



**EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
OCCASIONAL PAPERS**

Results of the first flexible
working employee survey

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Published in April 2004 by the Department of Trade and Industry.

URN 04/703

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Stephen Hicks and Ruth Wiseman of Employment Market Analysis and Research (EMAR) who designed the flexible working module questionnaire. The report was edited by Stephen Hicks and Grant Fitzner.

Mark Pullen and Mark Sayers in the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) provided comments. The author would also like to thank Alessio Fiacco and Laura Rainford of the Office for National Statistics, for their efficiency and helpfulness in collecting and compiling the survey results.

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Executive summary

The first DTI flexible working employee survey found that just over half of all employees were aware of the new right to request flexible working, introduced on 6 April 2003. Almost one quarter of employees with children under six had requested to work flexibly since then. Employers accepted the large majority of requests to work flexibly, with a near halving in the rate of refusal by employers compared with the previous two years. Around one in seven employees also reported taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003, most commonly to care for dependent children.

Summary of results

- Just over half (52 per cent) of all employees were aware of the right to request flexible working introduced on 6 April 2003. This is a marked improvement in the awareness rate of 41 per cent immediately prior to the new employment rights. Female employees were somewhat more aware of the new right than males (55 versus 49 per cent).
- Around one in eight (13 per cent) of all employees reported requesting to work flexibly since April 2003, most commonly requesting to work part-time (38 per cent) or flexitime (25 per cent). Female employees were more likely to request to work flexibly than male employees (16 and 10 per cent respectively). A greater percentage of female employees requested to work part-time than their male colleagues (41 per cent versus 31 per cent).
- Meeting childcare needs was the most common reason given by employees for requesting to work flexibly (43 per cent), particularly women (58 per cent). It was a less frequent reason for men (17 per cent), ranking equally with having more free time (17 per cent).
- The large majority (86 per cent) of flexible working requests made since April 2003 were either fully or partly accepted by employers. This is a marked improvement on the employer acceptance rate of 77 per cent immediately prior to the new employment rights. Only 11 per cent of flexible working requests made since April 2003 were declined. This represents a near halving of the rate of refusal by employers compared with the previous two years, suggesting the new employment rights have significantly increased employers' willingness to consider seriously employee requests.
- Fifty-eight per cent of both employees with children under six and employees with children under sixteen reported awareness of the right to request flexible working compared to 50 per cent of employees without dependent children.

- Almost one quarter (24 per cent) of employees with children under six and one fifth (20 per cent) of employees with children under sixteen requested to work flexibly since the introduction of the new law. This compares to only one in ten (10 per cent) employees without dependent children who had requested flexible working since April 2003.
- Amongst working parents with children under six, almost two-fifths of women employees reported requesting to work flexibly since April 2003 (37 per cent). This was nearly four times as high as requests by male employees with children under six (10 per cent).
- Since April 2003, 14 per cent of employees reported taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities, most commonly caring for dependent children. Employees with children under six and sixteen were more likely to report taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities than employees without dependent children (41, 31 and 6 per cent respectively). Similar percentages of male and female employees reported taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities (13 and 15 per cent respectively).

The new employment laws

The new employment laws introduced on 6 April 2003 give parents of children under six or parents of disabled children under eighteen the right to request to work a flexible working pattern. Employers have a statutory duty to consider such applications seriously.

Eligible employees are able to request: a change to the hours they work; a change to the times when they are required to work or to work from home. This covers working patterns such as annualised hours, compressed hours, flexitime, home-working, job-sharing, self-rostering, shift working, staggered hours and term-time working.

About this survey

This research was carried out as part of the Department of Trade and Industry's Employment Relations research programme. DTI commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to include a module of questions about flexible working and leave arrangements in its monthly Omnibus Survey. A total of 3,485 employees in Great Britain were surveyed over four months: September, October and November 2003 and February 2004. Unless otherwise stated estimates in this report are averages over the four months of data. The average overall response rate for the Omnibus Survey was 65 per cent.

For technical details about the survey please refer to Annex B.

Detailed tables of results are in Annex A, and the survey questionnaire can be found in Annex C.

Employee awareness

Awareness of the right to request flexible working

Employees were asked if they were aware of the new right to request flexible working arrangements that was introduced on 6 April 2003.¹

- The DTI flexible working employee survey found that 52 per cent of all employees were aware of the new law. This is a marked improvement in the awareness rate of 41 per cent immediately prior to the new employment rights.²
- Women were somewhat more aware of the new law than men (55 and 49 per cent respectively).
- A larger proportion of employees with dependent children reported awareness of the new employment law than employees without dependent children. Reported awareness was 58 per cent for employees with children under six and also 58 per cent for employees with children under sixteen. Half (50 per cent) of employees without dependent children reported awareness of the new right.
- Female employees with children under six reported higher levels of awareness than their male counterparts (60 and 56 per cent respectively). Similar percentages of male and female employees with children under sixteen reported awareness of the right (58 and 57 per cent respectively). When employees without dependent children are considered female employees were more aware of the right than male employees (53 and 46 per cent respectively).
- Levels of awareness were highest amongst those aged 55 to 64 years (59 per cent). Sixteen to 24 year olds reported the lowest levels of awareness of the new employment right (34 per cent).

¹ See Annex C for a copy of the flexible working module questionnaire.

² The DTI Second Work-Life Balance Study (WLB2) asked employees: 'Next year, employers will legally have to consider requests to adopt flexible working practices from parents with young children under the age of six or with disabilities. Were you aware or not aware of this right?' WLB2 was conducted in January and February 2003. For further information see Chapter 2 and Annex table A2.11 of Jane Stevens, et al. *The Second Work-Life Balance Study: Results from the Employees' Survey*, Employment Relations Research Series no. 27, DTI, March 2004.

The DTI flexible working employee survey asked employees: "Are you aware of the new right to request flexible working arrangements that was introduced on 6 April 2003?" (see Annex C for further details). Interviews were held between six and 11 months after the new employment rights were introduced, a shorter time period.

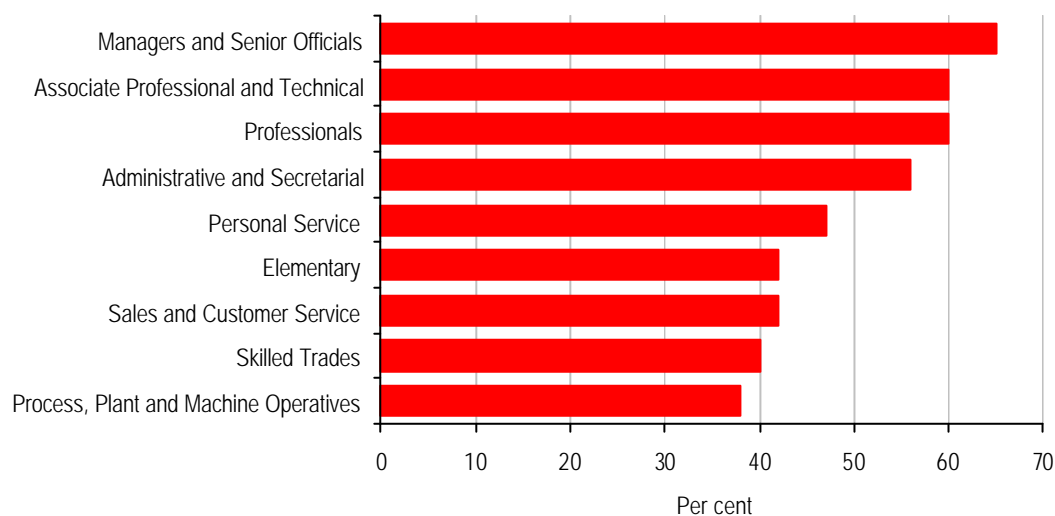
Table 1. Awareness of the new employment right introduced on 6 April 2003

	Awareness (per cent)
All employees	52
Sex	
Male employees	49
Female employees	55
Parental status	
Employees with children under six	58
Employees with children under sixteen	58
Employees without children	50

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses. See Annex A, Tables A1a and A1b for more detailed breakdowns.

- Chart 1 shows that managers and senior officials were most likely to be aware of the new employment right across the occupational groups (65 per cent). Process, plant and machine operatives and skilled trades occupations reported the lowest levels of awareness (38 and 40 per cent respectively).

Chart 1. Employee awareness of the new right to request flexible working introduced on 6 April 2003 by occupation

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses. See Annex A, Table A1b for details.

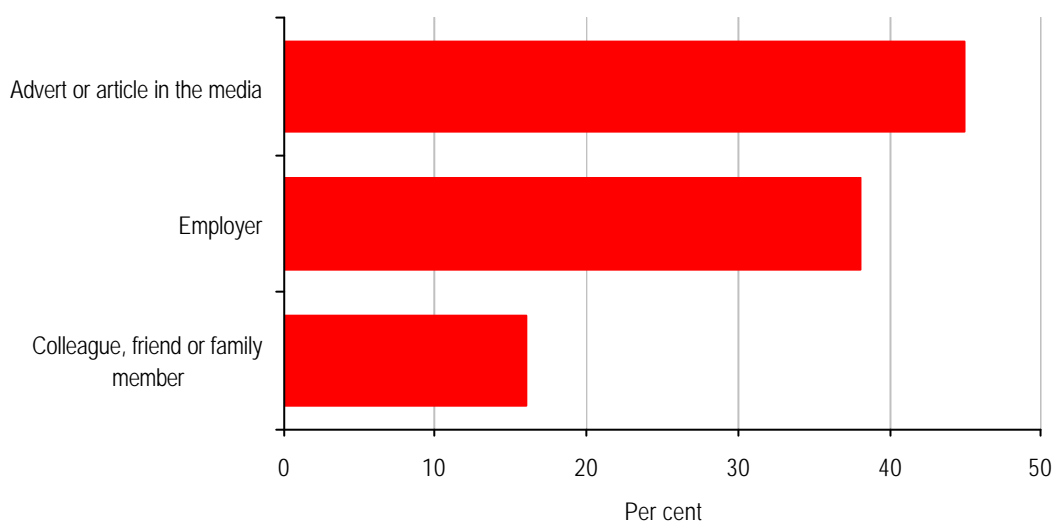
- Employees in Wales (56 per cent), London (56 per cent) and the North West (55 per cent) reported the highest levels of awareness of the new employment right. Forty seven per cent of employees in Scotland and 49 per cent of employees in the South West reported awareness of the right to request flexible working, the lowest regional percentages.

Method of awareness

Employees were asked how they became aware of the right to request flexible working. Employees could state more than one method, which is reflected in the results. Methods of awareness included becoming aware through: an employer, a colleague, friend or family member or an advert or article in the media.

- Chart 2 shows that seeing an advert or article in the media was the most common method of awareness reported by employees (45 per cent). Thirty eight per cent of aware employees reported being informed through their employer. The third most common method of awareness for employees was through a colleague, friend or family member (16 per cent).

Chart 2. Method of awareness of the right to request flexible working for all employees



Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees aware of the right to request flexible working. Total of 1,813 employee responses. See Annex A, Table A2 for details.

- By occupation, 49 per cent of managers and senior officials who said they were aware of the law reported being informed through their employer, whilst 37 per cent saw an advert or article in the media. Employees in skilled trades occupations reported the second lowest level of awareness of the new employment right (40 per cent). Fifty five per cent of these employees said they became aware through an advert or article in the media and 29 per cent reported being informed by their employer.

Working flexibly

Requests to work flexibly

Under the new flexible working law employees who are eligible can request a change to: the hours they work, the times when they are required to work or to work from home. They can request a working pattern such as flexitime or they can request more complex changes that could affect their pay. All employees in the survey were asked if they had requested to work flexibly, for a sustained period of time, since 6 April 2003.

Table 2. Requests to work flexibly since the introduction of the new employment law on 6 April 2003 (per cent)

All employees	13
Sex	
Male employees	10
Female employees	16
Parental status	
Employees with children under six	24
Employees with children under sixteen	20
Employees without children	10

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,484 employee responses. See Annex A, Tables A3a and A3b for more detailed breakdowns.

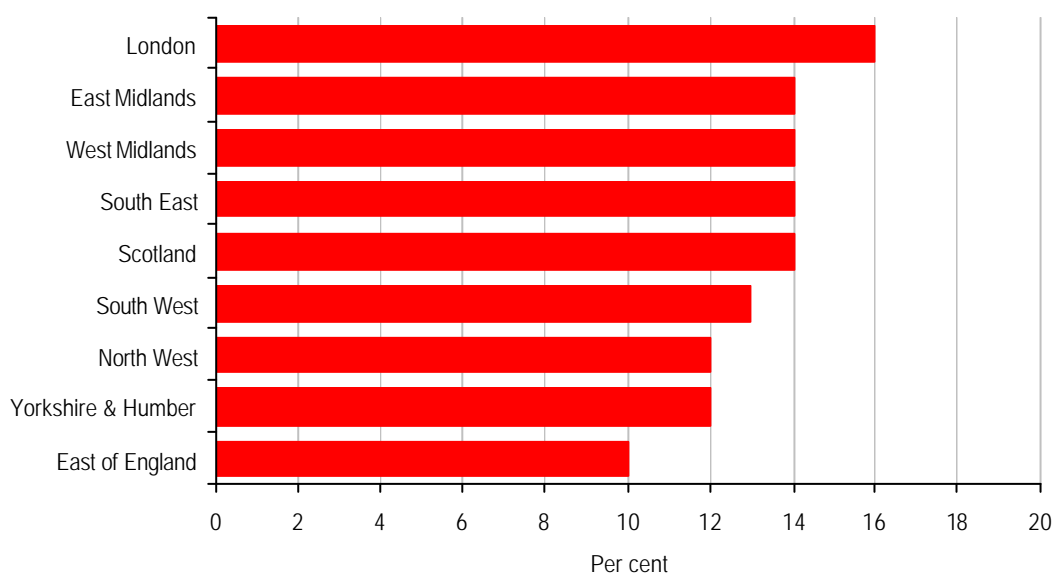
- The DTI flexible working employee survey found that 13 per cent of all employees had requested to work flexibly since the introduction of the new employment law on 6 April 2003. Although lower than the 17 per cent of employees in the Second Work-Life Balance Study who reported approaching their employees to request a change to their working arrangements, that result is not directly comparable because of different wording and a much longer time frame.³
- Female employees were more likely to request to work flexibly than male employees (16 and 10 per cent respectively).

³ The DTI Second Work-Life Balance Study (WLB2) asked employees: 'Over the last two years, have you approached your current employer to make a request to change how you regularly work for a sustained period of time?' WLB2 was conducted in January and February 2003. For further information see Chapter 4 and Annex table A4.7 of Jane Stevens, et al. *The Second Work-Life Balance Study: Results from the Employees' Survey*, Employment Relations Research Series No. 27, DTI, March 2004.

The DTI flexible working employee survey asked employees: 'Since 6 April 2003, have you requested to work any of the following work arrangements for a sustained period of time?' (see Annex C for further details). Interviews were held between six and 11 months after the new employment rights were introduced, a shorter time period.

- Twenty-four per cent of employees with children under six and 20 per cent of employees with children under sixteen reported requesting to work flexibly since the introduction of the new law. This compares to 10 per cent of employees without dependent children who reported requesting flexible working.
- A much higher percentage, 37 per cent, of female employees with children under six requested flexible working since April 2003 compared with only 10 per cent of their male counterparts. Female employees with children under sixteen were also considerably more likely to request to work flexibly than their male counterparts (27 and 11 per cent respectively). Male and female employees without dependent children were the least likely to request flexible working, with 10 per cent of both groups requesting to work flexibly since April 2003.
- Employees under 45 years were twice as likely to request flexible working as older employees. Requests for 16 to 24 year olds and 25 to 44 year olds were 17 and 16 per cent respectively compared to 8 and 7 per cent for 45 to 54 year olds and 55 to 64 year olds.
- Employees in sales and customer service occupations were most likely to request to work flexibly (19 per cent). Managers and senior officials and those in professional occupations were least likely to request flexible working (both reported 11 per cent).
- Chart 3 shows that London was the region with the highest reported percentage of employees requesting flexible working since April 2003 (16 per cent). Employees in the East of England were the least likely to request flexible working (10 per cent).

Chart 3. Requests to work flexibly since April 2003 by region



Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.
 Base: Total of 3,484 employee responses. See Annex A, Table A3a for details.
 Sample sizes for Wales and the North East were too small to provide reliable estimates.

Types of flexible working requested

Respondents were asked which of the following flexible working arrangements they had requested since 6 April 2003. Types of flexible working included; part-time, term-time, job-sharing, flexitime, compressed working, annualised hours, reduced hours and working from home.

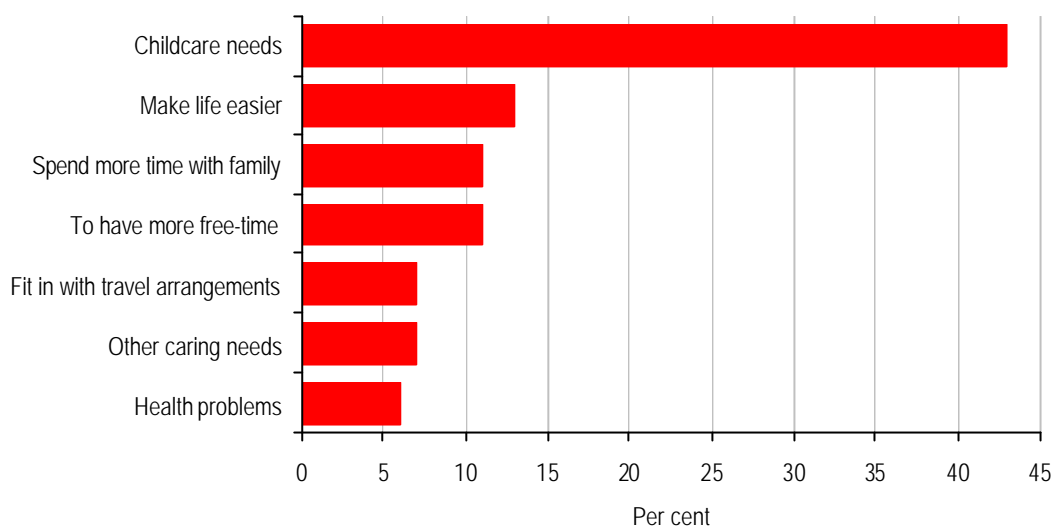
- The flexible working employee survey found that 38 per cent of employees who reported requesting flexible working requested to change to part-time working arrangements since the introduction of the new employment law on 6 April 2003. Additionally, of those employees who requested flexible working: 25 per cent requested flexi-time, 13 per cent requested reduced hours for a limited period, 10 per cent requested to work from home on a regular basis and 8 per cent requested a compressed working week.
- Of those employees who requested to work flexibly: female employees were more likely to request to work part-time than male employees (41 per cent versus 31 per cent). Thirty per cent of male employees and 23 per cent of female employees requested to work flexi-time. Twelve per cent of female employees requested to work reduced hours for a limited period and 17 per cent of male employees requested to work from home on a regular basis.

Reasons for requesting flexible working

Employees who requested flexible working were asked why they made their request.

- Chart 4 shows that by far the most common reason given by employees for requesting flexible working was to meet childcare needs (43 per cent).
- Thirteen per cent of employees reported requesting to work flexibly to make their life easier, 11 per cent wanted to spend more time with their family and similarly 11 per cent wanted more free time. Seven per cent of employees reported requesting to work flexibly to fit in with travel arrangements and 7 per cent needed to meet the caring needs of relatives or friends. Six per cent of employees reported requesting to work flexibly due to health problems.
- Though 58 per cent of women employees said they had requested to work flexibly to meet childcare needs, it was a much less frequently given reason by male employees, ranking equally with having more free time (both 17 per cent). Female employees also cited making life easier (12 per cent) and spending more time with their family (10 per cent) as reasons for requesting flexible working.

Chart 4. Reasons given for requesting flexible working



Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees who had requested flexible working. Total of 456 employee responses. See Annex A, table A5 for details.

- Eighty-two per cent of employees with children under sixteen and 98 per cent with of employees with children under six who reported requesting to work flexibly did so for childcare reasons. Employees without dependent children reported free time (19 per cent) and making their life easier (18 per cent) as reasons for requesting to work flexibly.

Acceptance of flexible working requests

Respondents were asked whether each of their requests to work flexibly were granted by their employer.

- The large majority (86 per cent) of flexible working requests made since April 2003 were either fully or partly accepted by employers. This is a marked improvement on the employer acceptance rate of 77 per cent immediately prior to the new employment right.⁴
- Seventy-seven per cent of flexible working requests were fully accepted by employers and a further 9 per cent were either partly accepted or a compromise arrangement was reached.
- Respondents stated that only 11 per cent of flexible working requests made since April 2003 were declined. This represents a near halving of the rate of refusal by employers since the introduction of the new employment right, suggesting they have

⁴ The DTI Second Work-Life Balance Study asked employees whether over the past two years they had requested to change how they regularly work for a sustained period of time. Note the different wording of the questions, as outlined in footnote 3.

significantly increased employers' willingness seriously to consider employee requests.⁵

- Female employees reported that a slightly higher percentage of requests were fully accepted (78 per cent) than for male employees (75 per cent). Nine per cent of requests made by female employees were partly accepted or compromised on and 10 per cent were declined.
- Similar percentages of flexible working requests made by employees with children under six, employees with children under sixteen and employees without dependent children were accepted (77, 77 and 78 per cent respectively).

Reasons for not requesting changes to working arrangements

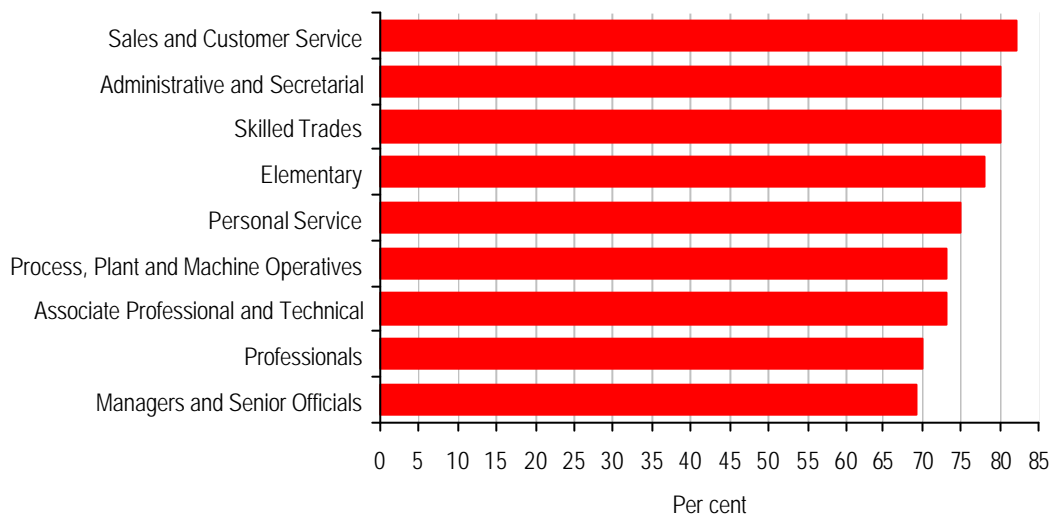
- The majority (84 per cent) of employees had not requested changes to their working arrangements since April 2003.
- Of those employees who had not requested a change to their working arrangements, three-quarters (75 per cent) said it was because they were content with their current work arrangements. Female employees (78 per cent) were somewhat more content than male employees (72 per cent), while employees with children under six who had not requested flexible working (67 per cent) were considerably less content than the national average.
- Employees also gave as reasons for not requesting flexible working: their job does not allow flexible working (6 per cent), they were unaware of the new employment law (5 per cent), and flexible working does not suit their domestic arrangements (3 per cent). Some employees were not convinced their employer would allow them to work flexibly (2 per cent) and 2 per cent said they did not need to work flexibly. A few employees could not afford any reduction in their income (1 per cent) and some employees said they had too much work to do (1 per cent).
- A lower percentage, 67 per cent, of employees with children under six reported being content with current work arrangements as a reason for not requesting flexible working since April 2003. This was the lowest contentment percentage by parental status. Higher percentages of employees with children under six reported that their job does not allow flexible working (9 per cent) and that they were unaware of the new right (8 per cent) as reasons for not

⁵ The DTI Second Work-Life Balance Study found that 20 per cent of employee requests to change how they regularly work for a sustained period of time were not agreed to. The WLB2 question asked: 'And was your request to change the way you regularly work agreed to?', with 20 per cent of respondents answering no. The flexible working employee survey question asked: 'Was your request to change < answer given > granted by your employer?', with 11 per cent answering no or declined.

requesting flexible working. These trends were repeated for employees with children under sixteen and employees without dependent children. Seventy-two per cent of employees with children under sixteen and 76 per cent of employees without dependent children reported that they were content with their current working arrangements and so did not request flexible working.

- Chart 5 shows that employees in sales and customer service occupations were most likely to report being content with work arrangements as a reason for not requesting flexible working (82 per cent). Managers and senior officials were least likely to report being content with work arrangements as a reason for not requesting flexible working (69 per cent).

Chart 5. Contentment with current working arrangements as a reason for not requesting flexible working by occupation



Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.
 Base: Total of 2,935 employee responses. See Annex A, Table A7b for details.

Caring responsibilities

Taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities

Respondents were asked whether they had taken any time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003.

Table 3. Taking time off for caring responsibilities since April 2003 (per cent)

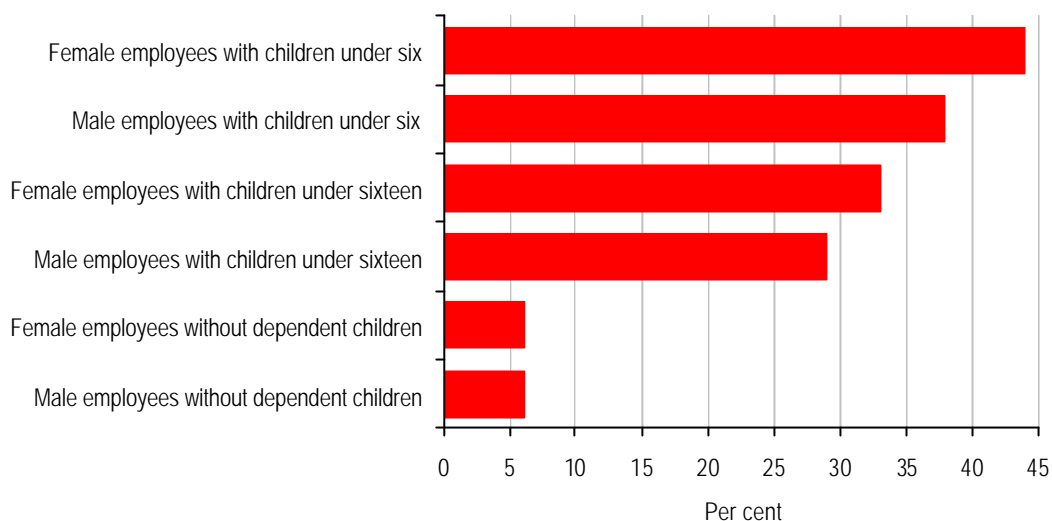
All employees	14
Sex	
Male employees	13
Female employees	15
Parental status	
Employees with children under six	41
Employees with children under sixteen	31
Employees without children	6

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses. See Annex A, Table A8 for more detailed breakdowns.

- Fourteen per cent of employees said that since April 2003 they had taken time off work to fulfil caring responsibilities. The figures for male and female employees were similar (13 and 15 per cent respectively).
- Working parents were much more likely than employees without dependents to have taken time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003. Forty-one per cent of employees with children under six and 31 per cent of employees with children under sixteen took time off compared with just 6 per cent of employees without dependent children.
- As shown in Chart 6, female employees were more likely to report taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003 than their male counterparts. Forty-four per cent of female employees with children under six took time off for caring reasons compared to 38 per cent of male employees with children under six. The difference was less for employees with children under sixteen, 33 per cent of females reported taking time off to care compared to 29 per cent of males.

Chart 6. Taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003 by parental status and sex

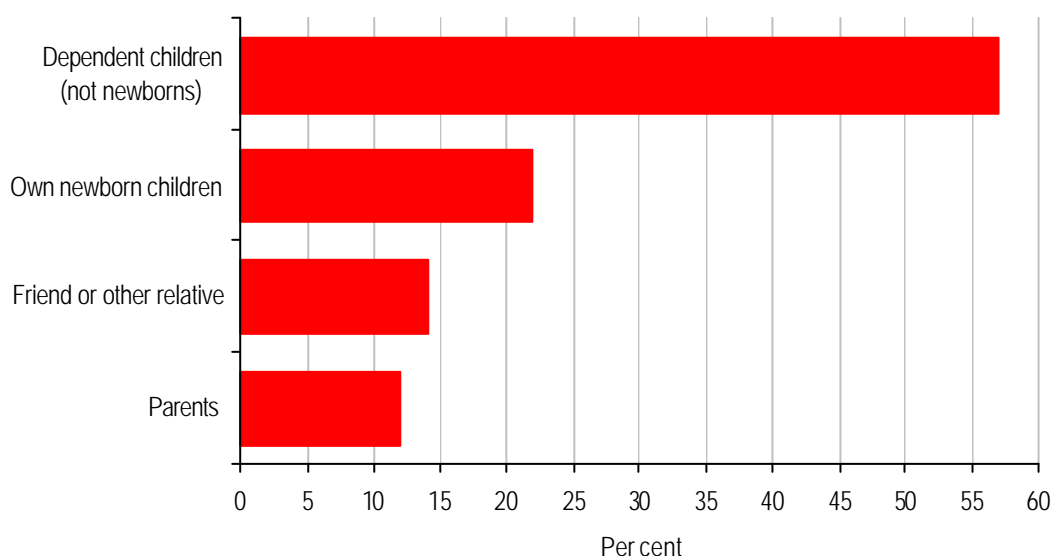


Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.
Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses. See Annex A, Table A8 for details.

Who was cared for?

- As shown in Chart 7, 57 per cent of employees who reported taking time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003 stated they were caring for dependent children (not newborns). Twenty-two per cent of employees reported taking time off to care for their own newborn children, 14 per cent reported caring for a friend or other relative and 12 per cent reported caring for parents.

Chart 7. Who was cared for? (all employees)



Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004. See Annex A, Table A9 for details.
Base: All employees who had taken time off since April 2003 to fulfil caring responsibilities. Total of 495 employee responses.

- Of those employees who had taken time off since April 2003 to fulfil caring responsibilities, 51 per cent of male employees and 61 per cent of female employees reported taking time off to care for dependent children (not newborns). Twenty-five per cent of male employees and 19 per cent of female employees reported taking time off to care for a newborn child. Nineteen per cent of male employees reported taking time off to care for a friend or other relative compared to 10 per cent of female employees. And 13 per cent of female employees reported taking time off to care for a parent.
- Overall, 15 per cent of employees who took time off to fulfil caring responsibilities were caring for a disabled person.

Annex A – Tables of results

Employee awareness

Table A1a. Awareness of the new right to request flexible working introduced on 6 April 2003 (per cent)

	Aware	Unaware
All employees	52	46
Parental status		
Employees with children under six	58	41
Employees with children under sixteen	58	41
Employees without dependent children	50	49
Sex		
Male employees	49	49
Female employees	55	44
Parental status by sex		
Male employees with children under six	56	42
Female employees with children under six	60	40
Male employees with children under sixteen	58	42
Female employees with children under sixteen	57	41
Male employees without dependent children	46	52
Female employees without dependent children	53	45
Age		
16 to 24 years	34	64
25 to 44 years	54	44
45 to 54 years	57	42
55 to 64 years	59	40
65 years and over	*	*
Region		
North East	52	44
North West	55	43
Yorkshire and the Humber	54	46
East Midlands	53	46
West Midlands	51	48
East of England	52	45
London	56	42
South East	50	48
South West	49	50
Wales	56	43
Scotland	47	51

* Sample size too small to provide a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could also record 'don't know'.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses.

Table A1b. Awareness of the new right to request flexible working introduced on 6 April 2003 by industry and occupation (per cent)

	Aware	Unaware
All employees	52	46
Industry		
Agriculture and Fishing	*	*
Energy and Water	*	*
Manufacturing	47	53
Construction	44	51
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	46	52
Transport and Communication	48	51
Banking, Finance and Insurance	58	41
Public Admin, Education and Health	61	38
Other services	43	54
Occupation		
Managers and Senior Officials	65	34
Professional Occupations	60	39
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	60	39
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	56	42
Skilled Trades Occupations	40	57
Personal Service Occupations	47	52
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	42	57
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	38	59
Elementary Occupations	42	56

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could also report 'Don't know'.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses.

Table A2. Method of awareness of the flexible working right (per cent)

	Employer	Colleague, friend or family member	Advert or article in the media
All employees	38	16	45
Occupation			
Managers and Senior Officials	49	10	37
Professional Occupations	31	14	55
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	46	14	38
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	44	15	43
Skilled Trades Occupations	29	*	55
Personal Service Occupations	35	20	48
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	39	20	42
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	*	*	62
Elementary Occupations	26	25	46

*Sample size too small to provide a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could also report 'Other' and 'Don't know' as a response.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees aware of the right to request flexible working. Total of 1,813 employee responses.

Working flexibly

Table A3a. Employee requests to work flexibly since 6 April 2003 (per cent)

	Requested flexible working	Did not request to change work arrangements
All employees	13	84
Parental status		
Employees with children under six	24	74
Employees with children under sixteen	20	78
Employees without dependent children	10	87
Sex		
Male employees	10	87
Female employees	16	82
Parental status by sex		
Male employees with children under six	10	87
Female employees with children under six	37	62
Male employees with children under sixteen	11	86
Female employees with children under sixteen	27	72
Male employees without dependent children	10	88
Female employees without dependent children	10	87
Age		
16 to 24 years	17	79
25 to 44 years	16	82
45 to 54 years	8	89
55 to 64 years	7	90
65 years and over	*	87
Region		
North East	*	86
North West	12	88
Yorkshire and the Humber	12	87
East Midlands	14	85
West Midlands	14	81
East of England	10	86
London	16	78
South East	14	84
South West	13	85
Wales	*	83
Scotland	14	84

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could also report 'Don't know'.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,484 employee responses.

Table A3b. Employee requests to work flexibly since 6 April 2003, by industry and occupation (per cent)

	Requested flexible working	Did not request to change work arrangements
All employees	13	84
Industry		
Agriculture and Fishing	*	89
Energy and Water	*	86
Manufacturing	8	88
Construction	*	92
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	17	78
Transport and Communication	*	86
Banking, Finance and Insurance	11	87
Public Admin, Education and Health	15	83
Other services	*	86
Occupation		
Managers and Senior Officials	11	87
Professional Occupations	11	87
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	16	81
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	14	84
Skilled Trades Occupations	*	90
Personal Service Occupations	15	84
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	19	77
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	*	89
Elementary Occupations	14	82

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 3,484 employee responses.

Table A4. Types of flexible working requested (per cent)

	Male employees	Female employees	All employees
Part-time	31	41	38
Flexitime	30	23	25
Reduced hours for a limited period	*	12	13
Work from home on a regular basis	17	*	10
Compressed working week	*	*	8

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Per cent of those employees surveyed who had requested flexible working.

Note: Respondents could give multiple responses.

Respondents also stated other types of flexible working, but sample sizes were too small to report above.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees who requested flexible working since April 2003. Total of 456 employee responses.

Table A5. Reasons for requesting flexible working (per cent)

	Male employees	Female employees	Employees with children under six	Employees with children under 16	Employees without dependent children	All employees
Childcare needs	17	58	98	82	*	43
Other caring needs of relatives, friends or neighbours	*	*	*	*	*	7
To make life easier	*	12	*	*	18	13
To have more free time	17	*	*	*	19	11
Spend more time with family	*	10	*	14	*	11
Health problems	*	*	*	*	*	6
Fit in with travel arrangements	*	*	*	*	*	7

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could give more than one response.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees who had requested flexible working since April 2003. Total of 456 employee responses.

Table A6. Acceptance of flexible working requests (per cent)

	Fully accepted	Partly accepted	Declined
All employees	77	9	11
Parental status			
Employees with children under six	77	*	*
Employees with children under sixteen	77	10	10
Employees without dependent children	78	*	12
Sex			
Male employees	75	*	*
Female employees	78	9	10

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Respondents could also state that they had not yet received a reply.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: Total of 455 employee responses.

Table A7a. Reasons given by employees for not requesting to change their work arrangements since April 2003 (per cent)

	Male employees	Female employees	Employees with children under six	Employees with children under 16	Employees without dependent children	All employees
Content with current work arrangements	72	78	67	72	76	75
Job does not allow flexible working	7	5	9	8	5	6
Not aware of the new right	5	5	8	6	4	5
Not suited to domestic arrangements	3	3	*	3	3	3
Not convinced employer would allow flexible working	2	*	*	*	1	2
Not needed	3	*	*	*	2	2
Too much work to do	2	*	*	*	1	1
Could not afford any reduction in income	*	*	*	3	*	1

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could give more than one response.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees who had not requested flexible working since April 2003. Total of 2,935 employee responses.

Table A7b. Main reasons given by employees for not requesting flexible working arrangements since April 2003 by occupation (per cent)

	Content with current work arrangements	Job does not allow flexible working
All employees	75	6
Occupation		
Managers and Senior Officials	69	10
Professional Occupations	70	13
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	73	*
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	80	*
Skilled Trades Occupations	80	*
Personal Service Occupations	75	*
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	82	*
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	73	*
Elementary Occupations	78	*

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could give other and multiple responses but sample sizes were small. Because of problems with sample size, only the top two responses in Table A7a were used.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees who had not requested flexible working since April 2003. Total of 2,935 employee responses.

Caring responsibilities

Table A8. Whether employee had taken time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003 (per cent)

	Yes	No
All employees	14	86
Parental status		
Employees with children under six	41	59
Employees with children under sixteen	31	69
Employees without dependent children	6	93
Sex		
Male employees	13	87
Female employees	15	84
Parental status by sex		
Male employees with children under six	38	62
Female employees with children under six	44	56
Male employees with children under sixteen	29	71
Female employees with children under sixteen	33	67
Male employees without dependent children	6	93
Female employees without dependent children	6	93

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.
Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses.

Table A9. Who was cared for by the employee? (per cent)

	Male employees	Female employees	All employees
Dependent children (not newborns)	51	61	57
Own newborn child	25	19	22
Parents	*	13	12
Friend or other relative	19	10	14

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate. Percentages will not add to 100 per cent as respondents could give more than one response.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees who had taken time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003. Total of 495 employee responses.

Table A10. Was the person/people cared for disabled? (per cent)

	Yes	No
All employees	15	85
Parental status		
Employees with children under six	*	94
Employees with children under sixteen	*	94
Employees without dependent children	34	66

* Sample size too small for a reliable estimate.

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

Base: All employees who had taken time off to fulfil caring responsibilities since April 2003. Total of 495 employee responses.

Annex B – Technical note

Eligibility for flexible working rights

The new employment rights introduced on 6 April 2003 gave many working parents the right to request to work a flexible working pattern. To request to work flexibly applicants need:

- to be an employee;
- to have a child under six, or under eighteen if the child is disabled;
- to be the child's parent, adopter, foster parent or guardian; or to be married to, or be the partner of, the child's parent, adopter, foster parent or guardian;
- to have worked for their employer continuously for 26 weeks at the date the application is made;
- to make the application no later than two weeks before the child's sixth birthday, or eighteenth birthday in the case of a disabled child;
- to have, or expect to have, responsibility for the child's upbringing;
- to be making the application to help them to care for the child;
- not to be an agency worker;
- not to be a member of the armed forces; and,
- not to have made another application to work flexibly under the right during the previous twelve months.

The ONS Omnibus Survey

The Office for National Statistics Omnibus Survey is composed of approximately 1,800 interviews with adults aged sixteen or over in private households in Great Britain. It is carried out on a monthly basis.

The Omnibus Survey uses the postcode address file of small users as its sampling frame. This contains all private household addresses in Great Britain. Only one adult per household is interviewed and proxy interviews are not taken for other adults in the household. Each month's Omnibus Survey consists of a sample of one hundred postal sectors and is stratified by: region, the proportion of households renting from local authorities and the socio-economic group of the household reference person. Postal sectors are selected with probability proportionate to size. Within each sector thirty addresses are selected randomly.

Weighting factors are applied to Omnibus Survey data on a household, individual and household reference person basis. This report uses the individual weight, Weight A, since the module of questions uses individual adults as the unit of analysis. Because only one member of the

household is interviewed, people in households containing few adults have an increased chance of selection than those in households with many. Weight A is applied to correct for this unequal probability, it is calculated by dividing the number of adults in the sampled household by the average number of adults per household. The base is then adjusted back to the number of respondents who were interviewed. As such the weight corrects for unequal probabilities of selection and does not correct for any non-response bias.

The overall response rate for the Omnibus Survey is calculated as the number of achieved interviews as a percentage of the eligible sample. The response rate over the four months was 65 per cent. Table B1 provides more information about responses to the survey over the four months of data collection.

Table B1. Interviews achieved, Omnibus Survey response rate and employees interviewed by survey month

	Interviews achieved	Omnibus Survey response rate (per cent)	Employees interviewed
September 2003	1,832	67	883
October 2003	1,724	64	882
November 2003	1,795	65	895
February 2004	1,777	65	865
Total	7,128	65	3,525

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004.

As standard practice the ONS place Omnibus Survey data with the ESRC data archive one year after collection. This report is based upon Module 333, Flexible Working and Leave Arrangements – DTI.

In this report the estimates produced are averages over the four months of data. Table B2 below shows the monthly estimates for awareness and flexible working requests and their four-month averages. This approach was taken to achieve larger sample sizes, allowing a wider range of analysis to be presented. A weighted cell size of 25 was used as the smallest reporting unit since confidence intervals become very large surrounding estimates based on smaller counts. For several variables this report considers 'Don't know' to be a valid response. Where this is the case it is noted at the foot of the appropriate table.

Table B2. Awareness and requests to work flexibly by survey month (per cent)

	Awareness	Requests to work flexibly since 6 April 2003
September 2003	55	10
October 2003	50	15
November 2003	53	13
February 2004	51	14
Average over 4 months	52	13

Source: ONS Omnibus Survey, September to November 2003 and February 2004. Base: Total of 3,485 employee responses.

Annex C – The Flexible Working Module Questionnaire

Module 333 Flexible Working and Leave Arrangements - DTI

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))

M333INTR

Many employers are increasingly adopting work-life balance and family friendly working time arrangements. The next set of questions is about how you balance work with your home life.

(1) Continue PRESS <1> TO CONTINUE

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))

M333_1

In April 2003 the government introduced the new right for parents of children under 6, or disabled children under 18 to request a flexible working arrangement. Employers have a statutory duty to consider such requests seriously.

Are you aware of the new right to request flexible working arrangements that was introduced on 6 April 2003?

(1) Yes Yes
(2) No No
(3) DonK Don't know

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: M333_1 = Yes

M333_2M

How did you become aware of this right?

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT PROMPT

CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

SET [4] OF

(1) Employer Employer
(2) Friend Colleague, friend or family
(3) Advert Advert/article in media
(4) NotAware Not aware of the right
(5) Other Other (SPECIFY)

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: M333_1 = Yes
AND: Other IN M333_2M

Spe333_1

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE SPECIFY OTHER SOURCE OF AWARENESS
STRING[50]

WARN IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: M333_1 = Yes
AND: (NotAware IN M333_2M) AND (M333_1 = Yes)
NOT(IN(NotAware,M333_2M))

THE RESPONDENT WAS NOT AWARE OF THE RIGHT. PLEASE CHANGE QUESTION
M333_1 TO 'NO'

WARN IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: M333_1 = Yes
AND: (NotAware IN M333_2M) AND (M333_2M = RESPONSE)
M333_2M.CARDINAL = 1

YOU CANNOT USE 'Not aware of the right' ALONGSIDE OTHER CODES. Please amend.
IF RESPONDENT WAS 'Not aware of the right' PLEASE CHANGE QUESTION M333_1 TO
'NO' **ASK IF:** (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus =
Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))

M333_3M

SHOWCARD C333_3M

Since 6 April 2003, have you requested to work any of the following work arrangements for a sustained period of time? ... HELP<F9>

INTERVIEWER: 'SUSTAINED' MEANS FOR LONGER THAN 1 MONTH AT A TIME.
INTERVIEWER (IF NEEDED): 'WORK ARRANGEMENTS' MEAN THE AMOUNT OF HOURS YOU WORK, WHEN YOU WORK THOSE HOURS AND WHERE YOU WORK THOSE HOURS (E.G. AT HOME).

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

2 - Term-time working - 'Working only during the school term-time'

3 - Job Share - 'This means where a full-time job is divided, usually between two people and where the job sharers work at different times. Sharers each have their own contract of employment and share the pay and benefits of a full-time job on a pro-rata basis'

4 - Flexi-time - 'This means situations where the employee has no set start or finish time but an arrangement to work a set number of hours per week or per month. Also where there is a requirement to work core hours, but outside of those hours, an employee can choose their start and finish time.'

5 - Work a compressed working week - 'This means for example working a 40 hour week over four days, a nine day fortnight, but this is NOT the same as shift working.'

6 - Work annualised hours - 'This means where the number of hours an employee has to work is calculated over a full year. E.g. Instead of 40 hours a week employees are contracted to work say 1900 hours per year.'

7 - Work reduced hours for a limited period - 'This means where an employee has an agreement to cut their hours for a set period of time (e.g. a month, six months) and then return to their original working hours. This is sometimes known as V-time working.'

SET [9] OF

- | | | |
|------|----------|---|
| (1) | PartTime | To work part-time |
| (2) | TermTime | To work term-time only |
| (3) | JobShare | To job share |
| (4) | Flexi | To work flexi-time |
| (5) | Compress | To work a compressed working week |
| (6) | Annualis | To work annualised hours |
| (7) | Reduced | To work reduced hours for a limited period |
| (8) | WrkHome | To work from home on a regular basis |
| (9) | Other | Another arrangement (please specify) |
| (10) | NRequest | Did not request to change work arrangements |
| (11) | DonK | Don't know (SPONTANEOUS ONLY) |

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: Other IN M333_3M

Spe333_2

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE SPECIFY OTHER ARRANGEMENT

STRING[50]

Qarrange: Block for array for M333_3M in Module M333 - Flexible Working and Leave Arrangements - DTI

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (M333_3M = RESPONSE) AND NOT ((NRequest IN M333_3M) OR (DonK IN M333_3M))
AND: In loop FOR LArrang := 1 TO AXLoop

M333_4M

Why did you make the request <answer given at M333_3M>?

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT PROMPT

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [11] OF

- | | | |
|------|----------|---|
| (1) | ChildCar | Childcare needs |
| (2) | Caring | Other caring needs of relatives, friends or neighbours |
| (3) | JbDemand | Demands of the job |
| (4) | LifeEasy | Makes my life easier, to get things done, be more efficient |
| (5) | FreeTime | Have more free time |
| (6) | Hobby | Pursue a hobby |
| (7) | Family | To spend more time with my family |
| (8) | TypeWork | It's the nature of my job/type of work |
| (9) | Health | Health problems |
| (10) | Travel | To fit in better with travel arrangements |
| (11) | Other | Other (SPECIFY) |
| (12) | DonK | Don't know |

WARN IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (M333_3M = RESPONSE) AND NOT ((NRequest IN M333_3M) OR (DonK IN M333_3M))
AND: In loop FOR LArrang := 1 TO AXLoop
AND: (DonK IN M333_4M) AND (M333_4M = RESPONSE)
M333_4M.CARDINAL = 1

YOU CANNOT USE 'Don't know' ALONGSIDE OTHER CODES

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (M333_3M = RESPONSE) AND NOT ((NRequest IN M333_3M) OR (DonK IN M333_3M))
AND: In loop FOR LArrang := 1 TO AXLoop
AND: Other IN M333_4M

Spe333_4

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE SPECIFY OTHER REASON

STRING[255]

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (M333_3M = RESPONSE) AND NOT ((NRequest IN M333_3M) OR
(DonK IN M333_3M))
AND: In loop FOR LArrang := 1 TO AXLoop

M333_5

Was your request to change <answer given at M333_3M> granted by your employer?

INTERVIEWER: PROBE IF ANSWER = 'YES'.

- | | | |
|-----|----------|----------------------------------|
| (1) | FullyAcc | Yes - fully |
| (2) | PartAcc | Yes - partly accepted/compromise |
| (3) | Declined | No - declined |
| (4) | Awaiting | Not received reply yet |

Module 333 - Flexible Working and Leave Arrangements - DTI

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (NRequest IN M333_3M) AND (M333_3M = RESPONSE)

M333_6M

Why have you NOT requested a change in your working arrangements since April 2003?

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT PROMPT

INTERVIEWER (IF NEEDED): 'WORKING ARRANGEMENTS' MEAN THE AMOUNT OF HOURS YOU WORK, WHEN YOU WORK THOSE HOURS AND WHERE YOU WORK THOSE HOURS (E.G. AT HOME).

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [12] OF

- | | | |
|------|----------|--|
| (1) | Happy | Content with current work arrangements |
| (2) | NoSuitJb | Job does not allow it/Doesn't suit my job |
| (3) | TMuchWrk | Too much work to do |
| (4) | Colleagu | Concerned about the extra workload for my colleagues |
| (5) | Career | Concerned about my career progression |
| (6) | JbSecur | Concerned about my job security |
| (7) | DoubtEm | Not convinced my employer would allow it |
| (8) | NConfid | Do not feel confident to ask my employer |
| (9) | NAfford | Could not afford any reduction in my income |
| (10) | NoSuit | Doesn't suit domestic/home arrangements |
| (11) | NtAware | Not aware of the new right |
| (12) | Other | Other (SPECIFY) |
| (13) | DonK | Don't know |

WARN IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (NRequest IN M333_3M) AND (M333_3M = RESPONSE)
AND: (DonK IN M333_6M) AND (M333_6M = RESPONSE)
M333_6M.CARDINAL = 1

YOU CANNOT USE 'Don't know' ALONGSIDE OTHER CODES

WARN IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (NRequest IN M333_3M) AND (M333_3M = RESPONSE)
AND: (M333_1 = Yes) AND (NtAware IN M333_6M)
NOT(IN(NtAware,M333_6M))

THE RESPONDENT WAS AWARE OF THE RIGHT AT M333_1. PLEASE CHECK AND AMEND IF NECESSARY.

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: (NRequest IN M333_3M) AND (M333_3M = RESPONSE)
AND: Other IN M333_6M

Spe333_6

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE SPECIFY OTHER REASON
STRING[255]

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))

M333_7

Since April 2003, have you taken any time off work to fulfil caring responsibilities?

- | | | |
|-----|------|------------|
| (1) | Yes | Yes |
| (2) | No | No |
| (3) | DonK | Don't know |

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: M333_7 = Yes

M333_8M

Who did you take time off work to care for?

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT PROMPT - EXCEPT TO VERIFY AGE AND STATUS OF
CHILD(REN).

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

SET [9] OF

- | | | |
|-----|----------|---|
| (1) | Newborn | Own newborn child(ren) (under the age of 12 months) |
| (2) | OthChild | Other dependent child(ren) |
| (3) | GrndChld | Grandchild(ren) |
| (4) | Parents | Parent(s) |
| (5) | GParents | Grandparent(s) |
| (6) | OthRel | Another relative(s) |
| (7) | Friend | Friend or neighbour(s) |
| (8) | OtNonRel | Other non-relative(s) |
| (9) | Other | Other (SPECIFY) |

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: M333_7 = Yes
AND: Other IN M333_8M

Spe333_8

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE SPECIFY OTHER PERSON CARED FOR
STRING[50]

ASK IF: (QILO.DVILO3a = InEmp) AND (QMainJb.Stat = Emp)
AND: NOT (((QILO.SchemeET = Yes) OR (QILO.OwnBus = Yes)) OR
(QILO.RelBus = Yes)) OR (QILO.JbAway = Yes))
AND: M333_7 = Yes

M333_9

Were any of the people (was the person) you took time off work to care for disabled?

- (1) Yes Yes
- (2) No No