

FINDINGS FROM THE MANAGEMENT AND WELLBEING PRACTICES SURVEY

June 2023

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The technical report is available at: <https://www.niesr.ac.uk/projects/management-and-wellbeing-practices-survey>

Reporting conventions

The Management and Wellbeing Practices (MWP) survey is a survey of workplaces. A workplace refers to the activities of a single employer at a single set of premises (for example, a store of a supermarket, or a branch of a high street bank). **The terms establishment and workplace are used interchangeably in this report.** Head offices are included, but as workplaces in their own right.

Organisation refers to the broader organisation to which the workplace belongs, where it is part of a larger organisation (for a single independent workplace, the terms workplace and organisation are equivalent).

Interviews were conducted with the most senior manager at the workplace with responsibility for human resource issues, and they were asked to respond about their workplace, not the organisation as a whole. Throughout the report the terms “managers” or “workplace managers” are frequently used to refer to the respondent with whom the interview was conducted.

Differences by workplace size are frequently described in the report. Small workplaces are defined as those with fewer than 50 employees, medium-sized as having between 50 and 249 employees, and large as those with 250 or more employees.

Similarly, **workplaces are classified as public, private or third sector** on the basis of information on legal status available on the IDBR (the sample source for the survey). Third sector refers to workplaces identified on the IDBR as non-profit bodies or mutual associations; private sector includes companies (including building societies), sole proprietors and partnerships; public sector includes central government, local authorities and public corporations/nationalised bodies.

Industries have been identified using information available on the IDBR, using the Standard Industrial Classification 2007 (SIC 2007). Some individual industries are combined in reporting for consistency with the approach adopted in the 2013 WLB survey, broadly equivalent to SIC 2003. For ease of comparison, industries are described on the basis of the SIC 2003 classification in this report.

Differences that are reported between subgroups are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level, unless otherwise stated.

The report presents some comparisons with equivalent figures from the 2013 Work Life Balance (WLB) employer survey and the 2011 Workplace Employers Relations Survey (WERS). **Differences that are reported between the MWP survey and either of these surveys are also statistically significant at the 95 per cent level, unless otherwise stated.**

Row or column percentages may not always sum to 100 (also as a result of rounding).

Where multiple items appear in a single table, the lowest base that applies for any single row is reported. In tables and figures, “0” represents a finding of less than 0.5 per cent, including none.

Unless otherwise stated, **all reported items have been calculated to include non-response**. For reasons of conciseness, the percentage of non-response is not always explicitly shown but is always included within the base.

Executive summary

This report presents findings from the Management and Wellbeing Practices (MWP) survey.

The policy environment around flexible working, in-work support for parents and collective rights has changed substantially in recent years. The MWP survey was undertaken in late 2018 and early 2019 to provide evidence on how employers were responding to policy developments in these areas.

Clearly, employer practices have changed in many significant ways in the time since the survey was undertaken, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing widespread changes in working arrangements for many organisations and their employees. As this survey was conducted between 2018 and 2019, its findings act as an important baseline measure of employer practices and attitudes prior to the onset of the pandemic.

The survey was commissioned by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and undertaken by Kantar Public and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR).

The survey was conducted among a representative sample of 2,489 workplaces with five or more employees in Great Britain. Interviews were carried out with the most senior manager at the workplace responsible for human resource issues, with fieldwork taking place between September 2018 and February 2019.

Parental leave

- In just over one third (36 per cent) of all workplaces, at least one employee had taken maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey. In over one quarter (27 per cent), at least one employee had taken paternity leave in the two years prior to the survey.
- Just under one fifth (17 per cent) of workplaces offered maternity pay above the statutory minimum. The same proportion offered paternity pay above the statutory minimum. Almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of workplaces paying more than statutory maternity pay also paid more than statutory paternity pay.
- Almost three quarters of managers (73 per cent) were aware of Shared Parental Leave (SPL). Amongst these workplaces, four per cent had at least one employee who had taken SPL in the last two years. This was much more common among large workplaces, standing at almost two-fifths (37 per cent) among workplaces with 250 or more employees aware of SPL.
- Almost half (47 per cent) of workplace managers were satisfied with the government's SPL and Pay policy, while five per cent were dissatisfied. In workplaces where employees had taken SPL in the past two years 63 per cent of managers were satisfied with the policy.
- Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of unpaid parental

leave, but fewer (40 per cent) were aware that this right had been changed to increase the age of children covered from 5 to 18 years and to increase the length of leave available from 13 to 18 weeks.

- In 13 per cent of workplaces, at least one employee had taken unpaid parental leave in the two years prior to the survey. Employees took, on average, four weeks' leave.

Flexible working

- Managers' general attitudes towards work-life balance and flexible working appeared relatively similar to those observed in the 2013 WLB Survey.
- Almost all workplaces (96 per cent) offered at least one of the forms of flexible working included in the survey¹.
- The most commonly used flexible working arrangement was part-time working (75 per cent of workplaces had at least one employee working part-time), followed by reduced working hours (34 per cent) and flexi-time (34 per cent). Employees used some form of flexible working in over four fifths (86 per cent) of workplaces.
- Half (50 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of the extension of the right to request flexible working. Awareness was much higher in larger workplaces; almost nine in ten (87 per cent) managers in workplaces with 250 or more employees were aware.
- In around two-thirds (67 per cent) of workplaces, managers thought the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements had remained the same over the last five years, with one fifth (22 per cent), believing it had increased. Workplaces where managers were aware of the extension of the right to request flexible working were more likely to report an increase (27 per cent, compared with 16 per cent in workplaces where managers were not aware).
- More than three-fifths of workplace managers thought flexible working and leave arrangements had positive effects on employee motivation and commitment (63 per cent) and on employee relations (62 per cent). Around half thought there were positive effects on absenteeism (49 per cent) and productivity (48 per cent). In most of the remaining workplaces managers thought there were no effects on these aspects; few reported negative effects.
- Managers were slightly more likely to disagree that only parents and carers benefitted from flexible working (59 per cent in 2013 and 65 per cent in 2018/19), however, they were also less likely to agree that employees who work flexibly were just as likely to be promoted (73 per cent in 2013 and 68 per cent in 2018/19). In 2018/19, 26 per cent of employers judged that it was not their responsibility to help people balance their work with other aspects of their life (25 per cent in 2013).

¹ This included part-time working, working from home, reduced hours for a limited period, job-sharing, flexi-time, term-time working, compressed hours and annualised hours

Employee voice in the workplace

Union and non-union representation

- In 76 per cent of workplaces, managers agreed that they would rather consult directly with employees than with unions. This indicates no substantive change in preferences for direct consultation since 2011, when the figure stood at 79 per cent. Just over three-fifths (62 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace where employers preferred to consult directly with employees.
- Just under one fifth (17 per cent) of all workplaces had at least some union members, with around one third of these (5 per cent of all workplaces) having a majority of employees in union membership. In 2011, the percentage of workplaces with at least some members was higher (21 per cent), as was the percentage with a majority of employees in membership (10 per cent). The report presents both lower bound and upper bound estimates for the percentage of workplaces with a recognised union and union members, standing at 12 per cent and 17 per cent of workplaces respectively.
- If alternatively, the percentage of employees in a workplace with a recognised union and union members is considered, the lower bound estimate is 34 per cent and the upper bound 41 per cent. The upper bound estimates are very similar to those seen in 2011 (17 per cent and 43 per cent respectively); however, the lower bound estimates would imply a fall in the incidence of union recognition over this period. Five per cent of all workplaces reported having an on-site union representative. This represented a small decline from the figure of seven per cent in the 2011 WERS. As on-site union representatives are more common in larger workplaces, overall, 28 per cent of all employees worked in a workplace with a representative.
- Just over one in ten (11 per cent) workplaces had employees who were non-union representatives. Such representatives were more common in larger workplaces, such that 23 per cent of employees worked in a workplace with a non-union representative(s).
- The majority (85 per cent) of workplaces did not have either union or non-union representatives. Just one per cent of all workplaces had both union and non-union representatives; a further four per cent had a union representative only, while ten per cent had a non-union representative only.

Communicating with employees

- The vast majority of workplaces had some structured means of communicating with their staff. Over four fifths (86 per cent) had whole-workforce meetings, which took place on at least a monthly basis for three-fifths (62 per cent) of these workplaces.
- Team briefings took place in 77 per cent of workplaces. Among workplaces that had team briefings, in 77 per cent these happened on at least a monthly basis.
- More than three-fifths of workplaces communicated with employees through cascading information through the management chain (64 per cent), noticeboards or display screens (62 per cent), and regular use of all-staff emails (62 per cent). Just under half (45 per cent) of workplaces used company social media networks.

- Just over one in ten workplaces (12 per cent) had a consultative committee at the workplace. This was more common in larger workplaces. Overall, almost one third (30 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace with a consultative committee. Consultative committees, along with whole-workforce meetings and team briefings, had become more common since 2011, however, there appeared to be a continued narrowing of the agenda for consultative committees.
- Around one quarter (23 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of the government policy that organisations with more than 50 employees should inform and consult their employees about plans and decisions which affect the business and working conditions. A further third (32 per cent) were aware of the policy but not sure of the details. Forty-four per cent stated they were not aware and two per cent did not know.
- Just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of workplaces had an agreement in place setting out the process by which employees would be informed and consulted about the economic situation of the business or major changes in working conditions. In one per cent of workplaces without an agreement, there had been a request for such an agreement in the year prior to the survey. Among workplaces in organisations with 50 or more employees, this also stood at one per cent.

Consultation over redundancies

- Ten per cent of workplaces had made at least one employee redundant in the 12 months prior to the survey. In the vast majority (86 per cent) of workplaces where an employee had been made redundant, employees or their representatives had been consulted prior to making redundancies.
- Redundancy payments and criteria for selection were each discussed in around two-thirds (66 per cent) of consultations, with options for reducing the number of redundancies discussed in three-fifths (60 per cent).
- In three in ten workplaces (30 per cent) where a consultation over potential redundancies had taken place, the consultation had led to a change in managers' original proposals. In over half (56 per cent) there had been no changes as a result of the consultation, while the remaining 15 per cent of workplace managers did not know.

Dispute resolution procedures

- Around six in ten workplaces (61 per cent) had a formal procedure for dealing with collective disputes relating to health and safety. Just under half had a formal procedure for collective disputes relating to redundancy (47 per cent), to organisation of work (43 per cent) and pay and conditions (42 per cent).
- The majority (84 per cent) of workplaces had a formal procedure in place for dealing with individual grievances. Only five per cent of employees worked in a workplace without a formal procedure for dealing with individual grievances.
- Similarly, almost all workplaces (89 per cent) had a formal procedure for dealing with discipline and dismissals. Only three per cent of employees worked in a workplace with no such procedure.

- Almost all workplaces with grievance and disciplinary procedures provided employees with the right to appeal (95 per cent and 91 per cent respectively).
- Formal verbal warnings, and formal written warnings, were the most common forms of disciplinary sanctions. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 34 per cent of workplaces had issued formal verbal warnings and 29 per cent of workplaces had applied formal written warnings.

1. Introduction

This report presents findings from the Management and Wellbeing Practices (MWP) survey, undertaken in late 2018 and early 2019 to map employer practice in the areas of flexible working, in-work support for parents and workplace employee representation. This first chapter describes the background to the MWP Survey, outlines the methodology and provides an overview of the content of the remainder of the report.

1.1 Introduction to the report

The policy environment around flexible working, in-work support for parents and collective rights has changed substantially in recent years. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) commissioned the MWP Survey to provide up-to-date, nationally representative evidence on employer practice in these areas, contributing to the evaluation of existing policies and informing their future development.

A key principle of the Industrial Strategy (HM Government, 2017) is that everyone should be able to access and enjoy 'good work'. This includes a focus on widening participation in the labour market. The provision of a right to Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Pay (SPP) in 2015 acknowledged that the imbalance of these rights in favour of mothers could be discouraging some women from sustaining their careers and some fathers from spending more time with their young children, thereby indirectly contributing to inequality in the workplace. By giving parents more flexibility in how they share the care of their child in the first year, the provisions aim to enable both parents to retain a strong link with the labour market.

In relation to flexible working, increasing recognition of the importance of balancing work and personal life led to the extension of the right to request flexible working. Previously available only to employees with caring responsibilities, the right was extended to cover all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service as part of the Children and Families Act 2014. The government's expectation was that this extension – supported by an Acas Code of Practice (Acas, 2014) – would help deliver a net benefit to employers through higher productivity, lower labour turnover and reduced absenteeism, as well as aiding labour market participation and inclusion more generally (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011).

There have also been notable changes in the area of collective rights, with the introduction of the Trade Union Act 2016, particularly in respect of balloting arrangements and, in the public sector, use of check-off and the provision of facility time. The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices in 2017 also highlighted the importance of employee voice in the workplace, recommending the extension of the Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) Regulations (BEIS, 2017). Legislation has subsequently been amended to reduce the percentage of the workforce needing to request a formal ICE agreement from ten per cent to two per cent²; this came into effect from April 2020.

² As part of the Employment Rights (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/731/contents/made>

The MWP survey was undertaken in late 2018 and early 2019 to provide evidence on how employers were responding to policy developments in these areas. Comparisons are drawn throughout the report with the findings from earlier surveys on these topics, specifically the 2013 Work-Life Balance Employer Survey (WLB) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2014) and the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) (Van Wanrooy *et al.*, 2013). Clearly, employer practices have changed in many significant ways in the time since the survey was undertaken, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing widespread changes in working arrangements for many organisations and their employees. The findings from the survey therefore also provide an important opportunity to assess employer practices and attitudes prior to the onset of the pandemic.

1.2 Survey methods

This section provides a brief overview of the survey methodology; further details are given in the accompanying [technical report](#).

The MWP Survey was undertaken by Kantar Public and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR). The survey was conducted among a representative sample of 2,489 workplaces with five or more employees in Great Britain. Interviews were conducted between September 2018 and February 2019 with the most senior manager at the workplace responsible for human resource issues.

The population for the survey was all workplaces in Great Britain with at least five employees, across all Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) major groups, apart from SIC Sections T and U (Activities of households as employers and extraterritorial organisations and bodies). This is effectively the same population used for the 2013 WLB Survey and the 2011 WERS, although WERS did not cover workplaces in Agriculture, forestry and fishing or Mining and quarrying (SIC Sections A and B). A cut-off of at least five employees was adopted for consistency with the WLB Survey and the 2011 WERS; workplaces with fewer than five employees are much less likely to have many of the formal policies and procedures that are of interest here.

The sample for the MWP Survey was drawn from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), which is held and maintained by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The IDBR is widely acknowledged to be the most comprehensive register of businesses available and is the same sampling frame used for the 2013 WLB Survey and the 2011 WERS.

Establishments were selected at random within specified size and industry groups. Larger workplaces and certain industry sectors were over-sampled to ensure sufficient numbers of workplaces; allowing subgroup analysis by workplace size and industry. Oversampling larger workplaces also increases the precision of employment-weighted estimates. This oversampling is corrected for in the analysis through the use of weights (discussed in further detail below).

Interviews were conducted with the most senior manager at the workplace with responsibility for human resource issues. Interviews were conducted via telephone; as was the case for the WLB survey series. However, this was a departure from WERS, where interviews were carried out face-to-face. It is important to bear this in mind when making comparisons between findings from the MWP Survey and findings from WERS. The change in mode meant that some questions had to change format, switching from sometimes long lists of response options presented on a showcard to shorter, often yes/ no questions. This could potentially lead to an

increase in affirmative responses. Issues of comparability are discussed when describing the relevant questions in the report.

The questionnaire consisted of eight substantive sections:

- Screener and introduction
- Maternity and paternity rights
- Shared Parental Leave
- Other parental leave
- Childcare and bereavement leave
- Flexible working
- Collective rights
- Sources of information/use of external sources of HR knowledge

Where possible, efforts were made to ensure consistency with key questions in the WLB and WERS series, to allow for comparisons over time. However, some changes were necessary in order to reflect policy developments, ensure interviews were not overly long, and (in the case of some questions previously asked in WERS) accommodate the change in survey mode. The average interview length was 29 minutes.

Fieldwork for the survey took place between September 2018 and February 2019. A total of 11,141 cases were issued for fieldwork; of which 6,763 were deemed eligible³. Overall, 2,489 interviews were achieved, representing a response rate of 37 per cent.

Weights are applied to correct for the variation in sampling probabilities and also for non-response. The weighted data are representative of the population of workplaces in Great Britain with five or more employees. An employment-based weight is also used in some instances, so that in addition to providing estimates of the percentage of workplaces with particular arrangements or characteristics, it is also possible to explore the percentage of employees working in these workplaces. Workplace-weighted estimates indicate the situation of an average workplace, but it is important to bear in mind that most workplaces are small in size. Large workplaces, which are few in number, employ a disproportionate share of all employees, and so employment-weighted estimates give a better indication of the situation experienced by the average employee.

1.3 Overview of remainder of the report

The remainder of this report is divided into two substantive parts.

The first part focuses on arrangements for parental leave and flexible working, and

³ For example, some cases are deemed ineligible (or not useable), because the workplace may have closed, or has less than five employees, among other reasons.

comprises two chapters:

- **Chapter 2: Parental Leave:** explores maternity, paternity and adoption leave, shared parental leave, other parental leave, childcare provision, time off for emergencies and bereavement leave.
- **Chapter 3: Flexible working:** explores awareness of the extension of the right to request flexible working, availability and take-up of flexible working, barriers to provision of flexible working, requests for flexible working, and employer attitudes.

The second part of this report focuses on voice in the workplace, comprising five chapters:

- **Chapter 4: Union and non-union representation:** explores prevalence of union and non-union representation and employer attitudes
- **Chapter 5: Communicating with employees:** reports on direct communications with employees, consultative committees, and awareness and prevalence of Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) agreements.
- **Chapter 6: Consultation over redundancies:** covers incidence, content and outcomes of redundancy consultation
- **Chapter 7: Grievance and disciplinary procedures:** exploring formal procedures for collective disputes, prevalence and form of grievance and disciplinary procedures, and disciplinary sanctions.
- **Chapter 8: Relations between managers and employees:** reports on the incidence of industrial action as well as managers' views on relations between management and employees.

Throughout the report, results are presented by key breaks such as workplace size and sector. Where possible, comparisons are also made with findings from the 2013 WLB survey and from the 2011 WERS.

Part 1: Parental leave & flexible working

2. Parental leave

This chapter explores parental leave arrangements, including maternity, paternity and adoption leave. It discusses maternity and paternity pay and provision of benefits beyond the statutory requirements. It also considers Shared Parental Leave, as well as unpaid parental leave, including awareness of these rights. Finally, the chapter reports on help with childcare, time off for emergencies involving dependents and employer policies on bereavement leave for parents.

Key findings

In 36 per cent of workplaces, at least one employee had taken maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey. In 27 per cent of workplaces, at least one employee had taken paternity leave in the two years prior to the survey.

Just under one fifth (17 per cent) of workplaces offered maternity pay above the statutory minimum. The same proportion offered paternity pay above the statutory minimum. Almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of workplaces paying more than statutory maternity pay also paid more than statutory paternity pay.

In two per cent of workplaces, an employee had taken adoption leave in the two years prior to the survey.

Managers in around three-quarters (73 per cent) of workplaces were aware of Shared Parental Leave (SPL). In four per cent of workplaces where managers were aware of SPL, at least one employee had taken SPL in the two years prior to the survey. This was much more common among large workplaces, standing at almost two-fifths (37 per cent) among workplaces with 250 or more employees aware of SPL. Overall, three per cent of all workplaces reported at least one employee taking SPL in the two years prior to the survey.

Managers in almost half (47 per cent) of workplaces were satisfied with the government's policy of SPL and Pay, while five per cent were dissatisfied. In workplaces where an employee had taken SPL in the past two years, more than three fifths (63 per cent) were satisfied.

Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of unpaid parental leave, but fewer (around 40 per cent) were aware that this right had been extended to increase the age of children covered and to increase the length of leave available.

In 13 per cent of workplaces, at least one employee had taken parental leave in the two years prior to the survey. On average, those employees took four weeks' leave.

2.1 Maternity leave

2.1.1 Take-up of maternity leave

In 36 per cent of workplaces with five or more employees, at least one employee had taken maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey (Figure 2.1). In 58 per cent no employees had taken maternity leave, while in the remaining five per cent, the number taking maternity leave was not known⁴. When considered in terms of employees, seven per cent of all female employees in workplaces with at least five employees had taken maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey. This stood at eight per cent in the 2013 WLB survey⁵.

There were no noticeable differences in the percentage of female employees taking maternity leave by workplace size (seven per cent in both medium-sized and large workplaces, and eight per cent in small workplaces). However, medium-sized and large workplaces were more likely to have had at least one employee take maternity leave, unsurprisingly, given their greater number of employees overall. Around three-fifths (62 per cent) of workplaces with 250 or more employees, and three-quarters (74 per cent) of workplaces with between 50 and 249 employees had had at least one employee take maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey, compared with 32 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees.

Some differences were observed by industry (Figure 2.1)⁶. The highest prevalence of at least one employee taking maternity leave was found in the Education and Health and social work sectors, where this stood at 62 per cent and 57 per cent respectively. Both sectors have a higher than average share of female employees (83 per cent each, compared with an average of 54 per cent)⁷.

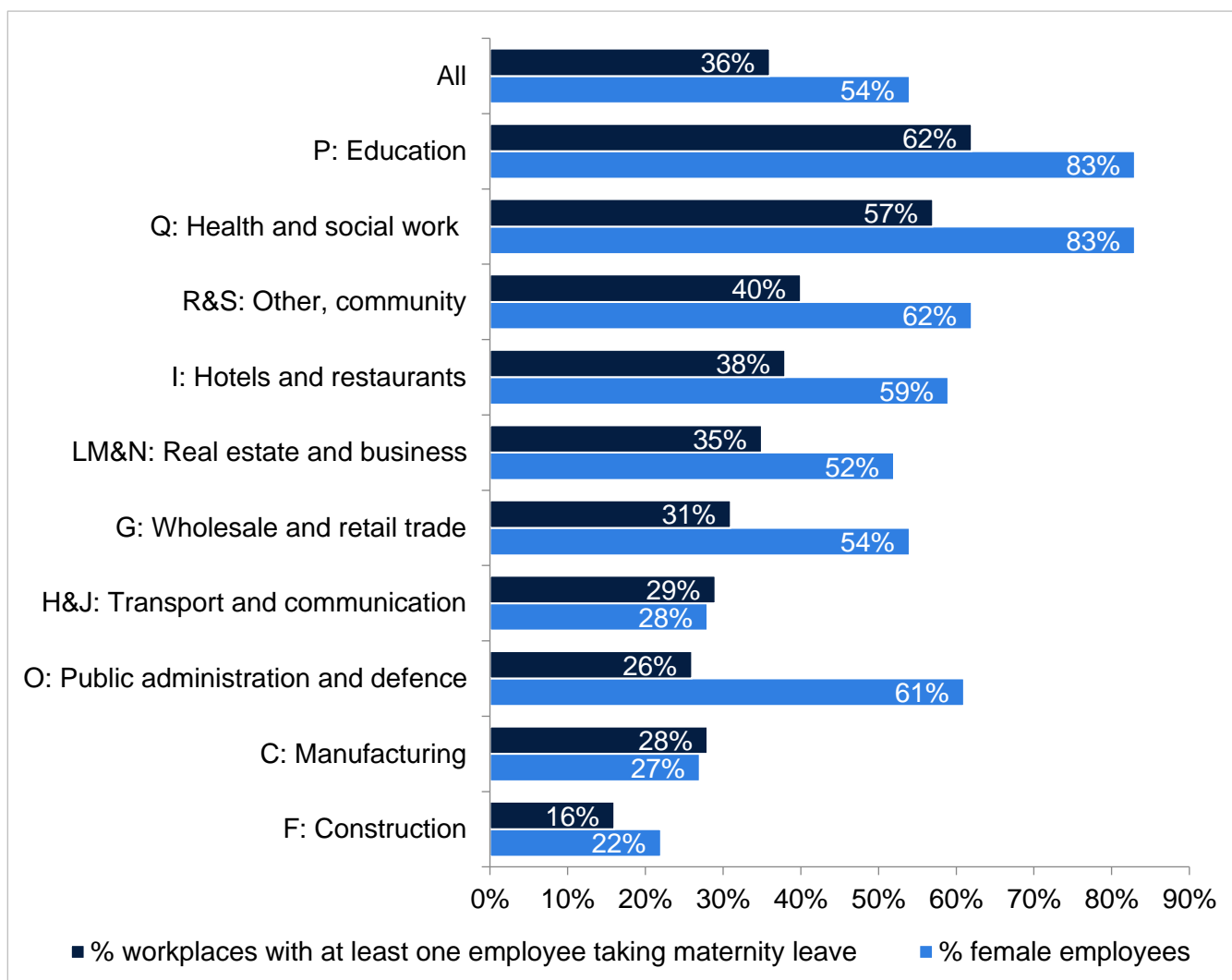
⁴ It is not possible to say with certainty whether these respondents did not know if any employees had taken maternity leave, or if they did not know how many had done so. Thus the figure of 36 per cent could be considered a lower bound estimate of the percentage of workplaces where at least one employee had taken maternity leave in the past two years.

⁵ This estimate was generated directly from the WLB data rather than relying on the figure published in the 2013 WLB employer survey, so that estimates for both surveys were calculated on a comparable basis.

⁶ Figures are not shown for all industries due to low sample sizes for some sectors (see reporting conventions for further details).

⁷ Note that there was also considerable variation in the percentage of workplaces where this was not known; this was highest for Public administration and defence (23 per cent), followed by Health and social work (10 per cent). In all other sectors non-response was less than 10 per cent.

Figure 2.1: Per cent workplaces where any employee took maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey, and female employment share, by industry



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

2.1.2 Maternity pay

In 2018/19, most employees on maternity leave were entitled to at least 90 per cent of their weekly pay for six weeks and £145.18 per week or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower, for the next 33 weeks. To qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) at the time of the survey, employees had to earn on average at least £118 a week, give the correct notice, give proof of pregnancy and have worked for the current employer continuously for at least 26 weeks⁸. If employees on maternity leave are not eligible for SMP, they may be eligible for maternity allowance for 39 weeks⁹.

In 89 per cent of workplaces where at least one employee took maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey, all had received SMP. In a further three per cent, at least some had received SMP. In three per cent none had received SMP and the remaining five per cent were

⁸ Further details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/eligibility>

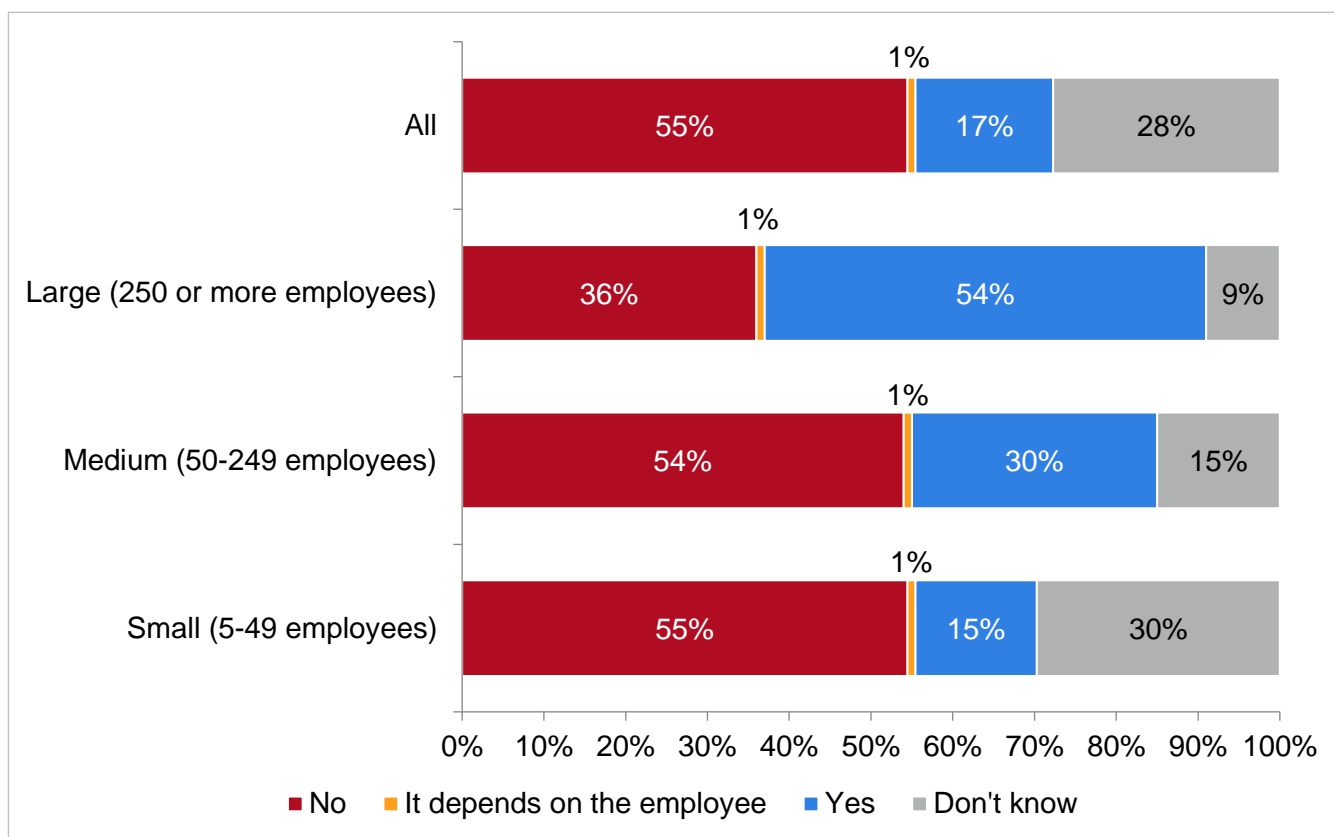
⁹ Further details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance/eligibility>

unsure. These figures were broadly similar to those observed in the 2013 WLB survey¹⁰. In 84 per cent of medium and 79 per cent of large workplaces, all employees taking maternity leave in the past two years had received SMP, compared with 91 per cent in small workplaces.

Respondents were also asked if they offered female employees taking maternity leave additional pay, beyond SMP. Just under one fifth (17 per cent) of workplaces paid more than the statutory minimum, with this proportion being much higher among large workplaces (54 per cent, compared to 30 per cent in medium-sized workplaces and 15 per cent in workplaces with fewer than 50 employees) (Figure 2.2).

Around half (55 per cent) of workplaces did not pay more than the statutory minimum, with a further 28 per cent not knowing if they did, and one per cent saying it depended on the employee. In comparison, in 2013, 13 per cent of workplaces offered more than the statutory minimum to at least some employees, while 67 per cent stated they did not, and the remaining 19 per cent were unsure¹¹.

Figure 2.2: Maternity benefits beyond Statutory Maternity Pay, by workplace size, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

¹⁰ In 2013, 92 per cent of workplaces where at least one employee had taken maternity leave some had received SMP (and in 85 per cent all had done so); in four per cent none had received SMP, and the remaining four per cent were unsure.

¹¹ The increase in the percentage of workplaces offering more than the statutory minimum between 2013 and 2018 is statistically significant, but it should be noted that there was no “it depends on the employee” response option in 2013.

Public sector workplaces were more likely to pay more than the statutory minimum, with 41 per cent doing so, compared with 15 per cent in the private sector and 16 per cent in the third sector. There was also variation by industry. Workplaces in Public Administration and Defence were the most likely to pay more, with 55 per cent doing so. In comparison, just 11 per cent of workplaces in the Hotels and Restaurants sector paid more than the minimum.

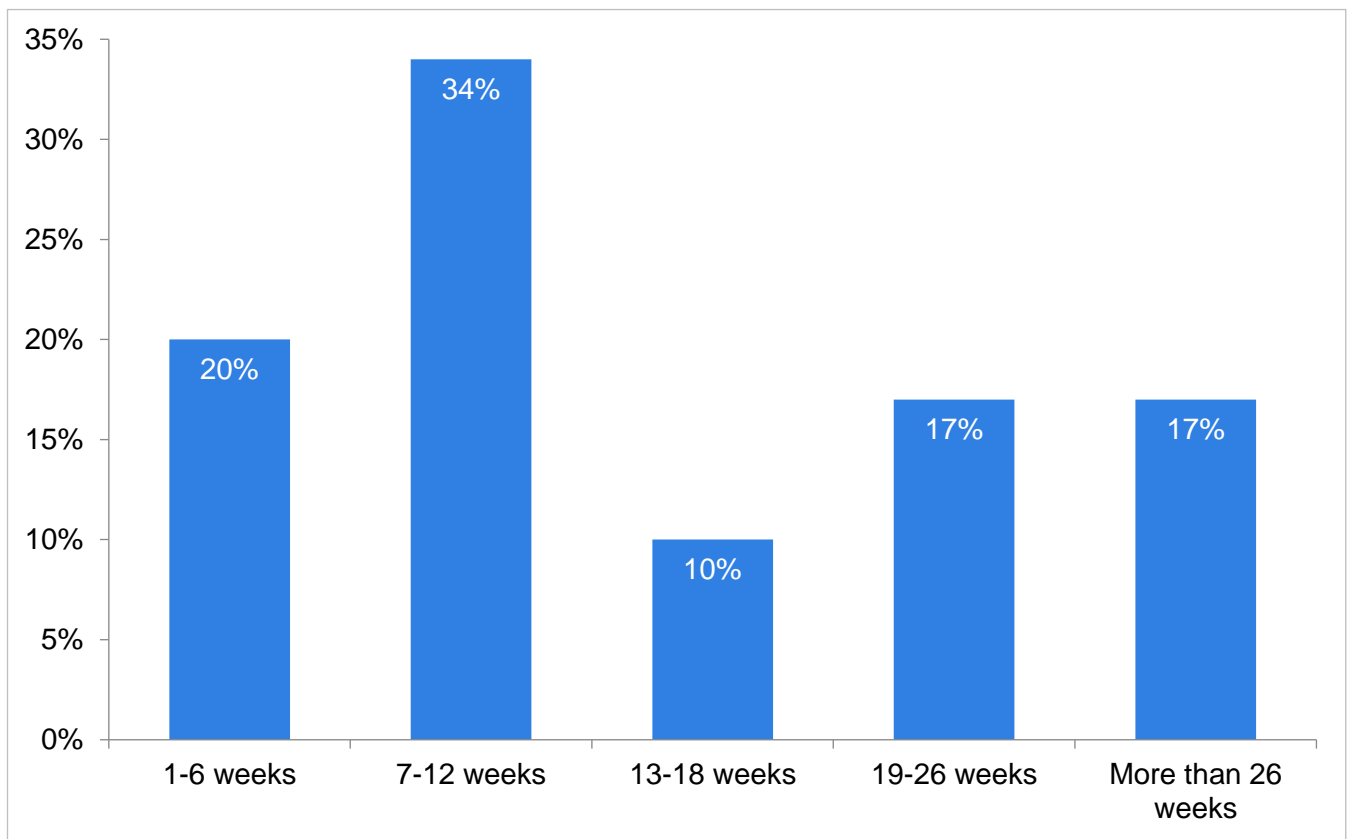
Those employers who provided maternity benefits beyond SMP were asked what percentage of normal pay they offered and for how long mothers were paid this. Managers in almost half (49 per cent) of these workplaces did not know what percentage of normal pay they offered. Among those workplaces where this was known, just over two-thirds (69 per cent) paid full pay, and a further 14 per cent paid 90 per cent of normal pay. One in ten (10 per cent) paid 50 per cent of normal pay¹².

Just over half (53 per cent) of employers offering more than SMP did not know how long they offered this for. Among those workplaces where this was known, on average, employers reported paying this for a 17 week period. More than half (54 per cent) paid this for up to 12 weeks, with a further 28 per cent paying this for between 13 and 26 weeks and 17 per cent paying for more than 26 weeks (Figure 2.3). The average (mean) number of weeks this was paid for stood at 19 weeks in the private sector, compared with 14 weeks in the public sector and 15 weeks in the third sector.

Figure 2.4 shows the number of weeks for which enhanced pay was offered, by the normal rate of pay provided. Among those offering 100 per cent of normal pay, 14 per cent were doing so for up to 6 weeks, with a further 26 per cent doing so for 7-12 weeks. Eight per cent were offering this for more than 26 weeks.

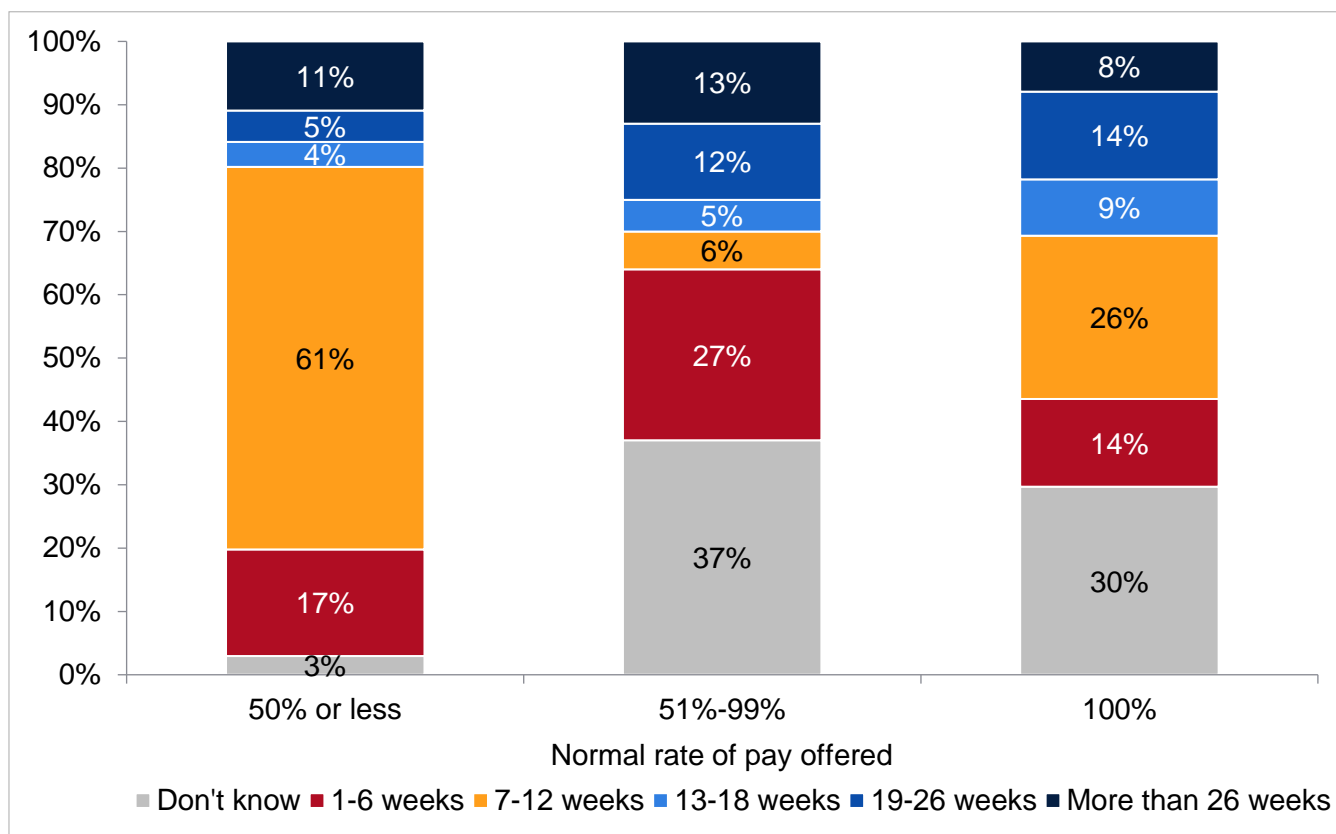
¹² As SMP entitles employees on maternity leave to 90 per cent of their weekly pay for six weeks, the implication here is that employers who reported paying 90 per cent of weekly pay, or less, were doing so beyond the initial six weeks. A substantial proportion (65 per cent) of these employers did not know how long they provided additional pay for, but eight per cent did report doing so for six weeks or less, which indicates that not all of these workplaces were genuinely offering more than the statutory minimum.

Figure 2.3: Number of weeks of enhanced maternity pay, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees offering more than the statutory minimum for maternity pay and for whom the number of weeks this was paid was known (455 workplaces).

Figure 2.4: Number of weeks of enhanced maternity pay, by percentage of normal pay offered, per cent workplaces



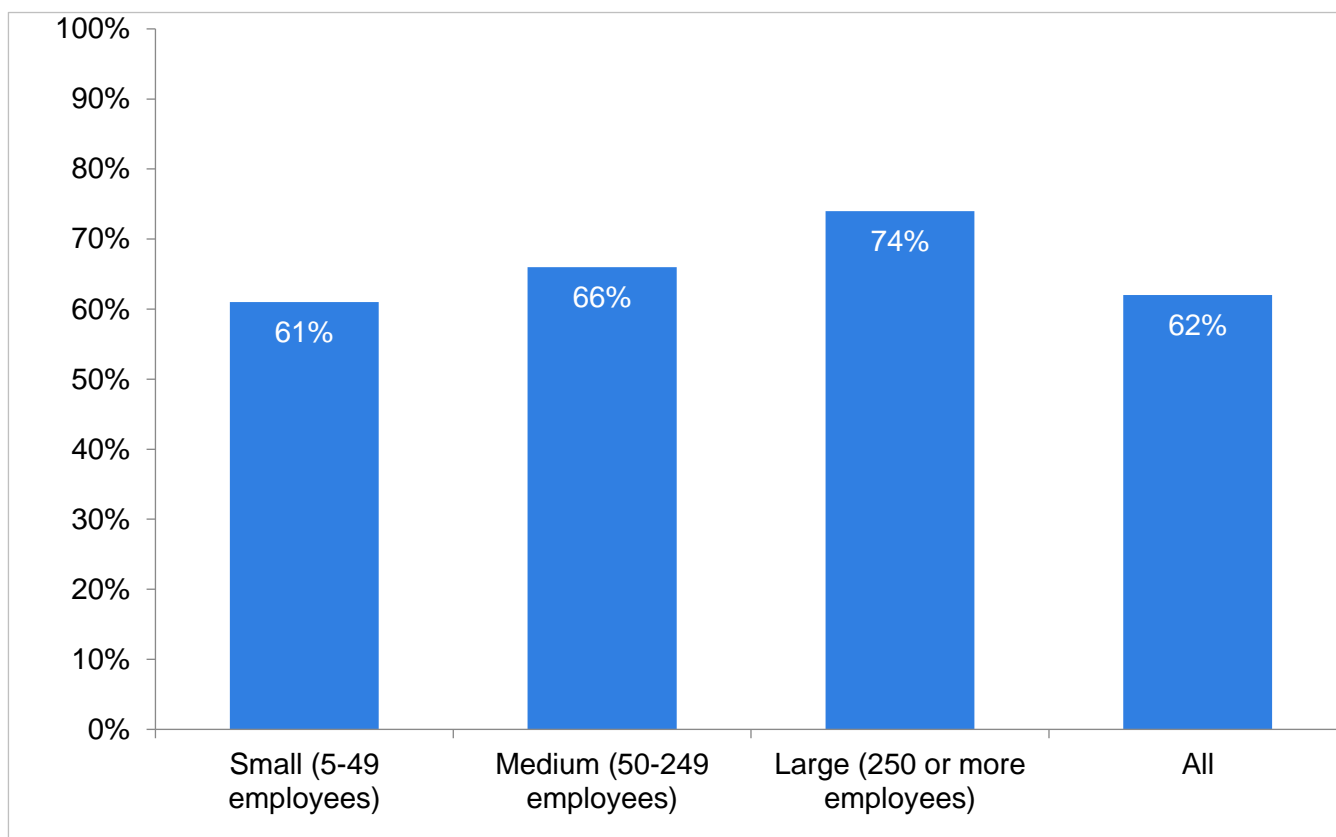
Base: all workplaces with five or more employees offering more than the statutory minimum for maternity pay and for whom the number of weeks this was paid was known (455 workplaces).

Employers are able to reclaim at least some of the cost of paying out SMP from HMRC. Respondents who stated that at least one employee had taken maternity leave in the past two years were asked whether they were aware of this entitlement. In around three-fifths (62 per cent) of workplaces where at least one employee had taken maternity leave in the past two years, managers were aware they could reclaim the costs of paying out SMP¹³. Awareness was highest in large workplaces; with 74 per cent aware, compared with 66 per cent in medium-sized workplaces and 61 per cent in small workplaces (Figure 2.5). Awareness was highest among third sector workplaces (78 per cent aware), followed by private sector workplaces (63 per cent), and lowest among public sector workplaces (48 per cent).

Awareness also varied by industry; 70 per cent or more were aware in workplaces in Manufacturing (77 per cent), Real estate and business (73 per cent), Other Community (71 per cent) and Transport and communication (72 per cent), compared with around half in Wholesale and Retail trade (52 per cent) and Education (52 per cent).

¹³ 35 per cent were not aware and the remaining three per cent did not know.

Figure 2.5: Managers aware that costs of statutory maternity pay can be reclaimed from HMRC, by workplace size, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees where at least one employee took maternity leave in the two years prior to the survey (1,247 workplaces).

2.2 Paternity leave

2.2.1 Take-up of paternity leave

In 30 per cent of workplaces with at least one male employee, at least one had taken paternity leave in the two years prior to the survey^{14,15}.

Overall, five per cent of all male employees within workplaces of at least five employees had taken paternity leave in the two years prior to the survey. This stood at five per cent in the public sector, private sector and third sector. There was also no variation by workplace size.

Workplaces in the Manufacturing, Transport and Communications and Education sectors, were the most likely to have had at least one employee take paternity leave in the two years prior to the survey (Figure 2.6). While take-up of paternity leave was similar in these three industries,

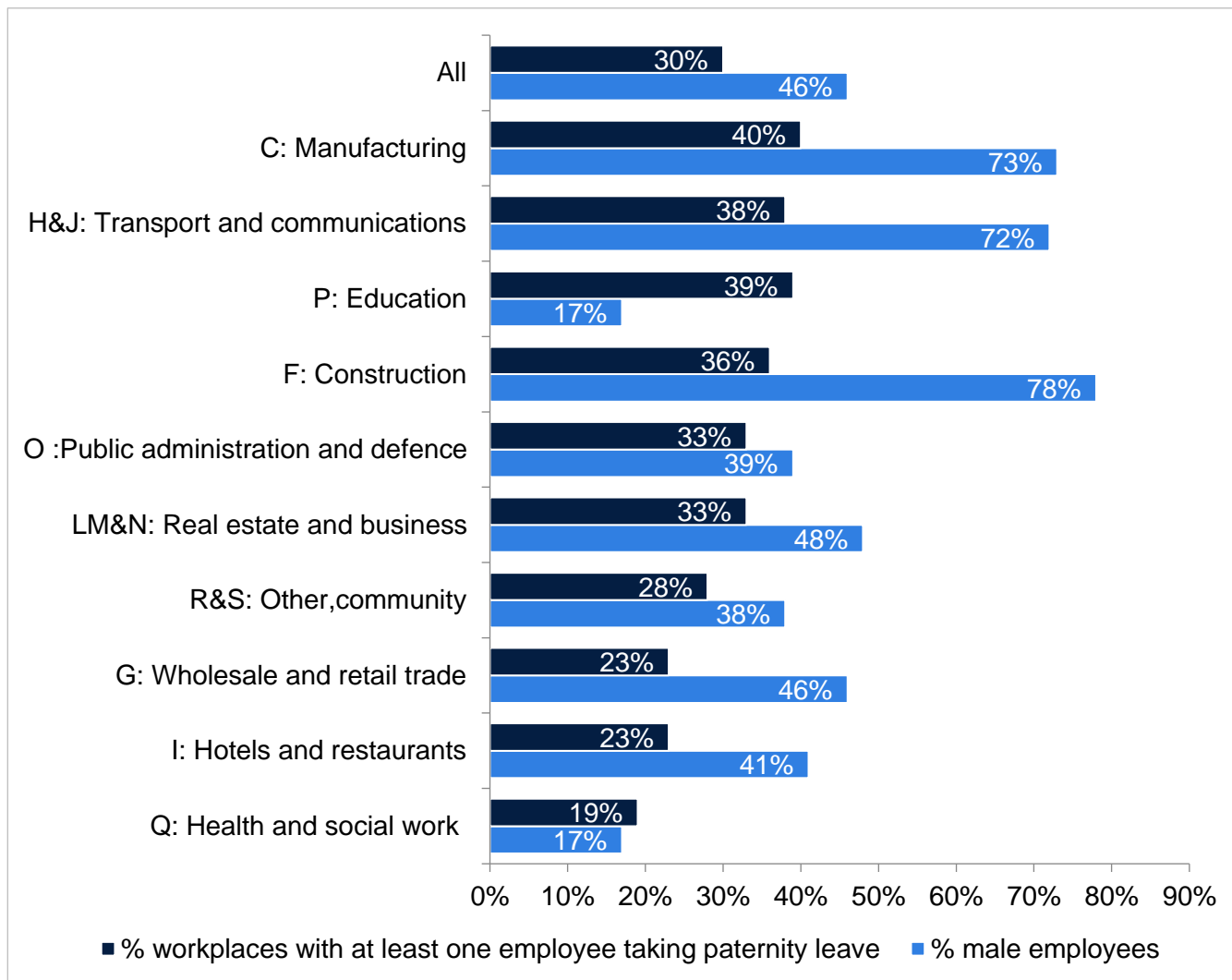
¹⁴ The 2013 WLB employer survey indicated that 36 per cent of workplaces had experienced a male employee “taking time off around the birth of a child” in the two years prior to the survey, however, this is not directly comparable, as the MWP Survey asked specifically about employees taking paternity leave.

¹⁵ This is equivalent to 27 per cent of all workplaces.

the Education sector has a much lower proportion of male employees.

Workplaces in the Health and Social Work sector were least likely to have had an employee take paternity leave in the past two years (19 per cent of workplaces), although this sector also had fewer male employees than the average.

Figure 2.6: Per cent workplaces where any employee took paternity leave in the two years prior to the survey, and male employment share, by industry



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees and at least some male employees (2,331 workplaces).

2.2.2 Paternity pay

In 2018/19, most employees on paternity leave were entitled to Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) of £145.18 per week or 90 per cent of their average weekly earnings, whichever is lower, for two weeks. In order to be eligible for SPP, the employee must be either a father, a husband/partner of the mother (or adopter), the child’s adopter or an intended parent (if surrogacy arrangements were made) and they must be employed up to the date the child is born, earn at least £118 a week within an 8 week period, have been continuously employed by the same employer for at least 26 weeks by the 15th week before the baby is born, give the correct notice, take time off to look after the child or partner and be responsible for the child’s

upbringing¹⁶. In most workplaces (81 per cent) where at least one employee had taken paternity leave in the two years prior to the survey, all had received SPP. In a further three per cent at least some had received SPP¹⁷.

There was some variation by workplace size and sector. In 11 per cent of small workplaces, no employees had been paid SPP, compared with five per cent of medium-sized workplaces and four per cent of large workplaces. One in ten private sector workplaces (10 per cent) had not paid SPP, compared with seven per cent of public sector and six per cent of third sector workplaces. In some cases, employees may not have been eligible for SPP. However, it is also possible that some respondents stated that they did not pay SPP as they instead offered additional pay. Indeed, more than half (54 per cent of those who did not pay SPP stated later in the questionnaire that they offered more than the statutory minimum. For the remainder, it is not clear whether their employees did not meet the qualifying conditions to be eligible to receive SPP, or whether qualifying employees were not paid their statutory entitlement.

All employers, regardless of whether any employees had taken paternity leave in the past two years, were asked if they offered employees taking paternity leave additional pay beyond the statutory requirement. Just under one fifth (17 per cent) of workplaces offered additional pay, while more than half (57 per cent) did not. A further one per cent stated that this depended on the employee, while the remaining quarter (25 per cent) did not know if additional pay would be offered (Figure 2.7).

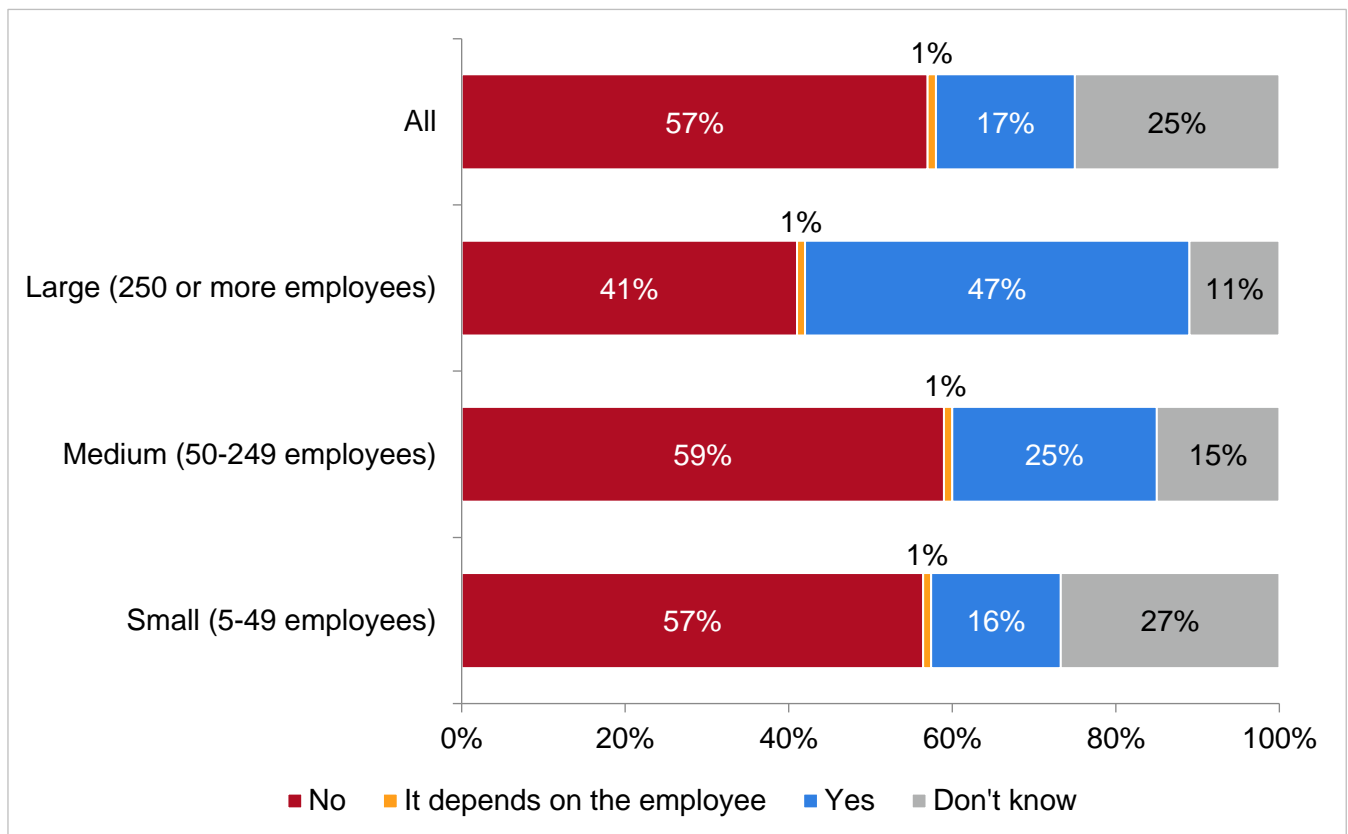
These figures varied by workplace size, with larger establishments more likely than small and medium-sized workplaces to pay above the statutory minimum (Figure 2.7); almost half (47 per cent) of workplaces with 250 or more employees did so compared with one quarter (25 per cent) of medium-sized workplaces and 16 per cent of small workplaces.

The likelihood also varied by industry and sector. Workplaces in Public Administration and Defence (44 per cent) were most likely to offer pay above the statutory minimum, while workplaces in the Health and Social Work and Hotels and Restaurants sectors, were least likely to do so (nine per cent for both sectors). While almost one third (31 per cent) of employers in the public sector offered benefits beyond the minimum, this proportion was much lower in the private and third sectors (16 per cent and 15 per cent respectively).

¹⁶ Further details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/employers-paternity-pay-leave/eligibility>

¹⁷ In a further ten per cent none had received SPP and the remaining six per cent were unsure.

Figure 2.7: Paternity benefits beyond statutory paternity pay, by workplace size



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Figure 2.7 shows that just under one in five (17 per cent) employers offered paternity pay above the statutory minimum; consistent with the findings for maternity pay discussed earlier. These are not always the same workplaces however, although overall, 62 per cent of those workplaces that offered additional maternity pay also offered additional paternity pay. Further exploration indicates that those workplaces offering additional maternity pay, but not additional paternity pay, had on average a higher proportion of female employees (56 per cent) than workplaces which enhanced paternity but not maternity pay (42 per cent). Workplaces that offered additional paternity pay only were more likely to be small than those offering additional maternity pay only (88 per cent and 73 per cent respectively); they were also more likely to be located in the private sector (84 per cent compared with 67 per cent).

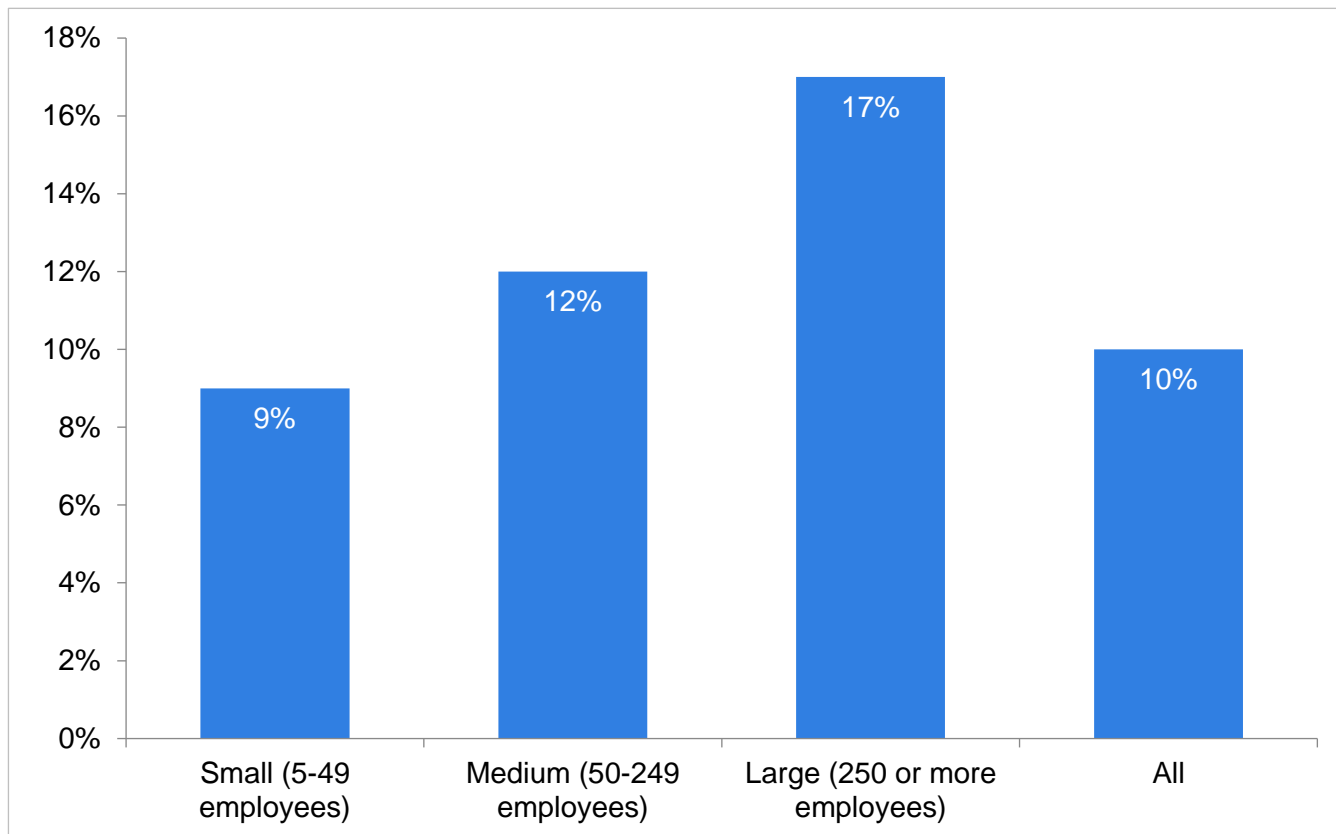
Managers in workplaces paying more than SPP were asked what percentage of normal pay they offered. Around two-fifths (38 per cent) did not know the percentage offered. Among those who did know the percentage paid, more than nine in ten (92 per cent) paid employees their usual rate of pay while on paternity leave.

All respondents were asked if their workplace offered additional paternity leave beyond the statutory two weeks; half (51 per cent) offered no additional leave and a further two-fifths (40 per cent) did not know if they did. The average (mean) length of additional leave was one week.

Larger workplaces were more likely than smaller workplaces to offer additional paternity leave

(Figure 2.8)¹⁸. There was less variation by sector; 12 per cent of third sector, 11 per cent of public sector and nine per cent of private sector workplaces offered additional leave.

Figure 2.8: Workplaces offering additional paternity leave, beyond statutory minimum, per cent workplaces

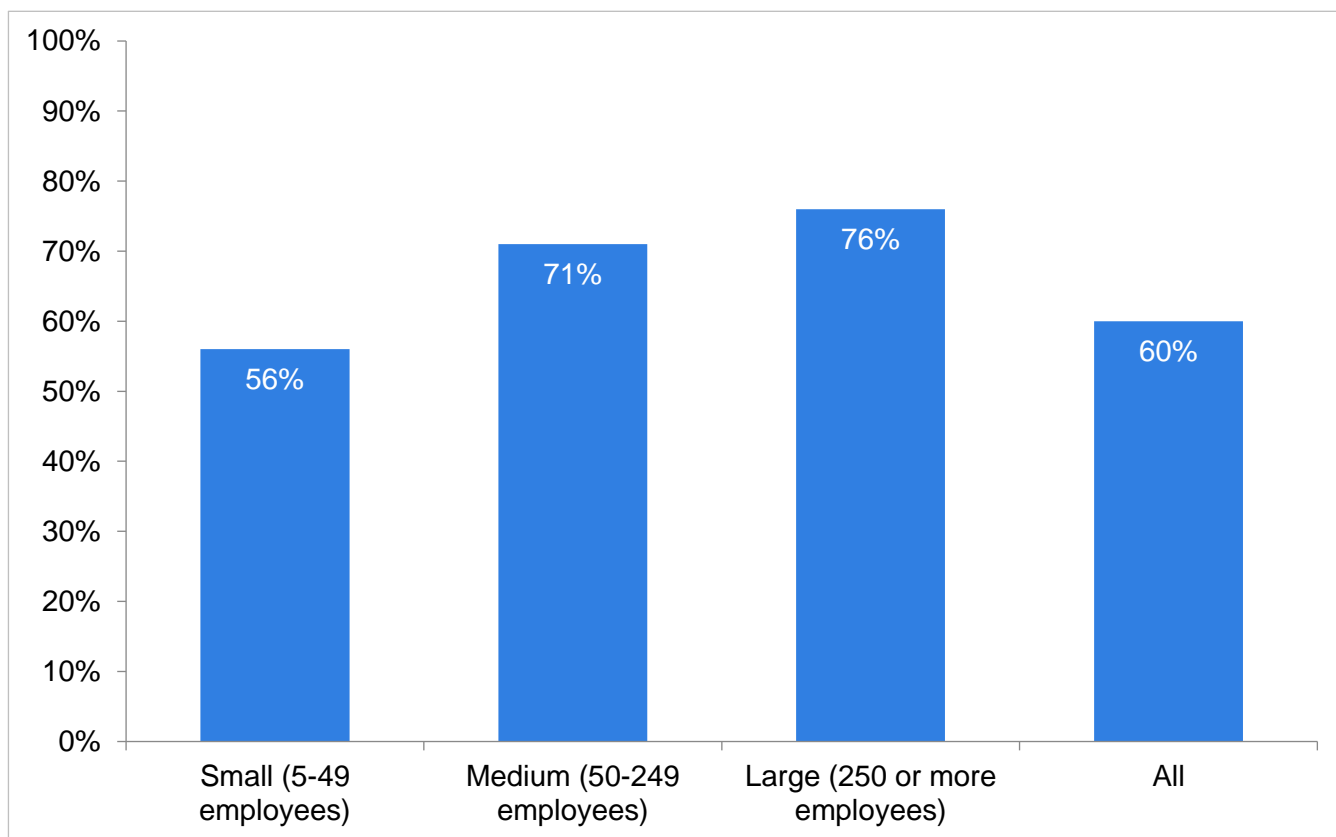


Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

As for SMP, employers are able to reclaim at least some of the cost of paying out SPP from HMRC. Managers in three-fifths (60 per cent) of workplaces where at least one employee took paternity leave in the previous two years stated they were aware of this (Figure 2.9). Managers in small workplaces were less likely to be aware they could reclaim (56 per cent were aware), compared with 71 per cent in medium-sized workplace and 76 per cent in large workplaces. Lower levels of awareness were also evident among public and private sector workplaces (55 per cent and 60 per cent respectively) compared with third sector workplaces (70 per cent).

¹⁸ Note that medium-sized and large workplaces were also more likely to respond that they did not know how much extra leave, if any, was allowed (52 and 59 per cent respectively compared with 38 per cent of small workplaces).

Figure 2.9: Managers aware that costs of statutory paternity pay can be reclaimed from HMRC, by workplace size, per cent workplaces

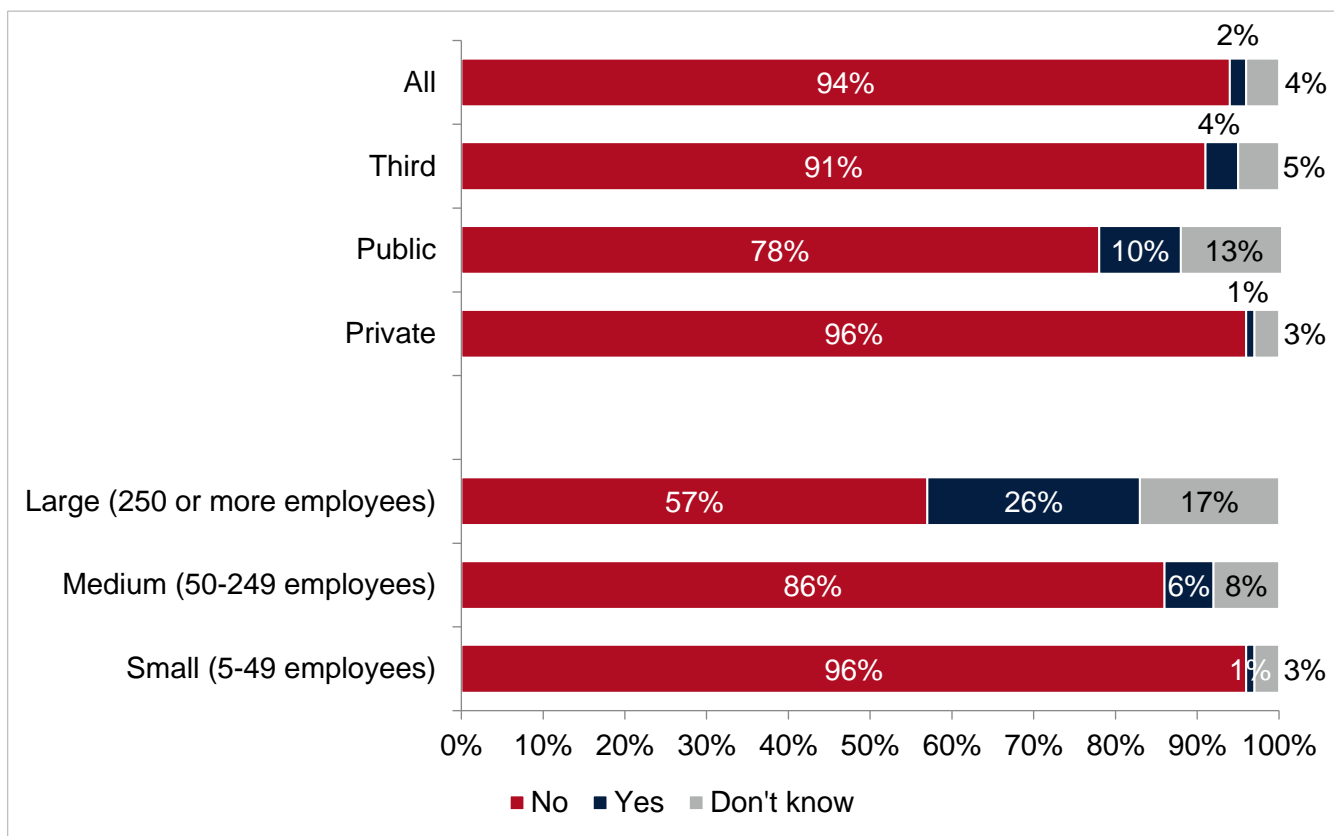


Base: all workplaces with five or more employees and where at least one employee took paternity leave in the past two years (948 workplaces).

2.3 Adoption leave

An employee had taken adoption leave in the two years prior to the survey in two per cent of all workplaces (Figure 2.10). This was more common in the public sector, where this applied for ten per cent of workplaces, compared with four per cent in the third sector and one per cent in the private sector. It was also more common in large workplaces, with around one quarter (26 per cent) of workplaces with 250 or more employees having at least one employee take adoption leave, compared with six per cent of medium-sized workplaces and just one per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees.

Figure 2.10: Any employees at the workplace taking adoption leave in the two years prior to the survey, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

2.4 Shared parental leave

2.4.1 Awareness of shared parental leave

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (SShPP) enable working parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay in the first year of their child’s life or the first year of the child being placed with the family for adoption. Weeks of SPL and/or Pay are 'created' from any untaken weeks of maternity or adoption entitlements. It allows each parent to take SPL and/or Pay in up to 3 blocks (more if their employer allows) and allows them to return to work between periods of leave. The right to SPL was introduced in December 2014 for parents of babies due or placed for adoption from April 2015 and therefore came into effect in 2015.

As for paternity and maternity pay, those who are eligible for SPL are not necessarily entitled to the SShPP as there are additional requirements to be met¹⁹.

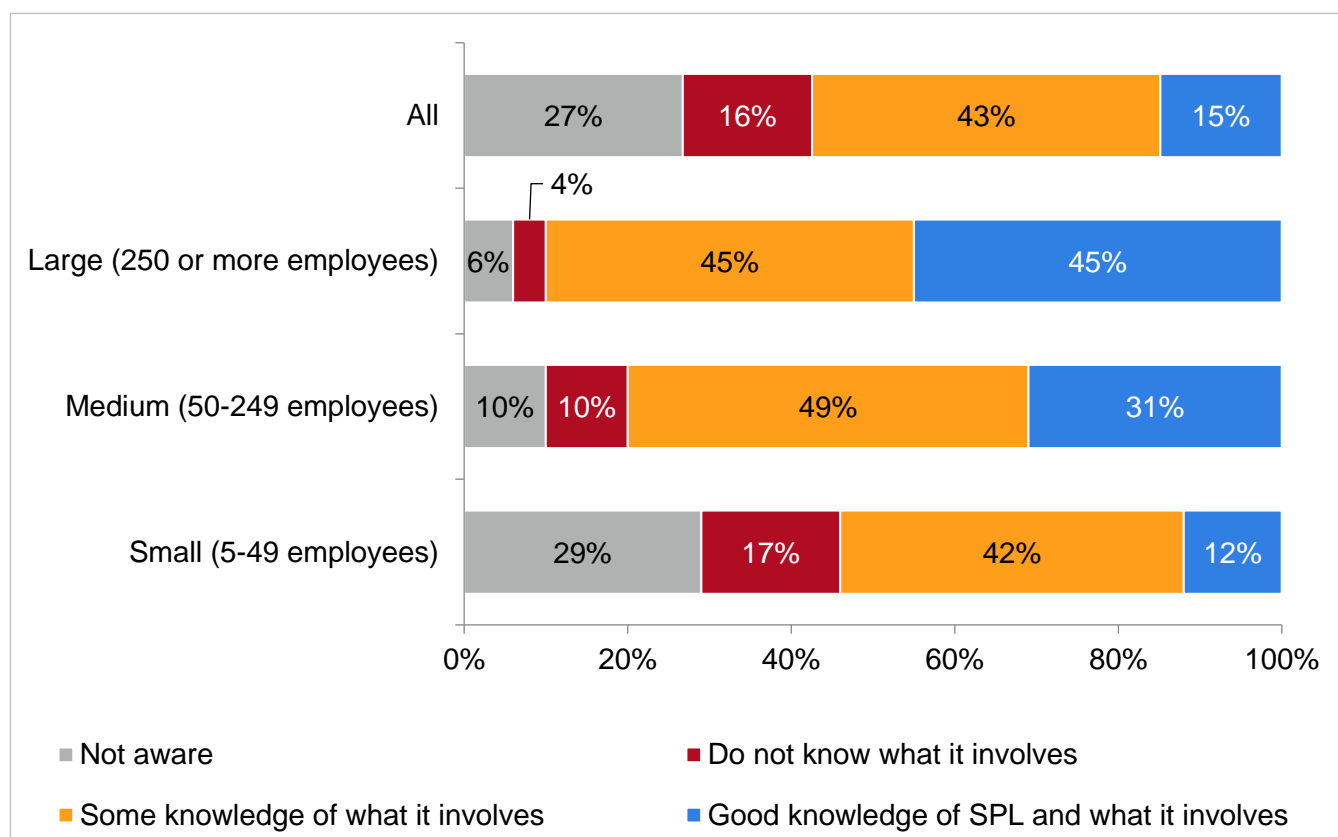
Managers were asked whether they were aware of SPL, and if so, to describe their level of knowledge and whether they knew that this is a legal right. Around three-quarters (73 per cent)

¹⁹ Further details are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay>

of managers were aware of SPL, with levels of awareness higher in larger workplaces; 94 per cent of managers in workplaces with 250 or more employees were aware compared with 71 per cent in workplaces with fewer than 50 employees. Overall, almost nine in ten employees (86 per cent) worked in a workplace where there was awareness of SPL. Among employers who were aware of SPL, almost all (94 per cent) knew that it was a legal right.

One sixth (15 per cent) of workplace managers stated they had a good level of knowledge of SPL and knew what this involved. A further 43 per cent were aware and had some knowledge of what was involved, and 16 per cent were aware but did not know what was involved (Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11: Awareness of shared parental leave, by workplace size



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Knowledge varied by workplace size, with 89 per cent of managers in workplaces with 250 or more employees having at least some knowledge and almost half (45 per cent) reporting good knowledge. Only 12 per cent of managers in small workplaces stated they had good knowledge of SPL.

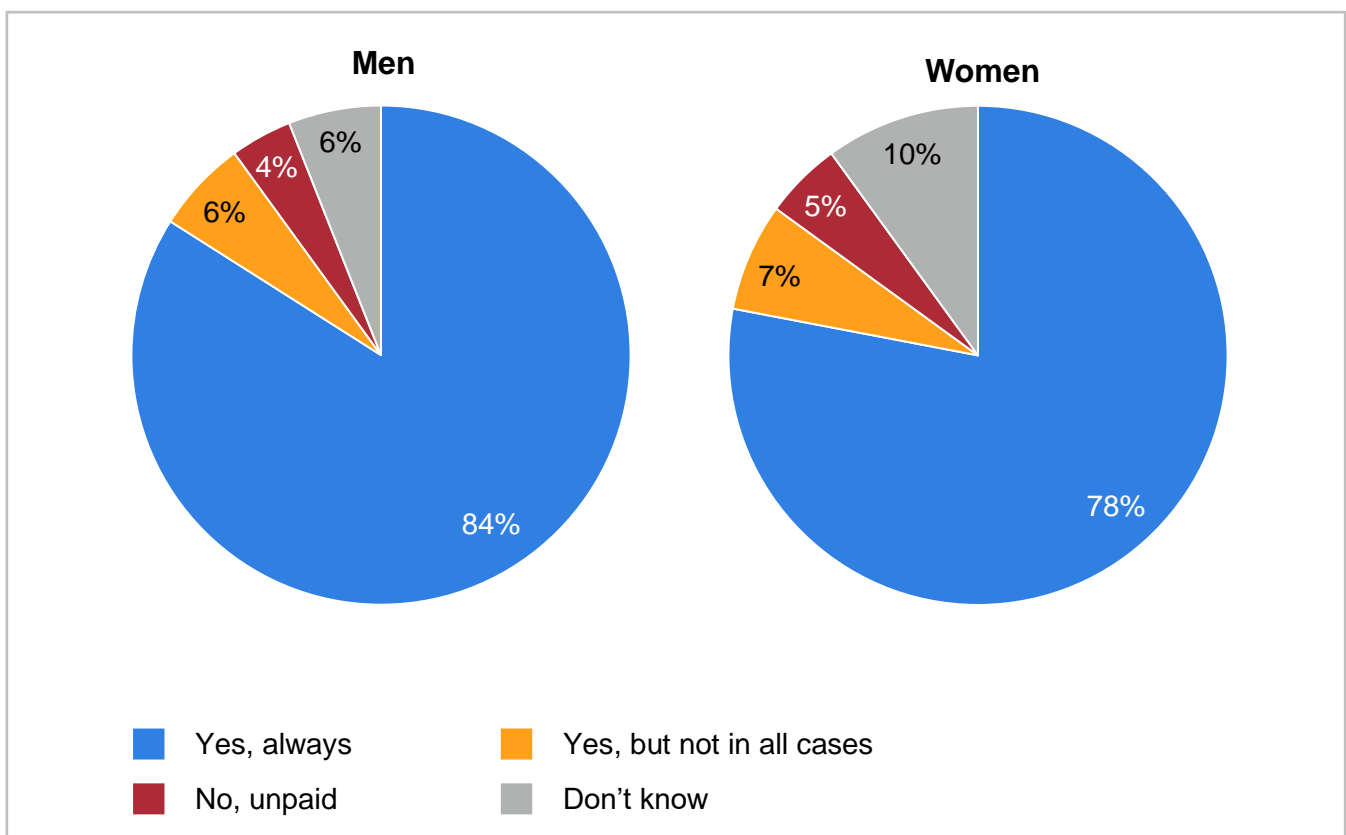
2.4.2 Take-up of shared parental leave

In four per cent of workplaces where the respondent was aware of SPL, at least one employee had taken SPL in the two years prior to the survey. This is equivalent to three per cent of all workplaces. In 92 per cent of workplaces where the manager was aware of SPL, no employees had taken SPL, and in the remaining four per cent of workplaces this was not known. Large workplaces were much more likely to have had at least one employee take SPL (37 per cent), compared with medium-sized workplaces (11 per cent) and small workplaces

(three per cent)²⁰. Respondents were asked how many men, and how many women, had taken time off as part of SPL. One quarter (25 per cent) of workplaces where at least one employee had taken SPL in the past two years did not know how many men had taken SPL, and one fifth (21 per cent) did not know how many women had done so. In 34 per cent no women had taken time off as part of SPL and in 29 per cent no men had taken time off as part of SPL. The number of employees taking time off as part of SPL was typically low; in 40 per cent of workplaces where at least one employee had taken SPL one or two female employees had done so, in the remaining four per cent three or more female employees had done so. In 41 per cent one or two male employees had taken SPL and in six per cent three or more had done so.

Respondents were then asked, if at least some male and/or female employees had taken time off as part of SPL, whether this was paid (Figure 2.12). In workplaces where men had taken SPL (equivalent to one per cent of all workplaces), this leave was always paid in 84 per cent, while six per cent paid in some cases and four per cent stated this was unpaid. A similar pattern is apparent for women taking SPL; in 78 per cent of workplaces this was always paid, in seven per cent it was paid in some cases and in five per cent it was unpaid.

Figure 2.12: Whether shared parental leave was paid, by gender, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees of which at least one man or woman had time off as part of shared parental leave in the past two years (134 workplaces for men, 113 workplaces for women).

The average (mean) length of SPL reported for men was ten weeks, while for women this

²⁰ Managers in large workplaces were also more likely to say they did not know (16 per cent), compared with small (three per cent) and medium-sized workplaces (eight per cent).

stood at 14 weeks. A substantial proportion of respondents did not know the length of leave (21 per cent for men and 44 per cent of women), and the small sample sizes on which these figures are based mean these estimates should be treated with caution.

Among workplaces where employees had taken SPL, one in ten (nine per cent) had at least one employee take it in multiple blocks. In a further 63 per cent no employees had taken SPL in blocks. Around one quarter (28 per cent) of employers did not know whether their employees had taken SPL in multiple blocks.

2.4.3 Reclaiming costs of shared parental pay

At the time of the survey, most employees who were eligible to take SPL were entitled to SShPP of either £145.18 per week or 90 per cent of their weekly earnings for up to 39 weeks, whichever was lowest. As for SMP and SPP, employers can reclaim the cost of paying out shared parental pay from HMRC. Managers were aware of this in three-fifths (61 per cent) of workplaces where an employee had taken SPL in the two years prior to the survey. This suggested similar levels of awareness among employers of the ability to reclaim costs of shared parental pay to those for SMP and SPP.

Comparisons by workplace size are limited due to small sample sizes, although these suggest lower levels of awareness among smaller workplaces. Third sector workplaces were most likely to be aware they could reclaim these costs, 84 per cent who had had an employee take SPL in the past two years were aware, compared with 56 per cent in both the public and private sectors.

2.4.4 Provision beyond the statutory requirement

Respondents who were aware of SPL were asked whether any employee taking SPL and SShPP would be paid more than the statutory minimum.

Eight per cent of workplaces where managers were aware of SPL said they would pay more than the statutory level of SShPP. Almost three in ten (29 per cent) did not know if they would pay more, while the remaining 63 per cent stated that they would not. In comparison, 17 per cent of workplaces offered more than the statutory maternity benefits, with the same percentage offering more than SPP²¹. Of those workplaces that offered enhanced maternity pay, 35 per cent also offered more than the statutory minimum for SShPP (33 per cent did not and 32 per cent did not know).

Larger workplaces were more likely to pay more than the statutory minimum; this applied for 22 per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees compared with eight per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees. Larger workplaces were also less likely to respond that they did not know if they would pay more, although this still accounted for almost one fifth (17 per cent). More than one in ten (15 per cent) of public sector workplaces would pay more than the minimum, compared with eight per cent of private sector and six per cent of third sector workplaces. However, managers in the public sector were also much more likely to say that they did not know if they would pay more (42 per cent). One fifth (20 per cent) of

²¹ Note that the questions about maternity and paternity pay were asked of all respondents, whereas the question about Shared parental pay was asked only of those aware of SPL. However, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that almost all workplaces would be aware of maternity and paternity leave.

workplaces where an employee had taken SPL in the past two years paid more than the statutory minimum, compared with eight per cent of those where no employees had taken SPL for SShPP.

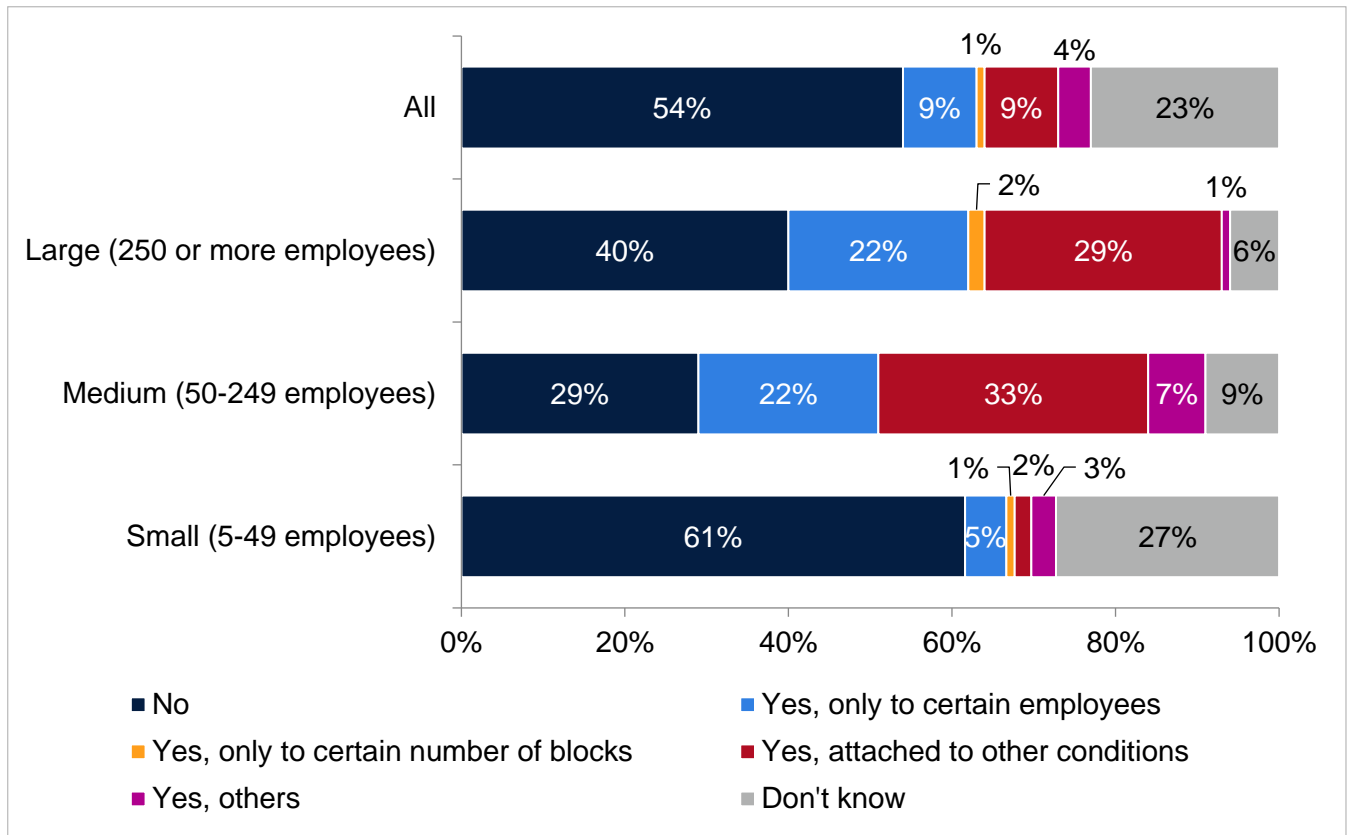
Managers in workplaces offering more than the minimum were asked what percentage of normal pay they offered, and for how long this would be paid. One third (32 per cent) did not know what percentage of normal pay would be offered. Among those that did, three quarters (75 per cent) would offer 100 per cent of the employee's normal pay, eight per cent would offer between 75 and 99 per cent, eight per cent would offer between 50 and 74 per cent, two percent would offer between 1 and 10 per cent while the remaining 7 per cent would offer none. Therefore, the average (mean) percentage of pay offered stood at 87 per cent of normal pay. On average this rate of pay was offered for a 16 week period, although in 44 per cent it was not known how long this would be paid for. Managers in almost half (45 per cent) of workplaces said that the enhancement to shared parental pay would apply for the whole period, while 25 per cent stated this would vary over time and 31 per cent did not know. Larger workplaces were more likely to apply the enhancement for the whole period, with 68 per cent doing so.

Respondents were also asked if there were any conditions attached to the enhanced rate of shared parental pay. Over half (54 per cent) of workplaces do not attach any conditions (Figure 2.13). In nine per cent of workplaces, enhancements only apply to certain employees, in one per cent they only apply to a certain number of blocks, and in 13 per cent there are other unspecified conditions²².

Small workplaces were most likely not to attach any conditions to receiving the enhanced rate, with this being the case for 61 per cent, compared with 29 per cent of medium-sized workplaces and 40 per cent of large workplaces (Figure 2.13). In around one fifth (22 per cent) of medium and large workplaces enhancements were only available to certain employees, while this was the case in five per cent of small workplaces.

²² This combines the "Yes, other conditions" and "Yes, others" categories shown in .

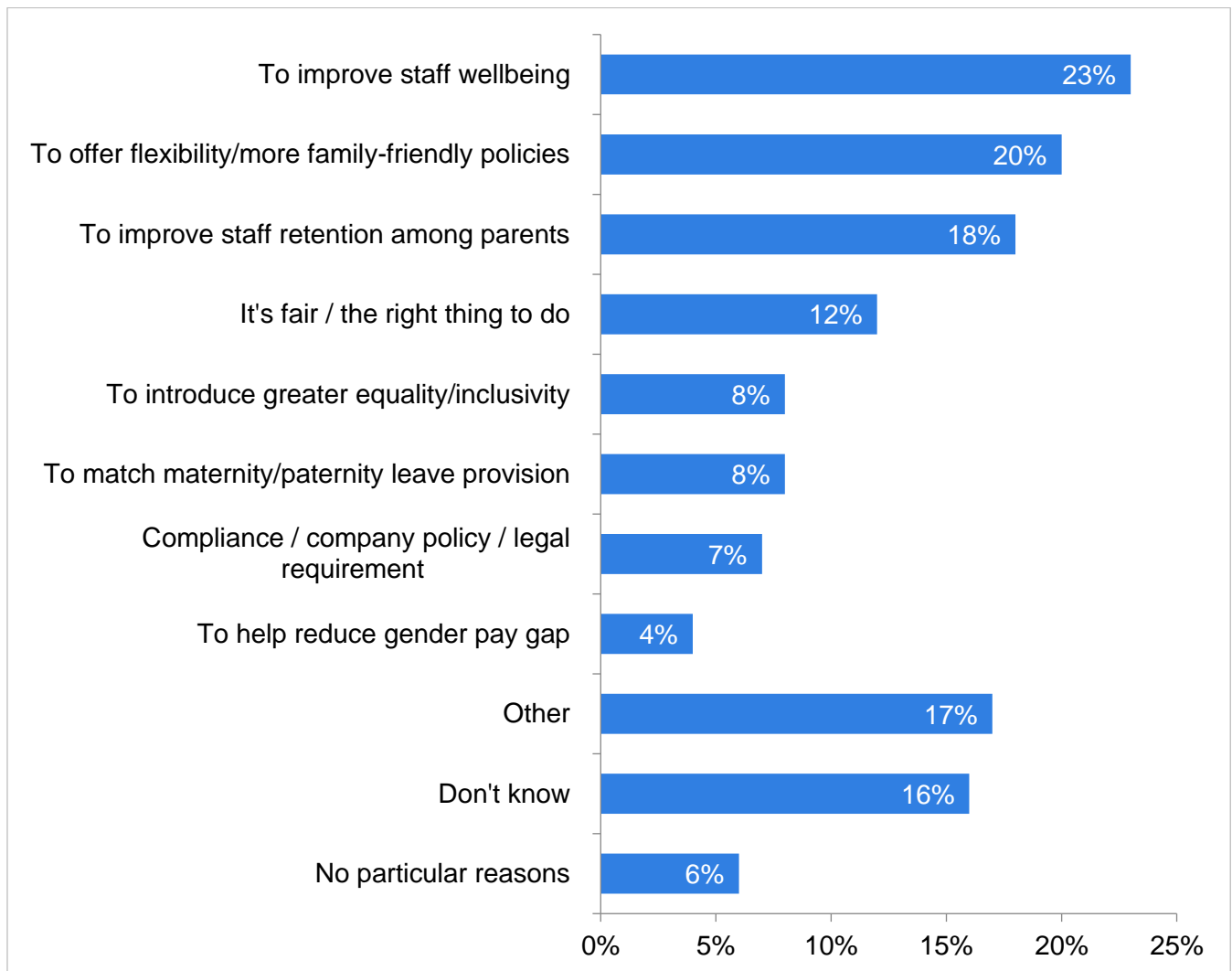
Figure 2.13: Whether conditions are attached to the enhanced rate of shared parental pay, by workplace size, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees offering more than the statutory minimum for shared parental pay (239 workplaces).

Respondents were also asked why they offered, or did not offer, enhanced Shared Parental Pay. Most commonly, workplaces enhanced Shared Parental Pay to improve staff wellbeing (23 per cent) (Figure 2.14). Around one fifth of workplaces did so to offer flexibility and family friendly policies (20 per cent) and to improve staff retention among parents (18 per cent).

Figure 2.14: Reasons why enhanced shared parental pay is offered, per cent workplaces

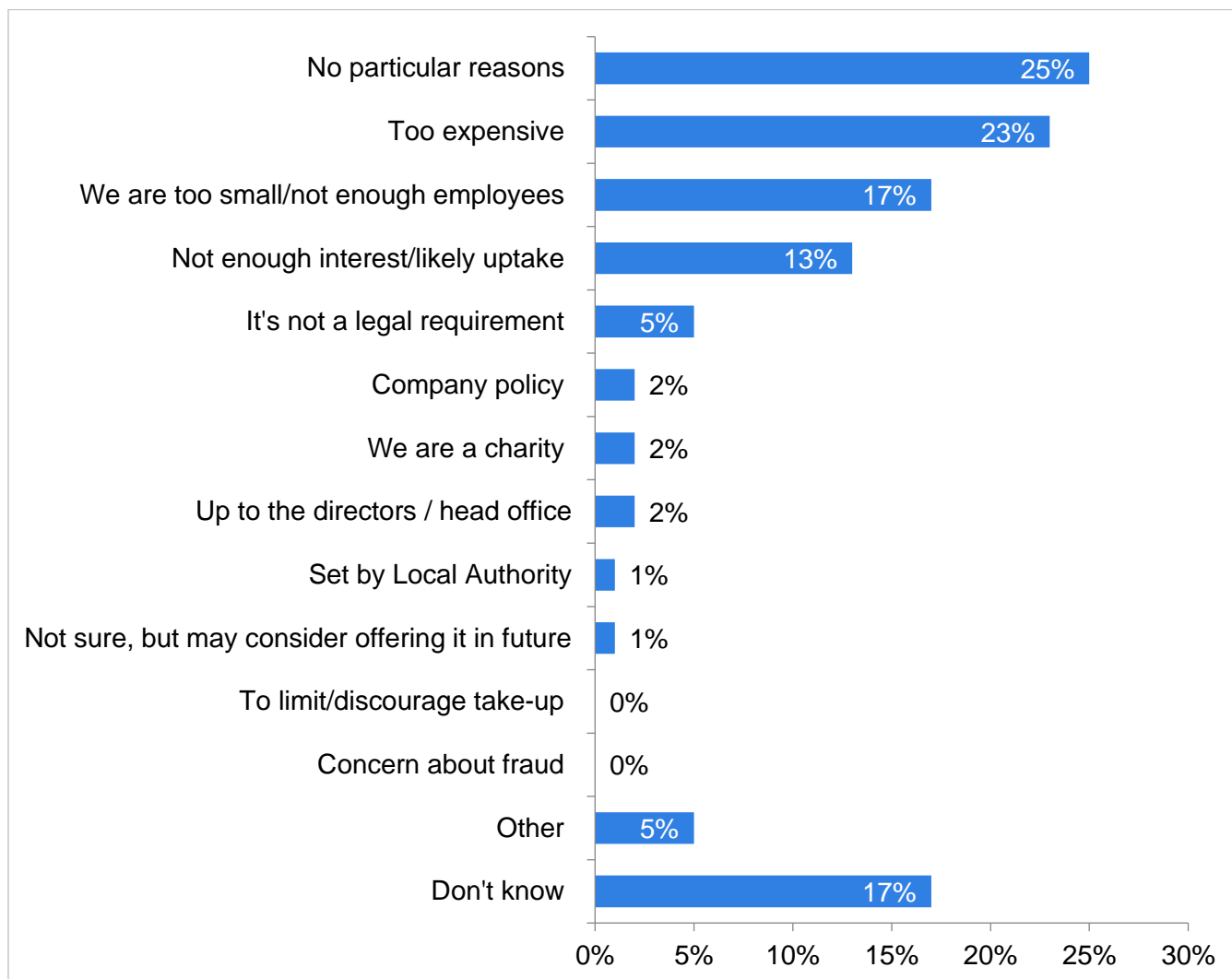


Base: All workplaces with five or more employees paying more than the statutory minimum for shared parental pay (239 workplaces).

Note: respondents could give more than one response.

Managers in workplaces not offering enhanced Shared Parental Pay were asked why. One quarter (25 per cent) stated they had no particular reason, while 23 per cent said that it was too expensive (Figure 2.15 **Error! Reference source not found.**). The next most common reasons were the small size of the workplace (reported by 17 per cent) and a lack of interest or likely uptake (13 per cent). Almost one fifth (17 per cent) did not know why they did not offer enhancements.

Figure 2.15: Reasons why enhanced shared parental pay is not offered, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees not offering enhanced shared parental pay (1,281 workplaces). Note: respondents could give more than one response.

2.4.5 Attitudes towards shared parental leave

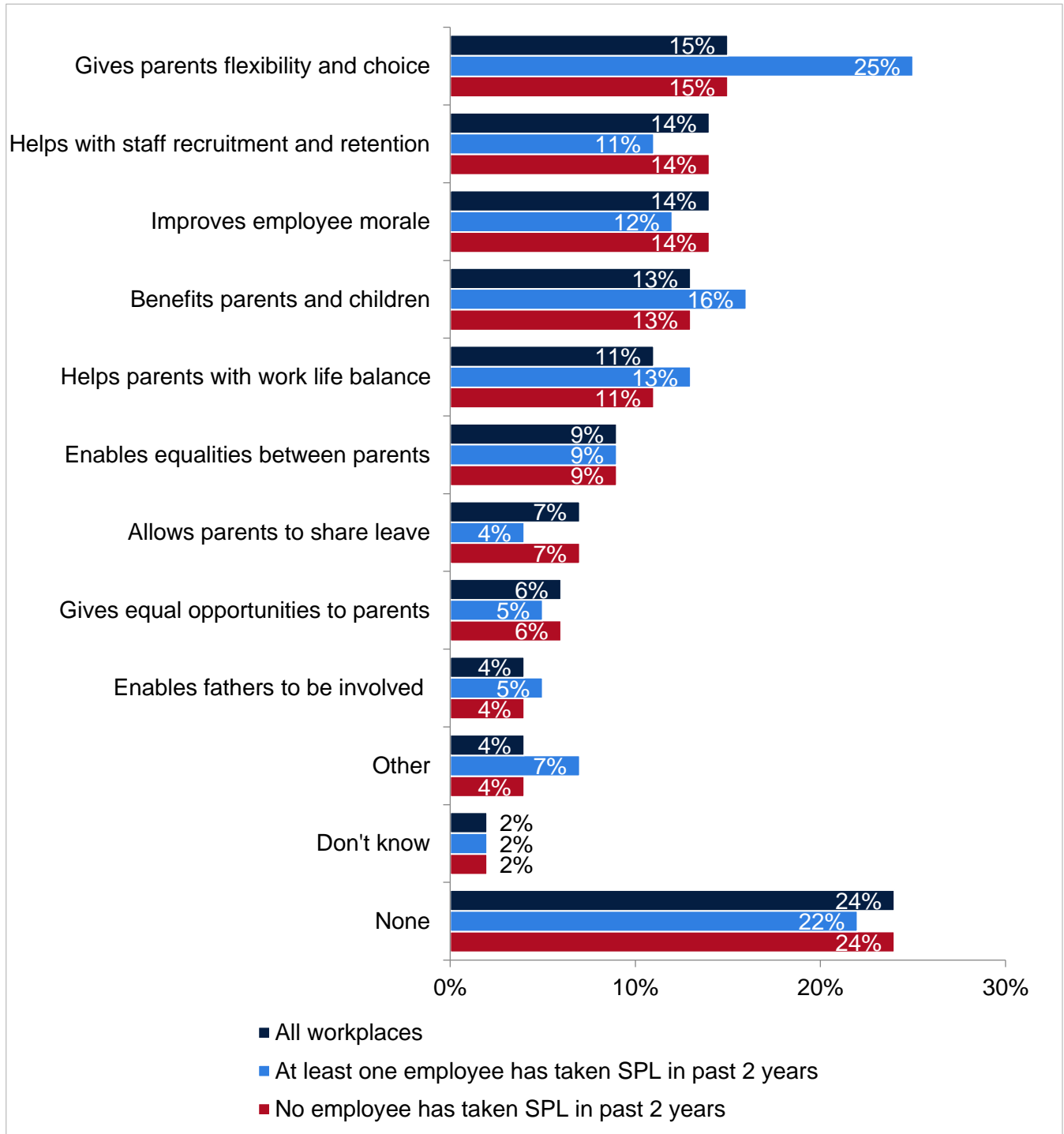
Respondents who were aware of SPL were asked what they saw as the advantages and disadvantages of SPL and Pay (SShPP).

The most commonly cited advantages were that SPL gives parents flexibility and choice (15 per cent), helps with staff recruitment and retention (14 per cent), improves employee morale (14 per cent) and benefits parents and children (13 per cent) (Figure 2.16).

While there was limited variation by workplace size, respondents in small workplaces were the most likely to report no advantages; 26 per cent of small workplaces did so compared with 12 per cent of large workplaces. Large workplaces were most likely to report that an advantage was giving parents flexibility and choice, cited by almost three in ten (28 per cent), compared with 14 per cent of small employers. They were also more likely to see an advantage as helping with staff recruitment and retention (reported by 23 per cent compared with 13 per cent of managers in small workplaces).

There were some differences in managers' views according to whether any employees at the workplace had taken SPL in two years prior to the survey (Figure 2.16). Among those workplaces where at least one employee had taken SPL, managers were more likely to say that an advantage was giving parents flexibility and choice (25 per cent), compared with workplaces where no employees had taken SPL (15 per cent).

Figure 2.16: Advantages of shared parental leave and pay, per cent workplaces

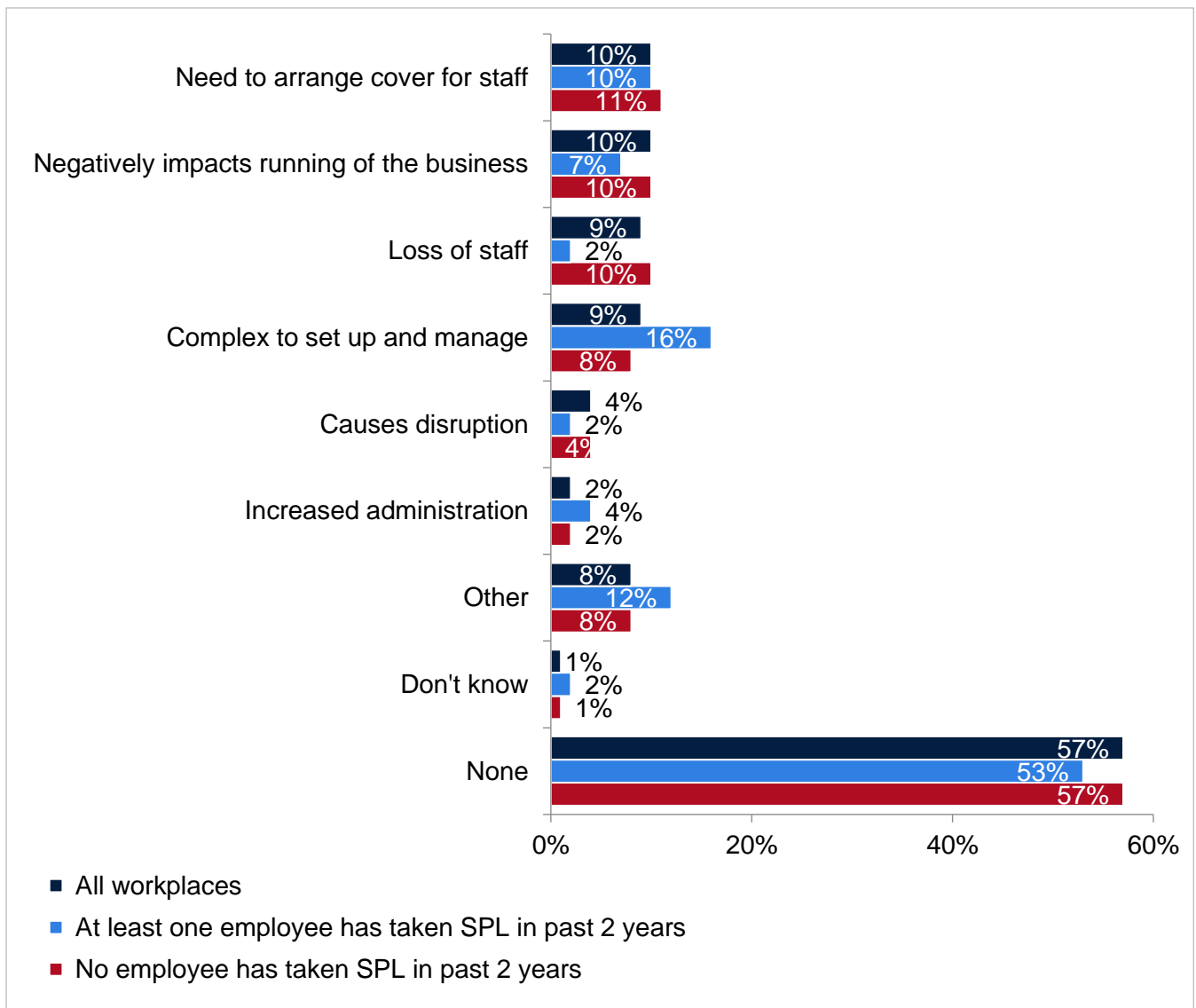


Base: all workplaces with five or more employees where respondent is aware of shared parental leave (2,025 workplaces; 1,593 where no employee had taken SPL; 281 where at least one employee had taken SPL in past 2 years).

Managers in more than half of workplaces (57 per cent) did not report any disadvantages of providing SPL or Pay (Figure 2.17). The most commonly reported disadvantages were the need to arrange cover for staff (10 per cent), a negative impact on running the business (10 per cent) and the loss in staff (9 per cent). One in ten (nine per cent) mentioned that it was complex to set up and manage SPL and Pay while four per cent thought it caused disruption and two per cent stated increased administration. Smaller workplaces were more likely to be concerned about loss of staff (10 per cent) and the need to arrange cover (11 per cent), while larger workplaces were more likely to note the complexity in set up and management (17 per cent).

Managers in workplaces who had experienced employees taking SPL within the last two years, were more likely to report the complexity in setting up and managing this as a disadvantage, with 16 per cent of employers noting this. In contrast, managers in workplaces where no employees had taken SPL were more likely to cite disadvantages as a negative impact on the running of the business (ten per cent) and loss of staff (ten per cent) than those in workplaces where an employee had taken SPL in the last two years (seven per cent and two per cent respectively). The proportion of managers who stated no disadvantages was similar regardless of whether the workplace had experienced employees taking SPL (53 per cent among workplaces where at least one employee had taken SPL in the past two years and 57 per cent where no employees had done so).

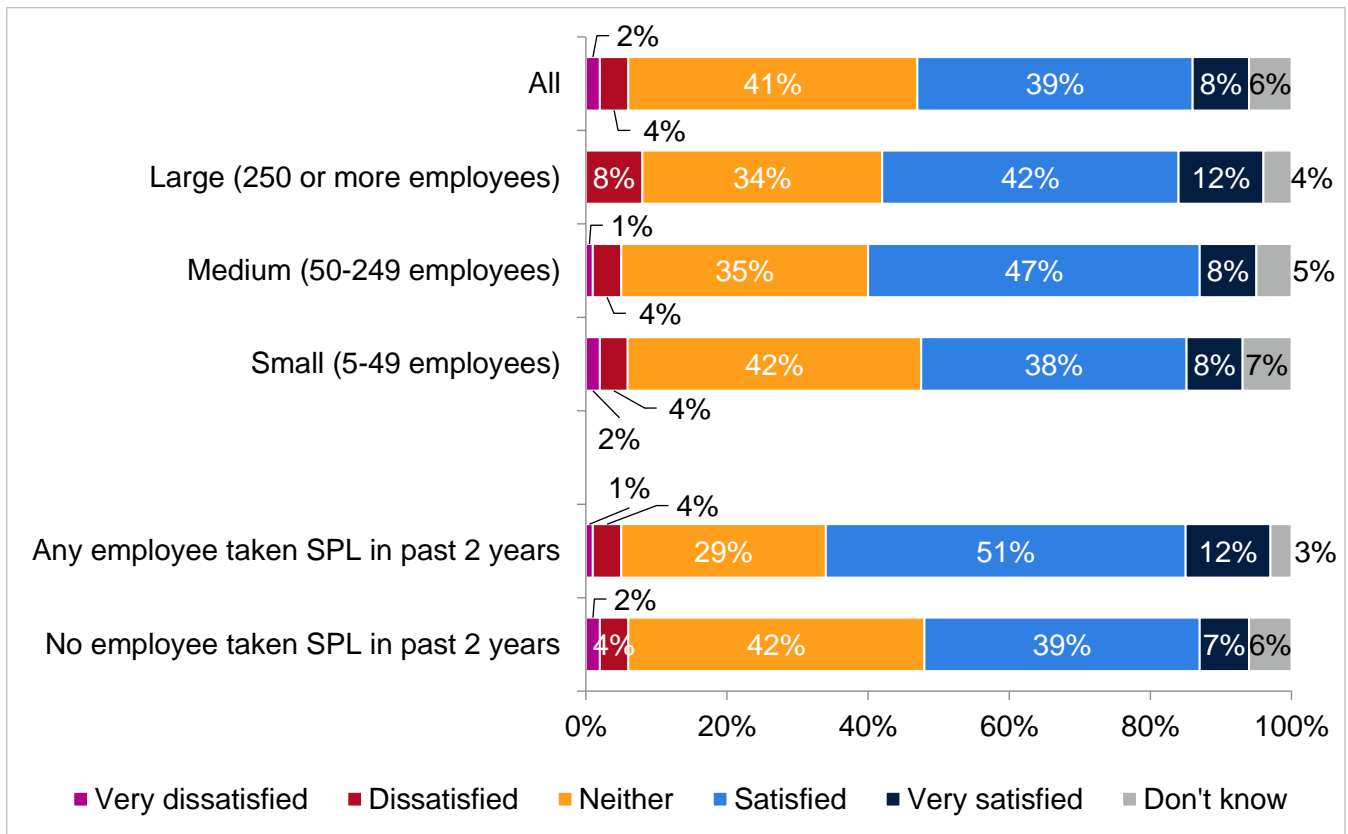
Figure 2.17: Disadvantages of shared parental leave and pay, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees where respondent is aware of shared parental leave (2,025 workplaces; 1,593 where no employee had taken SPL; 281 where at least one employee had taken SPL in past 2 years).

In addition, respondents who were aware of SPL were asked how satisfied they were overall with the government’s policy of SPL and Pay. Managers in almost half (47 per cent) of workplaces were satisfied or very satisfied, five per cent were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, 41 per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and the remaining six per cent did not know (Figure 2.18). Satisfaction levels varied by workplace size, with slightly higher percentages of managers in medium and large workplaces being at least satisfied (55 and 54 per cent, respectively) or at least dissatisfied (five and nine per cent, respectively) and a comparatively larger proportion of managers in small workplaces being neither (42 per cent).

Figure 2.18: Satisfaction with shared parental leave and pay, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees where respondents aware of shared parental leave (2,025 workplaces).

The differences apparent by workplace size may in part reflect differences in employers' experiences of employees taking SPL. Managers in workplaces where at least some employees had taken SPL in the two years prior to the survey were more likely to report that they were satisfied with the policy overall. More than three-fifths (63 per cent) stated they were satisfied or very satisfied, compared with just under half (46 per cent) of respondents in workplaces where no employees had taken SPL in the past two years. There was little difference in the proportion who were dissatisfied (six per cent where no employees had taken SPL and five per cent where they had); instead, managers in workplaces without experience of employees taking SPL were more likely to say that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (42 per cent, compared with 29 per cent).

2.5 Other parental leave

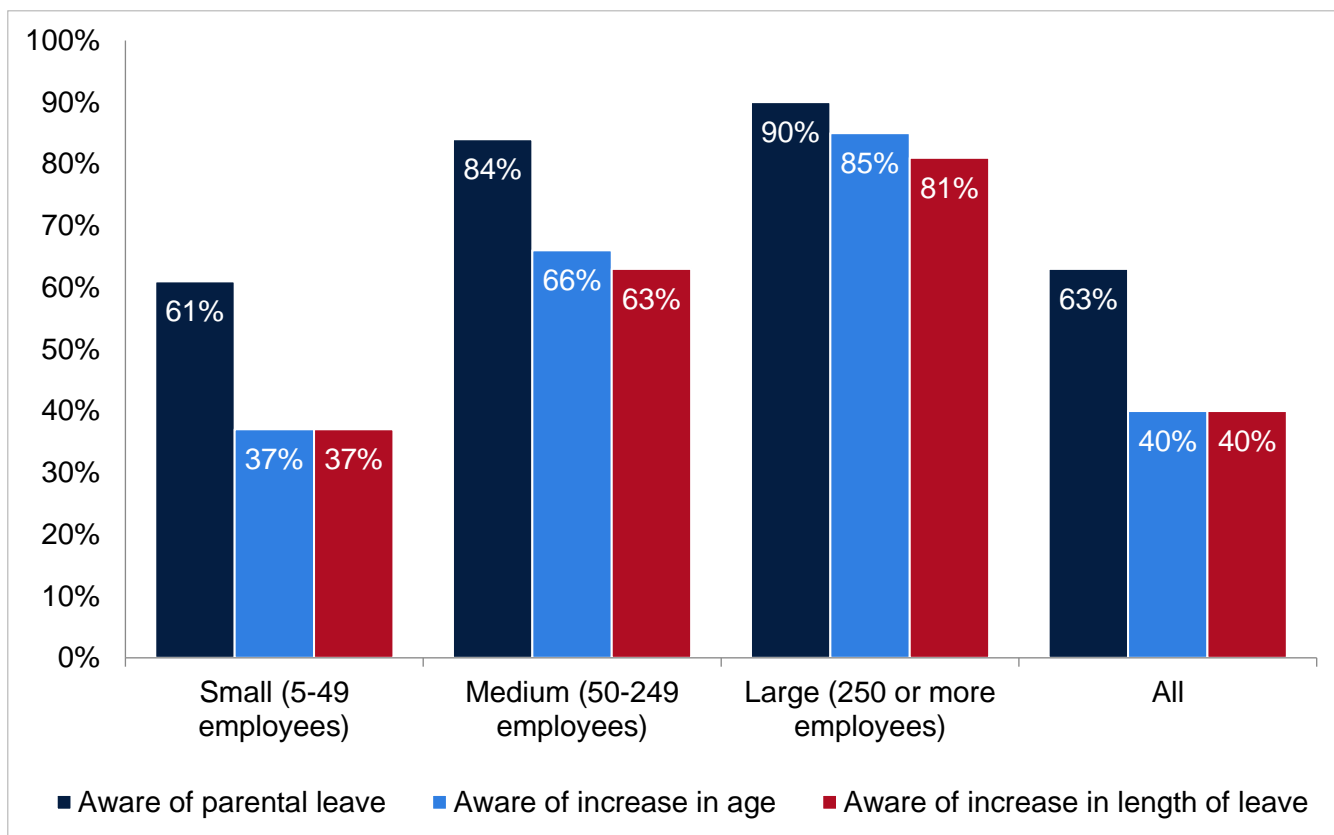
2.5.1 Awareness of unpaid parental leave

Unpaid parental leave provides all employed parents with the right to take up to 18 weeks of parental leave (four weeks in any year – more if the employer allows) to look after their child’s welfare, once they have completed 12 months service with their employer. The entitlement is per parent, per child.

This can provide parents with time off work in order to help settle children into new childcare, to look at new schools, or simply to spend more time with their child. Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of this type of parental leave. Overall, levels of awareness of unpaid parental leave were lower than for SPL (73 per cent of managers were aware of SPL, see Section 2.4.1). However, in common with awareness of SPL, awareness of unpaid parental leave was higher in larger workplaces (90 per cent compared with 84 per cent in medium-sized workplaces and 61 per cent in small workplaces (Figure 2.19).

In March 2013, the law changed to extend the amount of leave that can be taken from 13 to 18 weeks; and in 2015 the age of children covered by the policy increased from 5 to 18 years. Awareness of these changes was lower than awareness of the policy as a whole; in each case, 40 per cent of workplace managers were aware of these extensions to the policy. As for overall awareness, managers in larger workplaces were more likely to be aware of both of these changes (Figure 2.19).

Figure 2.19: Awareness of unpaid parental leave and changes in law, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Managers in private sector workplaces were least likely to be aware of unpaid parental leave (61 per cent) compared with managers in public sector and third sector workplaces (81 per cent and 76 per cent respectively). A similar pattern by sector was evident for awareness of the increases in the age of children covered and in the length of leave. Some variation by industry was apparent; managers in 87 per cent of workplaces in the Public Administration and Defence sector were aware of unpaid parental leave, compared with 48 per cent in the Construction sector.

2.5.2 Incidence of unpaid parental leave

More than one in ten workplaces (13 per cent) had at least one employee take unpaid parental leave in the two years prior to the survey. In the 2013 WLB survey, 14 per cent of workplaces had at least one employee do so in the year prior to the survey.

As in 2013, there is variation in take-up by workplace size and sector. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of large workplaces had at least one employee take unpaid parental leave in the two years prior to the survey, compared with 11 per cent of small workplaces and 25 per cent of medium-sized workplaces. Unpaid parental leave remained most common in the public sector; in 18 per cent of such workplaces at least one employee had taken parental leave, compared with 13 per cent of third sector and 12 per cent of private sector workplaces.

Among workplaces where at least one employee had taken unpaid parental leave, 11 per cent did not know how many had done so. In the majority (63 per cent) of workplaces just one or two employees had taken this form of leave in the past two years. Where at least one employee had taken unpaid parental leave in the two years prior to the survey²³, the average (mean) length of leave was four weeks. This was slightly higher among private sector workplaces, with an average (mean) of five weeks, compared with three weeks in public sector workplaces. If the median length of leave is considered, instead of the mean, this stood at one week in both the private and public sectors²⁴.

2.6 Childcare and bereavement leave

2.6.1 Provision of help with childcare

Parental leave is one form of support available to parents at work, but some employers may provide additional forms of support, such as help with childcare. Respondents were asked whether employees were entitled to any of the childcare arrangements listed in Table 2.1.

The most common form of help was childcare vouchers, provided by one third (33 per cent) of workplaces. Vouchers are particularly prevalent in large workplaces, offered by 82 per cent of workplaces with 250 employees or more, compared with 29 per cent of workplaces with 50 or fewer employees. As well as being more common in large workplaces, childcare vouchers are particularly common in public sector workplaces (offered by 71 per cent).

²³ Calculated excluding respondents who did not know (10 per cent).

²⁴ Estimates are not presented for third sector workplaces due to small sample sizes.

The next most common arrangement was help with childcare arrangements during school holidays, offered by 14 per cent of workplaces, while nine per cent offered other financial help with childcare. Around half (51 per cent) of workplaces did not offer any of the arrangements specified; this was mainly the case for small workplaces (54 per cent compared with 11 per cent of large workplaces). The lack of any help with childcare arrangements is mostly evident in the private and third sectors (54 per cent and 41 per cent), rather than in the public sector (16 per cent).

Table 2.1: Per cent workplaces offering help with childcare, by workplace size, column percentages

Types of childcare arrangements	Small (5-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (250 or more employees)	All workplaces
Childcare vouchers	29	63	82	33
Help with childcare arrangements during school holidays	13	17	22	14
Other financial help with childcare	9	9	7	9
Childcare facility	6	6	10	6
Flexible hours/change hours/shifts	4	5	9	4
Some other arrangement	2	2	3	2
None of these	54	28	11	51
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or more employees)</i>	<i>1,451</i>	<i>567</i>	<i>469</i>	<i>2,489</i>

Note: respondents could give more than one response.

2.6.2 Time off for emergencies

Respondents were asked what would happen if an employee needed to take time off at short notice to care for a family member or someone who depends on them for their care²⁵. Managers in the vast majority (81 per cent) of workplaces stated that time off for family emergencies would be agreed to in all cases²⁶. In a further 12 per cent of workplaces managers stated they would agree to this in some cases and in four per cent it depended on

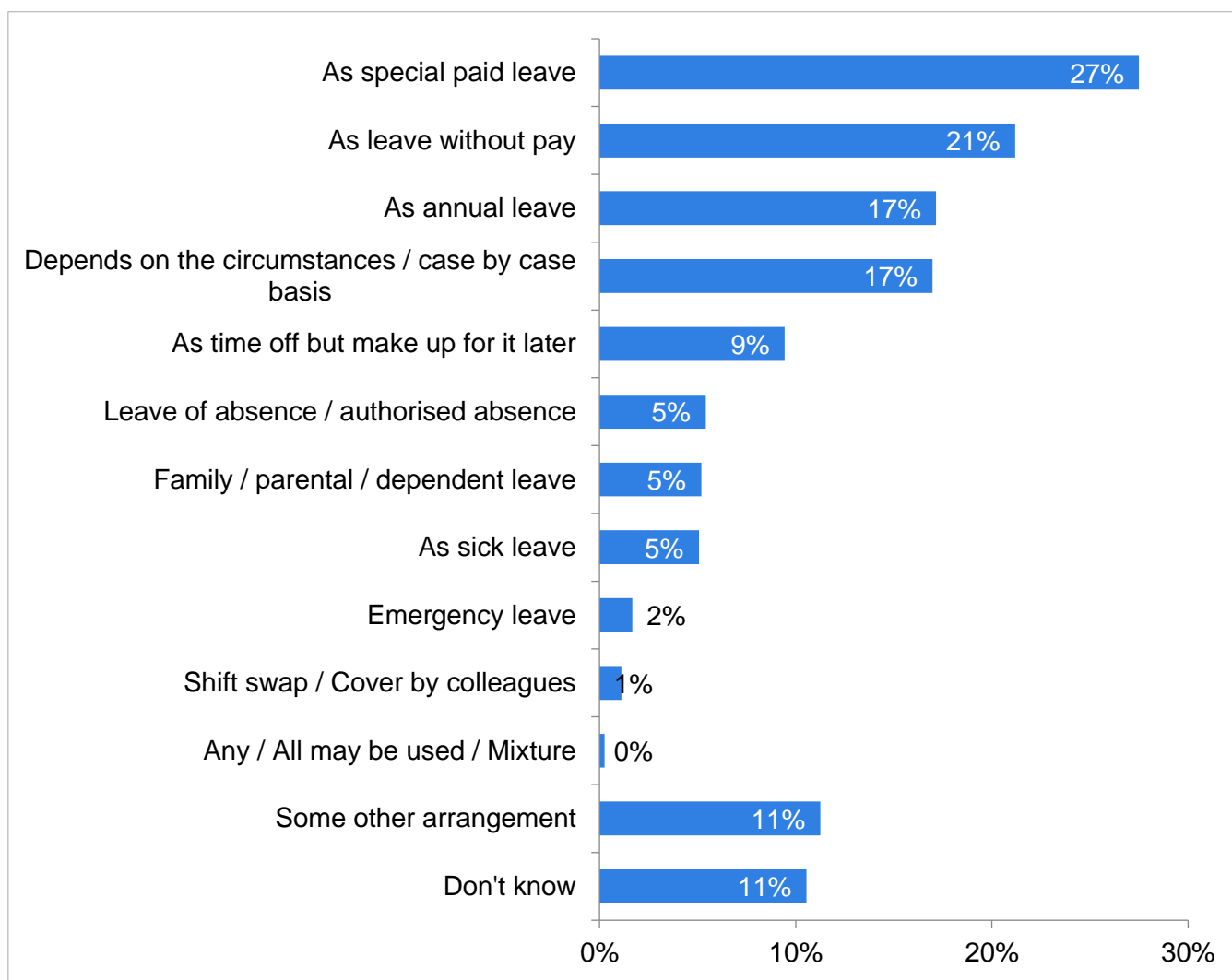
²⁵ Employees have a legal right to a reasonable amount of time off to take care of dependants in an emergency: <https://www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants> It is not possible to tell with certainty whether employers were responding to this question on the basis of their contractual policies, or with regard to the statutory entitlement to time off for dependants.

²⁶ This was the case regardless of workplace size, standing at 81 per cent for both small and large workplaces and 82 per cent for medium-sized workplaces.

individual circumstances (a further two per cent did not know).

Respondents were also asked how any time off for family emergencies was recorded (Figure 2.20). In just over one quarter of workplaces (27 per cent) this would be recorded as special paid leave. Around one fifth (21 per cent) stated this would be counted as leave without pay and 17 per cent recorded this as annual leave and decided this on a case by case basis. While there was limited variation by workplace size, small workplaces were more likely than larger workplaces to not know how such time off would be recorded (12 per cent compared with four per cent), or to record this as annual leave (18 per cent compared with 13 per cent). In comparison, recording this specifically as family, parental or dependant leave, or emergency leave, is more common among larger workplaces (17 per cent compared with four per cent for family, parental or dependant leave, and eight per cent compared with one per cent for emergency leave). Public sector workplaces were more likely to record this as special paid leave than private and third sector workplaces (41 per cent, compared with 26 per cent and 27 per cent respectively).

Figure 2.20: Recording of time off for family emergencies, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees where time off for emergencies would be agreed to (2,445 workplaces).

Note: respondents could give more than one response.

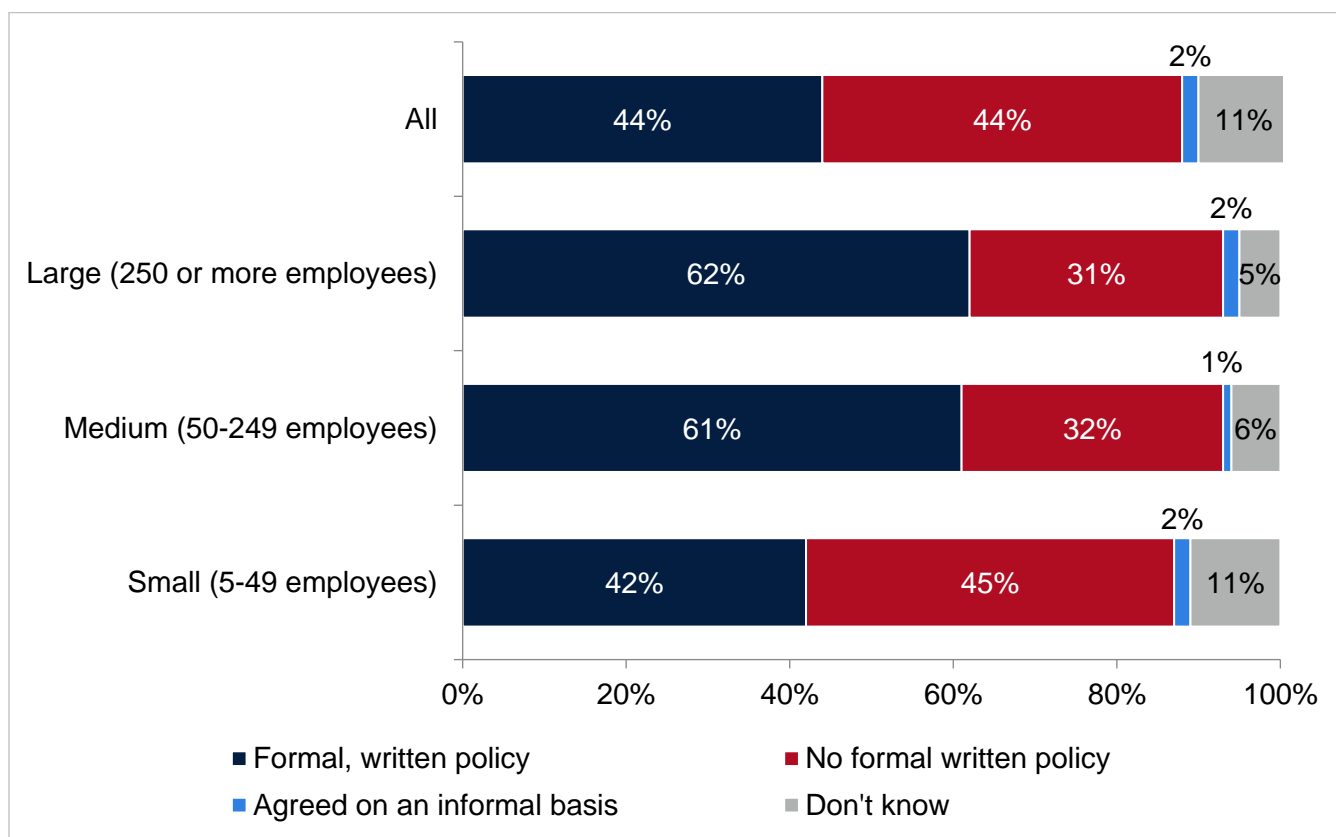
2.6.3 Formal employer policies on bereavement leave

From 2020, there will be a new day-one right to leave for employed bereaved parents, which will be paid, subject to meeting eligibility criteria. However, at the time of this survey, there was no statutory right to time off specifically for a bereavement – the bereavement policies discussed below are therefore provided by employers on an exclusively contractual basis.

Just under half (44 per cent) of workplaces had a formal or written bereavement leave policy for parents who had lost a child (Figure 2.21)²⁷.

Formal or written policies were most common among medium and large workplaces. They are also more common in workplaces which are part of a larger organisation compared with single independent establishments (57 per cent and 32 per cent respectively). They are also more common in larger organisations; around one third (31 per cent) of workplaces in small organisations had such a policy, compared with 53 per cent of workplaces in medium-sized organisations and 66 per cent among workplaces in large organisations. Formal policies were also more prevalent in the public sector, with 61 per cent of such workplaces having a formal written policy, compared with 42 per cent of private sector and 46 per cent of third sector workplaces.

Figure 2.21: Formal or written policy on bereavement leave for parents, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with five or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

²⁷ Note that the option “agreed on an informal basis” was not read out to respondents, and so this option was only coded if respondents explicitly stated this without prompting. Other workplaces that stated they did not have a formal written policy may nevertheless agree to such leave on an informal basis.

3. Flexible working

This chapter explores awareness of the extension of the right to request flexible working among workplace managers, provision and take-up of flexible working arrangements, as well as requests for flexible working. Managers' attitudes towards flexible working, leave arrangements and work-life balance more generally are also discussed. Finally, this chapter reports on the sources of information that workplaces use to understand flexible working and leave arrangements.

Key findings

Managers' general attitudes towards work-life balance and flexible working appeared relatively similar to those observed in 2013. Managers were slightly more likely to disagree that only parents and carers benefitted from flexible working than in 2013 (65 per cent compared with 59 per cent), however, they were also less likely to agree that employees who work flexibly were just as likely to be promoted (73 per cent compared with 68 per cent).

Almost all workplaces (96 per cent) offered at least one of the forms of flexible working asked about in the survey (part-time, working from home, reduced hours for a limited period, job-sharing, flexi-time, term-time working, compressed hours, annualised hours).

In around half (48 per cent) of workplaces where flexible working was available, managers actively promoted the available flexible working and leave arrangements. This stood at 43 per cent in 2013.

Half (50 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of the extension of the right to request flexible working. Awareness was much higher in larger workplaces; almost nine in ten (87 per cent) were aware in workplaces with 250 or more employees, and in workplaces with a recognised union (60 per cent).

In one fifth (22 per cent) of workplaces, managers thought the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements had increased over the five years prior to the survey. In a further two-thirds (67 per cent), managers thought this proportion had remained the same. Workplaces where managers were aware of the extension of the right to request were more likely to report an increase (27 per cent, compared with 16 per cent in workplaces where managers were not aware).

Around three in ten workplaces (30 per cent) had received at least one request for flexible working in the 12 months prior to the survey. The percentage of workplaces receiving requests for working from home, term-time working, reduced hours, job sharing and annualised hours had shown some increase since 2013. For part-time working, flexi-time and compressed weeks the percentage of workplaces receiving requests had remained similar.

In the vast majority (83 per cent) of workplaces where at least one request for flexible working had been made, no requests had been turned down. In nine per cent at least one

request had been rejected.

More than three-fifths of workplace managers thought flexible working and leave arrangements had positive effects on employee motivation and commitment (63 per cent) and on employee relations (62 per cent). Around half thought there were positive effects on absenteeism (49 per cent) and productivity (48 per cent). In most of the remaining workplaces managers thought there were no effects on these aspects; few reported negative effects.

3.1 Awareness of extension of right to request flexible working

The right to request flexible working was extended in June 2014 to cover all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service. Prior to this extension, only employees with children under 17 or with specific caring responsibilities had the legal right to request flexible working.

Half (50 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of this change (Table 3.1). Managers in larger workplaces were more likely to be aware of the extension, with 87 per cent aware in workplaces with 250 or more employees, compared with 47 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees. Overall, almost three-quarters (71 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace where the manager was aware of the extension of the right to request. Awareness was also higher among managers in the public and not-for-profit sectors (62 per cent and 60 per cent respectively) compared with employers in the private sector (48 per cent). There was also variation by industry; around one third (34 per cent) of workplace managers in the Construction sector were aware, compared with 70 per cent of workplace managers in Public administration and defence. Awareness was higher where there was a recognised union at the workplace (60 per cent of managers in such workplaces were aware compared with 49 per cent in workplaces with no recognised union).

Table 3.1: Awareness of extension of right to request flexible working, by workplace size, column percentages

Aware of extension of right to request flexible working	Small (5-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (250 or more employees)	All workplaces
Yes	47	73	87	50
No	52	26	13	49
Don't know	1	1	0	1
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or more employees)</i>	<i>1,451</i>	<i>567</i>	<i>469</i>	<i>2,489</i>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, awareness of the extension of the right to request among workplace managers was correlated with awareness of policies relating to Shared Parental Leave and unpaid parental leave (discussed in Chapter 2). For example, 59 per cent of managers who were aware of Shared Parental Leave were aware of the extension of the right to request flexible working, compared with 27 per cent of those who were not. Managers who were aware

of the extensions in coverage of unpaid parental leave were also more likely to be aware of the extension of the right to request flexible working; 75 per cent of managers aware of the increase in the length of unpaid parental leave were aware of the extension of the right to request flexible working, compared with 34 per cent of those who were not.

3.2 Take-up of flexible working

Respondents were asked whether anyone on the payroll at their establishment was currently using, or had used any of the eight flexible working practices shown in Figure 3.1 in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 3.1 Definitions of flexible working arrangements

Respondents were asked about use and availability of the following flexible working arrangements. The descriptions and definitions used in the survey are given below (*italics indicate text that was read out to respondents on request*).

Job sharing. *This is where two part time employees share a full-time job*

Flexi-time. *The employee chooses when to start and end work (within agreed limits) but works certain 'core hours', e.g. 10am to 4pm every day*

Compressed week. *This is where an employee works full-time hours over fewer days in their working week. For example, working a 40 hour week over four days, or working a nine-day fortnight. This is not the same as shift-working.*

Worked reduced hours for a limited period

Worked from home on a regular basis rather than an ad hoc basis

Worked during school term time only

Annualised hours. *This is where the number of hours staff have to work is calculated over a full year rather than a week or month.*

Part-time, that is less than 30 hours a week

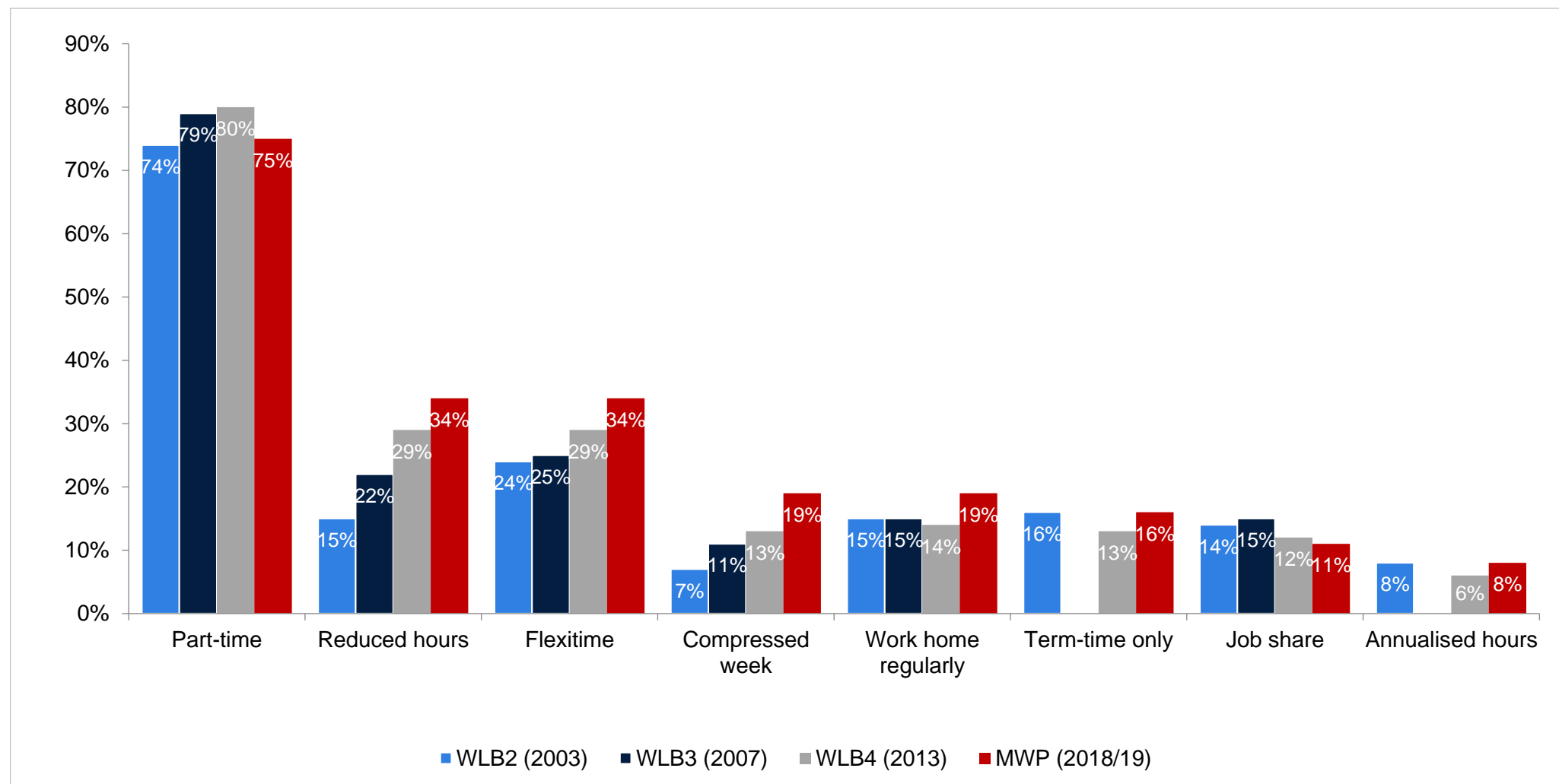
In the vast majority of workplaces (86 per cent), at least one employee had used (or was using) one of the flexible working arrangements described above. If part-time working is excluded, this figure stands at 62 per cent. Use of flexible working arrangements was more common among larger workplaces, standing at 99 per cent among workplaces with 250 or more employees compared with 85 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees (or 95 per cent and 58 per cent respectively if part-time working is excluded). There was also variation by industry sector, with virtually all workplaces within the Public Administration and Defence and Education sectors having at least some employees making use of flexible working arrangements, compared with around two-thirds (67 per cent) in the Construction sector. Take-up was also more common where there was a recognised union at the workplace (standing at 92 per cent in such workplaces, or 79 per cent excluding part-time work), although this will

partly reflect the fact that unions are more common in larger workplaces and in certain industry sectors. Take-up of any flexible working arrangement other than part-time was more common in London (76 per cent) and the East of England (67 per cent), compared with other regions in England and Scotland and Wales (where this ranged between 53 per cent and 61 per cent). However, if part-time work is included, less variation by region is apparent.

Estimates of take-up of flexible working can be compared with findings from the 2013 WLB survey and earlier surveys in the WLB series (

Figure 3.2). The most commonly used arrangement was part-time working; in 75 per cent of workplaces at least one employee was working part-time (or had done so in the past 12 months). This stood at 80 per cent in 2013. In around a third (34 per cent) of workplaces in 2018/19 at least one employee had reduced working hours, and the same percentage (34 per cent) had at least one employee working flexi-time. In 2013 both figures had stood at 29 per cent. Around one fifth (19 per cent) of workplaces had at least one employee working a compressed week in 2018/19, compared with 13 per cent in 2013, and 19 per cent of workplaces had at least some employees who regularly worked from home, compared with 14 per cent in 2013. Comparisons with earlier surveys in the WLB series show that the increases seen between 2013 and 2018/19 for take-up of reduced working hours, compressed hours and flexi-time were continuing a longer-run trend observed since the early 2000s. For the other flexible working practices, take-up appears to have generally remained more stable over the same period. However, there were statistically significant increases in take up between 2013 and 2018/19 for all practices except job-sharing, where there was no statistically significant change, and for part-time working, where there was a statistically significant decline.

Figure 3.2: Take-up by type of flexible working arrangement within workplaces over time, 2003- 2018/19, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (1,506 workplaces in 2003 (WLB2), 1,462 in 2007 (WLB3), 2,011 in 2013 (WLB4) and 2,489 in 2018/19).

Note: Take-up here means at least one employee at the workplace was using the arrangement or had done so in the 12 months prior to the survey.

If no employees had used any of these arrangements in the last 12 months (or respondents did not know if they had), they were asked whether any of the flexible working practices would be available to employees. On this basis, almost all workplaces (96 per cent) offered at least one form of flexible working arrangement. Note that due to a change in the way this question was asked in the MWP Survey, the responses are not comparable with those from the 2013 WLB survey²⁸. Provision of at least one flexible working arrangement was universal among large workplaces, but remained high even among small workplaces, at 95 per cent. There was also limited variation by union recognition (98 per cent in workplaces with a recognised union, and 95 per cent among those without), and by industry sector (this was universal for workplaces in Education, Public administration and defence and the Hotels and restaurants sectors, but also relatively high for workplaces in Construction and Wholesale and retail trade, where this stood at 93 per cent).

The promotion of flexible working opportunities is of considerable interest, and the importance of doing so has been recognised in initiatives such as the Flexible Working Task Force campaign to boost uptake of such arrangements²⁹. Around half (48 per cent) of managers in workplaces where flexible working was available, stated that managers at their workplace actively promoted the available flexible working and leave arrangements (this had stood at 43 per cent in the 2013 WLB survey). This was more common among larger workplaces and in the public and not-for-profit sectors. Overall, 46 per cent of all workplaces actively promoted these arrangements, and 54 per cent of all employees worked in these workplaces. Take-up of flexible working did appear higher where managers actively promoted arrangements, with at least one form being used in 94 per cent of workplaces where arrangements were actively promoted, compared with 87 per cent of workplaces where they did not.

Three-fifths (61 per cent) of workplaces with at least some form of flexible working available had a written policy on flexible working practices. One quarter (26 per cent) had no written policy, while in 12 per cent managers did not know if there was a policy. This represents an increase in the prevalence of written policies since the 2013 WLB survey, when just over half (52 per cent) of workplaces with flexible working arrangements had such a policy.

As in 2013, written policies were much more prevalent in larger workplaces; more than nine in ten (93 per cent) of workplaces with 250 or more employees had a written policy, compared with 77 per cent of medium-sized workplaces and 58 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees. Such policies remained most common in the public sector, where they were found in 78 per cent of workplaces, compared with 73 per cent of third sector workplaces and 58 per cent of private sector workplaces. The increase in the prevalence of written policies since the 2013 WLB survey appeared to be concentrated in private and third sector workplaces, rather than in the public sector (the equivalent figures for 2013 stood at 80 per cent in the public sector, 66 per cent in the third sector and 47 per cent in the private sector)³⁰.

²⁸ In the 2013 WLB survey, respondents were asked about availability of each practice not used, whereas in MWP respondents were only asked about availability if they stated that none of the listed practices were being used (or they did not know if this was the case).

²⁹ <https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/flexible-working-taskforce>

³⁰ Only the increase in the private sector was statistically significant.

3.3 Barriers to flexible working

Three per cent of workplaces did not offer any of the flexible working practices asked about in the survey³¹. Where this was the case, respondents were asked for the main reasons why (managers were able to give multiple responses). Given the relatively small number of workplaces (48 in total), a detailed analysis of these responses is not feasible. In broad terms however, around half said arrangements were “not feasible/not compatible with the nature of the work”, around two-fifths that they “did not fit with the culture of the business”, and around a fifth due to a lack of demand from employees. These are broadly similar patterns to those observed in the 2013 WLB survey³².

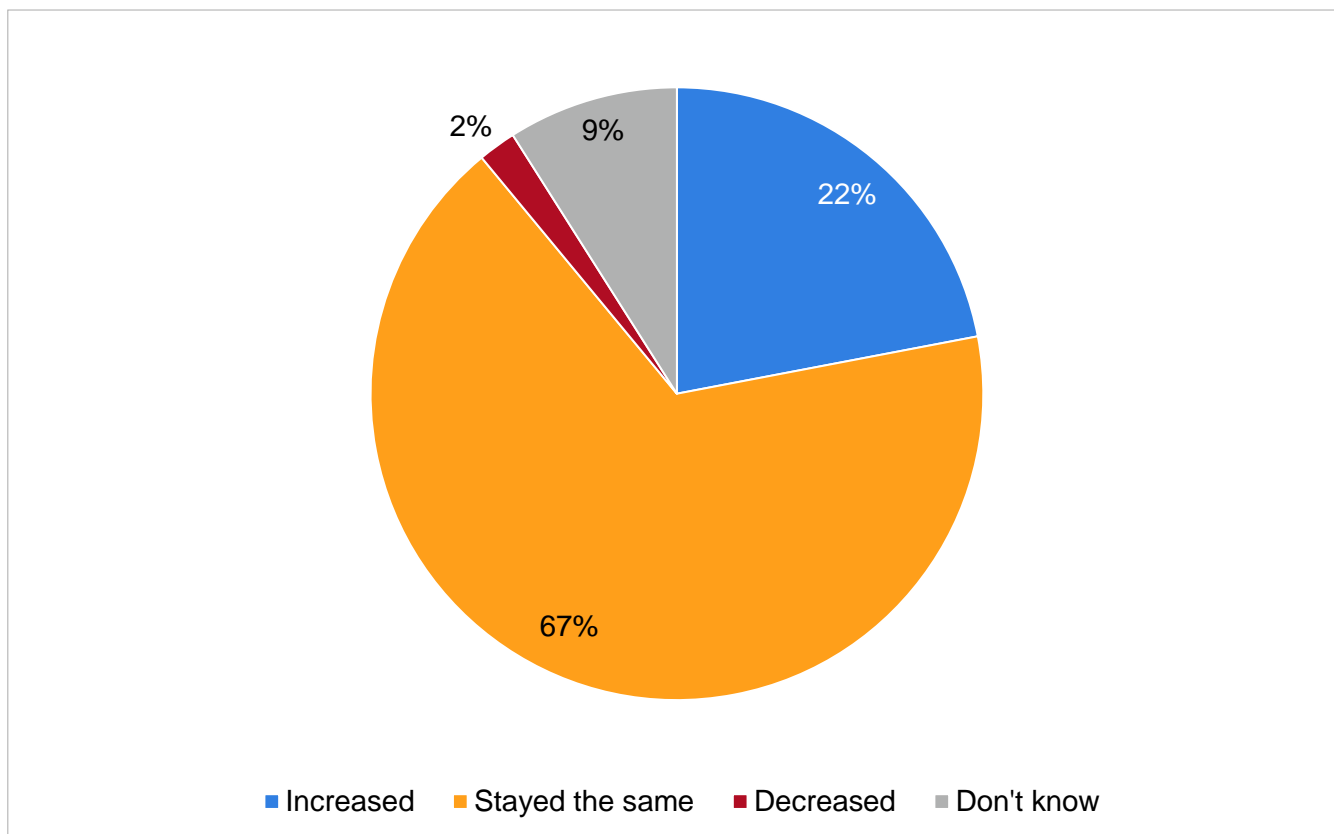
3.4 Change in flexible working arrangements

As well as being asked about their flexible working offer, managers were also asked whether the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements at their workplace had changed over the 5 years prior to the survey. Most (67 per cent) thought this had stayed the same (Figure 3.3). In around a further fifth (22 per cent) of workplaces, managers thought the percentage of employees with flexible working arrangements had increased. One in ten (nine per cent) did not know, while two per cent thought this had had decreased.

³¹ That is, they did not offer any of the arrangements listed in Figure 3.1.

³² Note that the 2013 Work-Life Balance Employer Survey asked separately about reasons why employers did not make part-time working available and reasons why they did not offer other forms of flexible working. Nevertheless, in both instances the most common reasons were the same as observed in the MWP Survey.

Figure 3.3: Change in flexible working arrangements over past 5 years, per cent workplaces



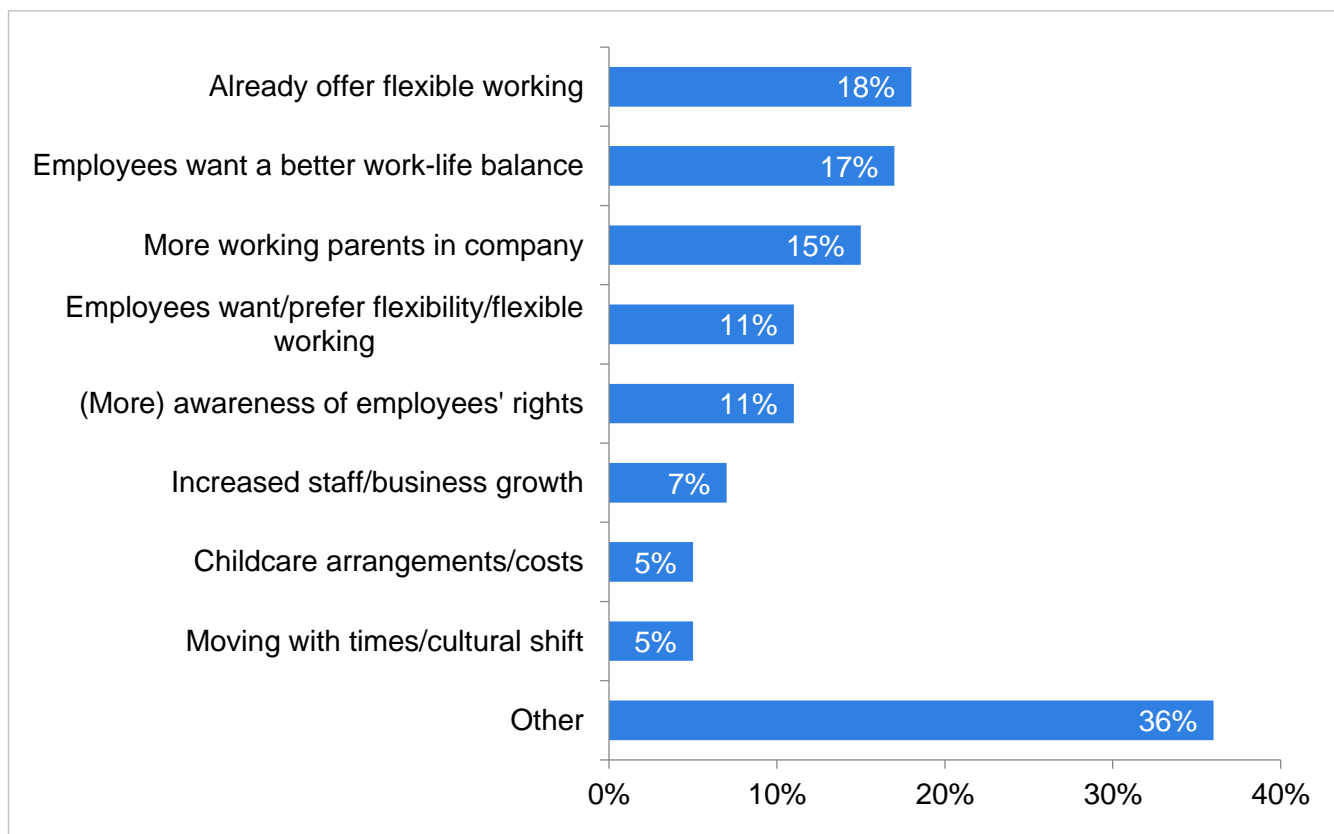
Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Employers who were aware of the extension of the right to request flexible working (see Section 3.2) were more likely than those who were not to have seen an increase in the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements (27 per cent, as opposed to 16 per cent).

These respondents were asked why there had been a change in the proportion of employees with (or without) flexible working arrangements. Among those who reported an increase, the most common reasons given were that the workplaces already offered flexible working (18 per cent), employees wanted a better work-life balance (17 per cent), and that there were more working parents in the company (15 per cent) (

Figure 3.4). Although just over one third (36 per cent) gave other responses, no other individual response was mentioned by more than five per cent of respondents.

Figure 3.4: Reasons why the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements has increased, per cent workplaces

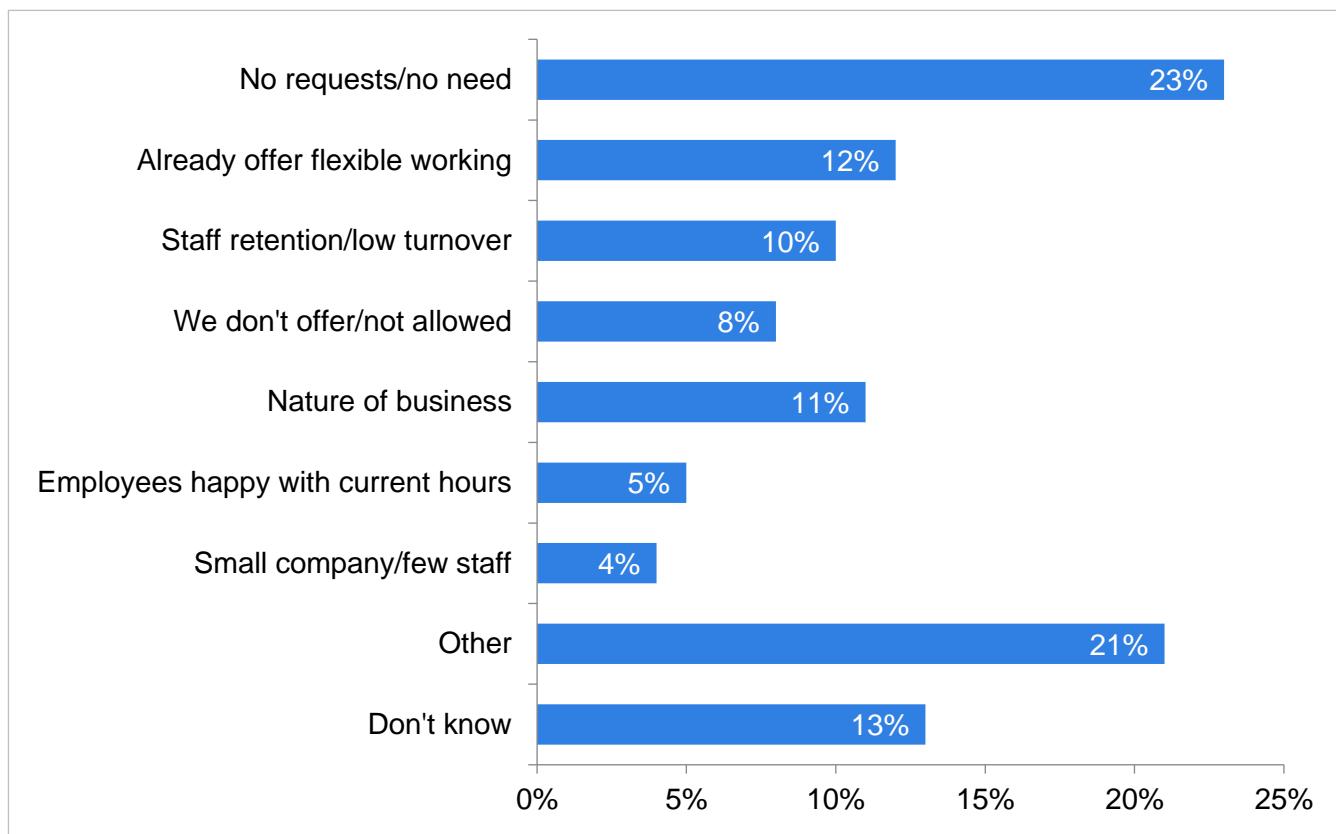


Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where respondent indicated an increase in employees with flexible working in the 5 years prior to the survey (812 workplaces).

Note: "Other" combines a range of other reasons given; no individual response was given by more than five per cent of respondents.

Amongst workplace managers who thought the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements had stayed the same, almost a quarter (23 per cent) believed this was because there had been no requests or no need to request flexible working (Figure 3.5). This was followed by the fact that they already offered flexible working (12 per cent). This suggests that managers felt there had been no change in requests for flexible working because they already offered such practices, and that there had been no change in the take-up of these arrangements over this period.

Figure 3.5: Reasons why the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements has stayed the same, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where respondent indicated no change in employees with flexible working in the 5 years prior to the survey (1,386 workplaces).

Note: "Other" combines a range of other reasons given; no individual response was given by more than five per cent of respondents.

Note that as relatively few respondents (less than 50 workplaces) reported there had been a decrease, we do not separately analyse this group. However, to give a broad picture, the most common reasons were having had no requests or there being no need and that employers preferred full time or more hours, both of which were mentioned by around one quarter of managers reporting a decrease.

3.5 Requests for flexible working

As noted earlier, in June 2014, the right to request flexible working was extended to all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service. This section considers requests for flexible working, exploring both the number and type of requests received, whether requests were accepted and decision-making processes regarding requests.

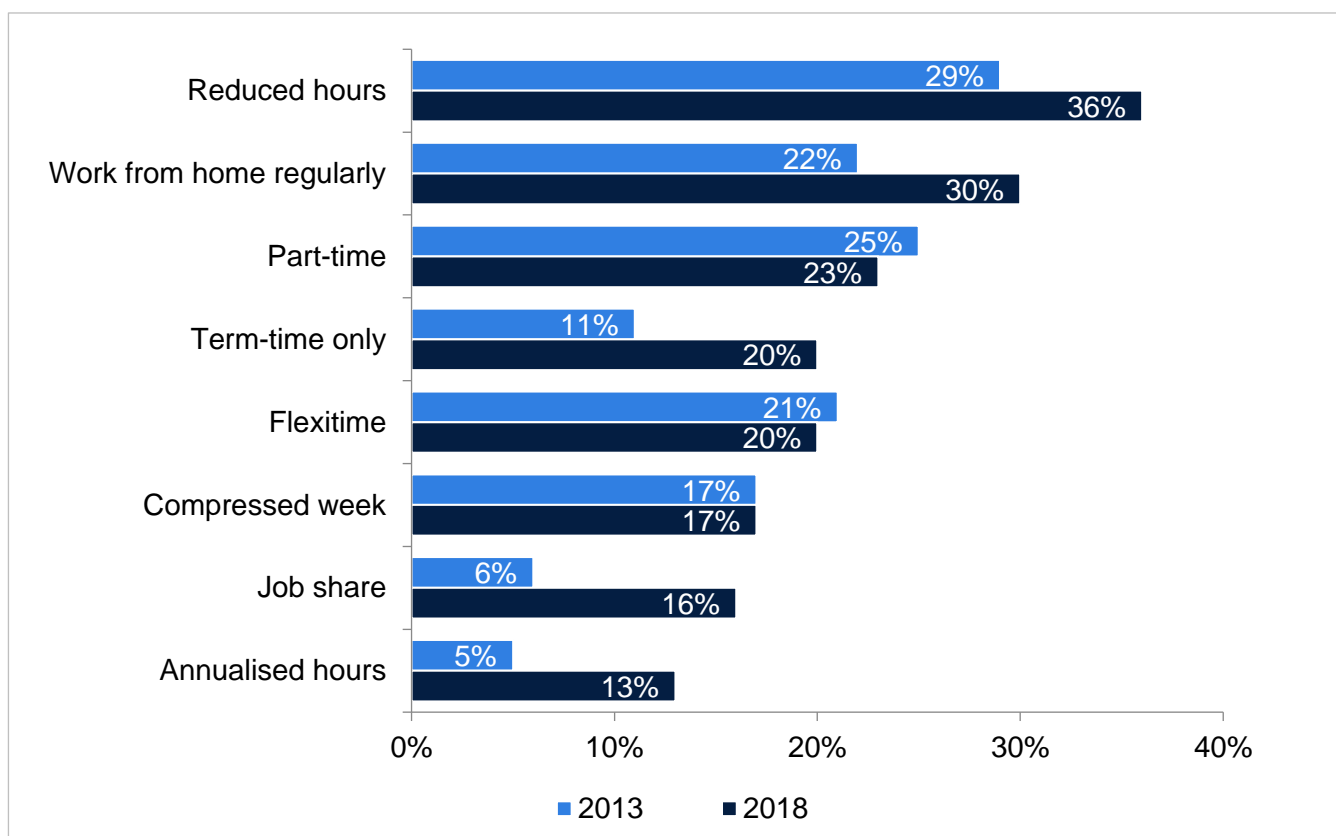
3.5.1 Number and type of requests

All respondents, regardless of their provision of flexible working arrangements, were asked how many requests they had received from employees in the 12 months prior to the survey to change their working pattern for 3 months or more.

Just over one quarter (27 per cent) of workplaces had received between one and five requests, with three per cent receiving more than five requests (thus 30 per cent of workplaces had received at least one request). Unsurprisingly this varied by workplace size, with larger workplaces more likely to have received requests, and to have received a higher number of requests. Larger workplaces were also much more likely to say they did not know how many requests they had received; this was the case for 41 per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees. Around three-fifths (61 per cent) of workplaces had received no requests, with a further one in ten (nine per cent) stating that they did not know how many requests they had received³³.

Where a flexible working arrangement was available at the workplace, the respondent was asked if they had received requests for that particular arrangement in the 12 months prior to the survey (Figure 3.6). The most common was a request for reduced hours, cited by 36 per cent, followed by requests to work from home on a regular basis (30 per cent). In around a fifth of cases there had been requests to work part-time (23 per cent), for flexi-time (20 per cent), term-time working (20 per cent), a compressed week (17 per cent) and job sharing (16 per cent). The least common request was for annualised hours, reported by 13 per cent of workplaces.

Figure 3.6: Requests for flexible working in 12 months prior to survey, per cent workplaces



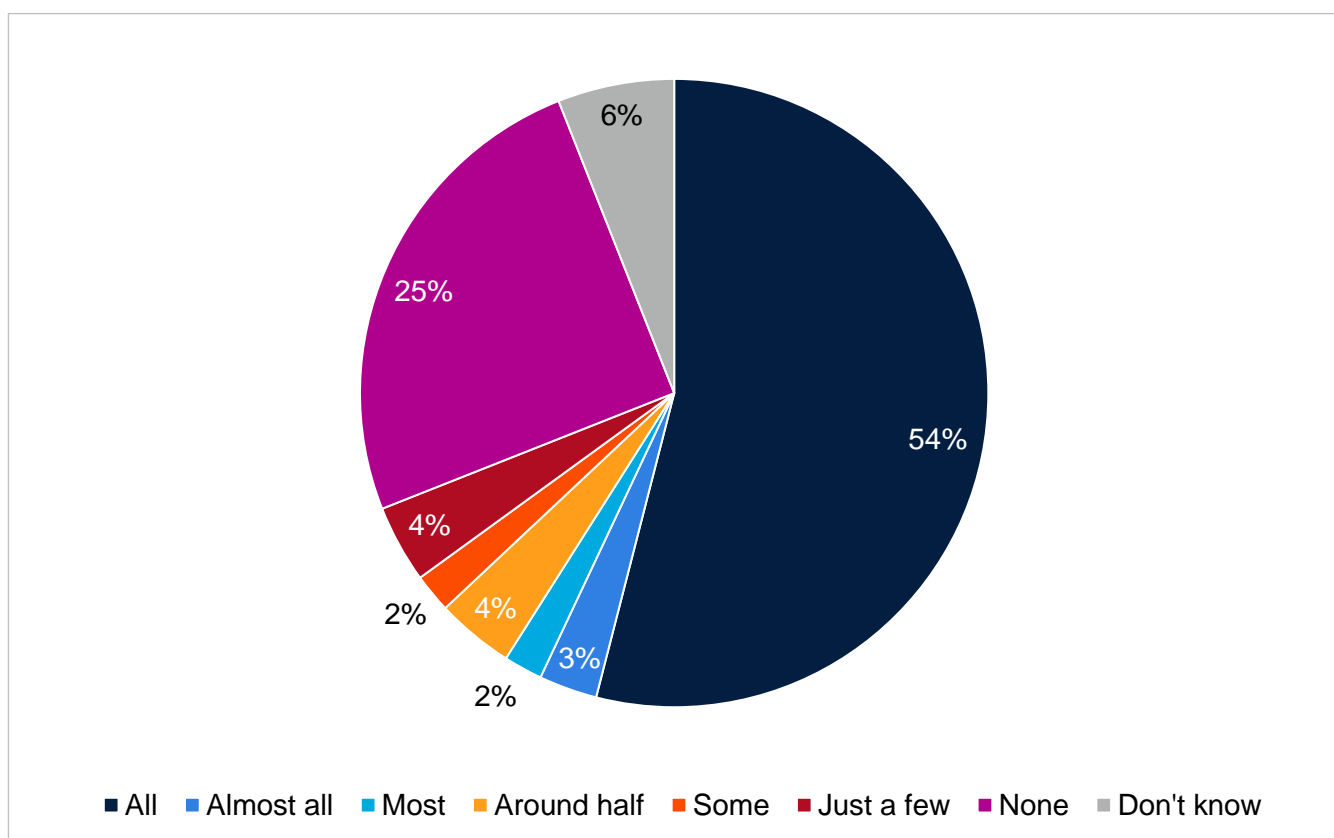
Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where the specified flexible working arrangement is available (in 2018/19, this varies from 446 workplaces for annualised hours to 2,176 workplaces for part-time work; in 2013, this varies from 683 workplaces for annualised hours to 1,915 for part-time work).

³³ It is possible that this could include those who did not know whether they had received a request as well as those who did not know how many requests were received.

The responses suggest some increase in requests for certain types of flexible working compared with the previous WLB survey³⁴ (Figure 3.6); in 2013, in 22 per cent of workplaces where working from home was available there had been requests for this arrangement, rising to 30 per cent in 2018/19. Increases were also apparent for requests for term-time working, reduced hours, job sharing and annualised hours. For part-time working, flexi-time and compressed weeks the level of requests had remained similar across the two time points, with no statistically significant changes.

Where workplaces had received at least one request in the 12 months prior to the survey, respondents were asked what proportion of requests were made in writing (Figure 3.7). In just over half (54 per cent) of such workplaces, all requests were made in writing. In a further three per cent of workplaces almost all requests were made in writing. In one quarter (25 per cent), no requests were made in writing.

Figure 3.7: Proportion of requests for flexible working made in writing, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where flexible working request in past 12 months (1,210 workplaces).

Larger workplaces were much more likely to say that all requests were made in writing; this applied for 84 per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees, compared with 48 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees. A more informal approach seemed to be more prevalent in small workplaces; in 30 per cent of small workplaces no requests were made in writing, with less than 0.5 per cent of large workplaces reporting this to be the case. Partly

³⁴ Although the same question was asked in the 2013 WLB survey, some caution should be noted in this comparison due to the change in the way availability of practices was identified (see Section 3.2).

reflecting the greater prevalence of union recognition in larger workplaces; it was more common for all requests to be made in writing where a union was recognised (76 per cent), compared with workplaces with no recognised union (48 per cent).

3.5.2 Accepting and rejecting requests

Once a request for flexible working is made, employers then have to make a decision on whether to accept or reject the request³⁵.

The above section noted that in 54 per cent of workplaces where requests had been made in the 12 months prior to the survey, all requests were made in writing; in 69 per cent, at least one request was made in writing. In 38 per cent of workplaces where any requests were made in writing, the request led to a change in the terms and conditions in employee contracts in all cases. In a further 23 per cent of workplaces a change in terms and conditions resulted in at least some cases, while in 25 per cent there was no change in terms and conditions as a result of the written request. In 14 per cent of workplaces the respondent did not know what proportion of written requests had resulted in a change in terms and conditions.

Workplaces who had received at least one request for one of the types of flexible working specified above were asked how many they had turned down. In the vast majority (83 per cent) of workplaces where at least one request was received, no requests had been turned down. In nine per cent at least one request had been turned down (and in around half of these cases it was one request that had been turned down); this also stood at nine per cent in 2013. The remaining eight per cent of workplaces did not know how many requests had been rejected³⁶. Larger workplaces were more likely than smaller workplaces to have turned down at least one request, however they were also much more likely to report not knowing how many requests had been turned down. Similarly, public sector workplaces were more likely to have turned down at least one request than private and third sector workplaces, but were also more likely to not know; this is in part likely to reflect the larger average size of public sector workplaces (and therefore the greater volume of requests they may receive).

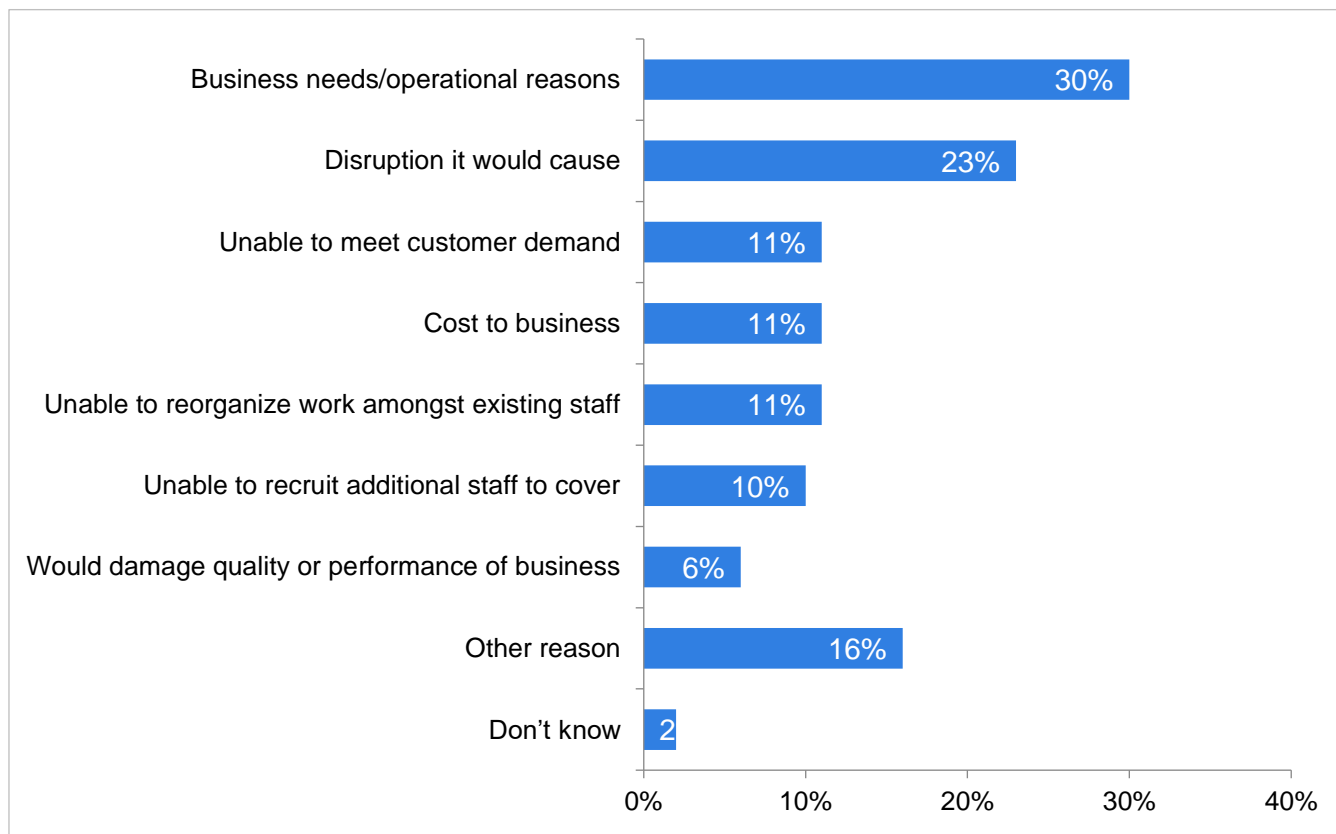
Where at least one request had been turned down, respondents were asked for the reasons why (

Figure 3.8). The most common reasons given were business needs/operational reasons, cited by 30 per cent of those who had turned down a request for flexible working, followed by the disruption it would cause, reported by 23 per cent of workplaces.

³⁵ Acas have produced guidance on handling requests for flexible working: <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1616>

³⁶ While the proportion that had turned down at least one request was unchanged between 2013 and 2018, there was an increase in the percentage that stated they did not know (which stood at less than one per cent in 2013), and a fall in the percentage who said no requests had been turned down (which stood at 91 per cent in 2013).

Figure 3.8: Reasons for turning down requests for flexible working in the last 12 months, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces where at least one request for flexible working in the last 12 months was turned down (231 workplaces).

Note: "Other reason" combines all other responses given. No individual response included here was mentioned by more than five per cent of workplace managers.

3.5.3 Decision-making regarding requests

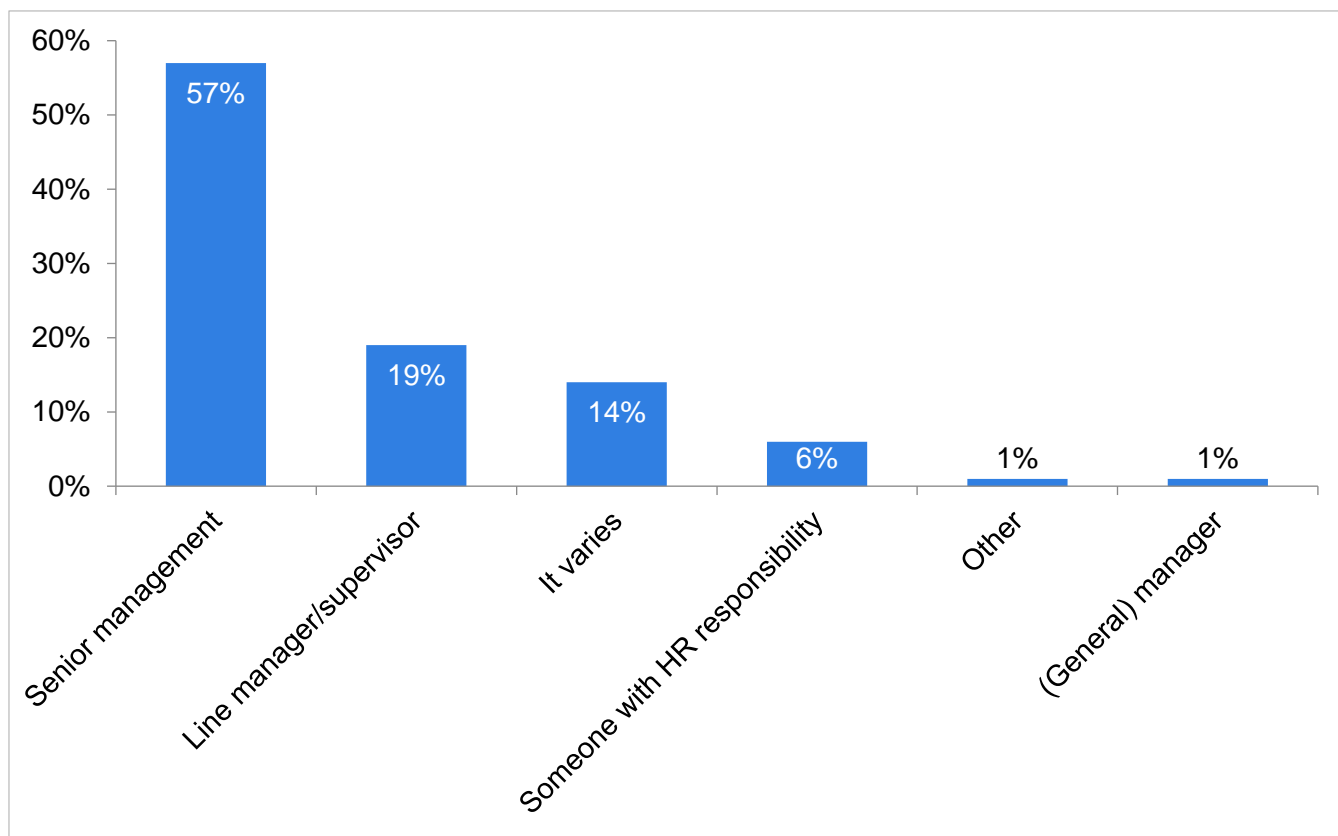
Respondents in workplaces offering at least one form of flexible working were asked who at their workplace was responsible for making decisions about whether the request was accepted. In almost three-fifths (57 per cent) of these workplaces, the decision was made by senior management (

Figure 3.9). In a further 19 per cent the decision was made by a line manager or a supervisor, in six per cent it was made by someone with HR responsibility, and 14 per cent stated that this varied.

As to be expected, there was variation by workplace size. In 59 per cent of small workplaces, this was the responsibility of senior management, compared with 44 per cent of medium-sized workplaces and 20 per cent of large workplaces. In contrast, and likely due to the greater need to devolve responsibilities for such decision-making in larger workplaces, it was much more common for larger workplaces to state that the decision was made by a line manager or supervisor. This was the case for 52 per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees, compared with 25 per cent of medium-sized workplaces and 18 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees. Some variation by industry sector was also evident (which will partly relate to workplace size); for example, in more than four-fifths of workplaces in the Education

and Construction sectors, such decisions were made by senior management (82 per cent and 87 per cent respectively), compared with around half of workplaces in the Wholesale and Retail, Hotels and restaurants and Health and Social Work sectors, and just 19 per cent of workplaces in Public administration and defence.

Figure 3.9: Who makes decisions on whether to accept a request for flexible working, per cent workplaces



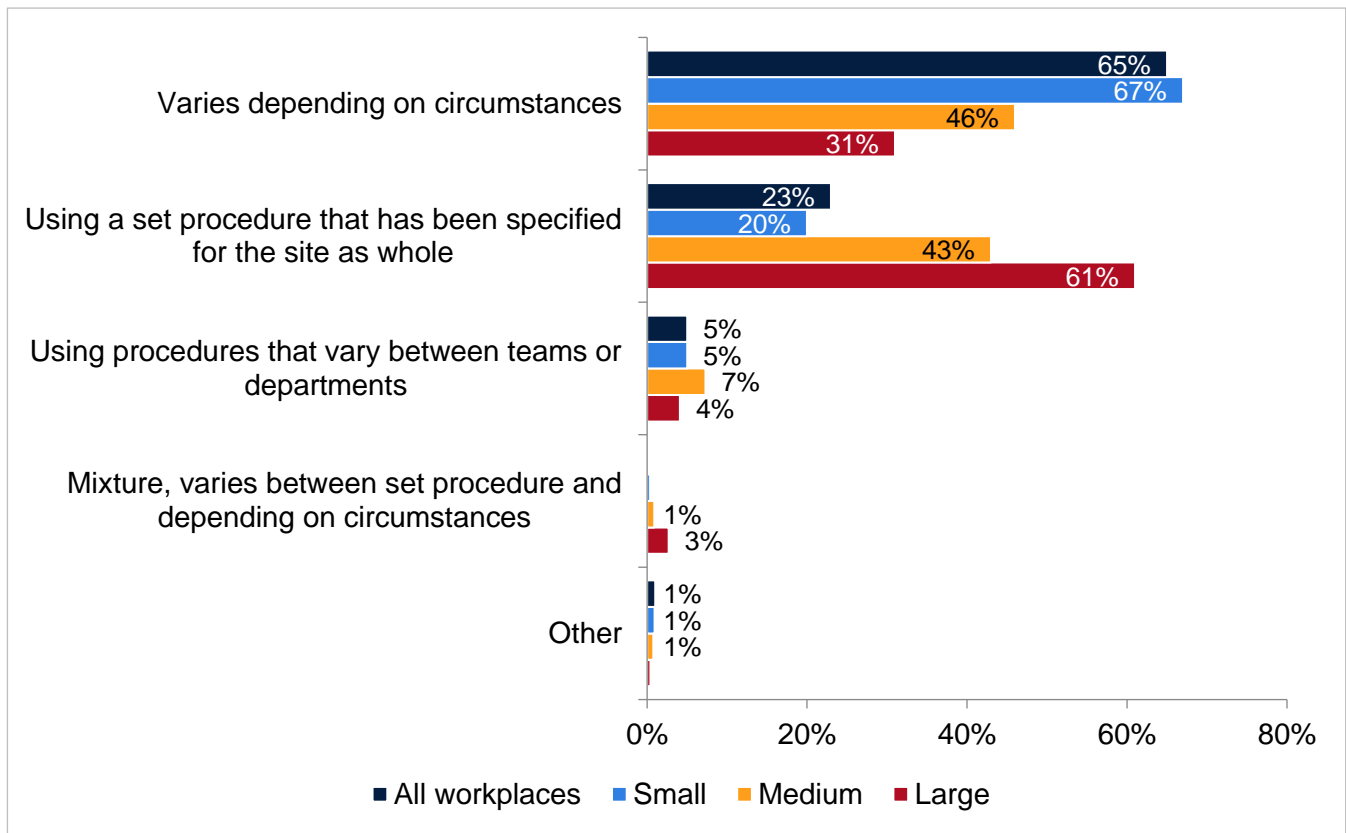
Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where at least one flexible working arrangement available (2,424 workplaces). Don't know responses are included in the base, but not shown in the chart, for ease of presentation.

Respondents were also asked how decisions about flexible working requests were made (Figure 3.10). In almost one quarter (23 per cent) of workplaces where flexible working was available, this was through a set procedure that had been specified for the site as a whole. In a further five per cent of workplaces, there were procedures that varied between teams or departments. By far the most common response was that this varied depending on circumstances, stated by around two-thirds (65 per cent) of workplace managers. This was also the most common approach reported in the 2013 WLB survey, where this applied for 74 per cent of workplaces where flexible working was available.

Again, this varied by workplace size, with larger workplaces much more likely to have a set procedure (61 per cent) than small workplaces (20 per cent) and medium-sized workplaces (43 per cent) (Figure 3.10). Small workplaces were much more likely than larger workplaces to say this varied depending on circumstances, and overall, 46 per cent of employees worked in a workplace where this was the case. Public sector workplaces were also more likely to use set procedures (57 per cent), compared with 20 per cent of private sector workplaces and 34 per cent of third sector workplaces. This was also the case for workplaces with recognised unions;

41 per cent followed a set procedure, compared with 19 per cent of workplaces without a recognised union.

Figure 3.10: How decisions about flexible working requests are made, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where at least one flexible working arrangement available (2,424 workplaces).

Of the 19 per cent of workplaces where decisions about flexible working requests were made by a line manager or supervisor, one third (33 per cent) stated that a set procedure was used. In the remainder, line managers would therefore appear to have a fair amount of discretion over the acceptance or rejection of flexible working requests (equivalent to 12 per cent of all workplaces where at least one flexible working arrangement was available).

3.6 Employer attitudes to WLB

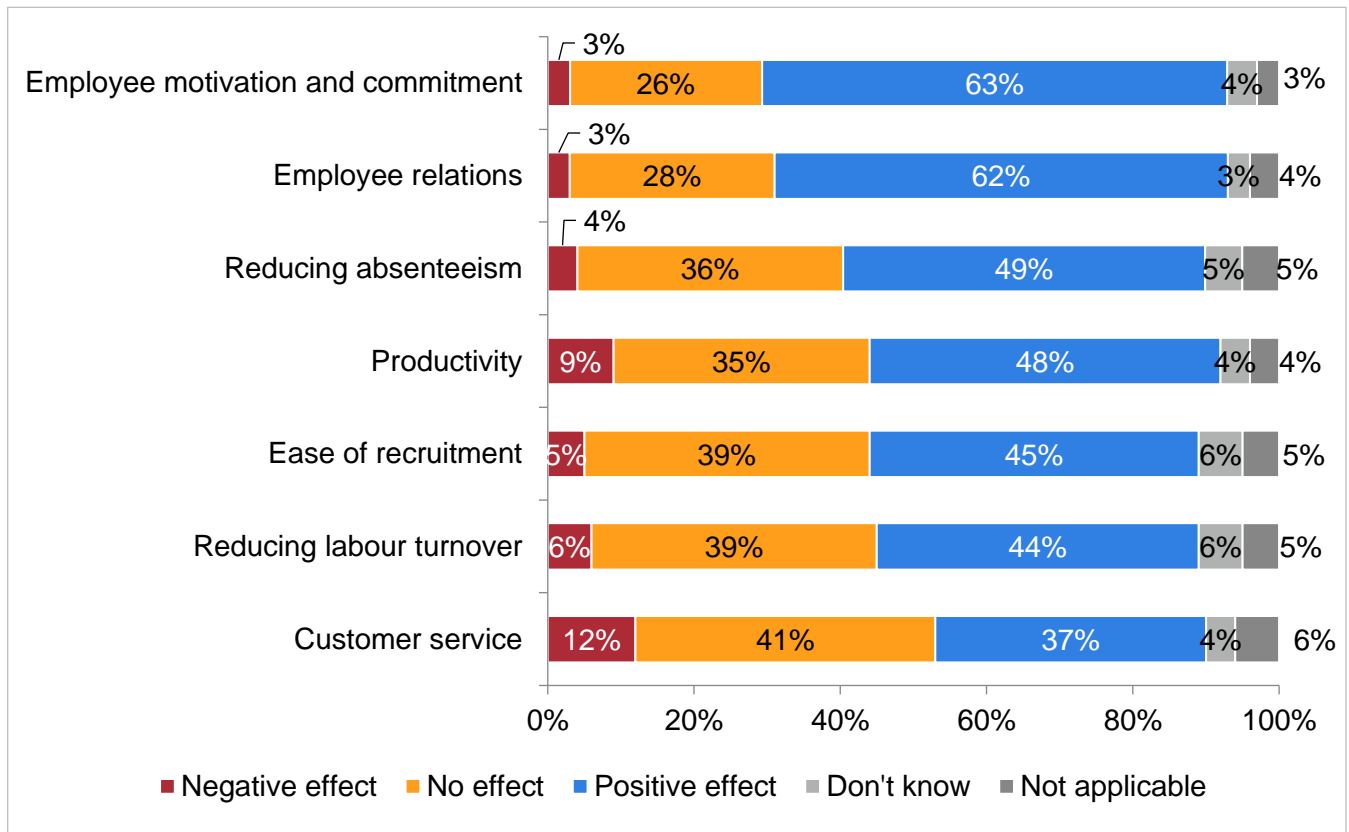
3.6.1 Employer views on effects of flexible working and leave arrangements

Respondents were asked about their views on the effects of flexible working and leave arrangements at their establishment; with respondents asked whether such arrangements had a generally positive, generally negative, or no effect on seven different aspects (Figure 3.11).

Across all seven areas, few managers reported that they thought flexible working and leave arrangements had a negative effect. Managers were most likely to see such arrangements as having a positive effect on employee motivation and commitment (63 per cent) and on employee relations (62 per cent).

Around half typically thought there were positive effects on absenteeism (49 per cent), productivity (48 per cent), ease of recruitment (45 per cent) and labour turnover (44 per cent). Most remaining managers thought there were no effects, with few citing negative effects. The MWP survey asked for the first time about effects on customer service; an area in which employers were least likely to report positive effects (37 per cent), around one in ten (12 per cent) saw negative effects, and 41 per cent reported no effect.

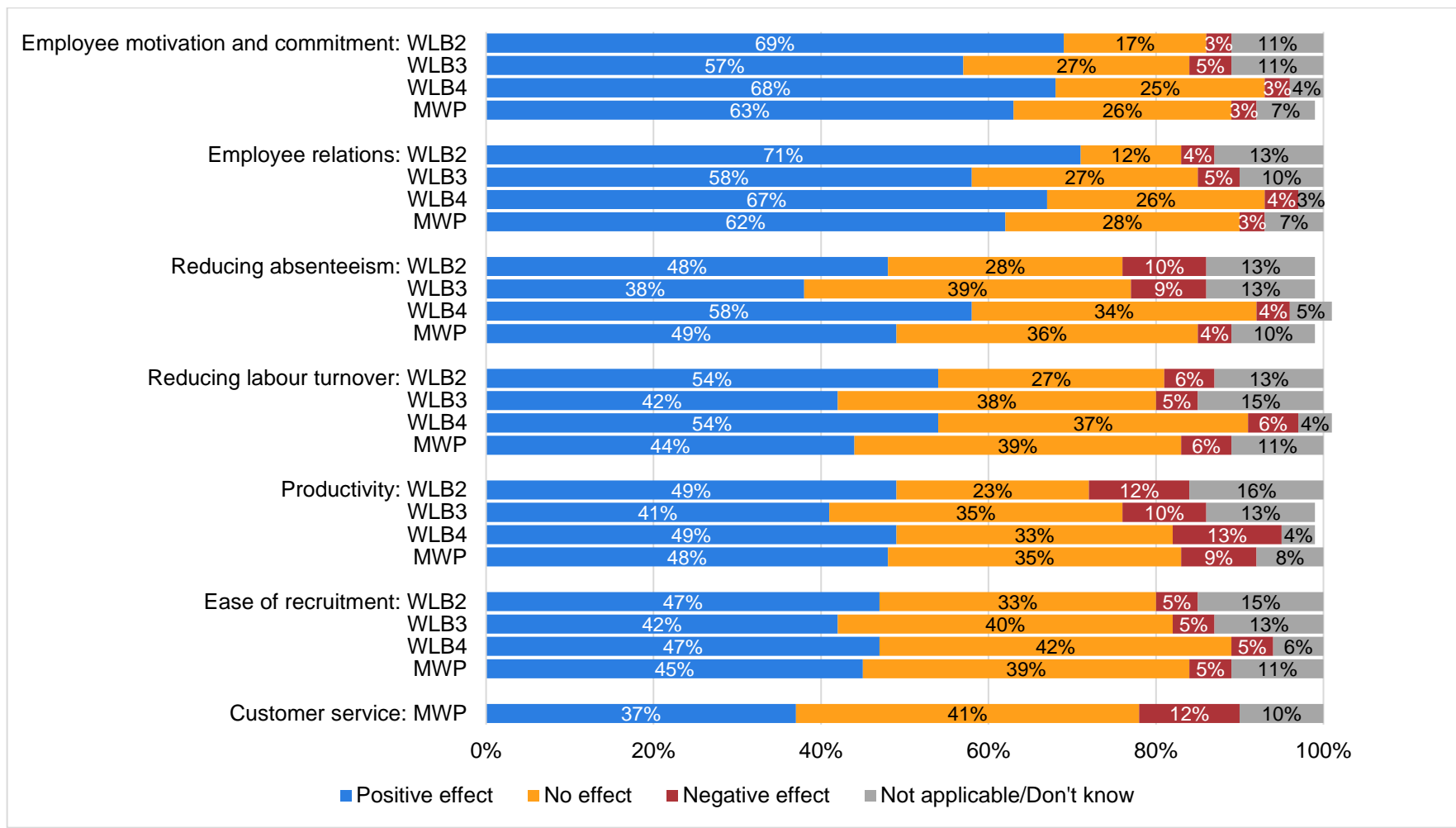
Figure 3.11: Perceived effects of flexible working and leave arrangements, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Previous WLB surveys have also shown employee motivation and commitment and employee relations to be the areas in which managers were most likely to perceive positive effects (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**). Compared with 2013, fewer managers in 2018/19 reported positive effects on employee motivation and commitment, employee relations, reducing absenteeism and reducing labour turnover. However, there were not statistically significant changes in the corresponding percentage of managers perceiving negative or no effects; instead, there were typically small increases in the percentage of managers who stated that they did not know in 2018/19. The percentage of managers who thought such arrangements had a negative effect on productivity fell from 13 per cent in 2013 to nine per cent in 2018/19. Again, there was no corresponding statistically significant change in the percentage of who perceived positive or no effects, but there had been an increase in the percentage stating they did not know in 2018/19.

Figure 3.12: Perceived effects of flexible working and leave arrangements over time, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees.

Across all seven aspects, large employers were most likely to see flexible working and leave arrangements as having a positive effect compared with small and medium-sized employer (Table 3.2). For example, 83 per cent of managers in large workplaces considered such arrangements to have a positive effect on employee relations, compared with 60 per cent in small workplaces and 74 per cent in medium-sized workplaces. Public sector managers were generally the most likely to report positive effects, although often there was no statistically significant difference between public and third sector employers. Managers were also more likely to report positive effects across all aspects where at least some form of flexible working arrangement was in use, compared with workplaces where none of the flexible practices asked about in the survey were being used.

Table 3.2: Managers reporting that flexible working and leave arrangements have a positive effect, cell percentages

	Employee motivation and commitment	Customer service	Ease of recruitment	Reducing labour turnover	Reducing absenteeism	Productivity	Employee relations
Workplace size							
Small	62	37	44	42	48	47	60
Medium	76	38	56	61	60	59	74
Large	84	55	64	67	67	69	83
Sector							
Private	61	36	44	41	47	46	60
Public	80	43	51	65	68	63	76
Third	78	43	55	59	64	60	74
Any take-up of flexible working							
Yes	67	39	47	47	52	51	65
No	41	26	31	24	30	31	42

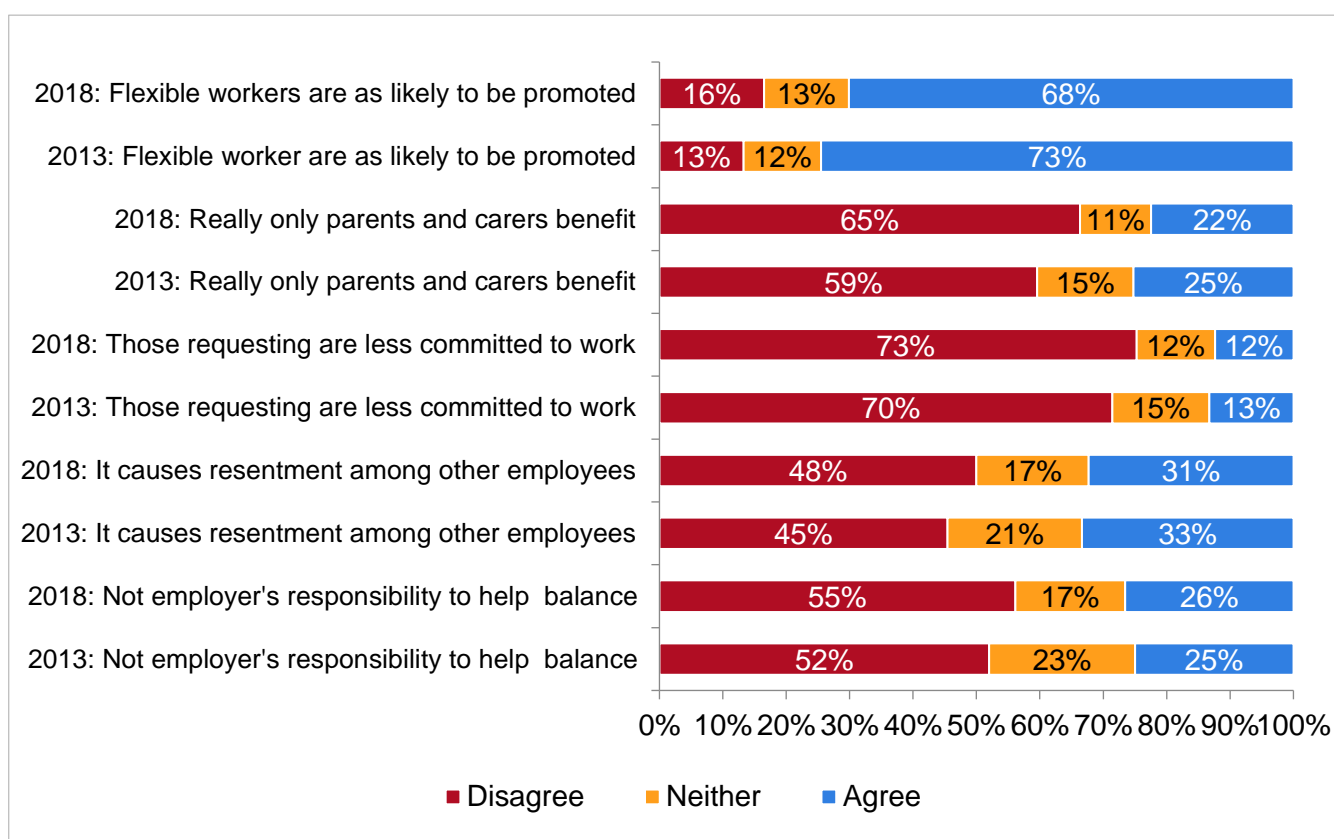
Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

3.6.2 Employer attitudes to work-life balance

Employers were also asked for their views on flexible working more generally. Respondents were read a list of five statements (as shown in Figure 3.13) and were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement (on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree).

The first statement shown in Figure 3.13 can be considered a positive statement (where agreeing indicates a positive attitude towards flexible working) while the other four statements can be considered negative (where agreeing indicates a negative attitude towards flexible working).

Figure 3.13: Employer attitudes towards work-life balance, 2013 and 2018/19, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces). Don't know responses are included in the base but are not shown in the chart for ease of presentation. As a result, percentages will not sum to 100.

Employers' attitudes generally appeared fairly similar in the MWP Survey to those apparent in 2013³⁷. Almost seven in ten employers (68 per cent) stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that people who work flexibly were just as likely to be promoted. This represents a small decrease compared with the percentage seen in 2013 (73 per cent). On the remaining four statements, while there had been a small increase in the percentage disagreeing with each statement, this was only statistically significant for the percentage who disagreed that it

³⁷ Note that in the 2013 WLB survey report, the figures presented in the main body of the report are calculated excluding don't know responses from the base, and so may differ from those reported here.

was only parents and carers who benefitted from flexible working, rising from 59 per cent in 2013 to 65 per cent in 2018/19. Given the arguably greater emphasis on flexible working in recent years, including the extension of the right to request, and some signs of some additional take-up of arrangements by employees, it is noteworthy that employers' attitudes to flexible working appear relatively unchanged³⁸.

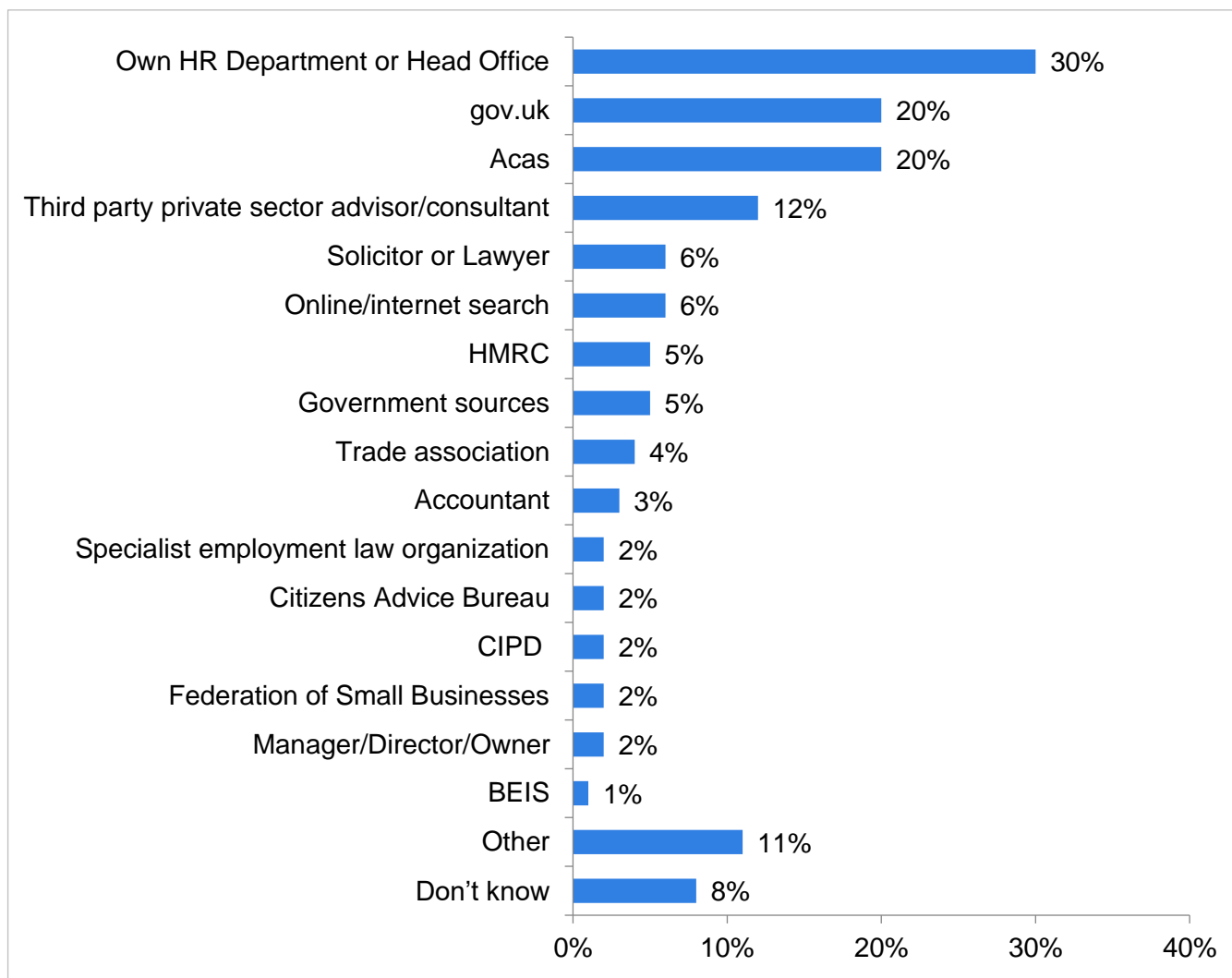
3.6.3 Sources of information

Respondents were also asked which organisations or people they would contact if they needed to find out more about flexible working or about maternity, paternity or parental rights legislation. The most common response was the organisation's own HR department or head office, cited by 30 per cent of workplace managers (Figure 3.14). This was followed by gov.uk and Acas (both cited by 20 per cent). These were also the top three sources of information in the 2013 WLB survey.

Just under one in ten respondents (eight per cent) said that they did not know who they would contact.

³⁸ As observed for the responses on the effects of flexible working and leave arrangements discussed in Section 3.6.1, there were small increases in the percentage of managers responding don't know to each of these questions. Overall levels of non-response to these questions remained low however, at between two and five per cent depending on the item.

Figure 3.14: Organisations or people respondents would contact to find out more about flexible working or about maternity, paternity or parental rights legislation, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Note: This was an unprompted question (i.e. the list of possible responses was not read out). “Other” combines a range of other sources given; no individual response was cited by more than one per cent of respondents. A more detailed breakdown is provided in the separate tables accompanying this report.

There was some variation by workplace size. For small, medium and large workplaces, the three most common sources of information were their own HR department or head office, gov.uk and Acas. However, for large workplaces, the most common choice was Acas (reported by 49 per cent), while in small and medium-sized workplaces, the most common choice was their own HR department or head office (29 per cent and 36 per cent for small and medium workplaces respectively).

Small workplaces were more likely to say that they did not know who they would contact (nine per cent reported this, compared with four per cent of medium-sized workplaces and two per cent of large workplaces). Public sector workplaces were more likely to say they would contact their own HR department/head office, with this applying for 53 per cent, compared with private sector workplaces (28 per cent) and third sector workplaces (22 per cent). Workplaces in the third sector were more likely to say they would contact gov.uk and Acas.

Part 2: Voice in the workplace

In this second part of the report we focus on employee voice in the workplace. The first chapter in this section (Chapter 4) explores union and non-union representation. Chapter 5 considers other methods of communicating with employees, including direct communications as well as communications through other methods. Chapter 6 covers consultation over redundancies, while Chapter 7 explores employers' approaches to dealing with collective disputes as well as individual grievances and disciplinary actions. The final chapter in this report (Chapter 8) explores relationships between managers and employees.

4. Union and non-union representation

This chapter explores union and non-union representation in the workplace, including employer attitudes towards unions, the prevalence of unions and union representatives, and the prevalence and selection of non-union representatives.

Key findings

In 76 per cent of workplaces, managers agreed that they would rather consult directly with employees than with unions. This indicates no substantive change in preferences for direct consultation since 2011, when the figure stood at 79 per cent. Just over three-fifths (62 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace where employers preferred to consult directly with employees.

Just under one fifth (17 per cent) of all workplaces had at least some union members, with around one third of these (5 per cent of all workplaces) having a majority of employees in union membership. In 2011, the percentage of workplaces with at least some members was higher (21 per cent), as was the percentage with a majority of employees in membership (10 per cent). The report presents both lower bound and upper bound estimates for the percentage of workplaces with a recognised union and union members, standing at 12 per cent and 17 per cent of workplaces respectively. If alternatively, the percentage of employees in a workplace with a recognised union and union members is considered, the lower bound estimate is 34 per cent and the upper bound 41 per cent. The upper bound estimates are very similar to those seen in 2011 (17 per cent and 43 per cent respectively); however, the lower bound estimates would imply a fall in the incidence of union recognition over this period.

Five per cent of all workplaces reported having an on-site union representative. This represented a small decline from the figure of seven per cent in the 2011 WERS. As on-site union representatives are more common in larger workplaces, overall, 28 per cent of all employees worked in a workplace with a representative

In 27 per cent of workplaces with union members, trade union subscriptions were deducted from the pay of at least some employees. This was more common in public

sector workplaces with union members (56 per cent).

Just over one in ten (11 per cent) of workplaces had employees who were non-union representatives. Non-union representatives were more common in larger workplaces, such that 23 per cent of employees worked in a workplace with a non-union representative(s).

The majority (85 per cent) of workplaces did not have either union or non-union representatives. Just one per cent of all workplaces had both union and non-union representatives; a further four per cent had a union representative only, while ten per cent had a non-union representative only.

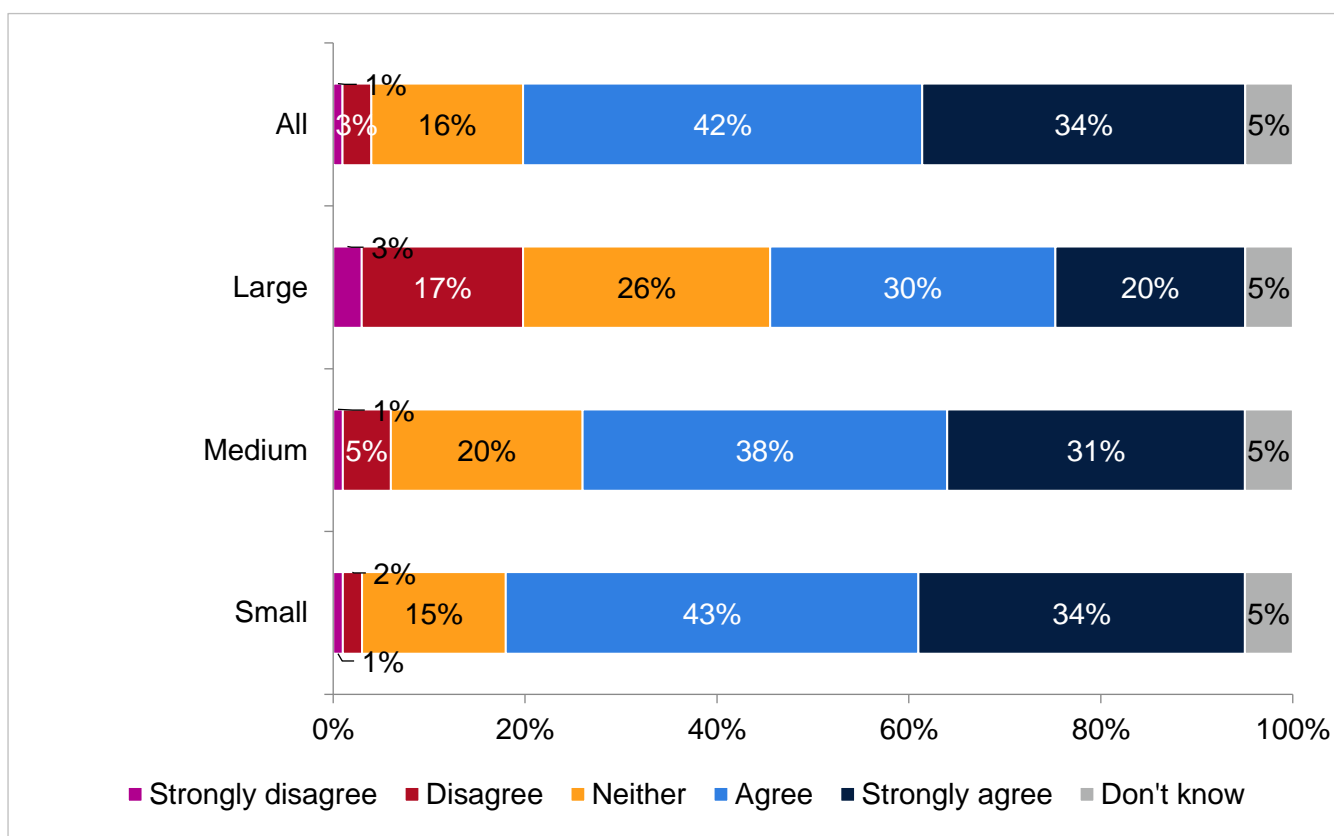
4.1 Employer attitudes

In 76 per cent of workplaces, managers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “We would rather consult directly with employees than with unions”, whilst 16 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 3 per cent disagreed (Figure 4.1). Although the share of managers agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement was slightly lower than in the 2011 WERS (79 per cent), the difference was not statistically significant³⁹.

Managers in smaller workplaces were more likely to prefer consulting directly with employees; 77 per cent of managers in workplaces with fewer than 50 employees agreed or strongly agreed that they would rather consult directly with employees than with unions, compared with 50 per cent in workplaces with 250 or more employees (Figure 4.1). Overall, 62 per cent of employees worked in a workplace where employers preferred to consult directly with employees than with unions.

³⁹ As is the convention throughout this report, don't know responses have been included in the base when producing these estimates. If don't know responses are excluded, in both MWP and the 2011 WERS, 80 per cent of managers agreed they would rather consult directly with employees than with unions.

Figure 4.1: Employers' agreeing they would rather consult directly with employees than with unions, by workplace size, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Note that don't know responses are not shown and therefore row percentages do not sum to 100 per cent.

4.2 Union representation

4.2.1 Union membership and recognition

Just under one fifth (17 per cent) of all workplaces had at least some union members, with around one third of these (5 per cent of all workplaces) having a majority of employees in union membership. A further 70 per cent of workplaces had no union members; in the remaining 13 per cent of workplaces, managers did not know if there were union members present. In 2011, the percentage of workplaces with at least some members was higher (21 per cent), as was the percentage with a majority of employees in membership (10 per cent). In 2018/19, just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace where there were union members (42 per cent where there were no union members and in the remaining 15 per cent this was not known).

Managers in all workplaces were asked whether unions were recognised for negotiating pay and conditions for any employees at the workplace⁴⁰. Just over one in ten (12 per cent) of workplaces had at least one recognised union, whereas two-thirds (68 per cent) had no

⁴⁰ It is possible for unions to be recognised at a workplace even when no employees belong to a union, for example if recognition has been agreed at company or industry level.

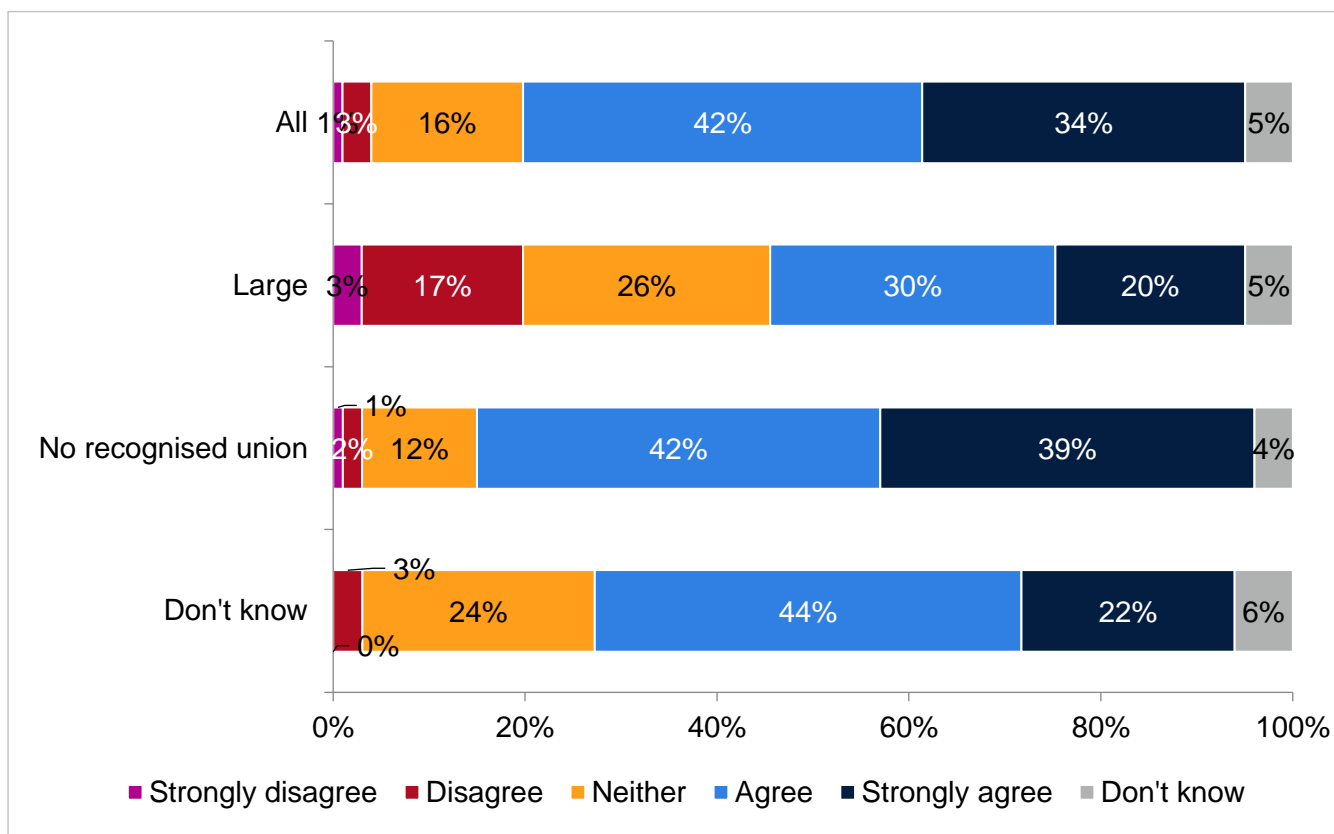
recognised unions; in the remaining one fifth (20 per cent) of workplaces, managers were not able to say whether (or how many) unions were recognised. It is not possible to determine whether these respondents did not know whether there was a recognised union at the workplace, or whether they knew that recognised unions were present but did not know how many. However, as many of the uncertain workplaces (77 per cent) did not have any union members, this suggests that many would also not have had recognised unions.

Almost a third (32 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace with at least one recognised union, while 47 per cent worked in a workplace with no recognised union, and the remaining 21 per cent in a workplace where the manager did not know whether (or how many) unions were recognised.

Differences in questionnaire structure between this survey and WERS 2011 mean that the best means of comparing the incidence of workplace recognition over time is to look at the percentage of all workplaces with at least one union member and at least one recognised union. In 2018/19, 12 per cent of workplaces clearly met these criteria, whilst a further five per cent of workplaces had union members but did not know how many unions were recognised. This suggests a lower bound for the percentage of workplaces with membership and recognition of 12 per cent and an upper bound of 17 per cent. The equivalent figure for the 2011 WERS, where there was considerably more probing of don't know responses, is 17 per cent. This is identical to the upper bound estimate for 2018/19, but above the lower bound estimate. It suggests that there may have been a fall between 2011 and 2018/19 in the proportion of workplaces with recognised unions and union members, but we cannot be confident of the magnitude of any change. The percentage of employees in a workplace with a recognised union and union members stood at 43 per cent 2011. The lower bound estimate for 2018/19 is lower, at 34 per cent, whilst the upper bound is similar, standing at 41 per cent.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, managers in workplaces where there was no recognised union were more likely to prefer direct consultation with employees (81 per cent agreed or strongly agreed,) (Figure 4.2). Yet it is notable that, even among workplaces with a recognised union, over three-fifths of managers (62 per cent) still expressed a preference for direct consultation with employees. Among workplaces with no recognised union, two per cent disagreed with the statement that they would rather consult with employees than with unions, indicating a small amount of unmet demand for union voice on the part of managers.

Figure 4.2: Employers' agreeing they would rather consult directly with employees than with unions, by union recognition, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

Note that don't know responses are not shown and therefore row percentages do not sum to 100 per cent.

4.2.2 On-site union representation

Overall, five per cent of all workplaces reported having an on-site union representative or steward. This represented a small fall from the figure of seven per cent in the 2011 WERS, although again some caution needs to be exercised in drawing comparisons⁴¹. As on-site union representatives are more common in larger workplaces, overall, 28 per cent of all employees worked in a workplace with a representative. Among workplaces with union members, around three in ten (29 per cent) had a union representative at the workplace. Overall, these findings suggest broad consistency with the 2011 WERS, although again some caution needs to be exercised in drawing comparisons.

In around six in ten workplaces (61 per cent) with an on-site representative, there were one or two union representatives at the workplace, with a further 25 per cent having more than two

⁴¹ In the MWP Survey, respondents in workplaces with any union members were asked, “Do union members at this workplace have any representatives or stewards here?”, whereas in WERS, respondents in workplaces with recognised unions with members at the workplace were asked “Do the members of the recognised union have any representatives or stewards here?”. If we focus specifically on workplaces with a recognised union with members in the MWP Survey, 29 per cent had a lay representative: significantly lower than the figure of 40 per cent in the 2011 WERS.

(11 per cent did not know how many on-site representatives there were)⁴². In 15 per cent of workplaces with an on-site representative, at least one representative spent all, or nearly all, of their working time on union affairs concerning the workplace. This was more common in larger workplaces; around one quarter (26 per cent) of workplaces with 250 or more employees, and an on-site union representative, had at least one representative who spent most of their working time on union affairs.

4.2.3 Negotiation and consultation with unions

Where the respondent had indicated that there were union members at the workplace, they were asked whether management normally negotiate, consult, inform or not inform unions about rates of pay, hours of work and holiday entitlements. Table 4.1 shows, for workplaces where there were union members and a recognised union, the percentage where management negotiated or consulted with unions over these terms and conditions.

Management negotiated or consulted with unions over pay in 43 per cent of workplaces where there was both a recognised union and union members. The equivalent figures for hours of work and holiday entitlements were 39 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. It is important to note that for all three terms and conditions, there were a significant percentage of don't know responses.⁴³

While, overall, the results of the MWP Survey point to lower levels of negotiation and consultation with recognised unions than in the 2011 WERS (Van Wanrooy et al, 2013: 81), we do not make explicit comparisons here because of differences in survey approach⁴⁴. These differences lead us to expect that MWP respondents thought more readily of practice at the workplace level than in WERS 2011. It is also worth noting that don't know responses were more common in MWP than in the 2011 WERS⁴⁵. While this gives reason to be cautious about relying on these responses as a measure of the level of negotiation and consultation with unions, relative comparisons may be less affected. In both surveys, negotiation and consultation with unions was more common for all three terms and conditions in the public sector than in the private sector.

⁴² In addition, two per cent of managers who indicated there was an on-site representative, when subsequently asked how many there were, responded that there were none.

⁴³ Varying from 19 per cent in relation to rates of pay to 24 per cent for holiday entitlements.

⁴⁴ A note to interviewers indicating that higher-level negotiations should be included was repositioned in MWP, in order to facilitate the change in survey mode, and may have been less effective as a result.

⁴⁵ Where around five per cent stated that they did not know for each of the three items.

Table 4.1: Negotiation or consultation over specific terms and conditions, by sector, cell percentages

	Public sector	Private sector	All workplaces
Rates of pay	56	37	43
Hours of work	53	31	39
Holiday entitlements	38	28	32
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or more employees, where there are union members and a recognised union)</i>	227	314	541

Notes: Private sector also includes the third sector.

4.2.4 Deduction of union subscriptions from pay

In workplaces where there were union members (17 per cent of all workplaces), respondents were asked whether they deducted trade union or staff association subscriptions from the pay of any employees. Around two-fifths (42 per cent) of workplaces with union members did so, although in a further 12 per cent, managers did not know if this was the case. It was more common for large workplaces to deduct subscriptions from pay, applying for around two-thirds (65 per cent) of workplaces with 250 or more employees with union members, and also in the public sector, where 59 per cent of workplaces with union members did so.

4.3 Non-union representation

Respondents were also asked whether, apart from health and safety matters, there were other employees at the workplace who act as representatives for others in dealings with management. Overall, this was the case in just over one in ten workplaces (11 per cent), indicating some increase in the prevalence of workplaces with some form of non-union representation since 2011, when the figure stood at seven per cent. Non-union representatives were more common in larger workplaces (34 per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees had an on-site non-union representative, compared with 21 per cent of workplaces with 50-249 employees and 10 per cent of those with 10-49 employees). Overall, 23 per cent of employees worked in a workplace with a non-union representative(s).

In 36 per cent of workplaces with non-union representatives, elections were usually held among employees to elect these representatives. Where this was not the case, the most common approach was that representatives were selected by managers (42 per cent of workplaces where there were no elections), followed by selection by employees⁴⁶ (31 per cent). In one quarter of cases (25 per cent) there was no selection, for example, representatives were volunteers. In six per cent of cases representatives were selected through other, unspecified methods, and in four per cent of cases the method of selection was

⁴⁶ Employees may have been asked to choose their representatives, without any formal election or casting of votes.

not known.

Table 4.2 summarises the presence of both union and non-union representatives. The majority (85 per cent) of workplaces did not have either union or non-union representatives. Just one per cent of all workplaces had both union and non-union representatives; a further four per cent had a union representative only, while ten per cent had a non-union representative only⁴⁷. Overall then, 15 per cent of workplaces had either a non-union or union representative (or both); these workplaces tended to be larger than average and, together, employed more than two-fifths (42 per cent) of all employees.

A comparison with the 2011 WERS further indicates the shift to non-union representation referred to above. In 2011, the percentage of workplaces with both types of representative was identical (one per cent), but the percentage with union representatives only was higher than in 2018/19 (6 per cent) and the share with non-union representatives only was lower (6 per cent). The percentage of workplaces with neither form of representation had fallen slightly between 2011 and 2018/19 (from 87 per cent).

Table 4.2: Summary of union and non-union representation, by sector, per cent workplaces

	Public sector	Private sector	All workplaces
Union representative only	26	2	4
Non-union representative only	7	10	10
Both	9	1	1
Neither	58	87	85
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or more employees)</i>	377	2,112	2,489

Notes: Private sector also includes the third sector.

⁴⁷ In some workplaces with non-union representatives only, there was still a recognised union; this applied for 14 per cent of these workplaces, although in the majority (63 per cent), this was not the case, with the remaining 24 per cent not knowing whether a union was recognised.

5. Communicating with employees

This chapter looks at communications with employees, exploring means of direct communication, as well as communications through consultative committees. The chapter also considers awareness and implementation of the Information and Consultation of Employees regulations.

Key findings

The vast majority (86 per cent) of workplaces had whole-workforce meetings. For two fifths (62 per cent) of these workplaces, meetings took place on at least a monthly basis.

Team briefings took place in 77 per cent of workplaces. Among workplaces that had team briefings, in 77 per cent these happened on at least a monthly basis.

More than three-fifths of workplaces communicated with employees through cascading information through the management chain (64 per cent), noticeboards or display screens (62 per cent), and regular use of all-staff emails (62 per cent). Just under half (45 per cent) of workplaces used company social media networks.

Just over one in ten (12 per cent) of workplaces had a consultative committee at the workplace. This was more common in larger workplaces, such that 30 per cent of employees worked in a workplace with such a committee.

Consultative committees, along with whole-workforce meetings and team briefings, had become more prevalent since 2011, however, there appeared to be a continued narrowing of the agenda for consultative committees.

Respondents were asked if they were aware of the government policy that organisations with more than 50 employees should inform and consult their employees about plans and decisions which affect the business and working conditions. In one quarter (23 per cent) of workplaces managers were aware of the policy and some of the details, with a further third (32 per cent) aware of the policy but not sure of the details. Forty-four per cent stated they were not aware and two per cent did not know.

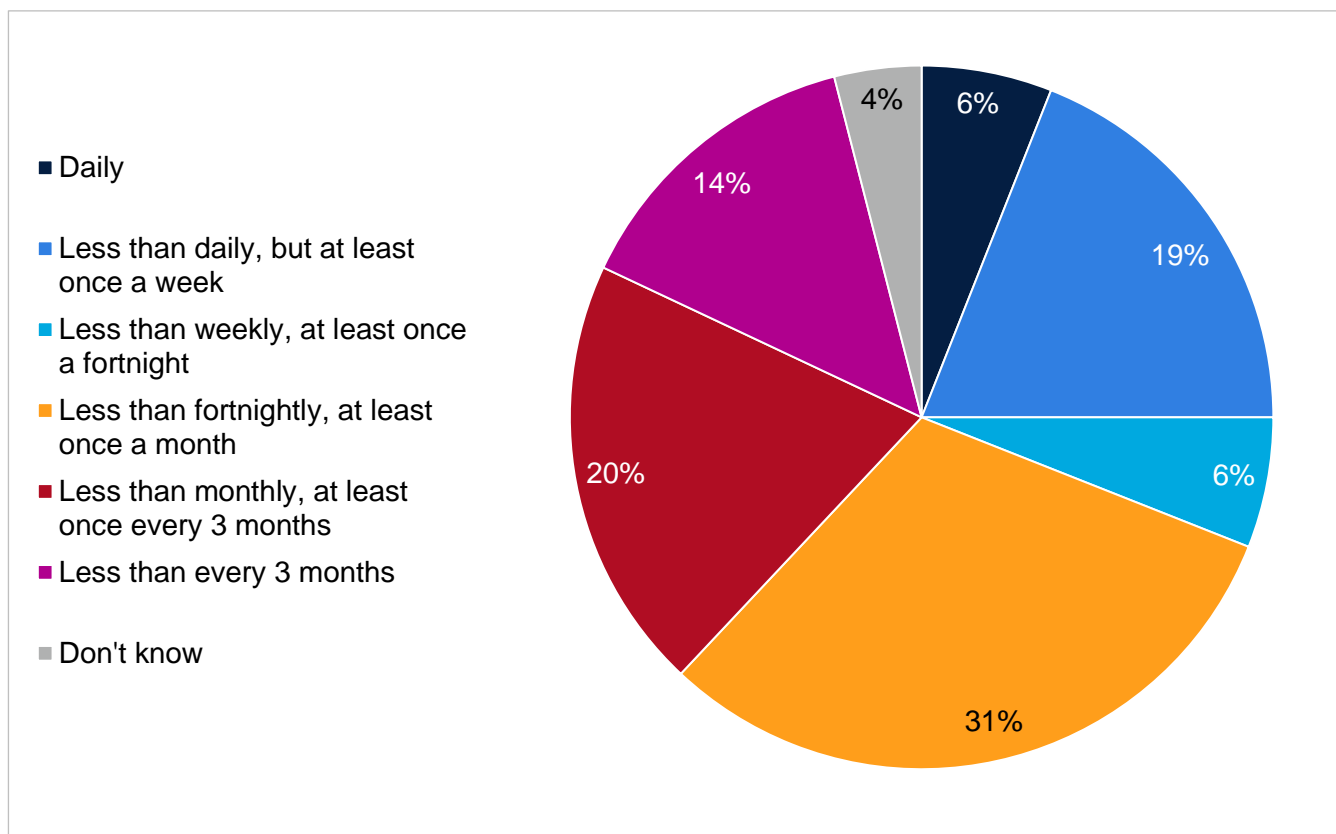
Just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of workplaces had an agreement in place setting out the process by which employees would be informed and consulted about the economic situation of the business or major changes in working conditions. In one per cent of workplaces without an agreement, there had been a request for such an agreement in the year prior to the survey.

5.1 Direct communication

5.1.1 Meetings and briefings

The vast majority (86 per cent) of workplaces had whole-workforce meetings (described as meetings between senior managers and the whole workforce, whether altogether or group by group). In 62 per cent of workplaces that had such meetings, these took place on at least a monthly basis (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Frequency of whole-workforce meetings, per cent workplaces



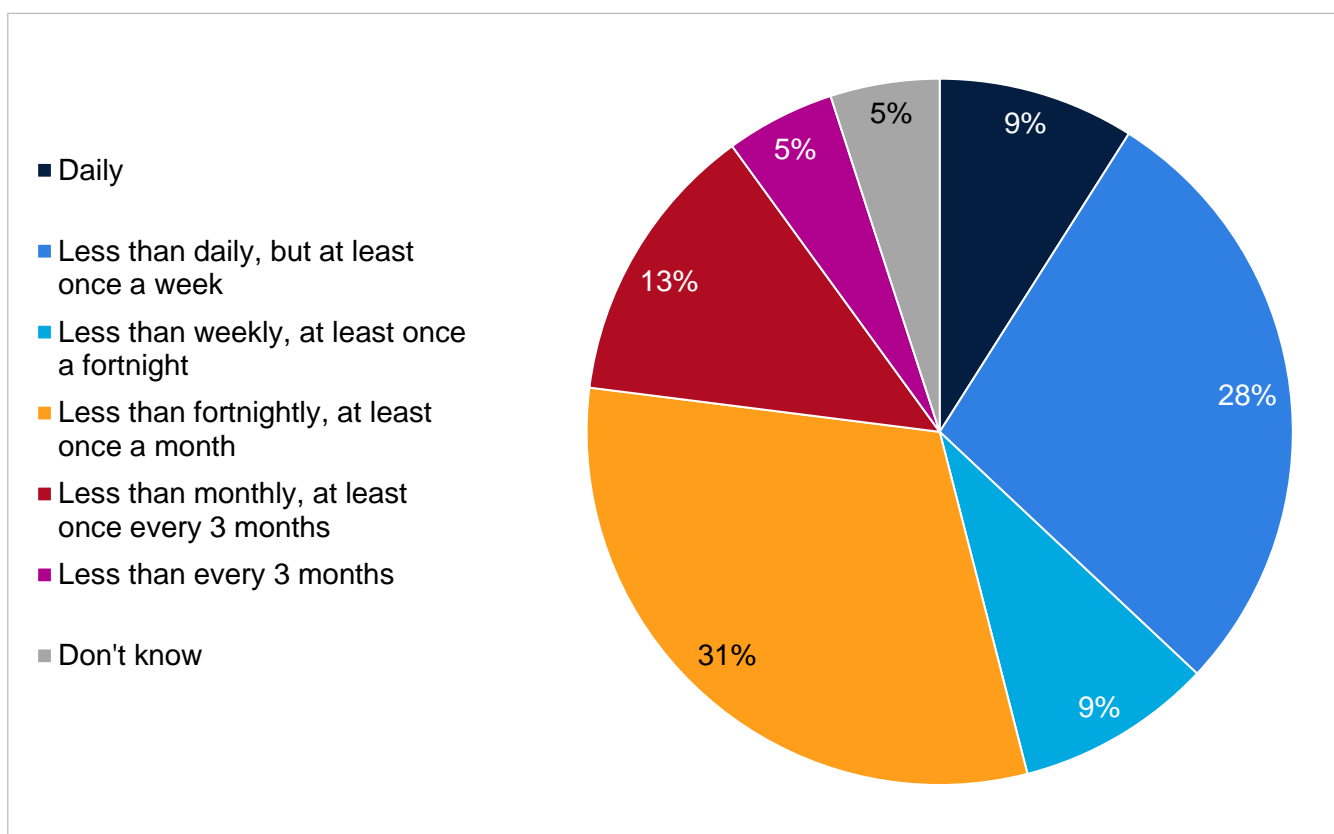
Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where whole-workforce meetings take place (2,166 workplaces).

There was relatively little variation in the prevalence of such meetings by workplace size, standing at 85 per cent among small workplaces, 90 per cent for medium-sized workplaces and 88 per cent for large workplaces. Whole-workforce meetings were typically less frequent in large workplaces; in workplaces with such meetings these happened on at least a monthly basis in 63 per cent of small workplaces and 59 per cent of medium-sized workplaces, compared with 47 per cent of large workplaces.

Similarly, the majority (77 per cent) of workplaces had team briefings (described as meetings

between line managers or supervisors and all the workers for whom they are responsible).⁴⁸ Such briefings typically took place more frequently than whole-workforce meetings; with 77 per cent of workplaces that had team briefings holding these on at least a monthly basis, and 37 per cent doing so on at least a weekly basis (Figure 5.2). Small workplaces were less likely to have team briefings, with 75 per cent doing so, compared with 93 per cent of medium-sized workplaces and 95 per cent of large workplaces. However, in workplaces that held team briefings, there was little variation in frequency of such briefings by workplace size.

Figure 5.2: Frequency of team briefings, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where team briefings take place (2,127 workplaces).

The 2011 WERS indicated that 80 per cent of workplaces had whole-workforce meetings while 65 per cent had team briefings. The findings from MWP therefore indicate that both forms of meeting have become more common, continuing an upward trend also seen between 2004 and 2011⁴⁹.

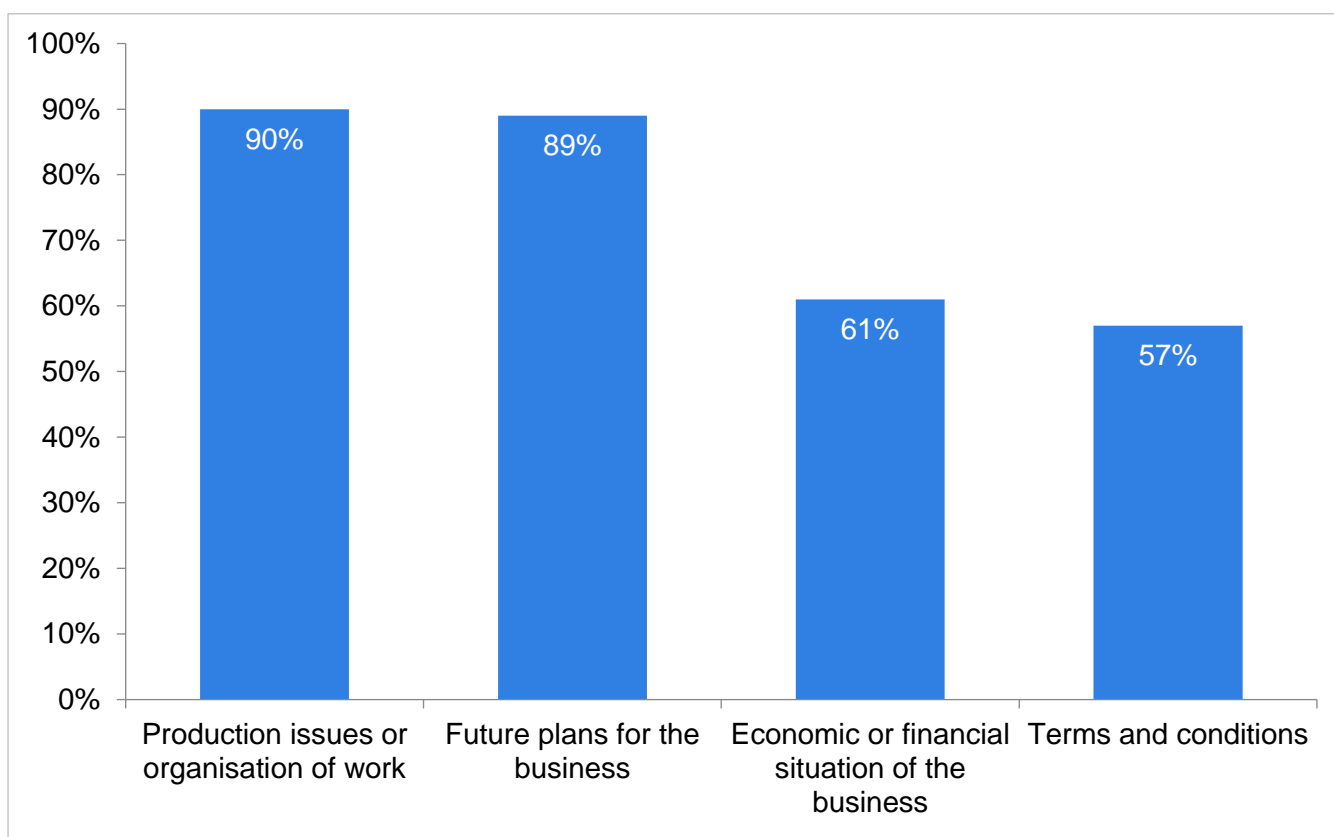
Respondents who indicated that there were either whole-workforce meetings or team briefings were asked whether these usually discussed the four sets of issues shown in

⁴⁸ This may in fact be an underestimate; some respondents who responded no or don't know at this question, when asked later in the survey about other ways of communicating with employees, indicated that they did so through (team) meetings or briefings. When these responses are taken into account, 83 per cent of workplaces had team briefings.

⁴⁹ Van Wanrooy, B., Bewley, H., Bryson, A., Forth, J., Freeth, S., Stokes, L. and Wood, S. (2013) *Employment Relations in the Shadow of Recession: Findings from the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study*, Palgrave MacMillan.

Figure 5.3. Production issues/organisation of work were discussed in 90 per cent of workplaces with these types of meetings, and a similar percentage discussed future plans for the business (89 per cent). It was less common for meetings to discuss the economic or financial situation of the business, or terms and conditions (such as pay, hours and holidays), but these were still discussed in more than half of workplaces with such meetings (61 per cent and 57 per cent respectively).

Figure 5.3: Issues discussed in whole-workforce meetings and team briefings, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where whole-workforce meetings or team briefings take place (2,355 workplaces).

5.1.2 Other communications

Respondents were also asked about other ways in which management communicates or consults with employees at the workplace (Table 5.1)⁵⁰. The most common methods were cascading information through the management chain (applying for 64 per cent of workplaces), noticeboards or display screens (62 per cent of workplaces) and through regular use of email to all employees (62 per cent). Use of company social media networks was also widespread, with 45 per cent of workplaces using these as a means of communicating with their employees. Ten per cent of workplaces stated that they did not have any other ways of communicating. Most methods were more common in larger workplaces compared with

⁵⁰ As noted above, some respondents who said they had other ways of communicating stated that this was through (team) meetings or briefings. These responses are categorised as “none of these” in the table if they only cited meetings or briefings and gave no other response.

smaller workplaces.

Table 5.1: Other methods of communicating with employees, by workplace size, cell percentages

	Small (5-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (250 or more employees)	All workplaces
Cascading information through the management chain	62	84	89	64
Noticeboards or display screens	60	82	87	62
Regular use of email to all employees	60	77	83	62
Suggestion schemes	45	62	71	47
Company social media networks	43	55	66	45
Information posted on company intranet	39	63	83	42
Regular newsletters or e-newsletters	35	65	83	39
Other ways of communicating	7	6	6	7
None of these	11	4	2	10
Don't know	1	0	0	1
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or more employees)</i>	<i>1,451</i>	<i>567</i>	<i>469</i>	<i>2,489</i>

Note: Respondents could give more than one response. "Other" combines a range of other methods; no individual response was cited by more than four per cent of respondents.

5.2 Consultative committees

5.2.1 Prevalence and structure of consultative committees

Managers were asked about the presence of consultative committees at the workplace (described as committees of managers and employees at this workplace, primarily concerned with consultation, rather than negotiation). Such committees existed in 12 per cent of workplaces: an increase from eight per cent of workplaces in the 2011 WERS. This increase occurred both in workplaces that were part of larger organisations; rising from 12 per cent to 18 per cent in workplaces in organisations with 250 or more employees, but also in workplaces which were part of smaller organisations (with fewer than 50 employees), rising from three per

cent to eight per cent⁵¹. There had been no change among medium-sized organisations (with 50-249 employees), where this remained stable at 14 per cent. The Information and Consultation of Employees regulations (discussed below in section 5.3) may have been one factor in the recent growth in consultative committees but it is not possible to draw out its potential effect in any detail, and the fact that growth has been seen in workplaces below the 50 employee threshold suggests that other factors have also been at work.

As such committees are more common in larger workplaces, overall almost one third (30 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace with an on-site consultative committee. The decline from 37 per cent in 2011 arose because consultative committees became more common in smaller workplaces, but less common in larger ones.

In 67 per cent of workplaces with a consultative committee, the committee had met at least four times in the 12 months prior to the survey (that is, it had met at least quarterly), while in 29 per cent, the committee had met 12 or more times (that is, it had met at least monthly). In almost one fifth (18 per cent) of workplaces with a consultative committee, it was not known how many times the committee had met in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Workplaces which were part of a larger organisation, but were not the head office, were asked whether there was a consultative committee operating at a higher level than the interviewed workplace. Overall, in 27 per cent of workplaces there was either a consultative committee located at the workplace or one operating at a higher level in the organisation.

Earlier it was noted that five per cent of workplaces had an on-site union representative. In workplaces with on-site union representatives and a consultative committee, the majority (62 per cent) had both union and non-union representatives sit on the committee. In 15 per cent only union representatives sat on the committee, and in six per cent only non-union representatives.

5.2.2 Consultative committee processes

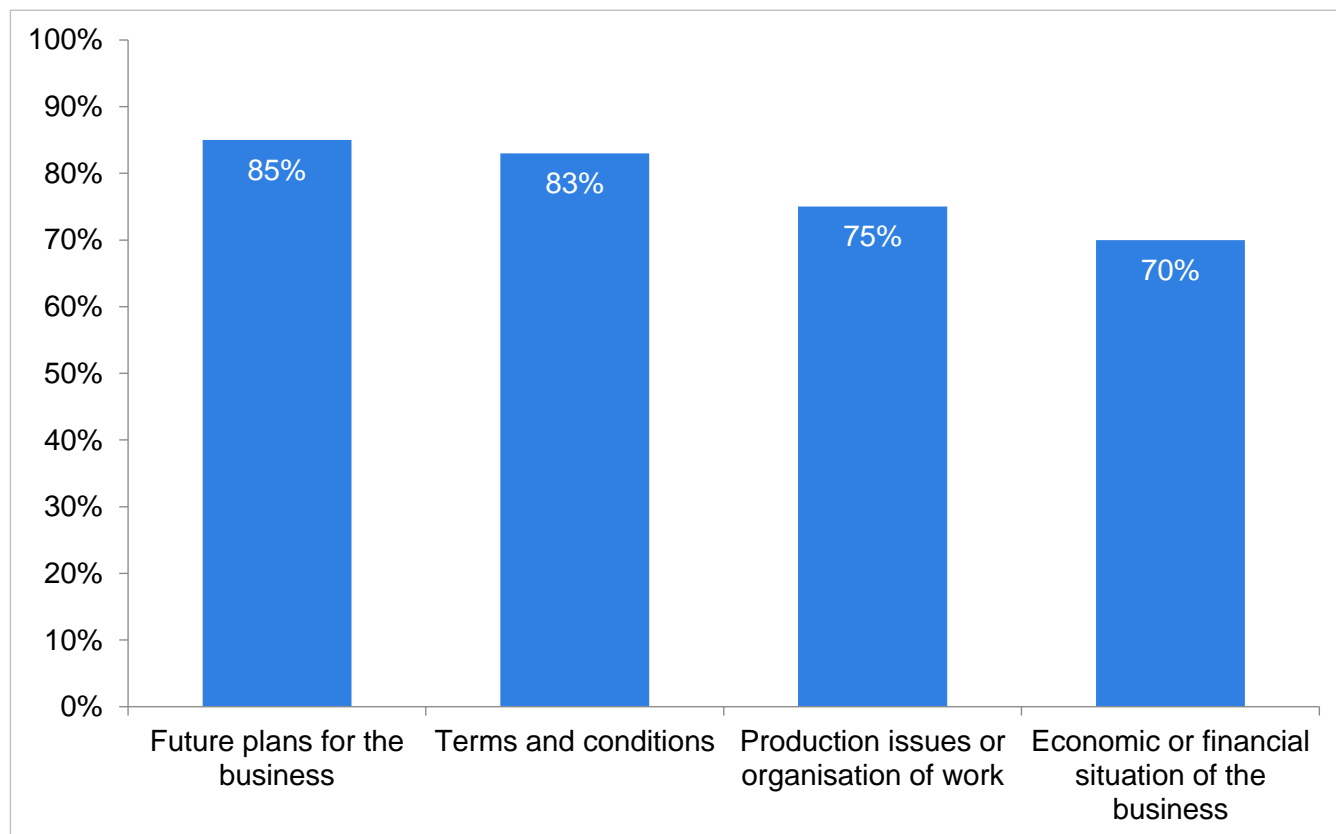
In workplaces with at least one committee dealing with a range of issues, respondents were also asked about managers' usual approach when consulting members of the committee. Three in ten (30 per cent) said that they seek solutions to problems; a further 40 per cent of managers seek feedback on a range of options, and 18 per cent seek feedback on a proposed option put forward by management. The remaining 12 per cent stated that they did not know. In the 2011 WERS, 43 per cent said their usual approach was to seek solutions to problems, 36 per cent sought feedback on a range of options put forward by management and 20 per cent sought feedback on a preferred option. Less than one per cent stated that they did not know. The higher share of don't knows in the current survey makes comparisons difficult, but the lower percentage of managers in 2018/19 saying that they seek solutions to problems does nevertheless suggest some narrowing of the agenda for consultation via consultative

⁵¹ These figures also include single independent workplaces, where workplace and organisation size are therefore the same.

committees, continuing the trend seen between 2004 and 2011⁵².

Figure 5.4 reports the issues discussed at consultative committee meetings. All of the four issues specified were discussed in the majority of workplaces with consultative committee meetings.

Figure 5.4: Issues discussed at consultative committee meetings, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees where consultative committees are in place (559 workplaces).

5.3 Information and consultation of employees

5.3.1 Awareness of information and consultation of employees regulations

This section turns to focus on the Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) regulations. Respondents were asked whether they were aware of the government policy that organisations with more than 50 employees should inform and consult their employees about plans and decisions which affect the business and working conditions⁵³. Although the policy relates to organisations with more than 50 employees, this question was asked of all workplaces regardless of organisation size.

⁵² Van Wanrooy et al. (2013), pp. 62-3. If 'don't knows' in MWP were missing at random, this would imply that 34 per cent of committees are used to seek solutions to problems, which is still likely to represent a statistically significant decline from the WERS 2011 figure of 43 per cent.

⁵³ The ICE regulations were not explicitly mentioned by name. The phrase "government policy" was used to avoid the impression of asking about compliance with legislation, which can inflate affirmative responses.

Overall, around one quarter (23 per cent) of workplace managers reported they were aware of the policy and some of the details, with a further third (32 per cent) saying that they were aware of the policy but not sure of the details (Table 5.2). Unsurprisingly, awareness was lower among workplaces that were part of smaller organisations; around half (52 per cent) of workplaces that were part of an organisation with fewer than 50 employees stated that they were not aware of the policy compared with 29 per cent of workplaces that were within organisations with 250 or more employees.

Table 5.2: Awareness of ICE policy, by organisation size, column percentages

	Small organisation (5-49 employees)	Medium-sized organisation (50-249 employees)	Large organisation (250 or more employees)	All workplaces
Aware of policy and some of the details	18	28	31	23
Aware of policy but not sure of the details	28	36	38	32
Definitely not aware	52	35	29	44
Don't know	2	1	1	2
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or more employees)</i>	<i>860</i>	<i>391</i>	<i>1,238</i>	<i>2,489</i>

Levels of awareness were also higher in larger workplaces, as well as in larger organisations. Only six per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees stated that they were definitely not aware of this policy, compared with 46 per cent of workplaces with less than 50 employees. Awareness was also higher among public sector and third sector workplaces (with 70 per cent and 65 per cent of workplaces aware) than among private sector workplaces (53 per cent aware). Managers in workplaces with recognised unions were also more likely to be aware (70 per cent compared with 51 per cent in workplaces without a recognised union). Overall, almost one quarter (24 per cent) of employees worked in a workplace where managers were not aware of this policy.

5.3.2 Prevalence of agreements setting out ICE processes

Respondents were also asked whether there was an agreement in place setting out the process by which employees would be informed and consulted about the economic situation of the business or major changes in working conditions. Overall, just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of workplaces had such an agreement. Almost half (49 per cent) did not have an agreement, while the remaining eight per cent did not know. In interpreting these figures, it is important to bear in mind that such agreements are not necessarily tied to the ICE regulations, and that the question did not stipulate that the agreement had to be written or formal.

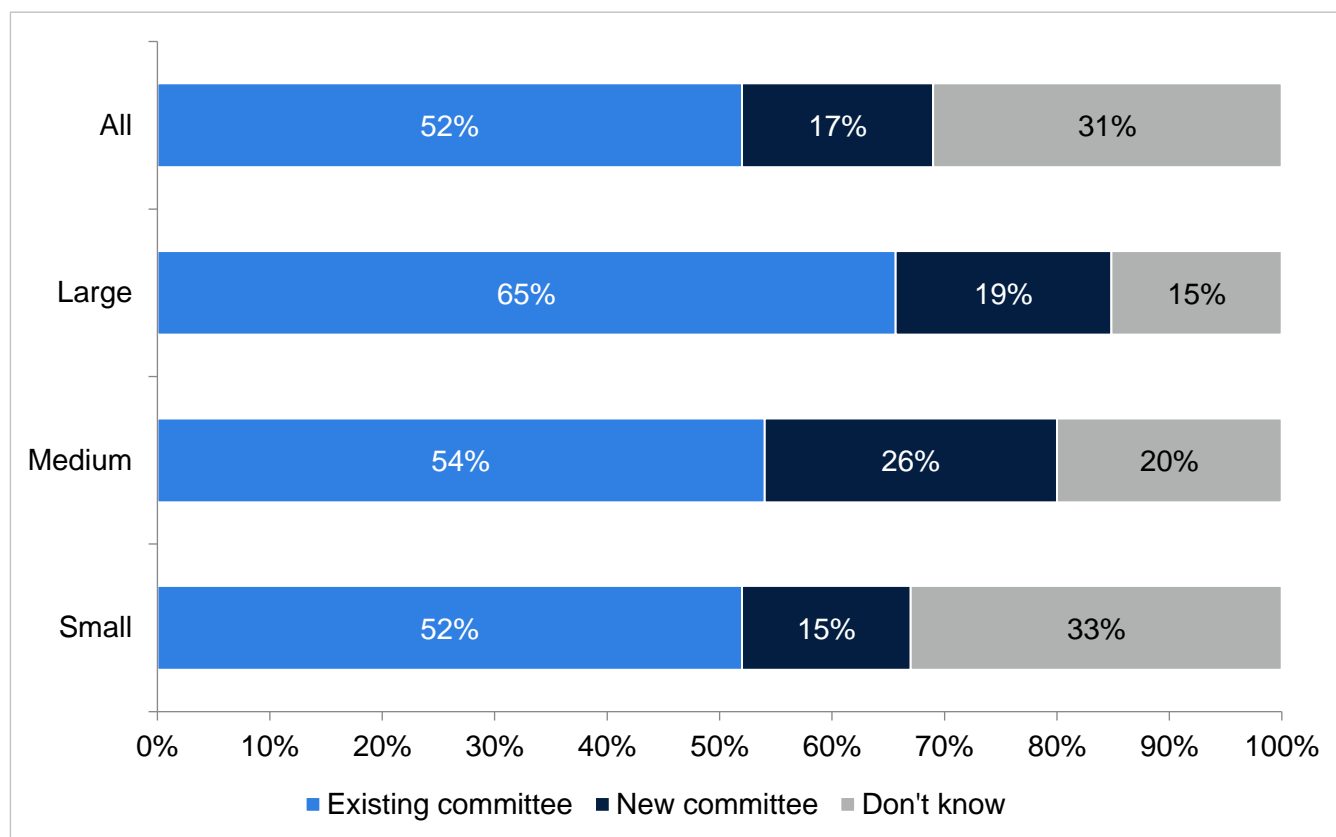
Nevertheless, workplaces were much more likely to report having such an agreement if they were aware of the policy that organisations with more than 50 employees should inform and consult employees about plans and decisions affecting the business and working conditions. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of employers who were aware of the policy and some of the details had an agreement in place, compared with 29 per cent of those who stated they were not aware.

Such agreements were most common in public sector workplaces (65 per cent), followed by the third sector (54 per cent) and least common in the private sector (40 per cent).

Where employers stated that they had an agreement, they were asked whether information and consultation meetings took place through an existing consultative committee, or whether a new committee had been set up for this purpose. It is also possible that workplaces were using an alternative approach for information and consultation, such as through all staff meetings, although the survey question did not allow for this. In just over half (52 per cent) of workplaces with such an agreement, meetings took place through an existing committee (Figure 5.5). In 17 per cent a new committee had been set up, while the remaining 31 per cent did not know.

Managers in small workplaces were the most likely to respond that they did not know; this applied for 33 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees compared with 15 per cent of large workplaces. Large workplaces were the most likely to be using an existing committee for this purpose (65 per cent), while there was little difference between small and medium-sized workplaces.

Figure 5.5: Whether information and consultation meetings take place through an existing or new committee, by workplace size, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees with an ICE agreement (1,342 workplaces).

5.3.3 Requests for information and consultation agreements

Managers in workplaces which did not have an agreement, or who were unsure if they, were asked whether they had received a request for such an agreement in the year prior to the survey. The vast majority (95 per cent) stated that they had not received a request, while in one per cent of such workplaces there had been a request. In the remaining five per cent the manager did not know. There was some variation by workplace size; three per cent of large workplaces without an agreement had received a request. However, managers in large workplaces were much less likely to know whether they had received such a request, standing at 29 per cent in workplaces with 250 or more employees, compared with four per cent in workplaces with fewer than 50. One per cent of small workplaces had received a request.

6. Consultation over redundancies

This section explores consultations over redundancies, considering whether employers consulted with employees and their representatives, the issues covered in consultations and whether there was an impact on managers' original proposals.

Key findings

Ten per cent of workplaces had made at least one employee redundant in the 12 months prior to the survey. In the vast majority (86 per cent) of workplaces where an employee had been made redundant, employees or their representatives had been consulted prior to making redundancies.

Redundancy payments and criteria for selection were each discussed in around two-thirds (66 per cent) of consultations, with options for reducing the number of redundancies discussed in three-fifths (60 per cent).

In three in ten workplaces (30 per cent) where a consultation over potential redundancies had taken place, this had led to a change in managers' original proposals. In over half (56 per cent) there had been no changes as a result, and in the remaining 15 per cent, respondents did not know if the consultation had changed managers' original proposals.

6.1 The incidence and content of redundancy consultation

In ten per cent of workplaces, at least one employee had been made redundant in the 12 months prior to the survey. In the vast majority (86 per cent) of these workplaces, employees or their representatives had been consulted prior to making redundancies⁵⁴. The figure of 86 per cent was identical to that seen in the 2011 WERS, but statistically significant from the figure of 76 per cent in the 2004 WERS, indicating a long-term increase in employers' propensity to consult when redundancies are being considered. While there is a requirement for employers to follow particular procedures regarding consultation over redundancy when 20

⁵⁴ The survey did not collect information on who was consulted as part of this process.

or more redundancies are planned, it is recognised to be good practice to consult employees and their representatives even when fewer redundancies are planned⁵⁵.

Almost all (94 per cent) large workplaces that had made redundancies in the 12 months prior to the survey had conducted a consultation. This remained high even among small and medium-sized workplaces, standing at 85 per cent and 89 per cent respectively.

Workplaces that had conducted a consultation were asked about the issues that this had covered (Table 6.1). Redundancy payments and criteria for selection and options were each discussed in around two-thirds (66 per cent) of consultations, with options for reducing the number of redundancies discussed in three-fifths (60 per cent). In four per cent of cases, respondents volunteered that the consultation had covered redeployment opportunities and in ten per cent other, unspecified issues had been covered⁵⁶. In almost a fifth (19 per cent) of consultations, respondents did not know what issues had been covered.

There was some variation by workplace size, with smaller workplaces were more likely to be unsure of the issues covered in the consultation. In 83 per cent of large workplaces the consultation had covered options for reducing the number of redundancies. This applied for only 55 per cent of small workplaces where a consultation had taken place – perhaps reflecting the lesser scope to reduce redundancy numbers in a small workplace (and where it is arguably more difficult to make fractional reductions in headcount). Redeployment opportunities were also more commonly covered in consultations in larger workplaces (ten per cent) than in small and medium-sized workplaces (each four per cent); likely reflecting the greater opportunities that may exist for redeployment in a larger workplace.

Table 6.1: Issues covered in redundancy consultation, by workplace size, cell percentages

	Small (5-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (250 or more employees)	All workplaces
Redundancy payments	64	71	77	66
Criteria for selection	64	67	81	66
Options for reducing number of redundancies	55	69	83	60
Redeployment opportunities	4	4	10	4
Other	9	15	7	10
Don't know	21	14	10	19
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or</i>	98	107	208	414

⁵⁵ See for example, the Acas guide on handling small-scale redundancies: <https://beta.acas.org.uk/redundancy>.

⁵⁶ Note that the response option 'Redeployment opportunities' was not read out to respondents, it was coded from other responses given. It is possible therefore that some managers may have implicitly included this within the response for "options for reducing the number of redundancies".

Management and Wellbeing Practices Survey findings

<i>more employees, where a consultation over redundancies had taken place prior to redundancies in past 12 months)</i>				
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Note: managers could give more than one response. 'Redeployment opportunities' was back-coded from verbatim answers cited under 'Other issues'.

In three in ten workplaces (30 per cent) where a consultation over potential redundancies had taken place, this had led to a change in managers' original proposals. In over half (56 per cent) there had been no changes as a result, and in the remaining 15 per cent, respondents did not know if this had led to change. Changes were more common in larger workplaces; in almost half (49 per cent) of large workplaces that consulted over redundancies, this resulted in a change to original proposals, compared with 27 per cent of small workplaces and 32 per cent of medium-sized workplaces. Changes were also more likely where there was a recognised union at the workplace; this applied for 42 per cent of workplaces with a recognised union compared with 33 per cent among workplaces with no recognised union.

7. Dispute resolution procedures

This chapter begins by considering formal procedures for collective disputes. It then looks at procedures for dealing with individual grievances, before exploring disciplinary procedures. Finally, the chapter reports the incidence of disciplinary sanctions.

Key findings

Around six in ten workplaces (61 per cent) had a formal procedure for dealing with collective disputes relating to health and safety. Just under half had a formal procedure for collective disputes relating to redundancy (47 per cent), to organisation of work (43 per cent) and pay and conditions (42 per cent).

The majority (84 per cent) of workplaces had a formal procedure in place for dealing with individual grievances. Only five per cent of employees worked in a workplace without a formal procedure for dealing with individual grievances.

Similarly, almost all workplaces (89 per cent) had a formal procedure for dealing with discipline and dismissals. Only three per cent of employees worked in a workplace with no such procedure.

Almost all workplaces with grievance and disciplinary procedures provided employees with the right to appeal (95 per cent and 91 per cent respectively).

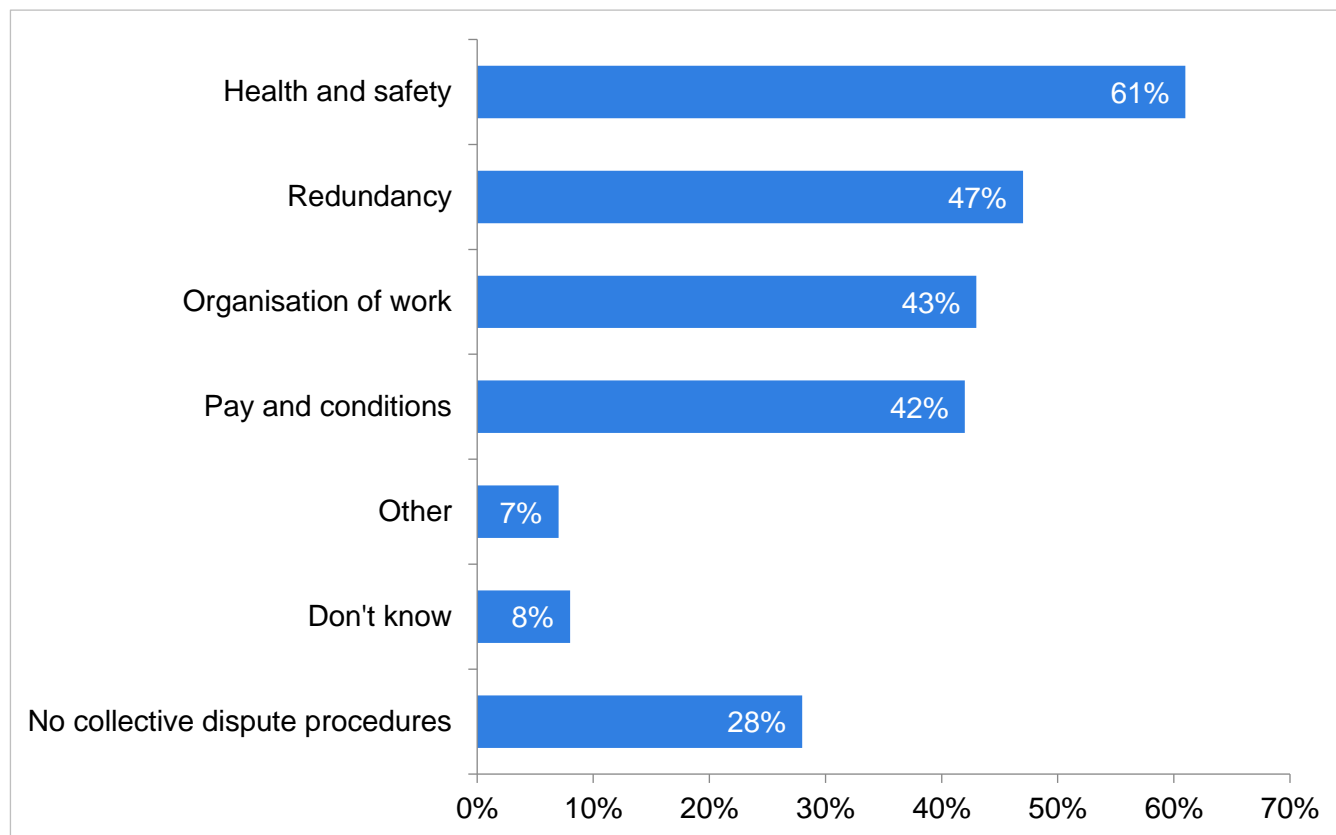
Formal verbal warnings, and formal written warnings, were the most common forms of disciplinary sanctions. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 34 per cent of workplaces had issued formal verbal warnings and 29 per cent of workplaces had applied formal written warnings.

7.1 Formal procedures for collective disputes

Managers were asked about the existence of formal procedures for dealing with any collective disputes that may arise for any of a specified list of issues (Figure 7.1). The most common was a formal procedure for dealing with collective disputes relating to health and safety, present in 61 per cent of workplaces. Just under half (47 per cent) had a formal procedure for collective disputes relating to redundancy, while around two-fifths had formal procedures for disputes relating to organisation of work (43 per cent) and to pay and conditions (42 per cent). Eight per cent of respondents did not know whether formal procedures were in place, while 28 per cent of workplaces stated that they did not have any formal procedures for dealing with collective

disputes.⁵⁷

Figure 7.1: Whether formal procedure for collective disputes, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces).

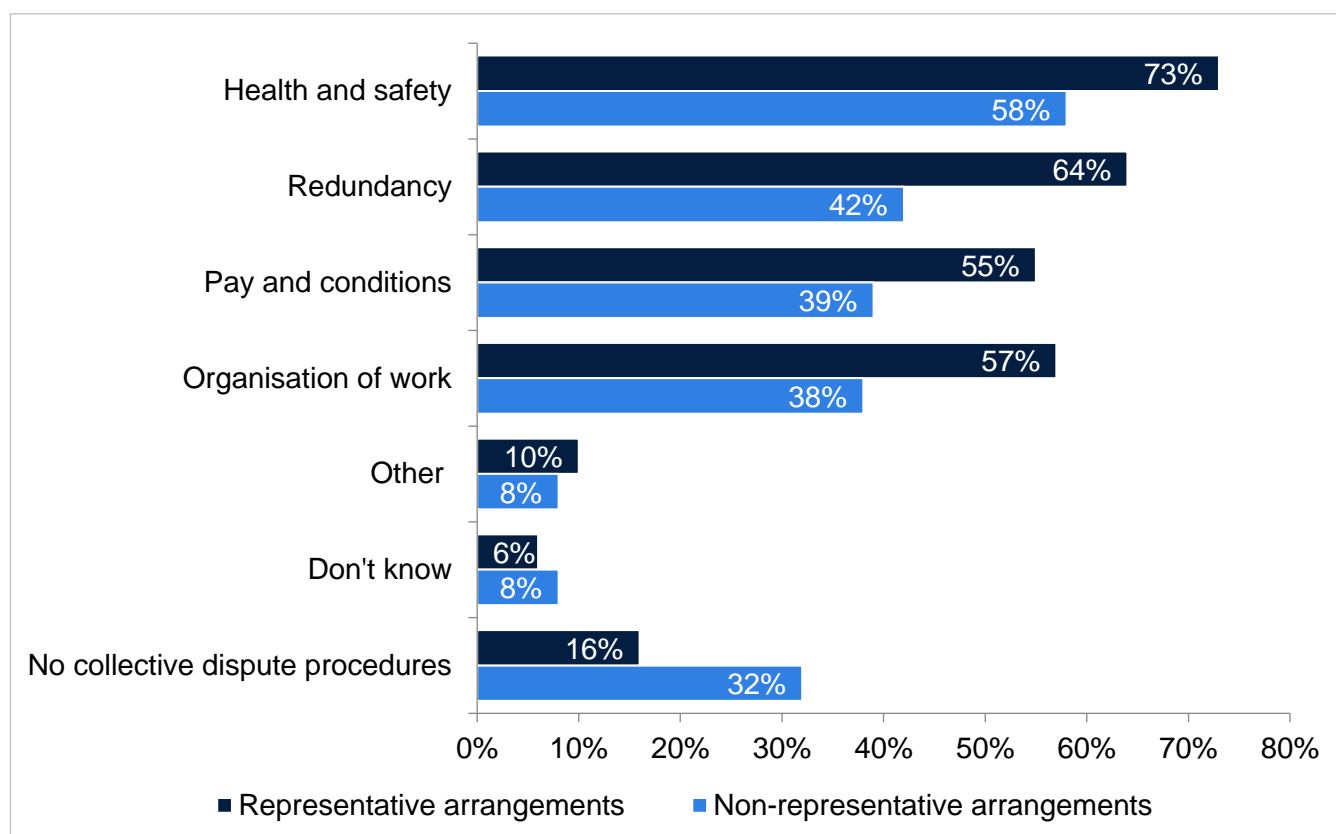
An aggregate indicator of the presence of formal procedures for collective disputes can be obtained by aggregating across the first five categories in Figure 7.1. This shows that formal procedures were most common in larger workplaces; 82 per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees had at least one collective disputes procedure in place, compared with 64 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees. This also applied among workplaces belonging to larger organisations; 75 per cent of workplaces that were part of an organisation with 250 or more employees had at least one formal collective disputes procedure, compared with 59 per cent of workplaces that were part of organisations with 50 or fewer employees. As a consequence of these patterns, the 28 per cent of workplaces that did not have any formal procedures for collective disputes tended to be smaller in size than average and, overall, 20 per cent of employees worked in a workplace with no formal collective disputes procedures. Procedures were also more prevalent in public sector workplaces (81 per cent) than in the private and third sectors (64 per cent and 61 per cent respectively).

Unsurprisingly, workplaces with a recognised union were more likely to report formal

⁵⁷ WERS 2011 indicated a lower incidence of formal collective disputes procedures in 2011, but the question was more explicit in focusing the respondent's attention on disputes raised by a *group* of employees. WERS also used a showcard in WERS, whereas the MWP Survey used a read-out list due to the change in survey mode. We could reasonably expect that these changes may have increased the percentage of respondents stating that their workplace had such procedures, and so we do not present a comparison of change over time.

procedures for collective disputes for each of the specified issues. Furthermore, for each of the four specified issues, formal procedures were more common where there was at least some form of representative arrangement on-site at the workplace (defined here as an on-site union representative, non-union representative, or a workplace-level consultative committee) (Figure 7.2). Yet a sizeable proportion of workplaces had formal procedures for dealing with collective disputes, even where no representative arrangements were in place.

Figure 7.2: Whether formal procedure for collective disputes, by presence of representative arrangements, per cent workplaces



Base: all workplaces with 5 or more employees (2,489 workplaces). A workplace is defined as having representative arrangements if there is an on-site union representative, non-union representative or workplace-level consultative committee.

7.2 Grievance procedures

Employers were also asked about dealing with individual grievances that may be raised by employees. The majority (84 per cent) of workplaces had a formal procedure in place for dealing with individual grievances, with a further 14 per cent having no procedure and 3 per cent not being sure. The figure of 84 per cent is slightly lower than in the 2011 WERS, when 88 per cent of workplaces reported having a formal grievance procedure⁵⁸. Such procedures were almost universal among workplaces with 50 or more employees (95 per cent) but were still very common among small workplaces (82 per cent). Some 93 per cent of employees worked

⁵⁸ Note that both figures are calculated by including don't know responses within the base, as is the convention in this report.

in a workplace with a formal procedure for dealing with individual grievances; 5 per cent worked in workplaces without a procedure and 2 per cent worked where managers were not sure.

Those workplaces without a formal procedure were asked how a grievance raised by an individual employee would be resolved. The most common approach, applying in 67 per cent of workplaces without a formal procedure, was that the grievance would be resolved through discussions with managers. The next most frequent approaches were that the grievance would be resolved through discussions with the parties concerned (12 per cent) and referred up the management chain (11 per cent). In six per cent of cases there would be discussions between union or non-union representatives and managers, in six per cent of cases there would be discussions with HR managers, and three per cent would use mediation through an impartial third party. Eleven per cent stated this would be resolved some other way and five per cent stated they did not know.

Respondents who indicated that there was a formal procedure were asked about the nature of the procedure, and whether this required employees to set out the nature of the grievance in writing, to attend a formal meeting with a manager to discuss the grievance, and if employees were able to appeal. These three principles are part of the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Employees were always required to set out their grievance in writing in 54 per cent of workplaces with a formal procedure, and in a further 29 per cent were sometimes required to do so. In one in ten (nine per cent), employees were not required to set out the grievance in writing. In most (73 per cent) of workplaces with a procedure, employees would always be asked to attend a formal meeting, and in a further 21 per cent, they would sometimes be asked to do so depending on the issue; in just two per cent no formal meeting was required. In almost all (95 per cent) of workplaces with a formal grievance procedure, employees were able to appeal against a decision.

In 75 per cent of cases, the procedure included provision for impartial mediation by a third party.

7.3 Discipline and dismissals procedures

Almost all (89 per cent) of workplaces had a formal procedure for dealing with discipline and dismissals other than redundancies. Eight per cent of employees worked in a workplace with no formal disciplinary procedure, whilst 3 per cent worked in workplaces where managers were unsure whether a procedure existed. These figures indicate no change in the prevalence of such procedures since 2011, when WERS 2011 also showed 89 per cent of workplaces to have a formal disciplinary procedure.

Again, such procedures were almost universal among workplaces with 50 or more employees - 99 per cent of such workplaces had a procedure - but procedures were also in place in the vast majority (88 per cent) of small workplaces with 5-49 employees.

Again, respondents were asked whether the procedure involved the three principles: that the employer sets out the issue in writing, there is a formal meeting with a manager, and whether the employee is able to appeal. Setting out the issue in writing was always a requirement in 80

per cent of workplaces with a formal procedure, and sometimes a requirement in a further 14 per cent. Five per cent did not know whether it was a requirement and just one per cent did not require the employer to set out the issue in writing. Almost all (86 per cent) would always require employees to attend a formal meeting, and a further 10 per cent would sometimes require this (four per cent did not know and this was not required in less than one per cent of workplaces with a procedure). In almost all (91 per cent) of workplaces with a procedure, the employee was able to appeal against the decision.

In 76 per cent of cases, the procedure included provision for impartial mediation by a third party.

7.4 Disciplinary sanctions

All respondents were asked whether any of a list of disciplinary sanctions had been applied at their workplace in the 12 months prior to the survey. The most common sanction was a formal verbal warning, occurring in 34 per cent of workplaces in the 12 months prior to the survey, followed by a formal written warning, recorded by 29 per cent of workplaces (Table 7.1). In 18 per cent of workplaces there had been at least one dismissal, in 13 per cent at least one employee had been suspended and in five per cent there had been a deduction made to pay. In 54 per cent of workplaces, none of the specified actions had been taken.

The incidence of disciplinary sanctions increased with workplace size, unsurprisingly as the greater number of employees increases the probability that some disciplinary sanctions will be taken. Just five per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees had not applied any of the specified disciplinary sanctions in the 12 months prior to the survey, compared with 59 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees.

Table 7.1: Disciplinary sanctions in 12 months prior to the survey, by workplace size, cell percentages

	Small (5-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (250 or more employees)	All workplaces
Formal verbal warning	31	61	73	34
Formal written warning	24	60	82	29
Dismissal	15	44	74	18
Suspension with or without pay	10	37	66	13
Deduction from pay	4	12	20	5
Other	2	4	12	2
None of these	59	21	5	54
Don't know	4	8	11	5
<i>Base (all workplaces with five or more employees)</i>	<i>1,451</i>	<i>567</i>	<i>469</i>	<i>2,489</i>

Note: "Other" combines a range of other sanctions; no individual response was cited by more than one per cent of respondents.

8. Relations between managers and employees

This final section looks at the relationship between managers and employees. It first explores the incidence of ballots to establish support for industrial action, arguably an indicator of poor relations, or discontent, with management. It then explores a subjective measure of relations, based on managers' views of the relationship between managers and employees.

Key findings

In eight per cent of workplaces with union members, a union had balloted members at the workplace to establish the level of support for industrial action in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Just over three-fifths (62 per cent) of managers rated relations between management and employees at their workplace as very good, with a further 34 per cent rating relations as good. Relations were rated more favourably in smaller workplaces than in larger workplaces.

8.1 Ballots for industrial action

The incidence of ballots to establish support for industrial action provides an insight into relations between managers and employees. Among those workplaces that had union members, eight per cent reported that a union had balloted members at the workplace to establish the level of support for industrial action in the 12 months prior to the survey (a further nine per cent did not know whether this was the case). Ballots were more common in the public sector; 17 per cent of public sector workplaces with union members reported that there had been a ballot, compared with four per cent of private sector and four per cent of third sector workplaces.

8.2 Relations between managers and employees

Respondents were asked to rate the relationship between management and employees at the workplace, on a five-point scale from “very good” to “very poor”. Overall, managers in just over three-fifths (62 per cent) of workplaces rated relations between management and employees as very good, with a further 34 per cent rating relations as good. Three per cent rated relations as “neither good nor poor”, “poor” or “very poor”, and one per cent stated they did not know. This indicates an improvement since 2011, when findings from WERS showed that 55 per cent of managers rated relations as very good and 41 per cent as good. It is important to bear in

mind that these are reported by managers; previous research, including WERS, has shown that when employees are asked to rate relations with management the responses are typically less favourable.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, there are interesting variations by workplace characteristics. Relations were generally perceived as better in smaller workplaces; 64 per cent of workplaces with fewer than 50 employees rated relations as very good compared with 33 per cent of workplaces with 250 or more employees. Relationships were also seen as best in private sector workplaces; 63 per cent of private sector workplaces rated relations as very good compared with 43 per cent of public sector workplaces (and 59 per cent of third sector workplaces).

⁵⁹ van Wanrooy et al., 2013: 162-164.

9. Conclusion

This report presents findings from the Management and Wellbeing Practices (MWP) survey, undertaken in late 2018 and early 2019 to map employer practice in the areas of flexible working, in-work support for parents and workplace employee representation. In terms of in-work support for parents, a primary objective of the MWP Survey was to explore employers' awareness and experiences of Shared Parental Leave and Pay, which came into effect in 2015. The findings show that around three-quarters (73 per cent) of workplace managers were aware of SPL, with almost all of those (94 per cent) being aware that it is a legal right. Overall, nine in ten employees (86 per cent) worked in a workplace where there was awareness of SPL.

Relatively few workplaces (three per cent) had experienced an employee taking SPL in the two years prior to the survey; in comparison, 36 per cent had at least one employee take maternity leave, and 27 per cent had at least one employee take paternity leave. In two per cent of workplaces an employee had taken adoption leave in the past two years.

Eight per cent of workplaces where there was awareness of SPL offered enhanced Shared Parental Pay (that is, they offered above the statutory minimum). This was lower than the percentage of workplaces offering maternity or paternity pay above the statutory minimum for any employees (17 per cent). Among workplaces that offered enhanced Shared Parental Pay, the most common reasons for doing so were to improve staff wellbeing, to offer more family-friendly policies and to improve staff retention.

Overall, managers in almost half (47 per cent) of all workplaces aware of SPL stated they were satisfied, "with the government's policy of SPL and Pay", with only 5 per cent dissatisfied. The percentage who were satisfied increased to more than three-fifths (63 per cent) of managers in the small proportion of workplaces where an employee had taken SPL in the past two years.

When asked about the disadvantages of the policy, managers in workplaces who had experienced employees taking SPL within the last two years were more likely to report the complexity in setting up and managing the policy (16 per cent), compared with workplaces where no employees had done so (eight per cent). In contrast, managers in workplaces where no employees had taken SPL were more likely to say SPL would negatively impact the running of the business (ten per cent compared with seven per cent) and result in loss of staff than those in workplaces with experience of employees taking SPL (ten per cent versus two per cent). This suggests some divergence in attitudes towards SPL according to whether the workplace had experienced employees taking SPL.

Other key policy developments in this area have been the extensions in the right to unpaid parental leave, affecting the age of children covered and the length of leave available. Awareness of unpaid parental leave was lower than awareness of SPL, with 63 per cent of workplace managers aware of unpaid parental leave, and even fewer workplace managers (around 40 per cent) were aware of the extensions to the policy. As observed for SPL, levels of awareness were higher among larger workplaces.

The extension of the right to request flexible working in 2014 reflected an increasing recognition that such arrangements not only had the potential to benefits parents and carers

but were also of value to other employees in helping to balance work and family life. Managers in around half of workplaces were aware of the extension of the right to request. As seen for awareness of parental leave policies, managers in larger workplaces were also more likely to be aware of the extension of the right to request.

Take up of flexible working practices was another key focus for the survey. There had been some increase since 2013 in the percentage of workplaces where at least one employee had reduced working hours, was regularly working from home, worked flexi-time or worked a compressed week, continuing a longer-run trend observed since the early 2000s. This measure only captures whether any employees at the workplace were using each of the flexible working practices, rather than how many employees were doing so. However, in about one fifth of workplaces managers thought the proportion of employees with flexible working had increased. Workplaces where managers were aware of the extension of the right to request were more likely to report an increase in the proportion of employees with flexible working arrangements.

In almost half (48 per cent) of workplaces where flexible working was available, managers actively promoted the available flexible working and leave arrangements; this proportion had increased since 2013 (when this stood at 43 per cent). Take-up of flexible working was higher where managers promoted these arrangements, suggesting this may be one contributing factor to increased usage of flexible working practices.

Three in ten workplaces had received at least one request for flexible working in the year prior to the survey. Around one in ten of these workplaces had turned down at least one request, but in the vast majority of workplaces where there had been requests, they had all been accepted. The most common reasons for rejecting requests were business needs/operational reasons, and disruption caused. Although some caution is needed in drawing comparisons with findings from the 2013 WLB survey, there was some indication of increases in requests for particular types of flexible working: namely for working from home, reduced hours, term-time working, job-sharing and annualised hours.

Overall, these findings provide some signs of increasing demand and take-up of some forms of flexible working. It would be valuable to corroborate these findings with evidence collected directly from employees, in order to obtain a fuller picture of usage and demand for flexible working.⁶⁰

Despite the extension of the right to request, and some signs of increased demand for flexible working, managers' attitudes towards work-life balance appear relatively unchanged from those observed in 2013. In 2018/19, 26 per cent of employers judged that it was not their responsibility to help people balance their work with other aspects of their life (25 per cent in 2013).

The importance of employee voice in the workplace was highlighted in the Taylor Review, and forms the focus of the second part of the report.

Of key interest here is employer awareness and implementation of the Information and Consultation of Employee Regulations. In around one quarter of workplaces (23 per cent)

⁶⁰ These issues are being explored within the Employee Rights and Experience Survey, commissioned by Department for Business and Trade.

managers were aware that organisations with more than 50 employees should inform and consult their employees about plans and decisions which affect the business and working conditions, while a further third (32 per cent) were aware, but not sure of the details. Just over two-fifths (43 per cent) of workplaces had an agreement in place setting out the process by which employees would be informed and consulted about the economic situation of the business or major changes in working conditions. In one per cent of workplaces without an agreement, there had been a request for such an agreement in the year prior to the survey.

In reporting on mechanisms for employee voice, where feasible, the report draws comparisons with findings from the 2011 WERS. As noted throughout the report, some caution is needed in making such comparisons. In broad terms however, the findings point to overall stability, with perhaps some decline in union representation. For instance, five per cent of all workplaces reported having an on-site union representative or steward, compared with seven per cent in the 2011 WERS. There were some signs that non-union representation may have increased. Around one in ten workplaces (11 per cent) reported a non-union representative, and a similar share of workplaces (12 per cent) had a consultative committee. Both figures had increased by four percentage points since 2011. Whole-workforce meetings and team briefings were widespread and had continued to become more prevalent compared with 2011, with 86 per cent of workplaces holding whole-workforce meetings (80 per cent in 2011) and 77 per cent holding team briefings (65 per cent in 2011). The findings from MWP also show the prevalence of newer forms of communication, with just under half of workplaces (45 per cent) using company social media networks to communicate with their employees.

Across all three areas of parental leave, flexible working and employee voice (and as previous studies of employment relations issues have shown), awareness of policies is typically higher in larger workplaces. This is unsurprising, given larger workplaces are more likely, for example, to have dedicated HR teams and departments. Large workplaces are also more likely to have formal procedures in place. Nevertheless, relations between managers and employees were typically rated more favourably in smaller workplaces, again in common with findings from previous research. This points to the importance of informal procedures and mechanisms in fostering good employment relations in small workplaces.

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