



Health in the Workplace

**A Survey of Employees in the UK and their Attitudes Towards Health
and Health Benefits**



Ceridian Quarterly HR Insight
Putting HR issues in focus

Conducted by Closer to Customers, October 2006

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Foreword

The health of the nation is a source of endless fascination. Daily we read of obese school children, increased heart disease, soaring diabetes rates and equally steep decreases in the amount of exercise we take. The lessons are there to be learnt, yet few of us make the necessary changes to our diet and lifestyle. Why is this something that employers need to care about? And what should responsible UK companies be doing about it?

The latest published figures show that absence due to ill health cost British businesses £13bn in 2005 according to the CBI. Reducing absence not only cuts this expense, but also improves morale and productivity across your entire workforce. Improving the health and well-being of employees protects your business from the hidden impact of losing a critical member of staff to illness or death. Established health and wellness initiatives also boost your employer brand and corporate social responsibilities, while delivering bottom-line business benefits as well.

Health and wellness initiatives can also help you understand absence better. Do you have problems with particular sites or regions? Are there patterns to an individual's absence that suggest a mental or stress-related problem, rather than a physical illness? Is a workplace problem that could be resolved manifesting itself as time off "sick"? Answering these questions not only means better care for the individuals involved, it also means less impact on the teams around them and better performance and engagement. Having the answers to these questions also helps you get better value from your reward and wellness spend.

Today's employer needs to accept more than just duty of care for their staff. Providing health benefits, health advice and initiatives to promote a healthy lifestyle combine to protect both your business and your employees. In the face of an ageing workforce, a creaking NHS and a lifestyle that's killing us, our research shows that putting health on the corporate agenda will be the vital prescription for UK business.

Key Conclusions

Our Respondents Are Not In Great Shape

While only a minority smoke or admit to drinking more than is good for them, many are not taking sufficient exercise, or eating as well as they might by reaching their target of five fruit or vegetable portions a day. Only one quarter of UK employees are happy with their weight.

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Time Off For Illness Costs Employers a Great Deal

Our respondents took an average of 8.5 unscheduled days off in the last twelve months for illness and other reasons. That is almost two working weeks per person. This is in line with the figure of 8.4 days revealed in a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The cost per worker is £601 according to the CIPD. However, the average is driven up by a relatively small number of people taking many days off and indeed many took no unscheduled days off in that period. The pattern of results suggest a focus on helping a relatively small number of employees could impact significantly in bringing down the high average figure.

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Employers Are Contributing Relatively Little to Well-being of Staff

But what are employers doing to limit illness and encourage well-being among their employees? With 72 per cent of employees admitting to the need for at least some weight loss, we find that co-incidentally 72 per cent report their employers offer no exercise facilities at all and then seem unsuccessful in encouraging their use.

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Health Insurance is Offered Only to the Few

Only one in five receive health insurance in their employment package, and just 8 per cent of our total sample is provided with family cover as well. With widespread criticism of the NHS in 2006, we anticipated that this benefit would be highly valued, but this is not the case – only 28 per cent who receive health insurance consider it a vital part of their package. Given the cost of this provision, this must surely be a disappointment for employers.

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Advice on Health and Well-being Rarely Offered

Only one quarter of employees report that their employers offer advice on well-being on anything like a regular basis, the majority offering no advice at all. Most employees indicate that they would welcome the advice, certainly not reject or resent it.

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Low Tolerance of “Sickies”

There is generally a low tolerance of other people taking “sickies”, though this differs according to age and position of the respondents, and also by the size of the team that the individual works in.

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An Opportunity for Employers

It’s a well-known fact that a healthy workforce is a happy workforce and employee well-being has a real impact on the bottom line. Healthy employees equate to a healthy company. There is less absenteeism and greater productivity. Our survey suggests that many companies cannot even measure the impact of illness and absenteeism.

Yet national statistics show that the general health of the workforce is declining:

- In the last 25 years the rate has quadrupled in the UK. In England, eight million adults were classified as obese, representing 22 per cent of all men and 23 per cent of all women, with a further 43 per cent of men and 34 per cent of women classified as overweight.
- Currently, in England, only 37 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women meet the current guidelines for exercise recommended by government. Physical inactivity contributes more to the most common risk factor of coronary heart disease (one in four men and one in six women die from the disease) than obesity or smoking.
- Disease and illness relating to high alcohol consumption and smoking continue to rise. NHS hospital figures show that admissions for alcoholic liver disease more than doubled in a decade, reaching 35,400 in 2004/5 with deaths increasing by 37 per cent.

So with a major asset at greater risk than in the past, what are employers doing to protect it? Not a great deal. Smaller companies in particular seem to be at fault, and they of course can cite limited resources as a barrier to this, but then again they have fewer people to manage.

Whatever the size of company, our survey has shown employers of all sizes and shapes are generally doing little to provide facilities, advice or support for their employees and we consider that this is an opportunity missed. Support and advice in particular need not necessarily cost a great deal, but the benefits can be substantial, not just in terms of well-being but also, with such initiatives likely to be well received, in terms of the relationship between employer and employee.

In a competitive workplace the ability of a company to attract and retain staff is not just about salary, but a package of benefits. Initiatives discussed in this report are some of many that forward thinking employers could consider.

1. Setting the Scene: Employees Looking After Themselves

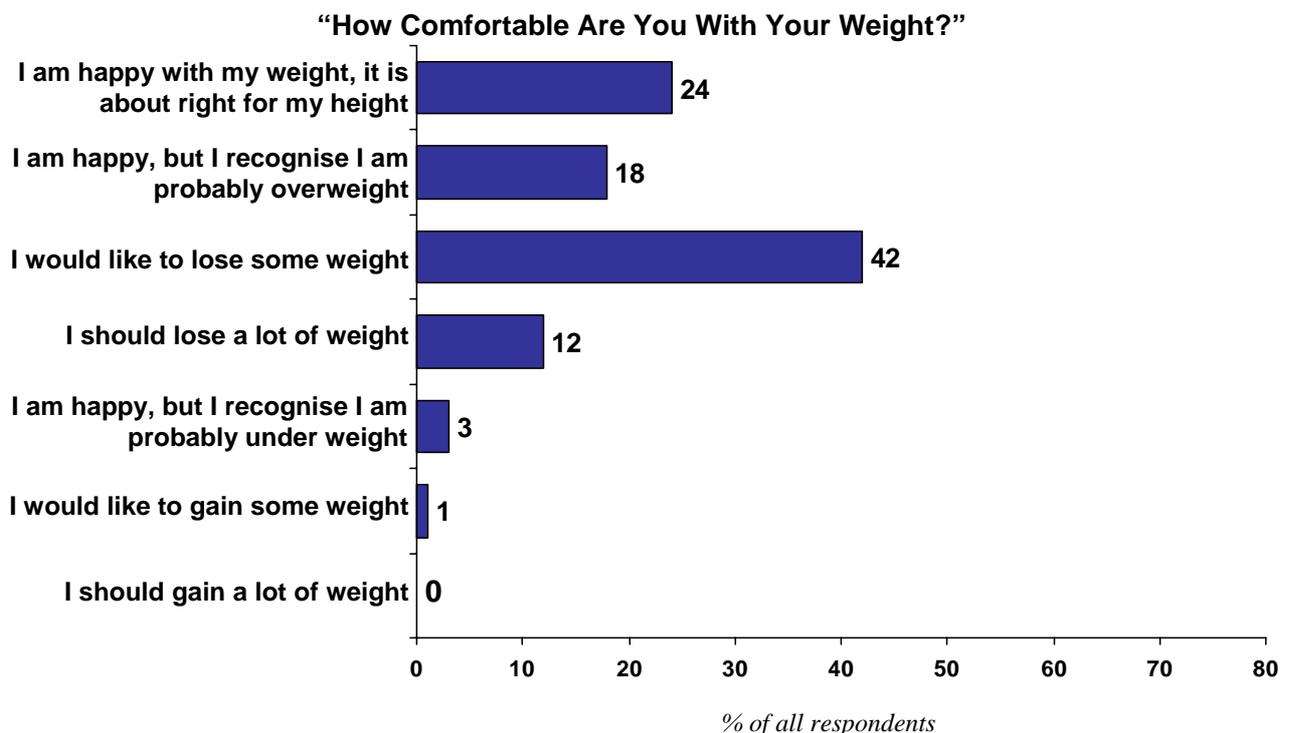
It is the responsibility of the individual to take reasonable care of his or her health to reduce the chances of mild or serious illness, so before we look at how their employers help and encourage well-being, it is first worth seeing how the employees look after themselves.

From the charts below, we can see that between one third and a half of our sample (see appendix, page 22) could by their own admission live their lives more healthily.

1.1 Keeping Healthy

- Only one quarter of our respondents are comfortable with their weight
- Yet three in five do not manage 30 minutes exercise more than twice a week and roughly half of those don't manage 30 minutes exercise even once in a week
- Almost two out of every five no more than "occasionally" eat their five portions of fruit and vegetables.

While not a primary objective of the research, the results reflect a general concern in the country that individuals could do more to help themselves. We could suggest that this creates a greater need for the role of the employer in helping people to live more healthy lives, if only to reduce the cost of absenteeism through illness.



- The C2DE group are more likely to express the need to lose weight (54% versus 45% for ABC1)
- Women are more likely to express the need to lose weight (64% versus 44% for men) though this perhaps does not necessarily reflect a health driven need to lose weight, just that men are more comfortable with excess weight.

These results are broadly reflective of independent national figures, which state that over half of all adults in England weigh more than their recommended weight. In England, eight million adults are classified as obese, representing 22 per cent of all men and 23 per cent of all women, with a further 43 per cent of men and 34 per cent of women classified as overweight.

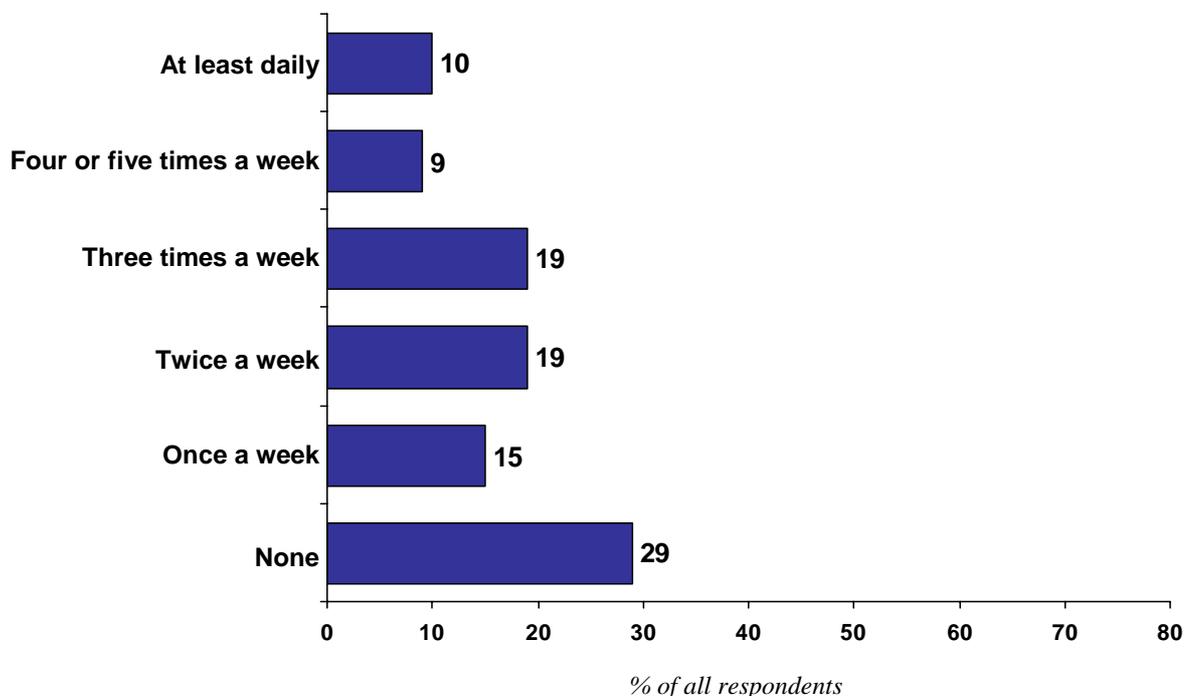
Being overweight increases the risk of heart disease, adult-onset (type II) diabetes, both of which place an enormous strain on the health service and impact employee well-being. Other problems include hypertension, musculoskeletal conditions, stroke, cancer and depression. Critically, obesity reduces life expectancy by nine years.

There is an obvious link between weight issues and physical activity.

The Recommended Daily Amount (RDA) of physical activity for adults is 30 minutes on five or more days of the week with the government targeting 70 per cent of the population in England and Wales to be "reasonably active" by 2020. According to the government, currently, in England, only 37 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women meet the current recommendations. In our survey, the figures are even lower.

Physical inactivity contributes more to the most common risk factor of coronary heart disease (one in four men and one in six women die from the disease) than obesity or smoking. The cost of physical inactivity in England – including direct costs of treatment for the major lifestyle-related diseases, and the indirect costs caused through sickness absence – has been estimated at £8.2 billion a year. Regular moderate physical activity, including walking and cycling, can help prevent and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, stroke, mental health problems, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and osteoarthritis.

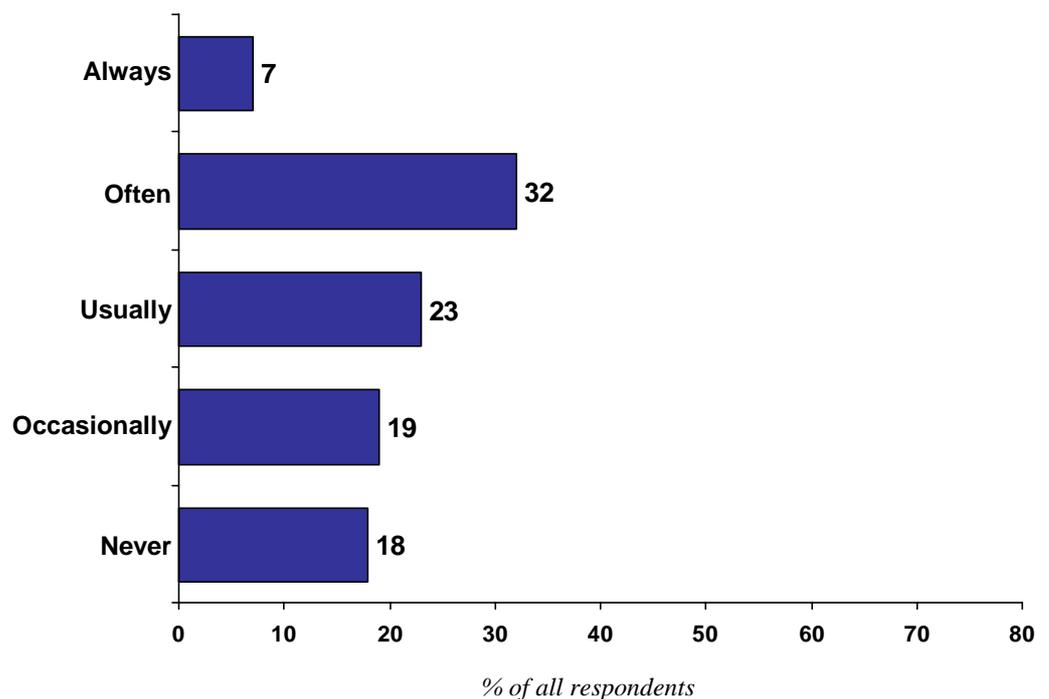
“In a Typical Week, How Often Do You Exercise For At Least 30 Minutes?”



- Retail workers are least likely to exercise three or more times a week – only 26% compared to Transport and Outdoor Workers and those in Production and Manufacturing environments, both on 43%.

We can add to the picture by examining the extent to which the much-lauded “five portions a day” initiative is adhered to. Again, we have a minority of employees regularly doing the right thing.

“How Often Do You Eat Five Portions of Fruit and Vegetables In a Day?”



- Almost half (46%) of C2DEs “never” or “only occasionally” eat their five portions, compared to 35% of ABC1s
- Those over 56 are more likely to eat their five portions, just 28% saying they “never” or “only occasionally” reach the target, comparing to the under 35s, 49% of whom “never” or “occasionally” reach the target
- Senior managers are somewhat more likely to reach their target – 30% “never” or “occasionally”, contrasting with the Customer Facing group, 46%
- Those working in public sector areas (education, health, etc.) are healthiest in this respect, again only 30% “never” or “occasionally” reaching the target, contrasting with those Working Outdoors, or in Transport – 44%.

1.2 Indulgences

- Only one quarter of our respondents smoke
- A minority consider they drink more alcohol than “is probably good for me.”

Better news here, though we have to accept respondents may be economical in their responses, and the interpretation of individuals’ drinking habits is down to them – they may not fit with a GP’s view. We should still consider the data in this section to be a concern. NHS hospital figures show that admissions for alcoholic liver disease more than doubled in a decade, reaching 35,400 in 2004/5 with deaths increasing by 37 per cent. Young adults are the most likely to binge drink – in 2004, a third of men and a quarter of women aged 16-24 said they had drunk more than double the recommended number of units on one night. By comparison, older adults, aged 45-64, are more likely to drink smaller amounts on a regular basis.

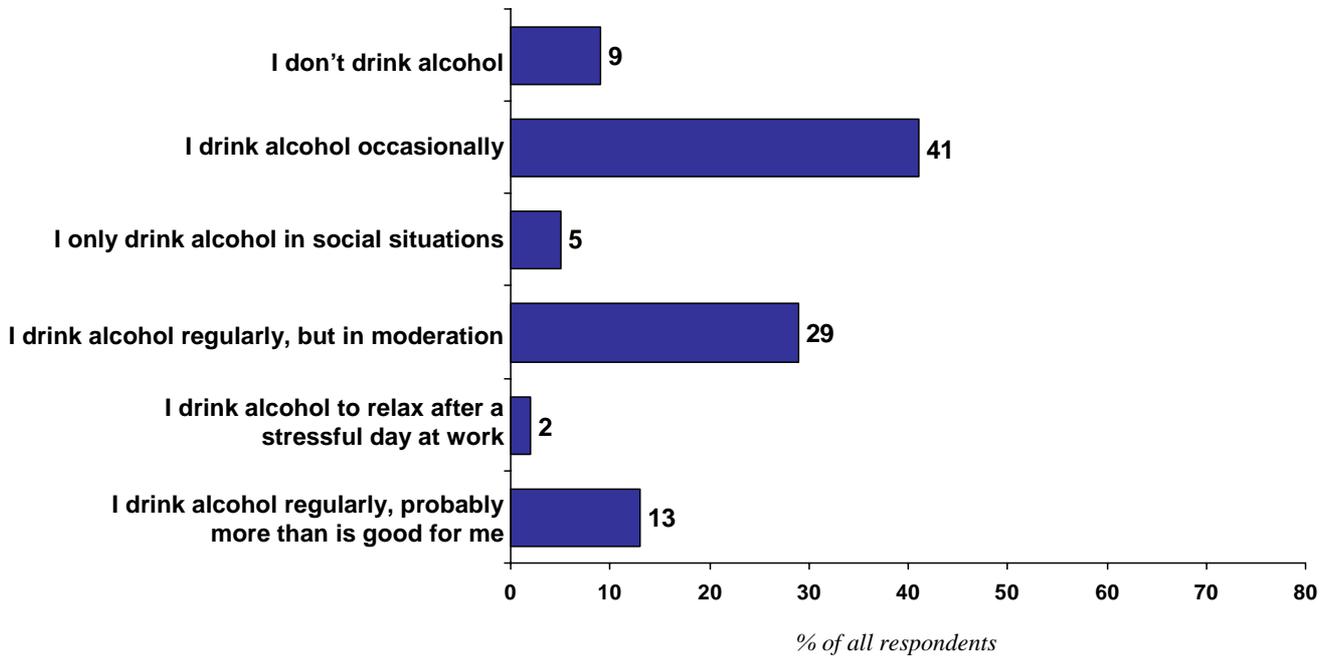
One in two smokers dies prematurely and, of these, nearly one in four will die of lung cancer. In 2000, there were 42,800 cancer deaths in the UK attributable to smoking and the risk of dying from lung cancer increases with the number of cigarettes smoked per day. We are not seeing younger people smoking any less than the previous generation.

“Do You Smoke? Are You Allowed to Smoke at Work?”



- Our heaviest smokers are C2DE (31%, versus ABC1s on 22%), Transport and Outdoor workers (32%, versus only 19% in Health and Education, the lowest incidence of all).

“Which of The Following Statements Best Reflect Your Drinking Habits?”



- In our segment analysis, the lowest incidence of regular consumption, “probably more than is good for me” is 10% (Health and Education, Retail, people in Admin roles) and the highest incidence is 15% (Senior Managers, Office Workers, those working in larger teams of colleagues (>20)).

2. Provision of and Attitudes Towards Health Insurance

For employers, health insurance might be considered a relatively valuable additional benefit, and of course the government considers it a taxable benefit. We did not anticipate large numbers of employees receiving health insurance and indeed that is the case, just one in five. Two in five of these receive it for their family also.

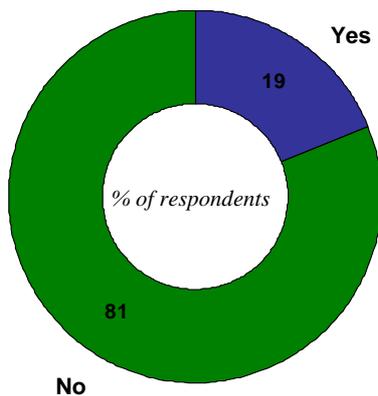
Employers however will be interested in how it is valued and we have looked at this in three ways:

2.1 How those that receive health insurance feel about it

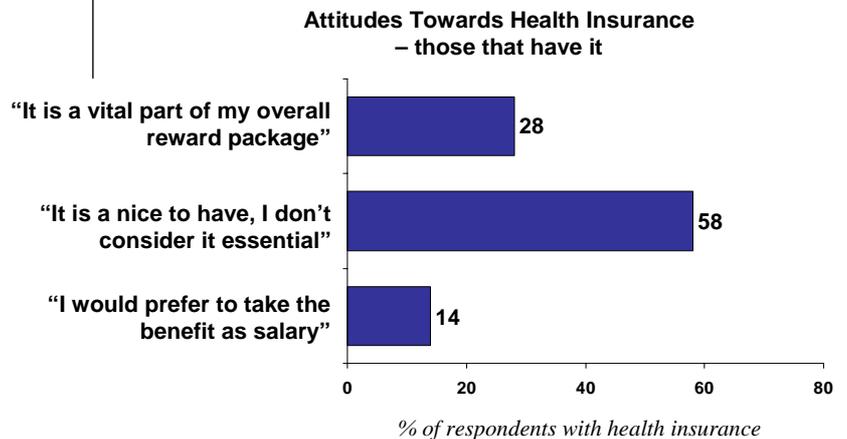
Only a minority consider it a “vital part of my package”, the majority considering it a nice to have, or even considering that salary in lieu would be better.

Incidence of, and Attitudes Towards Health Insurance Provision

“Do You Have Health Insurance as Part of Your Reward Package at Work?”



Yes	
Just for Me	55%
Includes my family	39%
No immediate family	6%

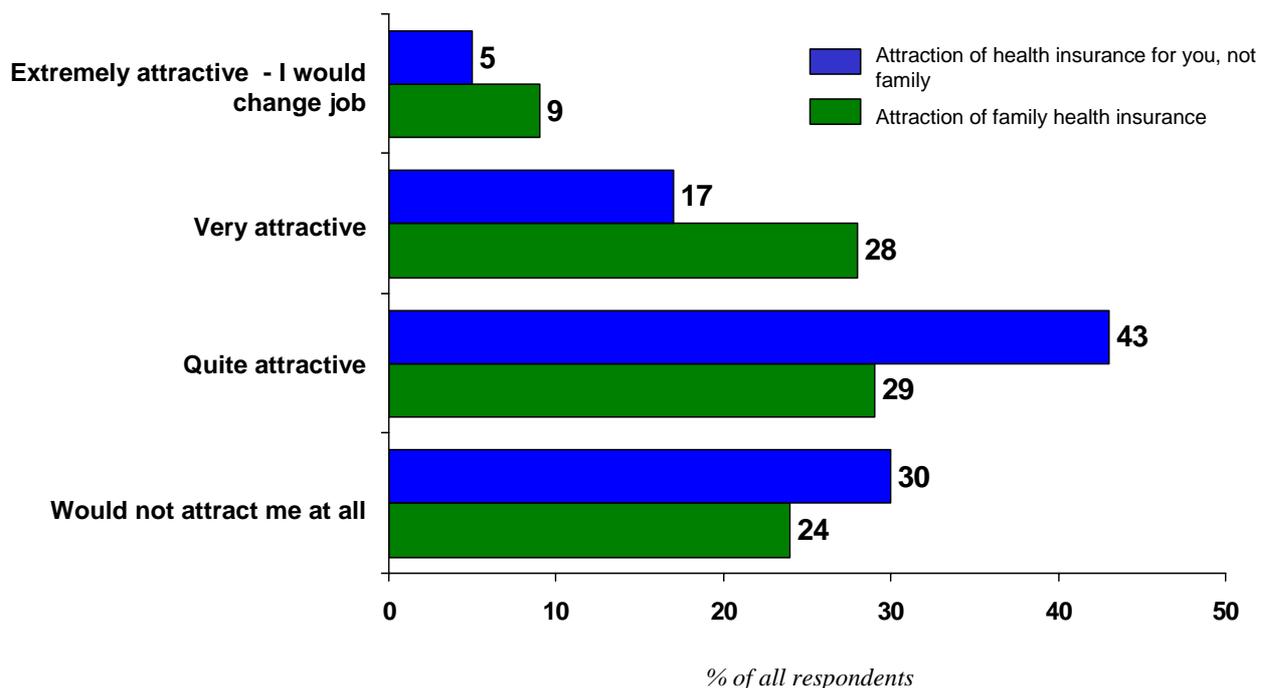


- Not surprisingly, it is the Senior Managers that are more likely to have health insurance – 35%, compared to the Admin and Customer Facing roles on 15% and 13% respectively. It is also more than twice as likely to be offered in larger companies than in small (<10 staff) companies
- 26% of those receiving health insurance consider they have “no idea” about the value of the benefit, a further 46% have only “an approximate” idea of the value – perhaps disappointing for those companies providing this relatively expensive benefit.

2.2 The role it would play in encouraging people to switch jobs (and therefore by implication its role as a loyalty earner)

Our previous quarterly insight reflected on the competition between firms to attract new staff, and the difficulties of recruiting and retaining the right people. While that report dwelt on flexible working, here we see that health insurance can play an important role also.

“How Attractive Would a Job Offer Be With a Similar Salary, but WITH Health Insurance For You (For You and Your Family)?”

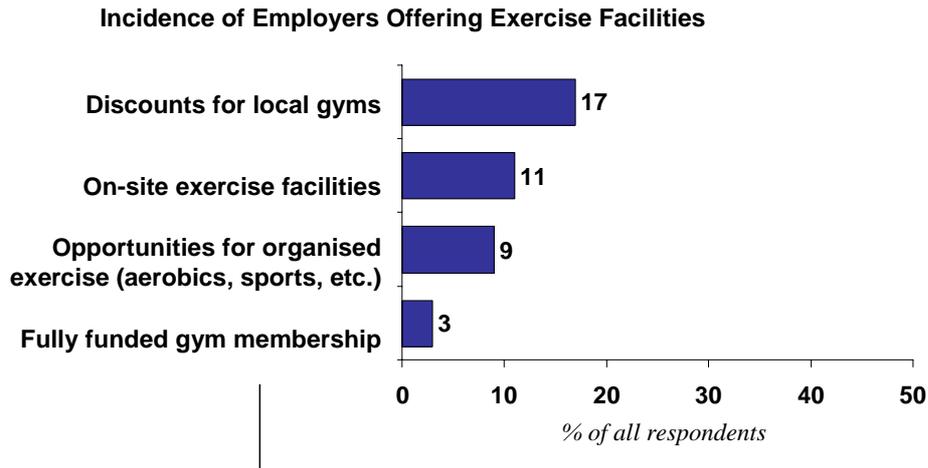


Production and Manufacturing staff show the greatest enthusiasm for health care, also Admin staff. Ironically, while Senior Managers are the most likely to receive health care benefits, they display the lowest degree of enthusiasm for it – perhaps a taxation issue for the higher waged, or simply a reflection that as higher earners the health care provision is comparatively a smaller component of their package.

3. Provision of Exercise Facilities at Work

While we recognise that within our sample we have employees working for large, medium and small companies, it is perhaps disappointing that 72 per cent of our employees report that no facilities such as those described below are offered to them.

Exercise Facilities Offered by Employers / Use of Facilities



Of the 28% respondents who receive one or more of these benefits:

- 14% Regularly use them
- 32% Occasionally use them
- 54%** Never use them

It is equally concerning, given the generally low activity level of the sample, that less than half of those offered the facilities actually use them. Taking the data in the above detail, only 12 per cent, little more than one in ten of the workforce, are offered exercise facilities of some kind, and actually use them.

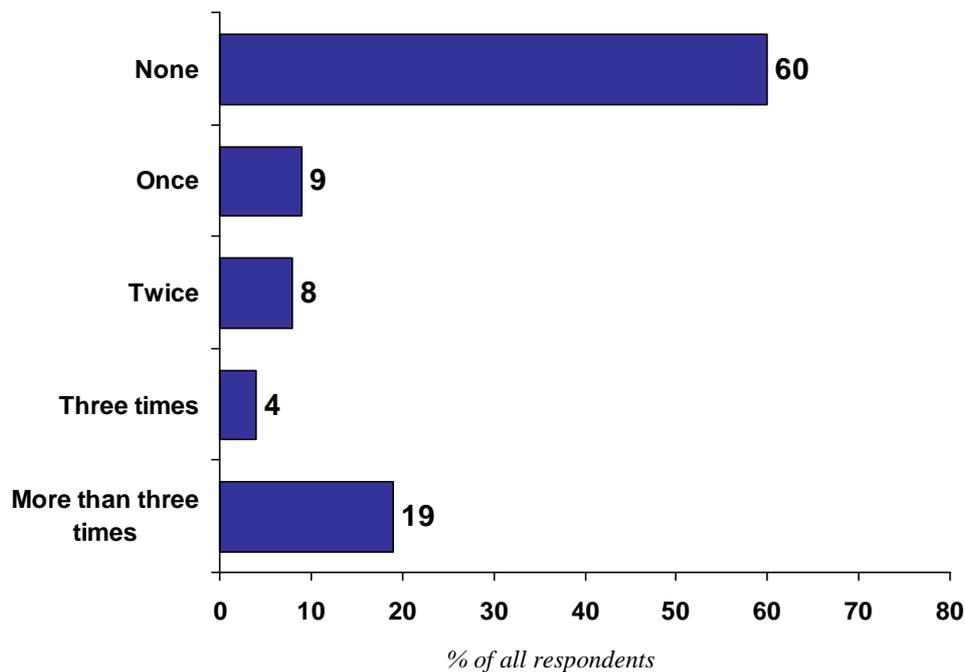
- Least likely to be offered exercise facilities are Retail workers (just 19%), employees in small (<10 staff) companies (just 8%) and senior managers (just 13%).

4. Employers Offering Advice on Health

As part of employers' duty of care to their employees, the offer of advice on health issues should be becoming more widespread.

In our survey, less than half of employees have reported back that their employers have offered anything in the last twelve months.

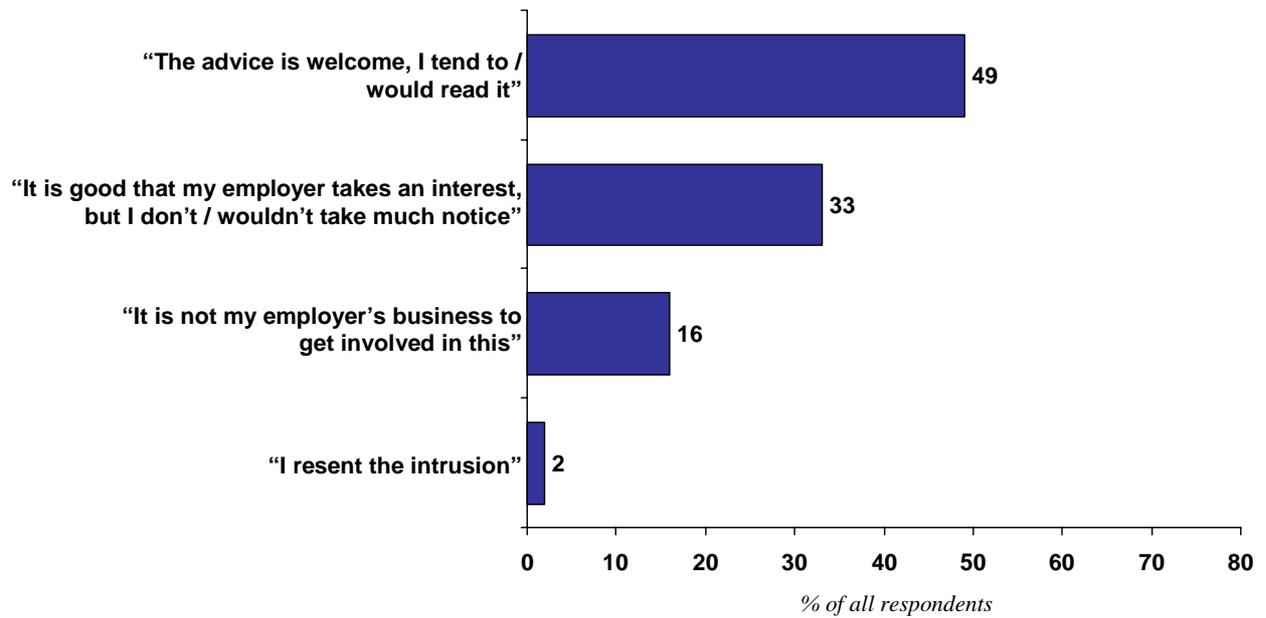
“In the Last Twelve Months, How Many Times Has Your Employer Issued Any Formal Advice or Information On Health and Well-being (Posters, Emails, Literature, etc.)?”



- Health advice is least likely to be offered to those working in Transport or Outdoors (only 31% recall receiving anything in the last year), in smaller companies of less than ten staff (just 18%), those working in small teams of less than five (just 24%, logically correlating with company size) and Senior Managers (just 24%).

“How Do You / Would You React to Your Employer Issuing Information on Health and Well-being?”

Select a Statement That Best Describes Your View



There are relatively few differences between our segments on this analysis.

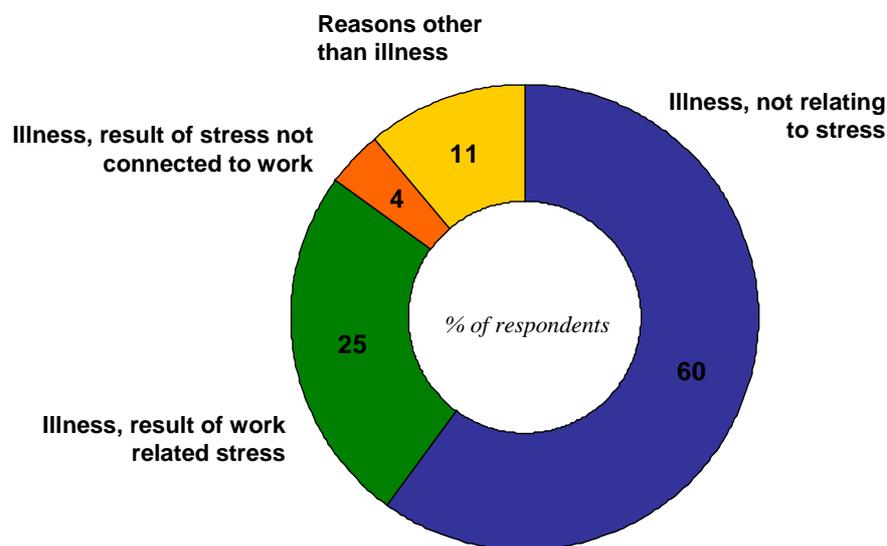
5. Time Off Work

5.1 Amount of Unscheduled Time Off Work in Last Twelve Months, Reasons For It

In this section we explore the extent to which the employees in our sample have taken unscheduled time off work, and for what reasons.

Our 1,050 respondents took, in all, 8,918 unscheduled days off work in the last twelve months, an average of 8.5 days per employee.

Reasons For Unscheduled Time Off In Last Twelve Months



However, this figure should not be presented in isolation as a small number of individuals who have taken a great deal of time off for whatever reason account for a large proportion of the 8,918 days:

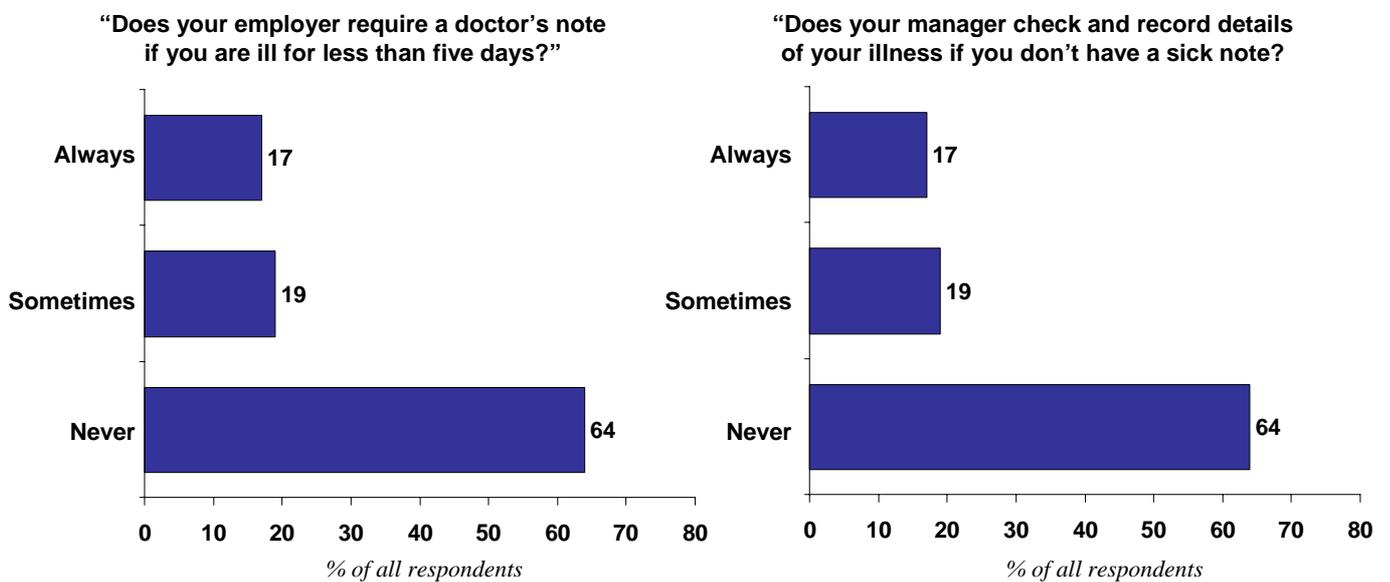
- 48% of our sample took no time off for illness (not relating to stress) in the last twelve months, while just 6% of our sample accounted for 68% of the 5,334 days declared
- 92% of our sample took no time off for illness (result of work-related stress) in the last twelve months, while just 1.4% of our sample accounted for 89% of the 2,222 days declared
- 96% of our sample took no time off for illness (result of stress not related to work) in the last twelve months, while just 0.8% of our sample accounted for 73% of the 379 days declared
- 88% of our sample took no time off for other reasons in the last twelve months, while just 1.3% of our sample accounted for 67% of the 983 days declared.

We note a wide range of reasons for taking unscheduled time off other than illness or permitted holiday, which accounted for 983 days, taken by 124 people. Clearly, some of the reasons that were given involve many days off.

5.2 Employers' Reactions to Illness

Employers remain trusting of their employees, comparatively rarely requiring a doctor's note for short-term illness, and infrequently recording details of illness.

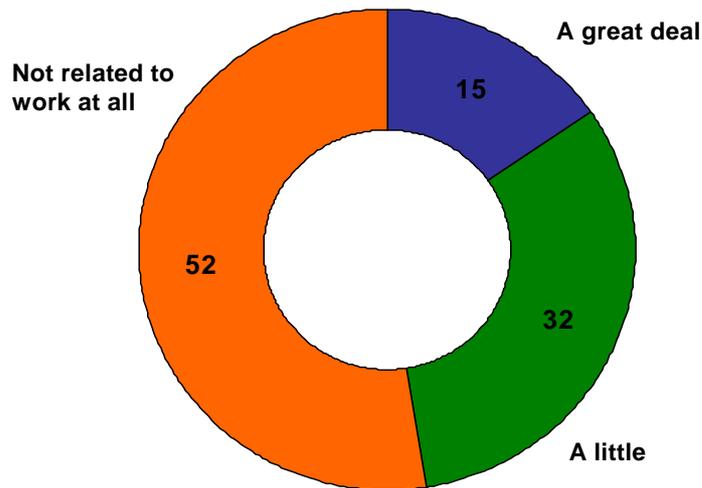
Employers' Reactions to Illness



5.3 Perceived Contribution of The Work Environment to Ailments

We asked employees to indicate whether the illness or ailment that had most impact on work attendance had been caused or contributed to, to any extent, by working conditions:

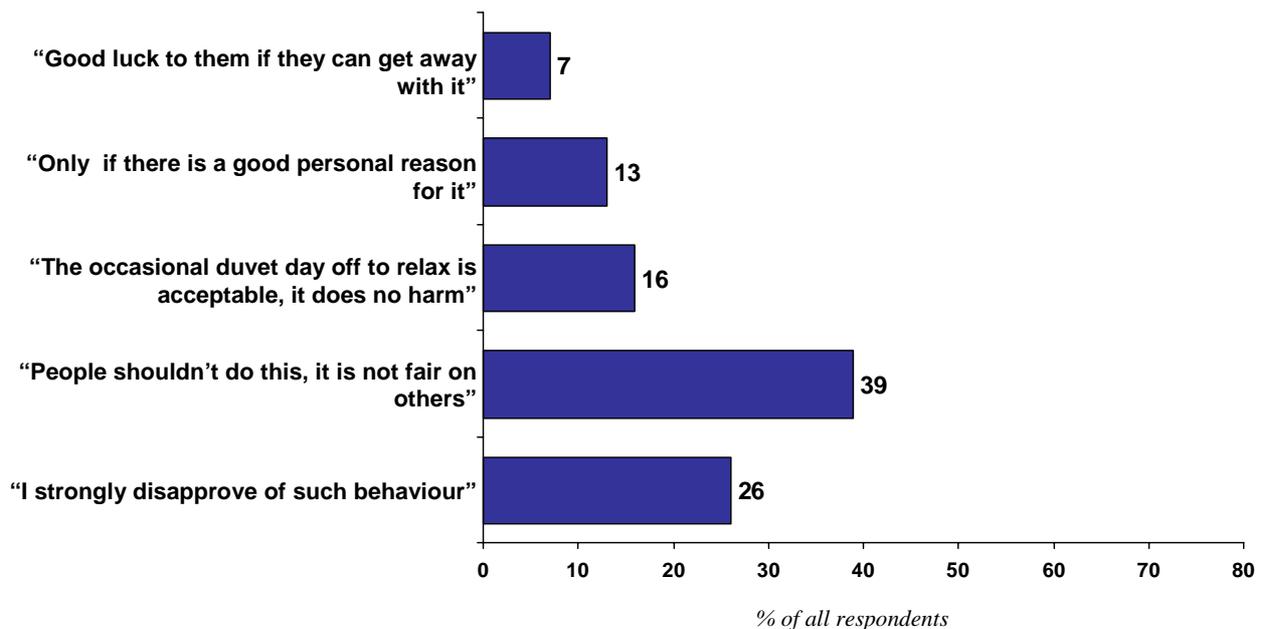
Extent to Which Work Conditions Attributed to Main Illness



5.4 Reaction to “Sickies”

The majority disapprove of “sickies”, with one-quarter taking a strong line against them.

“What Is Your Reaction To Others Taking Sick Leave When They Are Not Really Ill?”



We do however note some significant differences between our segments:

- A greater proportion of men (30%) strongly disapprove than do women (22%)
- A greater proportion of older respondents, 56 or older, strongly disapprove (40%) compared to the 18 – 35s, only 18% strongly disapproving
- Senior managers are more likely to strongly disapprove (34%) than Administration and Customer Facing staff (20%, 19%)
- Employees in smaller companies of up to 10 staff are more likely to strongly disapprove (35%) compared to larger companies (22%)
- Employees working in smaller teams of five or fewer staff are more likely to disapprove (31%) than employees in larger teams (22%).

Appendix: Details of Sample

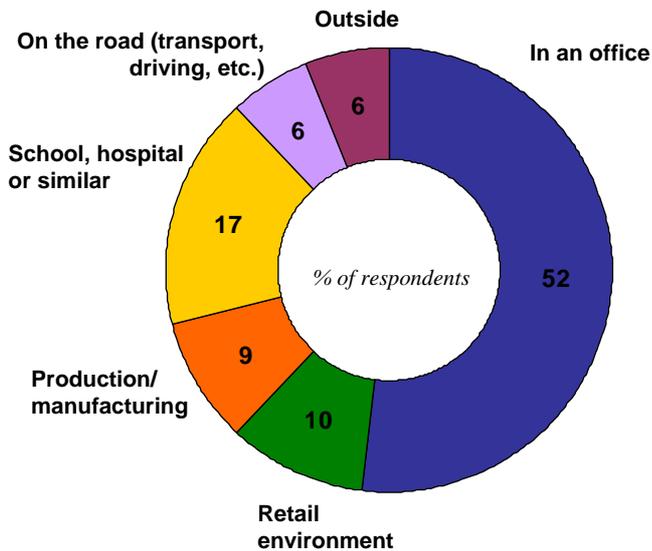
The survey of 1,050 employees was conducted online. Sample details are as follows:

- Age:
 - 18 – 25 13%
 - 26 – 35 22%
 - 36 – 45 22%
 - 46 – 55 21%
 - 56+ 22%

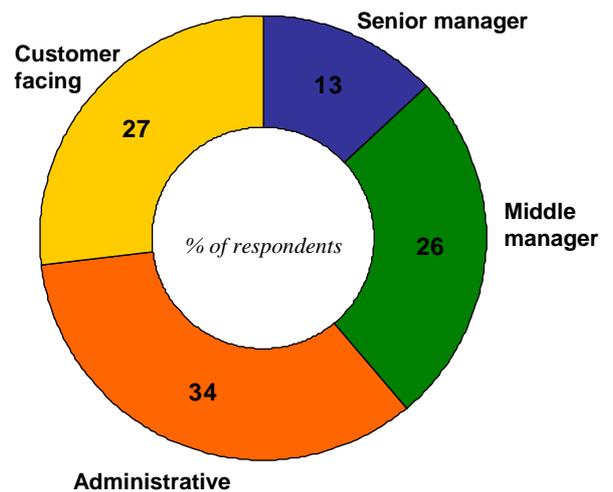
- Gender:
 - Male 50%
 - Female 50%

- In work:
 - Full-time 87%
 - Part-time 13%

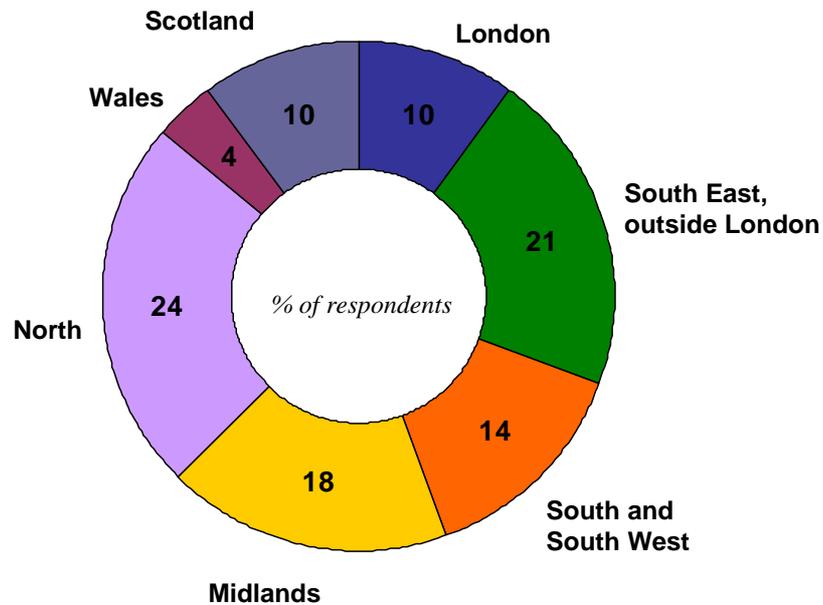
Where Our Respondents Work



What Our Respondents Do



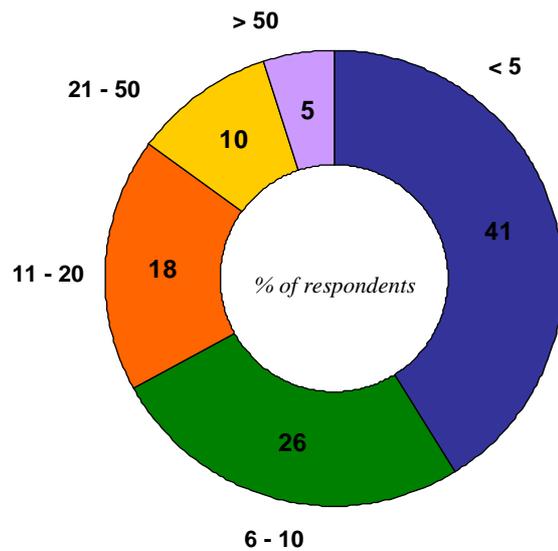
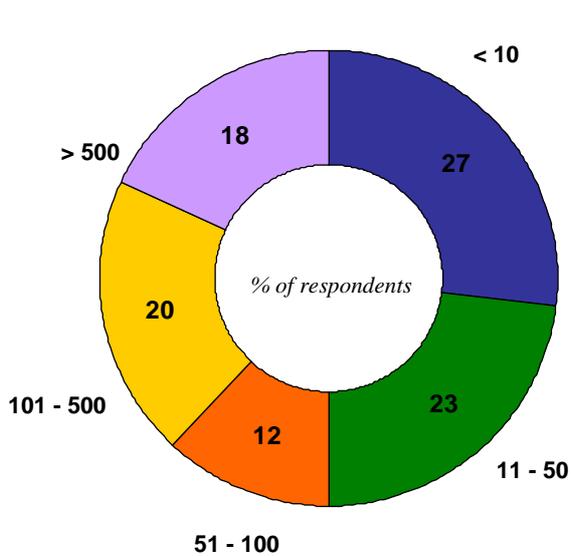
Where Our Respondents Live and Work



The Size of Companies and Teams Within Which Our Respondents Work

Number of Staff at Their Place of Work

Number of Colleagues in Their Team





Thanks go to all respondents who participated in this study for their time and consideration for our questions.

**Copies of this report can be obtained
by visiting our website: www.ceridian.co.uk**

Ceridian's work/life balance and health at work experts are available for further comment. If you would like to speak to Ceridian about any of the findings in the report in more detail, please contact Joanna Lait on 020 7335 3395.