report and from the viewpoint of an employers’ lobby group, responding to such issues as “Britain has a long hours culture” and “The workplace makes people unhappy and ill” (2003)

www.iod.co.uk/

- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

“One of the largest social policy research and development charities in the UK, spending about £7 million a year on a research and development programme that seeks to better understand the causes of social difficulties and explore ways of overcoming them.” Reports include: *Family and work in minority ethnic businesses in the UK*, *The impact of mothers’ employment on family relationships*, *Employers, communities and family-friendly employment policies*, and *The influence of atypical working hours on family life*.

www.jrf.org.uk/

- **Mother@Work Webzine**

“A functional, practical, useful and fun site. Mother@Work will take the stress out of finding information quickly by providing lists of web links attached to every article directing people on to other useful areas. It also features two comprehensive directories of useful websites and organisations that can help the working mother that are split into consumer and information.”

www.motheratwork.co.uk/

- **Telework Association**

“Europe’s largest organisation dedicated to the promotion of all forms of teleworking and over 7,000 people and organisations have joined us since we started in 1993. We believe that these

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new ways of working can benefit people by increasing the quality of life and improving access to work, as well as delivering significant business benefits to the organisations that implement them.” Publishes *The Teleworking Handbook*, “which is the most comprehensive guide to teleworking good practice yet produced. Now in its third edition, it includes introducing telework in organisations, ideas for telebusinesses, staying legal and equipment and training.”

www.tca.org.uk/

- **Working Families**

“The UK’s leading work-life balance organisation. We help and give a voice to working parents and carers, whilst also helping employers create workplaces which encourage work-life balance for everyone. Armed by all we hear from our supporters, our Helpline callers and our award winners, as well as our cutting edge research, we make the case to government and employers for social policy and workplace change that will benefit families, employers and communities.” Has a ‘Flexible Working and Small Employers’ web page that “sets out the experience and opinions of some SME employers and employees and links - at relevant points - to all the other guidance pages and checklists.” Factsheets include: ‘Adoption Leave Obligations’, ‘Leave for Caring Purposes’, ‘Paternity Leave Obligations’, ‘Childcare Options’, ‘Flexible Working and the Law’, and, ‘Managing Flexible Workers’. Offers an Interactive Flexible Working Guide for employees.

www.workingfamilies.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. Includes a link to related web sites.

www.worklifebalancecentre.org/

- **Work-Life Research Centre**

The centre is “future and internationally oriented, with a focus on emerging issues and future developments.” Offers published material, including the book: *The Myth of Work-Life Balance: The Challenge of Our Time for Men, Women and Societies*.

www.workliferesearch.org/

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MANUFACTURING

Cash Register Ribbons and Stationery	<i>What is the point of running your own company if you cannot enjoy taking time off - or trust others to run it in your absence ?</i>
Design, Printing & New Media	<i>Flexible working is the plus point that keeps me as an owner-manager rather than an employee.</i>
Fabrication, Welding, Machining, Special Purpose Machines	<i>To date, my position has been Managing Director/Senior Partner, but in order to improve my work/life balance, [I] have appointed another as MD and become Chairman/ Financial Director. It is the new MD who now has the work/life problem !</i>
High-tech Contemporary Textiles	<i>Flexible working ensures public services - such as electricity/water/heating - are available at low price points during off-peak working hours. Working off-peak hours reduces service bills/costs.</i>
Labelling For Cosmetics & Toiletry Industries	<i>Running a business, at any level, requires a substantial investment in time, particularly in today's global market. If you're not prepared for that commitment, then it is probably not for you.</i>
Manufacture & Installation of Steel Doorsets	<i>As a 69-year old owner-manager, I do 3 days/week while the junior management finds its feet. My son will take over from the current MD in a year or so when the MD will work part-time in my place.</i>
Manufacture Diving Suits	<i>Flexible working keeps you interested and focussed in my opinion.</i>
Pipework Fabrication	<i>Everybody is different. You need to adapt your time to what is going on around you.</i>
Pneumatic Connectors/ Valves	<i>It is vital to be available for contact by office personnel when working from home, in order to ensure seamless customer service and to avoid the perception of 'taking it easy' !</i>
Precision Engineering	<i>Owner-managers work 40/50 hours a week and spend their leisure time thinking about work.</i>

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BUSINESS SERVICES

Architect	<i>Sole practitioner - very content.</i>
Audit Accountancy and Taxation	<i>Working before 9:00 am is the key to staying 'on top' of the job. Once the phone starts ringing the battle is lost !</i>
Business & Marketing Consultancy	<i>As an owner-manager of a project-based small business, flexible working is a joke. If I have to work, I work 110%; if I don't, I work 120% to get work. It's a non-issue for survival businesses.</i>
Chartered Accountants	<i>We adopted flexible working and the biggest impact was that staff became aware of every minute worked. They were then less likely to work the extra 15 to 30 minutes to finish a job. Staff conditions improved and they appreciate flexible working, but it cost us more as employers. Some staff do try and abuse it but generally the system works well.</i>
E-learning, Market Research, Event Management	<i>As joint owner-manager with a husband, it's very difficult to get away from work and work issues/ discussion areas. Very stressful.</i>
Insurance Brokers	<i>Pressures running a business have increased significantly and whilst my personal goal was a reduction in hours, this has been impossible - largely due to increased regulation (Health & Safety / FSA / Employment Law).</i>
Legal and Debt Recovery Services	<i>I'd rather work to live, than live to work !</i>
Management Consultancy	<i>It is important for me to have staff I can trust to manage their own time to do the job well. I don't check that they've put in the hours - only that they have done what was required of them. They seem to appreciate this and probably work longer hours than they should.</i>
Recruitment	<i>I've always believed owner-managers should lead by example. I know when this does not happen the workforce feel 'why should I bother when they can't' !</i>
Recruitment - Contract & Permanent	<i>We are a service industry and need to be at our clients' call. We open at 7:00 am and close at 6:00 pm. [We have] Duty mobiles at weekend. We need to do this to stay in business.</i>
Recruitment Agency	<i>Having a 4-day week (8-6 x 4 = 40 hours so not part-time) and a 3-day weekend is incredibly liberating ! I have convinced many other owner-managers in my sector to do it.</i>

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BUSINESS SERVICES continued

Textile Marketing

We find the concept of 'Work-Life Balance' difficult to comprehend. One's livelihood depends upon an income which has to be earned, and in the case of most small private companies than means 'Hard Graft'. Yet this trendy term suggests that work can become subsidiary to leisure time and this cannot be a serious option. It is inconceivable that Owner / Managers can consider what is in effect part-time working. The first priority is to do the job, not plan an early getaway !

Anyone believing that they can run a business by doing as little as possible is living in a fool's paradise !

RETAIL & DISTRIBUTION

Dentist

In my opinion flexible working hours also had to be seen from a customer service point of view. As a dentist I have to adapt to when my patients can come. 9 am to 5 pm is not easy for some of them.

Dress Fabrics, Wools & Haberdashery

Nice idea - but never totally guaranteed as the buck stops with the boss. If others can't do it, you have to, and cancel plans in order to keep your business running on a day to day basis.

Electronic Equipment & Components

You are the boss and therefore should be able to set the agenda. All work and no play really does make Jack a very dull, stressed, unfit and generally unhappy boy !

Garage Services & Car Sales

I think the type of business dictates whether flexible working hours would be helpful or not.

Hardware and Pet Store

As a retailer I am obliged to have set opening hours. Flexible working for either myself or staff would have to include the ability to see into the future. When will the busiest times be ?

Health Foods and Herbal Remedies

Orders from the Internet are a very important part of our business. Logging into the system from home and printing off orders at work allows staff to start work immediately rather than wasting time printing orders.

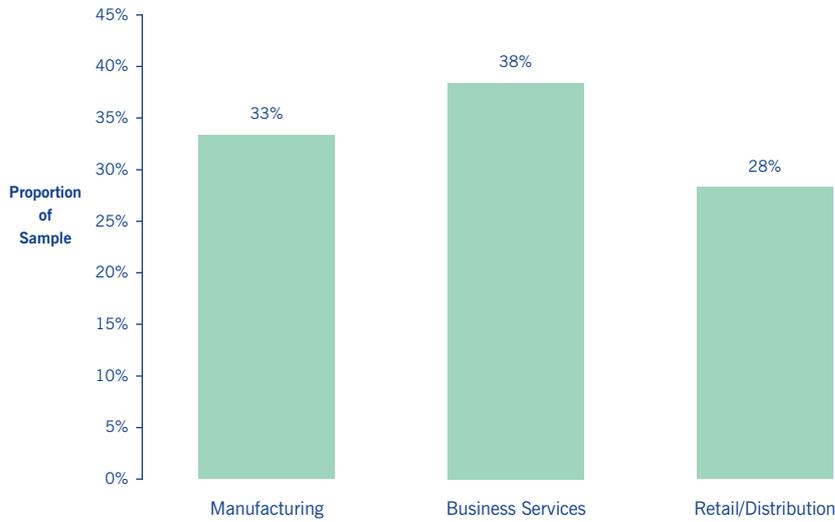
Tank Container Haulage

Government Red Tape is making it harder to be self-employed and stifling growth and creativity.

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**Figure 15 - Profile Of Sample:
Respondents By Industrial Sector**



APPENDIX 1 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

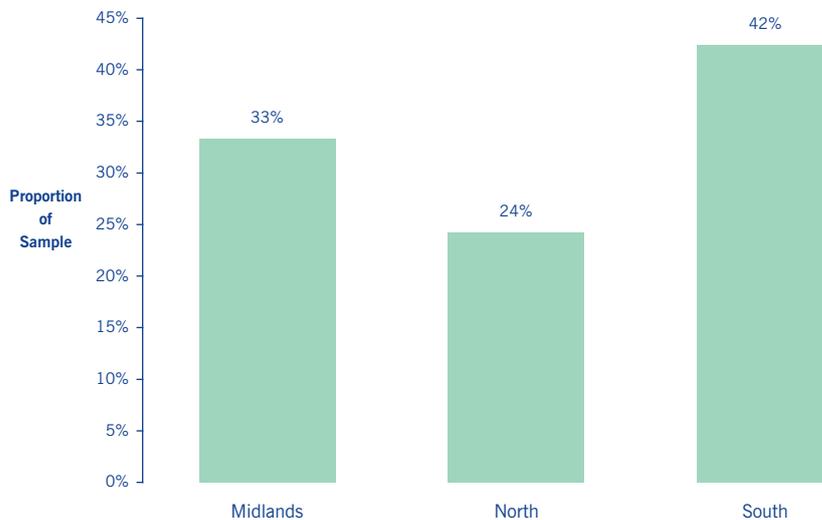
As an aid to the interpretation of the various figures (histograms), we have included some further information about the firms responding to this survey.

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 16 - Profile Of Sample:
Respondents By Region**



**Figure 17 - 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 business services (38%, compared with 38% in manufacturing for the previous report), see **Figure 15**.

The South region has the largest representation, with 42% of the sample's respondents (unchanged), see **Figure 16**.

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 17**.

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 (71%, compared with 65% previously).

Abbreviation of questionnaire text

It should be noted that, for reasons of space and, hopefully, clarity, questions and response options are sometimes abbreviated in the report text and the accompanying figures. The exact wording used is shown in the questionnaire appendix.

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Small Enterprise Research Report OWNER-MANAGER FLEXIBLE WORKING



Report No.10 - 2006 - Sponsored by Lloyds TSB

We are seeking the views of small firm owner-managers. 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..... M
Female F

2 Flexible working practices yourself – Do you feel, on balance, able to adopt flexible working practices personally (for example, by varying the hours, days or location for yourself) ?:

Tick ONE only

- Yes - to the extent that I wish to A
Or Yes - but I choose not to B
Or No - I am unable to do so C
Or No - but I am considering how I can make this possible in the future D

3 Indispensability – Generally speaking, do you feel that you are indispensable to the smooth running of your business ?:

- Yes..... A
No B

4 Working hours – How many hours a week do you work, on average ?:

Tick ONE only

- Less than 40 hours a week A
Or 40-50 hours..... B
Or 50-60 hours..... C
Or 60-70 hours..... D
Or More than 70 hours E

5 Attitudes towards flexible working for owner-managers – Please indicate where you agree with the following statements:

Tick all which apply

- I have no interest in working flexibly for myself A
Flexible working personally would interfere with the day-to-day running of the business B
Flexible working is the province of 'big business' C
It's more important to accommodate other staff's flexible working needs than my own D
I appreciate the benefits of working flexibly, but work pressures prevent me from doing so E
Flexible working for myself is a longer term goal, investment of time now will reap later rewards F
I practice what I preach and take advantage of flexible working opportunities where possible G
Working flexibly allows me to spend more time with my family H
Working flexibly allows me to pursue interests outside work or other business interests I
Working flexibly makes me focus my time better when at work J
Working flexibly allows me to manage the pressures of work K
My work is my passion L
I am satisfied with my 'work-life' balance M

6

Flexible working options for yourself
– Which of the following are available and actively adopted by you personally ?

Tick all which apply

	Avail- able 1	Adop- ted 2	
Home working.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
Other flexible working locations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
Flexitime.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
Job sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D
Part-time working.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	E
Staggered hours.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	F
Term-time only working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	G
Flexible shift working.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	H
Compressed hours.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I
Bring your kids to work days .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	J
Technology assistance, e.g., home broadband	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	K
Other (please state):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	L

7

Flexible working options for your staff
– Which of the following are available and actively adopted ?

Tick all which apply

	Avail- able 1	Adop- ted 2	
Home working.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A
Other flexible working locations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B
Flexitime.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C
Job sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D
Part-time working.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	E
Staggered hours.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	F
Term-time only working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	G
Flexible shift working.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	H
Compressed hours.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I
Bring your kids to work days .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	J
Technology assistance, e.g., home broadband	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	K
Other (please state):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	L

8

Flexible working barriers – Which of the following issues concern you most regarding flexible working for yourself ?

Tick all which apply

- Salary costs for staff to cover your time A
 - Required investment in technology B
 - Shortage of staff..... C
 - Disruption to day-to-day business continuity D
 - Customer service issues..... E
 - Time pressures
 - Existing external commitments
 - Other (please state): H
-

9

Future activities/interests – If a better ‘work-life’ balance were possible, which activities would you most like to pursue ?

Tick all which apply

- Do some form of voluntary work A
 - Go to theatre, cinema or art galleries B
 - Join a club or hobby group..... C
 - Learn a new skill such as a new language D
 - Play more sport or take up a new sport E
 - Read more F
 - Spend more time with friends and family G
 - Not applicable (already enjoy a satisfactory work-life balance) H
 - Other (please state): I
-

10

‘Flexible working for Owner-managers’ – If you have any strong views, especially if you feel that any aspect is not fully appreciated by other small businesses or by sections of the wider community, then please comment:

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