



Chartered Institute
of Personnel and
Development

Working time regulations Calling time on working time?

Survey report
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Background and methodology

Research objectives

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) commissioned TNS to undertake a survey among a representative sample of the British working population who work 48 or more hours a week. The main objective of the research is to produce evidence on the type and nature of long-hours working in the UK, in the context of the European Commission's consultation document on working time

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/labour_law/documentation_en.htm. In particular, the research looks at the implementation of the Working Time Directive and the operation of the UK's 'opt-out' (which allows individuals to work voluntarily beyond the 48-hour limit). Other objectives included establishing people's views on working long-hours, assessing the impact of long-hours working and understanding the effect of the EU Working Time Regulations and the opt-out.

Methodology

A total of 752 people were interviewed across a range of sectors and occupations. Interviews took place by telephone between 18 and 24 February 2004. Many of the questions were covered in the original study undertaken in July 1998 and a smaller subsequent survey carried out in August 2000, and comparisons have been made in the data between the different time periods, where appropriate.

Summary of key findings

Personal choice v compulsion

- The majority of respondents working 48 or more hours a week were putting in the extra hours consistently throughout the year. Almost three-quarters (73%) of those working 48 or more hours a week did so either most weeks or every week.
- The most popular reason given for working excessive hours was 'the amount of work that needs to be done', cited by 63% of respondents; this was up from 41% in 1998.
- In terms of what would enable them to work fewer hours, less work (26%) and maintaining a similar standard of living (25%) were the two critical requirements.
- Seven out of ten (70%) respondents stated that it was partly or totally their choice to work in excess of 48 hours. However, 30% claimed that there was an element of compulsion, which was up from 11% in 1998.
- Of those who had heard of the opt-out clause, nearly 4 out of 10 (37%) had signed the agreement, so they were now in a position to work longer than the 48-hour limit.
- Six out of ten respondents who had signed the opt-out clause did so after the date of signing the employment contract, some 37% signing on the date itself.
- One in five (21%) had felt a degree of employer compulsion to sign the opt-out agreement.

Effects of long-hours working

A number of people came up with positive aspects to working long-hours, including better standard of living (51%), better quality of life (46%), improved self-esteem (38%) and promotion (24%).

The biggest regret among respondents working 48 hours or more a week was the fact that they missed out on leisure and hobby time. This was put forward by almost 7 out of 10 (69%) people. Strain on relationship with partner (47%) was also a key concern.

- One in ten (10%) of workers putting in 48 hours a week or more had suffered some form of physical problem as a result of working long-hours. Furthermore, 17% of respondents had suffered from mental health problems.
- Others reported making mistakes at work (22%) and performing less efficiently because of tiredness (36%).

Flexible working solutions

- Just under half of respondents have access to flexible working options, such as job-sharing.

In terms of changes noticed in the organisation during the last five years, some 16% claimed that they had seen more flexible working patterns introduced, while 12% reported more information becoming available in the organisation about the EU regulations.

Long-hours trends

- Almost half (45%) of respondents believed that their companies encouraged the working of long-hours.

- Some 45% of long-hours workers had, in the last five years, increased the number of hours they work, the majority (57%) claiming that it was quite simply because their workload had increased. This was only slightly down on the 1998 figure of 61%.
- Conversely, only 15% of long-hours workers said that their hours had decreased in the last five years. The most common reason given was that the new job doesn't require as many hours to be worked (39%), a similar figure in fact to that in the 1998 survey (36%).

Interestingly, when asked whether they could maintain the same level of productivity while cutting back the number of hours worked each week, over 4 out of 10 respondents (41%) claimed that they could.

Arguments for keeping the working time opt-out

Around a third (35%) would like to see it removed.

When explicitly asked whether the EU should have the right to limit the number of hours you choose to work, a clear majority (66%) were against the notion.

- Fewer than 1 in 3 workers can identify the number of hours set out by the Working Time Directive.
- The EU regulations are starting to take effect, but little difference has so far been noted. Only 6% of those who had reduced their hours put it down to the Working Time Regulations, although this represented an improvement on the 1998 figure (0%). A further 3% claimed the reduction was due to the Government's new right to ask for flexible working options – a substantial figure, given that the right is eligible only to parents with children under 6 and those with disabled children under 18.

The most common complaint (28%) was that the opt-out has stopped staff working the hours they want, which was only slightly down on the 2002 figure (30%).

Arguments for removing the opt-out

- Over 4 out of 10 respondents (44%) believed that their organisation generally put the EU Working Time Directive into practice, with the public sector (49%) more likely to do so than their private counterparts (41%).
- In terms of what people felt was good about the EU Working Time Directive, the most popular reason given was that it was the only way to ensure that employees did not work excessively long-hours (51%), up from 41% in 2000.

Tackling the long-hours culture

- When asked to identify moves that the organisation has made to reduce working hours, almost one-quarter (23%) put forward time sheets.
- On balance, more people favour employer attempts to restrict the number of working hours than those who don't. Some 55% of long-hours workers believed it to be a good idea, compared with 37% who disagreed.

Working Time Directive – General

- Around 16% of respondents identified 'greater flexibility' as the measure they would most welcome to improve the EU Working Time Directive, making it the most popular option.

Conclusions and implications

This survey shows that a clear majority of those who work more than 48 hours a week do so largely as a result of their own choice. Senior managers and professionals, who are those most likely to be able to make informed choices about their hours, are also those most likely to work beyond the 48-hour limit. The most common cause of working long-hours is an increasing workload.

Nor does the survey find any substantial evidence of abuse of the opt-out clause. Over three-quarters of staff signing the clause did so as a result of their own choice rather than employer pressure, and only a minority had actually signed the clause at the same time as signing their employment contracts.

The majority of survey respondents therefore opposed the removal of the opt-out and legislative imposition of a fixed 48-hour maximum, and this is consistent with the CIPD's advocated policy on the issue. We believe that the issue of long-hours working is complex, deep-seated and ingrained in the culture of organisations, and cannot be addressed by a uniform ban.

But the survey does illustrate the potentially damaging effects on employee welfare and corporate productivity of long-hours working. Ten per cent of employees report damaging physical effects and 17% effects on their mental health. The data that should really capture the attention of UK plc is that more than a third of staff report that working long-hours negatively affects their performance, while a significant proportion believe that they could be just as effective and productive if they cut their working hours.

Therefore the CIPD believes that the debate over the Working Time Regulations needs to be considered in the broader context of how people are managed and

motivated at work. Rather than having inflexible uniform limits, employers need to be looking at more varied, creative, motivating and effective ways of increasing performance and productivity than simply increasing the workload and working hours of their staff. Related CIPD research demonstrates that giving employees a high level of choice and involvement over how, and how long, they work and introducing a wider variety of more flexible working options can realise substantial gains in levels of employee commitment and corporate productivity. Yet in this study fewer than half of employees felt that they had access to flexible working options.

Gerwyn Davies

Section 1: long-hours working

The working of long-hours was not a temporary phenomenon for most respondents, for a significant proportion of them were putting in the extra hours consistently during the year. Almost three-quarters (73%) of those working 48 or more hours a week did so either most weeks or every week, a further 13% working beyond 48 hours at least once a month. Men were more likely (26%) to work more than 48 hours every week than women (20%), and among those in upper management the figure was over one-third (34%).

Table 1: In how many weeks of the year would you say you worked 48 hours or more a week?

	All respondents (752)	%of respondents		Upper management (144)
		Men (538)	Women (214)	
Only a few times a year	7	6	10	5
Only at certain times of the year, eg summer, Christmas, end of financial year	8	6	12	5
At least one week a month	13	13	13	10
Most weeks	48	49	45	46
Every week	25	26	20	34

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Determinants of long-hours working

The most popular reason given for working excessive hours was 'the amount of work that needs to be done', cited by 63% of respondents – up from 41% in 1998. Other reasons put forward included 'it's part of my contract' (23%), 'buys better standard of living' (18%), 'part of the culture' (12%) and 'don't want to let clients down' (10%). Some 8% of long-hours workers claimed to 'love the job', which rose to 11% for those working 60 or more hours a week.

Table 2: What are your main reasons for working 48–59/60+ hours a week?

	1998 All respondents (823)	% of respondents 2004 Hours worked (2004)		
		All respondents (752)	48–59 hours (576)	60+ hours (176)
Workload – it's the only way to get things done	41	63	63	62
It's part of my contract	n/a	23	21	28
Like the extra money – buys better standard of living	14	18	18	22
Part of the culture – employer expects it	3	12	11	15
Don't want to let colleagues or clients down	15	10	9	14
Work enjoyment – love the job	12	8	7	11
Can't afford not to – need the money for basics such as food and accommodation	7	5	4	7
Career progression – want to get promoted	3	5	5	6
Nature of the job	1	2	2	3
Self-employed/family business	n/a	1	1	1
Short of staff	n/a	1	1	1
Don't know	n/a	1	1	1

Base: All respondents working 48 hours or more a week

In terms of what would enable people to work fewer hours, less work (26%) and maintaining a similar standard of living (25%) were the two critical requirements. Less pressure from colleagues/employers (17%), the ability to employ more staff (5%), greater job security (4%) and more pay (4%) were also mentioned.

Seven out of ten (70%) respondents stated that it was partly or totally their choice to work in excess of 48 hours. However, 30% claimed that there was an element of compulsion, which was up from 11% in 1998. People further down the management career ladder would appear to feel the pressure, as lower- and middle-level managers (32%) were more likely to feel compelled to work long-hours than upper managers (20%).

Table 3: Which one factor would enable you to work fewer hours?

% of respondents	
All respondents	
(752)	
Less work	26
Similar standard of living	25
Employ more staff	5
Greater job security	4
More pay	4
Other	3
Better-qualified staff	2
Less travelling	1
Change the job	1
Financial security	1

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 4: To what extent is it your choice to work long-hours?

	% of respondents				
	1998	2004	Management position		
	All respondents	All respondents	Upper	Middle	Lower
	(823)	(752)	(140)	(230)	(62)
Totally own choice	41	36	41	26	27
Mostly own choice, partially compulsion	47	34	38	41	40
Mostly compulsion, partially own choice	6	21	15	23	24
Not at all my choice	5	9	5	9	8
Don't know	-	1	1	-	-

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Effects of long-hours working

The biggest regret among respondents working 48 hours or more a week was the fact that they missed out on leisure and hobby time. This was put forward by almost 7 out of 10 (69%) people. Strain on relationship with partner (47%) was also a key concern. Even children in the family are also affected by the demands of their parents’ job, as 41% of respondents mentioned a strain on relationship with their offspring.

Other negative effects included generally performing less efficiently because of tiredness (36%), taking longer to get the job done because of tiredness (30%) and making mistakes at work (22%). On these particular factors, higher results were recorded for people in general manufacturing and the health sector, although this is based on low sample sizes. However, it is clear that the working of long-hours is contributing to mistakes across all occupations, and for certain professions this can result in potentially fatal consequences either for the workers themselves or for other people.

It is not all bad news, though. A number of people came up with positive aspects to working long-hours, including better standard of living (51%), better quality of life (46%), improved self-esteem (38%) and promotion or career progression (24%).

Table 5: Has working long hours contributed to any of the following?

	% of respondents All respondents (752)
Negative aspects	
Missing out on leisure/hobby time	69
Strain on relationship/arguments	47
Strain on relationship with children (base: those with children)	41
Generally performing less efficiently because of tiredness	36
Taking longer to get the job done because of tiredness	30
Mistakes at work	22
Relationship break-ups	12
Divorce	6
Deciding not to have children	3
Positive aspects	
Better standard of living	51
Better quality of life	46
Improved self-esteem	38
Promotion/career progression	24

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 6: Have you suffered any of the following health problems as a result of working long hours?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Hours worked 48–59 hours	60+ hours
	(752)	(576)	(176)
Physical ailment	10	8	15
Mental health (eg stress, depression)	17	16	19
None	76	78	70

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

The working of long-hours results in a physical or mental ailment for a significant proportion of working people. One in ten (10%) of workers putting in 48 or more hours a week had suffered some form of physical problem as a result of working long-hours, a proportion that climbs to 1 in 6 (15%) for those who work in excess of 60 hours. Furthermore, 17% of respondents had suffered from mental health problems such as stress or depression.

Overtime pay

Over half (54%) of workers putting in 48 or more hours a week receive no extra pay for the extra time. Those in senior positions were less likely to be paid than their junior counterparts; 69% of respondents in managerial posts not being paid for the extra hours. Workers in manual posts, however, were more likely to receive some form of recompense, and in many cases it was at double the hourly rate.

Table 7: Do you get paid for working 48–59/60+ hours a week?

	% of respondents				
	All respondents	Professional	Manager/ administrators	Machine operators	Assoc prof/tech
	(752)	(291)	(215)	(63)	(50)
No extra pay	54	62	69	13	32
Extra pay at the same hourly rate	16	16	13	14	18
Extra pay at one-and-a-half times the normal rate	21	15	11	59	32
Extra pay at double the normal rate	4	3	3	8	8
Time off	–	–	1	–	–
Other (eg bonus/commission)	3	2	2	4	6
Don't know	1	1	–	–	–

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 8: On balance, do you think your organisation encourages or discourages the working of long hours?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents (752)	Public sector (289)	Private sector (446)
Encourages	45	40	49
Discourages	23	25	22
Neither	30	31	28
Don't know	2	3	1

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Employer efforts to reduce working hours

There would still seem to be a long way to go in getting companies to accept the adverse affects of their employees working long-hours. Almost half (45%) of respondents believed that their companies encouraged the working of long-hours and, perhaps not surprisingly, it was the private sector (49%) that applied the pressure more than the public sector (40%).

When asked to identify moves that the organisation has made to reduce working hours, almost one-quarter (23%) put forward time sheets. Other initiatives included re-organising work schedules (14%), organisations insisting that all holiday entitlement is taken (14%), organisations expressing concern that employees were working too many hours (12%) and organisations consulting employees about ways to ease the workload (11%).

Table 9: What moves does your organisation make, or has it made, to reduce working hours?

	% of respondents
	All respondents (752)
Monitors of hours worked, eg with time sheets	23
Reorganise work to enable me to cut back on hours	14
Insisted that I take all my holiday entitlement or time off in lieu	14
Expressed concern about my working too many hours	12
Consulted me about ways to ease workload	11
Told me to go home when found me working late	7
Employed more staff	4
Allows partial working from home/ job share	1
Promotes flexible hours	1
Other (State)	2
Don't know	35

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 10: What do you think of attempts by employers to restrict working hours?

	% of respondents All respondents (752)
Good idea – employers have a duty to ensure that their staff do not work excessive hours	55
Not a good idea – it is up to the individual whether he/she works long-hours or not	37
Good and bad	1
Depends on situation/job	1
Other	1
Don't know	5

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

On balance, more people favour employer attempts to restrict the number of working hours than those who don't. Some 55% of long-hours workers believed it to be a good idea, compared with 37% who disagreed, the latter arguing that it is up to the individual whether he/she works long-hours or not.

In terms of changes noticed in the organisation during the last five years, there was only limited acknowledgement of anything significant happening regarding working hours. Some 16% of respondents claimed that they had seen more flexible working patterns introduced, and 12% that there was now more information available in the organisation about the EU Regulations. A further 9% stated that there was employer encouragement to work fewer hours, and 7% had noticed a compulsory reduction in working hours.

Table 11: Has anything changed in your organisation during the past five years?

	% of respondents All respondents (752)
More flexible working patterns	16
More information is available in organisation about the EU Regulations	12
Employer encouragement to work fewer hours	9
Compulsory reduction in working hours	7
Voluntary reduction in working hours	5
Increased working hours	2
Introduced EU Working Directive	2
Staff employed	1
Redundancies	1
Decreased work load	1
Organisation is bigger	1
Other	2
Nothing has changed	52
Don't know	10

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 12: Do you have access to flexible working options if you want them?
For example, different start/finish times, different total hours, part-time working, job-sharing?

	% of respondents						
	All respondents	Construction	Gen. manuf.	Transport	Health	Financial services	Retail
	(752)	(66)	(69)	(82)	(58)	(61)	(68)
Yes	46	48	33	33	53	57	46
No	54	52	67	67	47	43	54

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

When asked if they had access to flexible working options, over half (54%) of respondents claimed that this was not the case. Respondents working in general manufacturing and transport have less opportunity to change hours, as the figure for these sectors was well above average at 67%.

Have working hours changed during the last five years?

Some 45% of long-hours workers had increased the number of hours they work in the last five years, and this was more likely to be true of women (52%) than men (43%).

Table 13: Have your working hours increased, decreased or stayed the same in the last five years?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Men	Women
	(752)	(538)	(214)
1 Increased	45	43	52
2 Decreased	15	17	11
3 Stayed the same	39	40	37

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 14: By how much have your hours increased/decreased each week?

	% of respondents	
	All respondents (increased hours) (342)	All respondents (decreased hours) (114)
1–2 hours	6	10
3–5 hours	22	29
6–8 hours	15	14
9–11 hours	21	18
More than 11 hours	32	25
Don't know	4	4
Average no. of hours	8.0	7.0

Base: All respondents who have increased/decreased hours per week

On average, long-hours workers had increased the number of hours worked each week by 8.0, the majority (57%) claiming that it was quite simply because their workload had increased. This was only slightly down on the 1998 figure of 61%. Almost one-third of those who had increased their hours asserted that it was a new job that required longer hours, up from 17% in 1998.

Table 15a: Why have you increased the number of hours you work each week?

	% of respondents			
	1998 All respondents (98)	2004 All respondents (342)	2004 Men (231)	2004 Women (111)
Workload has increased	61	57	58	54
New job requires longer hours	17	30	31	28
Need to earn extra money so working more overtime	4	11	11	12
Now on a different contract, eg moved from part-time to full-time	2	9	7	13
Shortage of staff	n/a	4	4	3
Promotion/more responsibilities	n/a	4	3	4
Job satisfaction	n/a	2	3	–
Travelling time	n/a	1	1	–
Other	9	1	1	3
No particular reason/don't know why	6	1	1	1

Base: All respondents who have increased working hours

Table 15b: Why has the workload increased?

	% of respondents All respondents
	(194)
More senior role	34
Fewer people to do the job	31
Organisational cost pressures	12
Expanding business/organisation doing well	9
Management pressure	5
New employer	4
Fewer family commitments	3
More paperwork	2
Other	5
Don't know	5

Base: All respondents whose workload has increased

Looking at those who stated that their workload had increased, over one-third (34%) put it down to the fact that they now had a more senior role, with fewer (31%) claiming that there were now fewer people to do the job.

Conversely, only 15% of long-hours workers said that their hours had decreased in the last five years. The average reduction amounted to 7.0 hours. The most common reason given was that the new job doesn't require as many hours to be worked (39%), a similar figure in fact to that in the 1998 survey (36%). Just over one-fifth (21%) stated that their workload had diminished, which was slightly up on 1998's 18%. There would appear to be evidence of a move to

Table 16: What were the main reasons for reducing your hours of work?

	% of respondents	
	1998 All respondents	2004 All respondents
	(256)	(114)
New job doesn't require as many hours to be worked	36	39
Workload has diminished	18	21
Wanted to spend more time with family	7	18
Wanted to spend more time with friends/more time for hobbies/interests outside work	7	11
Employer has changed hours of work	6	10
Because of Working Time Regulations	-	6
Illness forced me to work fewer hours	1	5
Government's new right to ask for flexible working	n/a	3
Getting older	n/a	3
Child commitments	n/a	2
Government's new working family tax credits	n/a	-
Other	16	4
No particular reason/don't know	6	1

Base: All respondents who have decreased working hours over last five years

spend more time with family and friends during the last five years. Some 18% gave the family reason for working fewer hours, and 11% cited friends and hobbies. This compares with only 7% for each factor in 1998. One in ten claimed that the employer had changed their hours of work, up from 6% in 1998. The EU regulations are starting to take effect, but have yet to make a significant difference to working hours. Only 6% of those who had reduced their hours put it down to the Working Time Regulations, although this represented an improvement on 1998 (0%). A further 3% claimed it was due to the Government's new right to ask for flexible working options.

Working hours and productivity

Interestingly, when asked whether they could maintain the same level of productivity while cutting back the number of hours worked each week, over 4 out of 10 respondents claimed that they could. Men (43%), were more likely to believe this was the case than women (36%). Similarly, those who worked in excess of 60 hours (46%) also believed that they could maintain the same output as those who worked a more moderate 48–59 hours (39%).

Table 17: Do you think that you could maintain the same level of productivity while cutting the working hours you work each week?

	All respondents (752)	Hours worked		Male (538)	Female (214)
		48–59 (576)	60+ (176)		
Yes	41	39	46	43	36
No	55	56	51	54	57
Don't know	4	4	3	3\	7

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Section 2: Working Time Directive

Table 18a: Have you heard of the European Union Working Time Directive which sets the maximum number of working hours each week at a certain level?

	% of respondents				
	All respondents	48–59	60+	Male	Female
	(752)	(576)	(176)	(538)	(214)
Yes	79	77	85	84	68
No	20	22	15	16	31
Don't know	1	1	–	–	–

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

General awareness

The overwhelming majority (79%) of workers putting in 48 or more hours each week had heard of the EU Working Time Directive, and among those who worked particularly long-hours (60+) the figure was even higher, at 85%. Men (84%) were far more likely to have heard about the ruling than women (68%). The self-employed (69%) were less aware than employees (80%), although these figures represent an increase of 5% and 4% respectively on 1998. The

level of awareness was uniformly high across the industry sectors and by occupation, where sample sizes permit comparison.

Almost half of all respondents (47%) who were aware of the directive (and prepared to give a figure) estimated the level correctly at 48 hours. Men (50%) were more likely to know than women (34%).

Table 18b: What do you think that level is in terms of the number of hours each week?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Men	Women
	(522)	(405)	(117)
Fewer than 40	1	–	1
40 hours	38	34	51
42–46 hours	9	9	11
48 hours	47	50	34
50+	5	5	3

Base: All respondents who are aware of European Working Directive – excludes don't knows

Table 19: How did you hear of this Directive?

	% of respondents All respondents (596)
From the organisation	46
Media – eg news, newspaper	36
From work colleagues/friends	11
Through the union	2
Studied/recruitment of job	2
Legal services	1
Don't know	3

Base: All respondents who have heard of Working Directive

The most popular source of finding out about the Directive was the organisation (46%), followed by the media (newspapers etc) (36%). Rather surprisingly, very few had heard of the Directive through their trade union.

Implementation

Over 4 out of 10 respondents (44%) believed that their organisation generally put the EU Working Directive into practice, with the public sector (49%) more likely to do so than their private counterparts (41%).

Table 20: Does your organisation generally put the EU Working Time Directive into practice?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents (752)	Public sector (289)	Private sector (446)
Yes	44	49	41
No	41	37	44
Don't know	15	15	15

Base: All respondents working 48 hours or more a week

Pros and cons

The EU Working Time Directive would seem to enjoy a degree of popularity, as just under two-thirds (64%) of respondents stated that they were in favour of the legislation. There were some considerable differences, though, depending on the type of job. In view of the fact that they were less likely to get paid for any overtime, managers (70%) were more enthusiastic about the Directive than machine operatives (37%), who are paid for the extra hours and likely to feel that the rule restricts their opportunity to earn extra income. Among respondents who had heard of the Directive previously, 69% were in favour of it, up from 49% in 2000 who claimed it was a good thing.

In terms of what people felt was good about the EU Working Time Directive, the most popular reason given was that it was the only way to ensure that employees did not work excessively long-hours (51%), up from 41% in 2000. Some 11% argued that it was more difficult for employers to discriminate against people with family commitments, which compares with 16% in 2000. Other positive aspects included that it makes people realise that working long-hours is bad for your health (10%), slightly down on 2002's 12%, and generally encourages companies to think about working smarter rather than longer (6%).

Table 21: Are you in favour of the EU Working Time Directive?

	% of respondents			
	All respondents	Professional	Management	Machine op.
	(752)	(291)	(215)	(63)
Yes	64	69	70	37
No	20	17	15	49
Don't know	15	14	15	14

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 22: What, if anything, do you think is good about the EU Working Directive?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents	All respondents who think EU Directive is good	
		2004 (752)	2002 (273)
It's the only way to ensure workers don't have to work excessively long-hours	40	41	51
Makes it more difficult for employers to discriminate against people with family commitments	10	16	11
Makes people realise that working long-hours is bad for your health	8	12	10
It is a useful regulation to follow	8	n/a	11
Encourages organisations to explore ways of working smarter rather than longer	7	14	6
Helps keep reasonable hours	5	n/a	5
Individuals less likely to make mistakes/have accidents	4	10	6
Improves balance between work and home life	3	n/a	4
Stops unscrupulous companies	3	n/a	3
Stops exploitation of employees	2	n/a	2
Increases enjoyment	2	n/a	2
I can spend more time with family	2	n/a	2
Standardisation across the board	2	n/a	3
Protection of employees' rights	1	n/a	2
Good for people in low wages	1	n/a	1
Less stress	1	n/a	1
More social life	1	n/a	2
Nothing good	10	n/a	2
Don't know	21	n/a	13

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 23: What, if anything, do you think is bad about the EU Working Directive?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents	All respondents who think EU Directive is good	
		2004 (752)	2002 (273)
Has stopped staff from working the hours they want	18	30	28
It's bad, because people are being bullied or forced into signing their rights away under the regulations	6	10	13
It is largely ignored by my employer	5	n/a	5
People will carry on working long-hours because the work isn't going to get done by itself	5	23	7
It's bad because the regulations are an unnecessary burden on business	5	14	9
It's bad because the regulations are so confusing	4	2	7
Impractical to implement	3	n/a	2
Stops you earning extra money	2	n/a	5
Britain should be individual/not aligned with EU	2	n/a	6
Removes individual choice	2	n/a	3
Reduces flexibility	2	n/a	1
Restricts productivity	1	n/a	1
Adversely affects small business	1	n/a	1
Puts pressure on staff	1	n/a	1
Won't benefit working people	1	n/a	1
Other	5	16	4
Nothing bad	23	n/a	6
Don't know	25	n/a	18

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

There wasn't universal approval for the directive, though, and some respondents voiced their dissent. The most common complaint (28%) was that it has stopped staff working the hours they want, which was only slightly down on 2002 (30%). Other negatives included a feeling that people are being bullied into signing their rights away (13%), or that the directive is

largely ignored either by the employer (5%) or the workers themselves (7%). The issue of more red tape is clearly a factor, as 9% of respondents claimed that the regulations are an unnecessary burden on business, and a further 7% described them as confusing.

Table 24: What measures would you welcome to improve the European Union Working Directive as it stands?

	% of respondents All respondents (752)
Greater flexibility in how the time is calculated, eg number of hours worked	16
More enforcement, ie from the Health and Safety Executive or Local Authorities averaged out over a year	12
More accurate recording of time – for instance, time spent not strictly on the job	10
More frequent opt-out reviews	8
The involvement of a third party, ie trade union, ACAS	8
Removal of the opt-out altogether	7
More information	4
More communication between employer/employees	1
Monitor more closely/enforce	1
Make it easier to understand	1
Make opt-out clause optional	1
Increase wages to minimum standard	1

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours per week

Respondents were then asked what measures they would welcome to improve the EU Working Time Directive. Greater flexibility was key (16%), especially in terms of how the time was calculated; related to this factor was more accurate recording of time (10%). Clearly there was a view that it is all well and good introducing these rules but that what matters is ensuring that they are enforced; this was mentioned by 12%. Other improvements that people would like to see included more frequent opt-out reviews (8%), removal of the opt-out altogether (7%), and the involvement of a third party, eg trade union (8%).

Although a majority of respondents were in favour of the regulations, a clear majority (66%) were opposed to the EU's right to limit working hours. People in the construction and transport sectors were definitely against this sort of interference, whereas those in the health sector were warmer to the idea, albeit with most still not in favour.

Table 25: Should the European Union have the right to limit the number of hours you choose to work?

	% of respondents						
	All respondents (752)	Construction (160)	Gen. manuf. (276)	Transport (82)	Health (58)	Financial services (61)	Retail (68)
Yes	29	24	32	18	38	30	44
No	66	74	67	77	55	66	49
Don't know	5	2	1	5	7	5	7

Base: All respondents working 48 hours or more per week

The opt-out clause

Table 26: Are you aware that the EU has introduced an opt-out clause so that employees can choose to work more than the maximum 48-hour working week if they want to?

	% of respondents					
	All respondents	Hours worked			Male	Female
	(752)	48–59 (576)	60+ (176)		(538)	(214)
Yes	59	57	66		64	49
No	39	40	33		34	50
Don't know	2	2	1		2	2

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Almost 6 out of 10 respondents (59%) were aware that the EU had introduced an opt-out clause such that employees could choose to work more than the maximum 48-hour working week. The figure was higher among those who put in a 60-hour working week (66%) and among males (64%).

There was general resistance, though, in terms of having the opt-out clause removed, thereby compelling companies to limit the working week to 48 hours. Only 35% of all respondents claimed that they would like to see it removed, and this differed between the age groups, with the 16–34s (30%) less keen than the over-45s (40%).

Table 27: Do you think that the opt-out clause should be removed, thereby compelling companies to limit the working week to 48 hours?

	% of respondents			
	All respondents	Age		
	(752)	16–34 (264)	35–44 (244)	45+ (238)
Yes	35	30	36	40
No	55	57	58	49
Don't know	10	13	6	11

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 28: Have you signed the Working Time Directive opt-out so that you can work more than 48 hours a week?

	% of respondents							
	All respondents (446)	Public (160)	Private (276)	16–34 (138)	35–44 (155)	45+ (150)	Men (342)	Women (104)
Yes	37	31	41	45	34	31	39	29
No	61	66	57	51	64	67	58	69
Don't know	2	3	2	4	2	2	3	2

Base: All respondents aware of the opt-out

Of those who had heard of the opt-out clause, nearly 4 out of 10 (37%) had signed the agreement in order to work longer than the 48-hour limit. Those in the private sector (41%) were more likely to have signed the opt-out clause than their public sector counterparts (31%). Similarly, a greater number of younger people (45%) – those aged 16–34 – seemed keener to do the extra hours than the over-45s (31%), as were men (39%) compared with women (29%).

Compulsion versus personal choice

Six out of ten respondents who had signed the opt-out clause did so after the date of signing the employment contract, some 37% signing on the date itself.

Table 29: Did you sign the opt-out clause at the same time as signing the employment contract?

	% of respondents All respondents (163)
Yes – at the same time	37
No – in my own time	60
Don't know	1
Other	2

Base: All respondents signing the opt-out clause

Table 30: Why did you sign the opt-out clause?

	% of respondents All respondents (163)
Employer compulsion	21
Personal choice	76
Don't know	3

Base: All respondents signing the opt-out clause

One in five (21%) had felt a degree of employer compulsion to sign up, with over three-quarters (76%) admitting that it was their own choice. A variety of reasons were given as to why some people felt compelled to sign the clause, including both direct pressure (29%) and indirect pressure (26%) from the employer. One in five (21%) felt that if they didn't sign, it would hinder their progress in the new job, with a further 29% simply accepting that it was par for the course and something they should do.

Table 31: Why did you feel compelled to sign the opt-out clause?

All respondents	
	(34)
Direct pressure from employer	29
Par for the course/normal practice for the industry	29
Indirect pressure from employer	26
Personal feeling that it would hinder early progress in new job	21
Other	12
Don't know	3

Base: All respondents compelled to sign opt-out clause (low base size)

If the long hours workers were faced with a strict rule that they were not allowed to work more than 48 hours, 50% claimed that it would have no effect. A further 12% indicated that they would have to get a second job and 9% would change job altogether.

Table 32: If you were not allowed to work more than 48 hours in your current role, what would the effect of such a move be?

% of respondents	
All respondents	
	(752)
No effect	50
Get second job	12
Change job	9
Less income	5
Wouldn't get job done	5
Might force organisation out of business	2
More time with family	2
More stress	1
Increase costs	1
Less productivity	1
Could not meet clients needs	1
More staff to employ	1
More effective line management	1
None/don't know	5

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Classification

Table 33: How would you describe your occupation?

	% of respondents	
	1998 All respondents (823)	2004 All respondents (752)
Professional	23	39
Managers and administrators	22	29
Craft	19	2
Plant and machine operators	11	8
Associated professional and technical	8	7
Personal and protective services	8	3
Sales	4	5
Clerical/secretarial	3	3
Other occupation	0	3

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

The 2004 survey included respondents from a range of occupations and job functions. More professionals and managers were being picked up in 2004 (68%), compared with 45% in 1998, and fewer craft persons and plant machine operators (10% as against 30%).

In terms of sector, again there was wide coverage, the three largest components being transport and distribution (11%), construction, retailing and general manufacturing (all 9%).

Table 34: What industry sector do you work in?

	% of respondents All respondents (752)
Construction	9
General manufacturing	9
Local government	3
Central government (including defence)	2
Transport and distribution	11
Professional services	6
Food and drink	5
Health	8
Financial services	8
High tech/electronics	4
Retailing	9
Education	6
Hotel and leisure	3
Agriculture	1
Consumer products	1
Publishing/printing	1
Utilities (water/gas/electric)	2
Pharmaceutical	1
Media/broadcasting	1
Oil and mining	2
Chemical	1
Paper and packaging	1
Other services	6
Other	1
Don't know	1

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 35: Are you an employee or self-employed?

	% of respondents	
	1998	2004
	All respondents (823)	All respondents (752)
An employee with only one job	75	89
An employee with more than one job		3
Self-employed	25	7

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Some 89% of the 2004 sample were employees with one job and a further 3% claimed to have more than one job. Only 7% were self-employed, compared with 25% in 1998.

Fifty-six per cent of employees in 2004 claimed to be in management, a similar figure to that in 1998.

The public sector accounted for almost 4 out of 10 respondents (38%), with women (57%) more likely to be engaged in this area than men (31%).

Table 36: Are you in upper, middle or lower management?

	% of respondents	
	1998	2004
	All respondents (620)	All respondents (695)
Upper management	17	15
Middle management	30	32
Lower management	12	9
Non-manager	42	43

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 37: Can I confirm, do you work in the public or private sector?

	% of respondents		
	All respondents	Men	Women
	(752)	(538)	(214)
Public sector	38	31	57
Private sector	59	67	41
Don't know	2	2	2

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Demographics

Table 38: Please can you tell me your age?

	% of respondents All respondents (752)
16–24	8
25–29	9
30–34	18
35–44	32
45–54	23
55–65	8
Over 65	–
Average age	40

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 39: Sex

	% of respondents	
	1998 All respondents (620)	2004 All respondents (695)
Male	75	72
Female	25	28

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

Table 40: How many children under 16 live in the household?

	% of respondents All respondents (752)
1	25
2	24
3	5
4+	1
None	44

Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

The average age of all respondents was 40, the majority (55%) falling into the 35–54 age group.

Over 7 out of 10 (72%) of the sample were men, a marginally lower proportion than 1998 (74%).

Some 56% of respondents had children.

Table 41: Please can you tell me which of these bands your personal average income falls into before tax?

	% of respondents All respondents
	(752)
Less than £11,000	3
£11,000–£14,999	7
£15,000–£19,999	14
£20,000–£24,999	14
£25,000–£29,999	15
£30,000–£39,999	16
£40,000–£49,999	10
£50,000–£59,999	4
£60,000–£69,999	2
£70,000 or more	3
Don't know	1
Refused	12
Average salary	£30,100


Base: All respondents working 48 or more hours a week

The average income for all respondents was £30,100 a year.

Table 42: Would you be willing for us to contact you again, should we need to in the future?

	% of respondents All respondents
	(752)
Yes	90
No	10
Don't know	–

Notes



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