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# Redistribution of Working-Time: Achieving a Better Work-Life Balance

**A Report for the Alex Ferry Foundation**

by Professor Phil Taylor, Department of Work,  
Employment and Organisation, University of Strathclyde

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## by Ian Waddell, CSEU General Secretary

It is now just over three decades since the conclusion of one of the greatest trade union disputes the UK has ever seen – the 35 Hour Week Campaign for a shorter working week, led by the Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions (CSEU). Hundreds of thousands of union members were involved in the campaign, either by donating an hour's pay every week, or by being directly involved in strike action to shift the dial on working time. In 1990 the campaign resulted in the working week being reduced from 39 to 37 hours across engineering and that led to reductions elsewhere in the economy, making the 37-hour week the new normal.

The Alex Ferry Foundation, named in honour of the CSEU General Secretary that led the dispute, was created using the money left over in the 35 Hour Week Campaign Fund and shorter working time is therefore part of the DNA of our charity. Our funding for this excellent report by Professor Phil Taylor and the Institute for Employment Rights is part of a broader campaign to make shorter working time a mainstream aspiration for trade unions and their members. This work has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has caused a huge shift in the attitudes of workers to the time they spend at work and the balance with the rest of their lives outside work.

This report is the largest survey of the hopes, fears, dreams and aspirations of workers on the matter of working time ever undertaken in the UK, with over two thousand individuals offering detailed responses. Their views and answers to the questions posed are fascinating and informative for union negotiators, company managers and policymakers alike. They go far beyond a narrow agenda for a four-day week and cover diverse topics such as the importance of mental and physical well-being, health and safety, productivity, job satisfaction, more family time and general happiness in the minds of workers when they think about working time.

The report is not just informative – it is timely given the renewed focus on working time across our economy, which is itself probably overdue. The UK works the longest hours in Europe and it is over thirty years since the last substantial improvement in working time. Meanwhile, productivity has increased exponentially but the rewards have not been shared equally with workers. A reduction in working time with no loss of pay is therefore not only justified, it has already been paid for.

This report should give shop stewards, union committees, full-time officers and union executives the confidence to launch full-throated campaigns for a step change in working time with no reduction in pay. It is clear that workers want to see change, they want a better balance in their lives and they want to feel happier by working less time whilst being more productive. There is a potential win-win for employers if this appetite is harnessed in a positive way.

The CSEU and Alex Ferry Foundation are proud to publish this report and we look forward to the campaigns that must surely follow on. Workers want to see change and the labour movement must listen to their voices as expressed in this report.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction and Background

- In recent years, debates on the benefits of shorter working time have proliferated across Europe and the UK, particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Arguments in favour of fewer working hours, often framed around the four-day week, have accumulated: improved workers' mental and physical health, better workplace safety, enhanced work-life balance. Simultaneously, a compelling case is made that well-rested workers contribute to increased productivity.
- However, a narrow fixation on the four-day week, as policy or statutory objective, may overstate the benefits that may accrue. A more appropriate approach, focused on reduced working time or hours, informs this study.
- Over four decades, productivity increases, particularly in engineering and manufacturing, have not been matched by reduced working time, nor compensated for by increased wages.
- The important case for shorter working time in the UK is amplified in that UK workers work longer hours than their counterparts in any country in Europe. They suffer from very high rates of occupationally related illness, whether stress, depression or anxiety, and musculoskeletal disorders. In recent decades, they have experienced significant work intensification, tightened sickness absence procedures and, often harsh, performance management.
- An important context is the momentous impact of Covid-19, a watershed episode for workers, potentially prompting re-evaluation of their priorities regarding their work and personal lives.
- Over thirty years have elapsed since the CSEU's 'Drive for 35' campaign by engineering and manufacturing workers, which achieved industry-wide reduction from 39 to 37 hours. Against this background, then, revisiting the case for shorter working time is a timely undertaking.

## The Research Project

- It was agreed that the core of the study would be an analysis of the experiences, perceptions and aspirations of union members in selected companies in engineering, shipbuilding, automotive and manufacturing industries: British Aerospace, Jaguar Land Rover, Bentley, Airbus and McVities-Pladis.
- Understanding members' views are essential for informing any campaign aimed at reduced working time that the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) might adopt. A survey of members was deemed essential to achieve the breadth and depth of data that could deliver a meaningful report on a strong evidential basis.
- Interviews with convenors and full-time officers identified the principal themes for the survey and their feedback enhanced the relevance of the questions to be asked.
- The survey with explanatory letter was uploaded on the secure academic platform (JISC). Ethical protocols were followed, anonymity for respondents ensured and the data was accessible only by Professor Taylor. The survey link opened on 17 November 2021 and closed on 28 February 2022. Union officers distributed the link to members via emails and newsletters throughout the companies or on-site.
- In total, 2,390 usable completions were returned, a sufficiently large sample to be a creditable representation of union members in the sector, providing a breadth and depth of data on their

experiences and perceptions of working time and aspirations towards shorter working time. The greatest numbers of completions came from the largest companies – British Aerospace, Rolls Royce and Jaguar Land Rover – and decent clusters came from Bentley and McVities.

## Key Research Findings

- More than 9-in-10 (91.7 per cent) are working contacted hours greater than those for the UK workforce overall. Overtime added to the length of working time. Just under one half work overtime at an average of 4 hours and 53 minutes per week. Almost one-in-ten work 10 hours overtime each week.
- The main reasons for often excessive overtime include: money and financial necessity; workload, volume of work and understaffing; business needs, compulsion or expectation.
- Almost two-thirds work permanent days shifts, but rotating and double shifts account for significant minorities. Four-in-five report working hours spread over five days or nights.
- Workers, generally, have little choice over the shifts they work, or their ability to change shifts at short notice. Nevertheless, workers report that managers in the main do respond positively to workers' need to change shifts to respond to family circumstances.
- Around 6-in-10 report having flexi-time arrangements in place and comments reveal both the benefits and difficulties encountered. Of those without flexi-time, 71.2 per cent report that they would like to see it implemented.
- An important set of findings relates to respondents' preferences for possible changes to working time; 93 per cent report their wish to have reduced working time without loss of pay, 88 per cent desire extended weekends and 82 per cent fewer shifts. For those to whom it applied, almost 9-in-10 stated that they wanted flexi shifts, either to deal with caring responsibilities or to fit in with their partners' lives.
- Additional reasons are given for shorter working time. Three stand out. Better work balance was seen as important by 96.8 per cent, improved mental health by 93.6 per cent and physical health by 88.9 per cent. Three-quarters believed shorter working time would be very important for improving mental health. Three-quarters also believed that fewer hours would be important for relieving the pressure of work.
- Very larger percentages saw being able to spend time with their partner or family as important. One-in-two reported the importance of reductions in commuting time. Finally, in support of the business case, four-in-five believed that shorter working time would improve efficiency at work.
- Respondents provide additional detail on the reasons for wanting reduced working time, putting flesh on the bones of the statistical findings regarding fewer days and longer weekends. Other stress the improvements in productivity and efficiency that would result.
- In comments, many re-iterate the importance of no loss of pay, unsurprising in the context of the cost-of-living increase underway at the time of the survey. A number do report they would be prepared to accept some loss of pay in return for reduced hours, but this number was dwarfed by those insistent on no loss of pay.
- A strong theme to emerge relates to those workers, who ordinarily, pre-Covid-19, would have been office-based. They largely express a desire to remain working at home, or on a hybrid basis. However, a minority wished to return to the office, reporting isolation and the negative consequences for their mental health resulting from the experience of working from home.

- The Covid-19 influence is clear and confirms that the experience of the pandemic has prompted a re-appraisal of attitudes to work and work-life balance. More than four-in-five believe the impact of Covid-19 increased their appreciation of the time they spend with family. Nine-in-ten see work-life balance as more important and believe Covid-19 has engendered a greater appreciation of their physical and mental health. More than three-quarters agree that Covid-19 has made them more aware of the need for a shorter working time.
- That the last two years has taken its toll on workers is evidenced by the fact that majorities believe that their physical and mental health has deteriorated over this period. Large numbers report, again, that shorter working time would benefit a great deal their physical health (57.3 per cent), their mental health (71.8 per cent) and their well-being (74.2 per cent).
- The relief from pressure at work that reduced working time would bring is further suggested by the degree of pressure workers feel they are under on a normal day, 62.6 per cent reporting that they are either very or quite pressurised.
- Diverse reasons are reported as contributing to this pressure. The most frequently cited in descending order are workload, intensity of work, having to meet targets/KPIs, not enough workers to do the job, pace of work, pressure from supervisors/managers, not enough time between tasks, fear of making mistakes, and not given enough information to do the job.
- The extent of presenteeism, workers coming to work when unwell, is a cause for concern. 1-in-7 report coming to work when ill either several times a week or several times a month. Diverse reasons are given. The most important is not being ill enough to warrant staying off, commitment/dedication to the company or colleagues, pressure of work, the way the sickness absence policy is implemented and the fear of getting put on a disciplinary. In comments, a number reported how they were fearful of being managed out of the organisation.
- This report concludes with the most important findings of all for they relate to how shorter working time might be achieved in the engineering, automotive, shipbuilding and manufacturing sites and perhaps even more widely. 93.8 per cent declare their support for a union campaign over shorter working hours, with almost 73.4 per cent stating they would 'strongly support' such a campaign. The final words are those of a Rolls Royce worker, with more than 10 years length of service, who expresses the aspirations of many of this survey's participants:

Reduced working time without loss of pay is highly important to me and I feel like the Union should make this the highest item on their agenda.



## 1 Introduction and Background

In recent years debates on the benefits of shorter working time have become prominent, even more so given the profound health impacts and social and economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Much discussion has focused on achieving a four-day week (e.g. Barnes, 2020), widely welcomed as an exciting idea, which has been piloted by businesses, endorsed by certain governments and, latterly, regarded as a potential remedy for some of the economic dislocation and social trauma caused by Covid-19 (Shepherd and Bhattacharya, 2021). A recent UK initiative involves 3,300 workers at 70 companies and is based on the 100:80:100 model, meaning 100 per cent pay for 80 per cent of working time, in exchange for maintaining 100 per cent productivity (4 Day Week, 2022).<sup>1</sup>

The value of these discussions, in drawing attention to the damaging consequences for workers of long working hours for their physical and mental health, for their work-life balance, for their family, caring and household responsibilities and, more broadly, for the quality of life, is unquestionable. The benefits from shorter working time are widely acknowledged (Harper et al, 2020) and the persuasive case for a reduction in existing hours of work is gaining ever greater purchase. Those advocating a four-day week emphasise the benefits for society (better mental and physical health, reducing gender inequalities), for the economy (less unemployment and under-employment, improved productivity), for the environment (e.g. reduced carbon emissions) and for democracy (higher civic and political engagement).

The arguments for shorter working time or a four-day week have accumulated (see Coote et al, 2021), and do not need to be fully re-iterated in this introduction, but it is important to highlight improved workers' health (mental and physical), better workplace health and safety,<sup>2</sup> enhanced equality and work-life balance and an increased ability to undertake caring responsibilities. There follows the compelling case that well-rested workers, not fatigued by overwork, contribute to increased levels of productivity. The economic case is based not merely on the relation between workers' well-being and performance, but also on research demonstrating that a four-day week with no loss of pay would be affordable for most firms in the United Kingdom (Jump and Stronge, 2020).

An important moral, democratic and trade union case can also be forcibly made. Over the past four decades increases in productivity have not been shared by workers in the form of reduced working time, nor compensated for with increased wages. Shepherd and Bhattacharaya (2021) calculate that the full-time working week would be as much as 4.2 hours shorter today, if pre-1980 trends in leisure time and productivity growth had continued to the present. In the manufacturing sector, in which this study is located, the deficit is greater, given that its industries have witnessed faster productivity growth than the rest of the economy, partly due to the adoption of new technologies.<sup>3</sup>

Attention needs to be paid to understanding some of the nuance of the debate. A narrow fixation on the four-day week as a policy objective may overrate the benefits that might accrue. There are several important caveats to what appears to be a straightforward objective to be realised through statutory means. Reducing statutory hours may incentive firms to lower pay and worsen conditions, and even to lessen the degree of control workers may have over their hours. Those most likely to benefit from a four-day week may tend to be the amongst the most socially advantaged. Shepherd and Bhattacharaya (2021) argue that the adoption of a 'one size fits all' strategy could even have negative effects in sectors where shorter hours are less immediately feasible. It is significant that one key finding of these authors' study is that 80 per cent of workers would not favour a four-day working week were it to mean earning less.

A more constructive approach, it is argued, and which informs this study, is to not become over-preoccupied with a literal four-day week, but to concentrate on a **reduction in working time and hours**, that does not mean loss of pay, that can deliver benefits for workers in terms of health, well-being and work-life balance, and which can simultaneously improve productivity.

That this study is UK-based additionally contributes to the importance of the case for shorter working time, for UK workers have longer hours of work, on average, than any country in Europe (ONS, 2022; OECD, 2021). They also suffer from exceptionally high levels of occupationally related illness. The latest figures from the Health and

Safety Executive (HSE) show an epidemic of work-related stress, depression and anxiety (SDA). In 2020-1, 882,000 workers were suffering from a work-related SDA (HSE, 2021). Meanwhile 470,000 workers were afflicted by a musculoskeletal disorder, conditions that have relevance for workers in the manufacturing and engineering industries.

In addition, a slew of evidence, particularly over the past decade, has demonstrated growth in work intensification (Green et al, 2018), tightened sickness absence management procedures (Taylor et al, 2010) and harsh forms of performance management (Taylor, 2013). These all too prevalent conditions of overwork, long hours, work intensification, occupationally related ill health, particularly endemic mental-ill health, when taken together, provide an underpinning context for this study. These pervasive contemporary worker experiences were neglected in the Government-commissioned *Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices* (Taylor, M. et al, 2017; see Taylor, 2019 for a critique). Any reduction in working hours (with the appropriate qualification regarding earnings), by increasing leisure and non-work time, can contribute to alleviating these work-related pressures and afflictions and to improving the quality of workers' lives.

While it may seem too obvious to note that this study was conducted in late-2021 and early 2022 and, thus, still during Covid-19,<sup>4</sup> the worst pandemic since the Spanish flu of 1918. It was a momentous event in peoples' lives. This is a self-evident truth, whether people were directly impacted by death and incapacitation of family and loved ones, whether they were stricken with the SARS-CoV-2 virus or long-Covid, whether they were profoundly affected in their work lives (redundancy, furlough, working from home), or whether their mental health and well-being were negatively impacted.

The Covid-19 pandemic may have been a watershed episode, in that it sharply focused attention on, and often prompted a re-evaluation of, priorities regarding the balance between work, on the one hand, and home and personal life, on the other. The conclusion for many has been, as the evidence below confirms, that less time should be spent at work and more in the personal and domestic spheres. Accordingly, it is recognised that any study of working time undertaken in 2021-2 must necessarily take account of the Covid-19 context and its myriad implications.

This is a study that also acknowledges important precedent. Ian Waddell, CSEU General Secretary reminds us in his introduction to the *New Economics Foundation* report (Harper et al, 2021) that is now over 30 years since a UK-wide campaign for shorter working time captured the imagination of engineering and manufacturing workers. Without detailing the dynamics of the campaign (see McKinlay and McNulty, 1992), it involved sustained strike action in selected plants, with workers across non-striking plants contributing an hour's pay each week. Ultimately, the action achieved an industry-wide reduction from 39 to 37 hours, which became a new norm, not merely in these industries but more widely.

It is against this background, then, that the moment is appropriate for re-visiting the question of shorter working time. The context might be historical in the present, as it were, in the sense that the campaign for shorter working hours is integral to the historical purpose of trade unions, but it is very much contemporary in two senses. First, there is the growing discourse in the UK and in Europe on the virtues of shorter working time, couched often in the slogan of the Four Day Week. Second, the experiences of workers in today's workplaces, indicated above, emphasises the importance of gaining some relief from the pressures of work, especially when combined with the heightened sensitivity towards work-life balance and well-being. These experiences, and the fact that the numbers of hours that full-time workers in the engineering, manufacturing and automotive industries work have, for most, remained unchanged despite increases in productivity, make this study of workers' experiences of all aspects of their working time a timely undertaking.

## 2 The Research Project

This report contains the findings of a survey of union members in the UK automotive, aerospace, engineering and manufacturing industries on their experiences of working time. The broader purpose was that these findings would constitute valuable evidence contributing to the case for a shorter working campaign across the

sector and even for other industries. At the outset of the project, it was acknowledged that the core of the report would consist of analysis of the experiences, perceptions and aspirations of trade union members in selected companies. Establishing an understanding of members' views would be essential for informing any campaign aimed at reduced working time that the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) and its affiliate unions might adopt. To this end, it was agreed that a survey of members was necessary to achieve the breadth and depth of data required to deliver a meaningful report with a strong evidential basis.

### 3 The Survey of Members – Methods and Data

The survey was constructed following interviews with the convenors and relevant full-time officers. Interview transcripts were analysed, in order to identify the principal themes to be included in the survey, to divide it into appropriate sections and to formulate suitable questions that would elicit responses on issues of relevance to members. Certain questions were informed, additionally, by reference to recent think-tank and reports. A draft was circulated to the Alex Ferry Foundation (AFF), the CSEU and the convenors and full-time officers interviewed, requesting critical comment on the questions and terminology and suggestions for additional questions. An important objective was to ensure that questions would be meaningful and that the wording made sense to members. Following some minor adjustments approval was gained for the survey to be distributed in the six companies. The survey, prefaced by an introductory letter by Professor Taylor, was uploaded on the JISC platform (<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/>), an established platform in UK academia noted for reliability and GDPR compliance. University ethical standards were followed throughout the research process and confidentiality and anonymity for respondents guaranteed. Completed surveys could only be accessed through JISC, a repository that is subscriber and password secured. Only Professor Taylor has been able to access the data. Ethical and data compliance issues were made explicit in the covering letter.

### 4 Survey Distribution

Perhaps the most challenging stage of the research process was anticipated to be, and proved to be in practice, ensuring a sufficient number of completed surveys. The process required liaison between Professor Taylor and the union officers. Various means were adopted. The survey link was distributed to convenors and senior stewards to circulate. In one case, the survey required legal authorisation to ensure data compliance, adherence to ethical standards and a full explanation of these provided for respondents. The link <https://phil.onlinesurveys.a.uk/cseu-working-time-survey> was opened on 17 November 2021 and was circulated by email and newsletters to members. Follow-up emails urged completions. The deadline was 28 February 2022.

The findings reported are based on the 2,390 useable completed surveys, a sizable absolute number, that they can be regarded as a creditable representation of the experiences of union members across the aerospace, engineering and shipbuilding sector. To the best of the author's knowledge this is largest independent survey of workers undertaken on working time in the UK manufacturing industries. What makes this survey distinctive is the breadth and depth of union members' experiences of, and attitudes to, all aspects of working time and especially their aspirations in relation to shorter working time.

### 5 Distribution of Responses by Company

Table 1 (*overleaf*) demonstrates that the greatest numbers of responses came from the three largest organisations, Rolls Royce (RR), BAE Systems (BAE) and Jaguar Land Rover (JLR). While the total responses from Bentley and McVities are smaller, they nevertheless represent decent sized clusters of members that help provide a fuller overview of the sector.<sup>5</sup> Drilling into the returns displays the distributions by site/location for the largest organisations, Rolls Royce, BAE and JLR respectively (see Appendix). The positive conclusion is that samples have been successfully achieved for the main and lesser sites, enabling us to have confidence that the survey findings are generally representative of workers in these organisations.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Responses by Company

Company	Number	% of Total
Rolls Royce	857	35.9
BAE Systems	833	34.9
Jaguar Land Rover	581	24.3
Bentley	74	3.1
McVities-Pladis	43	1.8
Airbus	2	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,390</b>	<b>100</b>

## 6 Contracted Hours of Work

Table 2 provides the distribution of hours worked across the sample. The small figure for less than 30 hours (1.1 per cent) indicates the limited extent of part-time working. Most significant for our purposes are four findings. First, less than 3 per cent are contracted to work 35 hours and around 5 per cent are on >35-36 contracts. Second, the 37-hour contract is most numerous with 57.8 per cent. Third, more than one-in-three (33.8 per cent) work on contracts that are more than 37 hours. Fourth, as many as one-in-eight (12.4 per cent) are contacted to work 40 hours per week or more.

To put these figures in a broader context, 91.7 per cent in this study are working longer contracted full-time hours than the average for the UK workforce as a whole. The most recent ONS (2022) statistics show average actual full-time working hours at 36.6 (Jan-Feb 2022), slightly down from the 36.9 hours for the last quarter of 2019 before the onset of Covid-19.

**Table 2:** Distribution of Responses by Company

Hours	Number	% of Total
25 or less	15	0.6
>25 to 30	11	0.5
30	9	0.4
>30 to <35	46	1.9
35	68	2.8
>35 to 36	51	2.1
37	1382	57.9
37.5	122	5.1
38	314	13.2
39	73	3.1
40	200	8.4
>40	95	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2386</b>	<b>100</b>

## 7 Overtime

### 7.1 Numbers Working Overtime

Slightly less than a half reported working overtime, and slightly more than a half that they did not.

**Table 3:** Do You Work Overtime?

	Number	% of Total
Yes	1,136	47.5
No	1,254	52.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,390</b>	<b>100</b>

### 7.2 Overtime Hours Worked

**Table 4:** Distribution of overtime hours worked each week on average? (n=1,113)

Overtime Hours Worked	Number	% of Total
< 2	94	8.4
2 to < 3	196	17.6
3 to < 4	163	14.6
4	142	12.8
5	188	16.9
6	78	7.0
7	29	2.6
8	107	9.6
9	8	0.7
10	55	4.9
11	3	0.3
12	20	1.8
13	4	0.4
14	2	0.2
15	7	0.6
16	7	0.6
18	2	0.2
20	7	0.6
25	1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,113</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In addition to calculating the mean of **4 hours 53 minutes per week** for those who do work overtime, the data can be presented in additional meaningful ways. Almost one-in-ten (9.7 per cent) reported working 10 hours or more overtime each week, and exactly one-in-five (20 per cent) worked 8 hours or more. Testimony of unwanted excessive overtime is reported as, for example:

Too much work, not enough people, mostly deadline related (as in we get given frequent deadlines with less than a week's notice, so forced to do OT to get it done in time). For the last three weeks I've done 45+ hours a week. *(BAE, male, 36-45, more than twenty years, FTP, permanent days)*<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes on the Friday when it's supposed to be our short shift of only 6 hours, JLR put uptime on of 5 hours. So you work 11 hours on a Friday and don't finish work until 11pm then you're at work Monday morning at 5am so hardly have a weekend. *(JLR, female, 26-35, 5-10 years, rotating shifts)*

### 7.3 Reasons for Working Overtime

Clearly, given the principal objective of this study to acquire robust evidence that might support the case for shorter working time, it is of major importance to understand the reasons why respondents work overtime. A follow-up, open question asked workers to volunteer their reasons. 1,171 responded, a number slightly larger than those who reported that they did work overtime. The reason for this minor discrepancy is that some currently not working overtime, might do so ordinarily, had recent experiences of doing or so or wished to, but were currently prevented from doing so. The following quotes are indicative of the latter:

None available at the moment but would usually try and work overtime for more money if necessary and also depending on what rate, my time is more valued. *(BAE, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, FTP, permanent days)*

At present, overtime is not an option, but when it gets busy - we can work it. I work it in order to boost my wage to help pay towards bills and savings. *(BAE, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, FTP, permanent days)*

#### 7.3.1 Money and Financial Reasons

The most common response, cited by a majority in various ways, was financial, most succinctly expressed in the single word 'money'. One emphatically stated, 'Money and nothing more!'. Yet, a detailed analysis of these responses reveals different motivations and experiences within this overall category, some of which reveal financial necessity, even hardship, with some testimonies reflecting the rise in the cost of living for which pay increases have not been able to compensate.

Extra pay, to get by. Full time single dad with child in full-time nursery. Living pay check to pay check throughout the entire pandemic. Nursery bills exceeding £1000 a month. Now down to £700. *(RR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, FTP, permanent days)*

Extra pay. I have a young family. Below inflation pay rise last year and no pay rise the previous 2 years before hand. So in theory my pay has had 3 years of not keeping up with the cost of living. *(JLR, male, 36-45, 5-10 years, FTP, rotating shifts)*

Can't afford to live most of the time. *(JLR, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, FTP, double shift - earlies/lates)*

My basic wage has not kept up with the cost of living over the last 10 years so done to support a family and importantly complete required tasks at work. *(Bentley, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days)*

In this general context, a few reported that they worked overtime for 'extras', or 'special purchases' or 'luxuries', including this respondent:

Because they pay more money for less hours and it helps pays the for a fancy holiday for the family. *(Bentley, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, double shift - earlies/lates)*

Age, more exactly the stage that a worker and their family might be at in their life cycle, appears to be a factor, with a clutch of older worker expressing less compulsion that many younger workers to work overtime. The following is one example:

Extra hours needed by the company in the short term I'm 60 now so the extra money isn't as relevant.  
(JLR, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, rotating shifts)

Conversely, a number younger workers, at a different stage in their life cycle, made reference to their recent marriage, or impending weddings and/or the need to take on a mortgage, or to the need to support their young children or 'newborns'. In these testimonies, financial pressures were frequently cited at the same time.

(When the overtime is available) I will work 60 hours a month. Because I want to clear debt and save for a house. (RR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, rotating shifts)

### 7.3.2 Workload, Volume of Work and Understaffing

The second most commonly reported reason to emerge from the testimonies relates to workload and volume of work, which many believed to be connected to staff shortages or understaffing. 'Workload', 'high workload', 'volume of work' and 'overload' were common refrains. The following statements amplify these succinct comments:

Amount of work I'm expected to deliver cannot be undertaken within my contracted hours.  
(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, FTP, permanent days)

Too much to do in the time available, to meet the performance objectives. Not enough skilled staff available to do the job properly. Unskilled/poor capability of subcontract resource.  
(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, FTP, permanent days)

Too much work, not enough people, mostly deadline related (as in we get given frequent deadlines with less than a week's notice, so forced to do OT to get it done in time). For the last three weeks I've done 45+ hours a week. (BAE, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, FTP, permanent days)

Understaffed by about 50%. (BAE, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, FTP, permanent days)

Lack of resource and vacancies are not being filled. Group was up to six engineers, now down to TWO engineers. (BAE, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, FYP, permanent days)

Because my colleague has left and there is no replacement. I only work 5 hours overtime because I have commitments (Kids...). The workload is huge and it is very behind.  
(Bentley, female, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 10 years, permanent days)

Some respondents reported that, because of the imperative to ensure continuous production, maintenance and repair could be undertaken only during overtime hours.

It's the only time I can get to repair the kit I work on. Due to production needs and running time, we have to firefight issues during the week and keep production running at all costs. Working overtime makes my life easier during the week as it reduces the faults. I have to attend due to key rectifying issues on weekend over time. (JLR, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, FTP, permanent days)

### 7.3.3 Business Needs or Job Requirements – Compulsion and Expectation

Other recurrent themes were references to 'business needs' or 'job requirements'. Two main types of response can be identified, those reporting that working overtime was compulsory or that it was expected. The reporting of mandatory overtime appears to be an outcome of a union-employer agreement at JLR that aims to match the peaks and troughs of production requirements and are related to a provision whereby workers can bank hours during busy periods and take TOIL (Time off in Lieu) during slacker periods. The following comments are illustrative and the second adds critical comment.

Contractual obligation, if production targets do not hit plan, we have to do compulsory overtime at the end of each shift to make up the numbers. *(JLR, Male, 36-45, 5-10 years, FTP, double shift – earlies/lates)*

Catchback - when the company needs to build more vehicles. This is mandatory not voluntary. Catchback needs to be scrapped. These hours can add and 1 to 2 hours to you normal working day. Other sites only give a few hours to call catchback. gives no time to arrange any child-care. *(JLR, Female, 46-55, 5-10 years, FTP, rotating shifts)*

Others reported that, while overtime was not compulsory, there was an expectation that it must be done. Some indicate that the borderline between compulsory and voluntary overtime may not be firmly demarcated.

There is far more work to do that can be done in the time. I and my team are under-resourced. I actually try to stay disciplined and minimise the amount of overtime I do but although not explicitly stated there is some peer pressure to work overtime and I worry how I might compare to my contemporaries and how it might affect my opportunity to progress. *(RR, male, 26-35, 10-20 years, permanent days)*

It is necessary to manage my workload and a level of assumed overtime the management expect as a matter of course. *(BAE, female, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days)*

Partly out of expectation due to 'Modern Working Practices', partly to get tasks completed in a timely manner. *(RR, male, 26-35, 10-20 years, permanent days)*

The company expects us to work overtime. We are often pressured to work overtime. *(JLR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, rotating shifts)*

### 7.3.4 Multiple and Other Reasons

While these three sets of reasons (financial, workload, compulsion/expectation) are the most commonly reported, many comments make clear that workers often do overtime, not for one single reason, but for multiple reasons. The most frequent is the need for extra money in tandem with work demands.

A mixture of the demands of the job and the incentive for more money. *(BAE, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, FTP, permanent days)*

In addition, several reported on the influence of flexi-time, whereby workers were able to 'bank' hours through working overtime which could be taken later, emphasising the benefits that may result for personal and family life:

A mixture of workload & personal life. We have the ability to accrue flexi time so additional hours is banked as flexi which can be taken at a later time. *(BAE, female, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days)*

Other particular combinations included both commonly reported reasons and distinctive personal motivations as, for example, the following:

1. To get the job done to meet timescales. 2. Professional Pride. 3. Staff shortages caused by management 'Gapping' of posts' *(BAE, male, 65+, 10-20 years, FTP, permanent days)*



## 8 Shift Patterns, Hours and Times

### 8.1 Shift Patterns

A closed question asked workers to indicate the shift pattern they normally worked. The responses are presented in Table 5. Almost two-thirds (64.6 per cent) reported working ‘permanent days’. Three-in-ten worked what is frequently termed ‘atypical working time arrangements’ (Eurofond, 2017: 58), rotating shifts, double shifts and night shifts. The health and safety and social impacts<sup>7</sup> of shift and extended hours working, particularly because of disrupted circadian rhythms, have long been evaluated (e.g. Harrington, 2001). While detailed analysis lies beyond the scope of this study, a reminder of the potential physical and mental health effects of shift working is salutary for a report aiming to contribute to discussions around, even negotiations over, working time in the round. The evidence from Europe indicates that shift working is on the increase; from 17 per cent in 2005 and 2010 to 21 per cent by 2017 (Eurofond, 2017: 58). The most prevalent type is alternating or rotating shifts, followed by permanent shifts (mornings, afternoons, nights), a pattern reflected in this study.

**Table 5:** Distribution of shift patterns (n=2,378)

	Number	% of Total
Permanent days	1,538	64.6
Rotating shifts	353	14.8
Double shifts	340	14.3
Permanent nights	27	1.1
Permanent mornings/earlies	23	1.0
Permanent evenings/lates	10	0.4
Weekends	2	0.2
Other	85	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,378</b>	<b>100</b>

The second most common working pattern was ‘rotating shifts’, reported by 14.8 per cent, closely followed by those working double shifts (14.3 per cent). Relatively small numbers report working permanent nights, mornings/earlies or evenings/lates. The ‘other’ category, 3.6 per cent of respondents, contains myriad variation, but some commonalities can be detected. There are those on rotating (nights, afternoons, mornings in succession), working 3 on and 4 off with 12-hours shifts. Others, detail their double shifts.. Then, there are those working ‘continental shifts’, the classic pattern of four consecutive 12-hours day, followed by four days off, then four consecutive 12-hour nights and four days off. It is also worth mentioning those reporting ‘compressed’ shift working, whereby 5 days of working hours are undertaken in four days. Finally, it is necessary to note the cluster of respondents who report unpredictable shift allocation, or shifts changed at short notice. The following four comments are given by JLR employees.

Shifts change on a regular basis from days to days afternoons to 4/5 shifts. (JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, FTP)

We change shifts at the whim of the management. Must have been on about 6 different patterns in 2021. (JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, FTP)

The shift patterns are changed regularly so I have no definitive shift arrangement. (JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, FTP)

Our shifts at Wolverhampton are constantly changing due to the semi-conductor microchip shortage. In the past 6 months we have worked mornings & afternoons and also straight day shifts. (JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, FTP)

### 8.2 Days or Nights Worked Per Week

**Table 6:** Distribution of the Number of Days/Nights Worked (n=2,212)

Number of Days/Nights	Number	% of Total
2	5	0.2
3	88	4.0
3.5	30	1.4
4	243	11.0
4.5	55	2.5
5	1774	80.2
6	9	0.4
7	8	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,212</b>	<b>100</b>

A question asked members to state the numbers of days (or nights) they worked per week. Clearly, there is some ambiguity given that some shift patterns will not fit neatly into a seven-day week. The 2,212 useable responses (outliers excluded) are presented in Table 6. The majority of those reporting 2, 3 or 3.5 days part-time workers. Only 11 per cent reported four days. Those reporting 4.5 days were largely on permanent days and worked a half day on Friday. By far the most common response (80.2 per cent) was for those working 5 days. Very small numbers reported working 6 or 7 days.

**Table 7:** Distribution of the Number of Hours Worked Per Shift(n=2,212)

No. of Hours per Shift	Number	%	No. of Hours per Shift	Number	%	No. of Hours per Shift	Number	%
4	5	0.2	7.5	185	8.3	9.5/9.75	27	1.2
5	2	0.1	7.7/7.8/7.9	89	4.5	10	38	1.7
6	5	0.2	8	858	38.5	10.5	47	2.1
6.25	5	0.2	8.25/8.3/8.4	47	2.1	11	7	0.3
7	42	1.9	8.5	110	4.9	12	112	5.0
7.23/7.24/7.3	140	6.3	8.8/9	103	4.6	12.25/12.3/12.4	47	2.2
7.4	182	8.2	9.25	60	2.7	13	3	0.1

### 8.3 Perceptions of Flexibility and Shifts

Respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with three statements, a question designed to elicit experiences of flexibility in their ability to decide or change their shifts. The results are given in Table 6.

**Table 8:** Agreement or Disagreement with Statements Regarding Shifts (n=2,311)

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neither %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
I can choose the shifts I work	11	20.4	16.2	19.9	32.6
I am able to change my shifts at short notice	9.7	23.5	19.8	20	27
Managers respond to personal/family circumstances and give me flexibility to change my shifts if I need to	24.3	38.9	16.8	9.5	10.5

Experiences are mixed. With respect to choice over the shifts worked, greater numbers reported an inability to do so than an ability. So, 53 per cent either disagreed (19.9 per cent) or strongly disagreed with the statement, ‘I can choose the shifts I work’, compared to 31.5 per cent who either agreed or strongly agreed. Larger numbers either disagreed or disagreed strongly (47 per cent) than agreed or strongly agreed (33.2 per cent) with the statement ‘I am able to change my shifts at short notice’.

Conversely, members reported a far greater degree of flexibility from their managers, when they were needed to deal with family or personal issues. So, almost two-thirds of respondents either agreed (38.9 per cent) or strongly agreed (24.3) with the statement, ‘Managers respond to personal/family circumstances and give me flexibility to change my shifts if I need to’, compared to the 20 per cent who either agreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Even in this respect, then, one-in-five reported management inflexibility.

## 9 Flexi-time Arrangements

### 9.1 Extent of Flexi-Time and Arrangements

**Table 9:** Do you Have Flexi-time Arrangements? (n=2,390)

	Number	%
Yes	1427	59.7
No	963	40.3

In answer to the questions, ‘Do you have flexi-time arrangements?’ and ‘Are you able to ‘bank’ hours, meaning you can work additional hours and take them as leave time later?’, 59.7 per cent reported that they did and 40.3 per cent that they did not.

A subsequent open question requesting information of the arrangements prompted 1,440 responses. The first main theme to emerge from this extensive qualitative data are straightforward, often one-word answers, including TOIL (time off in lieu), banking or banked hours, flexi-time or flexibility. Many provided overall descriptions and the following give insight in the arrangements that workers have across the case study companies.

1 hour a week gives me 6 days lieu holidays a year.  
(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

“Banked” hours can be taken as holiday or paid as cash (a bonus is added to cash as the company would rather have personnel at work) (JLR, male, 56-65, more than 10 and less than 20 years, FTP)

+15/-8 hours can be used as days off or late start early finish within core time.  
(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

4 day week (JLR, female, 56-65, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

52 hrs banked every year (JLR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)

Modern Working Practices (MWP) allows flexibility and the ability to bank hours as TOILS. Overtime pay is not allowed. (RR, male, permanent days, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, FTP)

Some, notably BAE respondents, emphasised the importance of the requirement to work core hours, outside of which banked hours can be taken. For example:

Core Time between 7 am & 3 pm (12:30 Fridays). can take approx. 2 flexi days per month. can bank max 15 hours (BAE, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

As long as you work the core hours (10am-2pm) and work an average of 7.6 hours a day, you can work 8.6 hours one day and 6.6 the next for example. (RR, female, 25 or under, 1-2 years, permanent days, FTP).

Others provided more detailed responses:

A flexible system based on a plus and minus 40 hours “green” zone with flex for positive and negative hours. Amber and red zones progressing two wider bands with management involvement to understand the “excessive” hours and a payment plan if these are sustained on the positive side and not able to be taken back due to business circumstances.

(RR, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, FTP)

Bank up to 15hrs or negative 15hrs. Up to 12 flexi days a year plus one core period (morning or afternoon) off per week. Core hours 9.30am to 12pm and 2pm to 3.15pm. Range hours 7am to 7pm M-F (outside these can only be overtime not accrual hours). Flexi balance carries over week to week, never reset.

(BAE, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Notwithstanding union-negotiated agreements, although there appears to be a deficit at McVities- Pladis, some provided evidence of informality, unofficial agreements and even the exercise of managerial discretion in the implementation of flexi-time.

Agree arrangements with the line manager beforehand.

(RR, male, permanent days, 36-45, more than ten and less than 20 years, FTP)

Although not in my contract local management are very flexible with working times. If I work overtime I can usually take time off in lieu. (RR, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, work from home and on site, FTP)

Gained time hours can be banked and taken by mutual consent or in emergencies.

(McV, male, 36-45, more than 20 hours, permanent days, FTP)

I do not have banked hours, but if I needed time off during a shift some arrangement could be made with my shift manager. (McV, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

It is an unofficial arrangement as only do a few hours if necessary to cover covid/illness etc.

(RR, female, 36-45, more than 20 years, rotating, shifts, PTP)

Local agreements may supplement company-wide flexi agreements.

Ad-hoc, if I work excessively long on a day I can claw the hours back under a local agreement.

(JLR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Based on local agreement that we shouldn't be working excessive overtime; try to keep to 5% maximum to be booked and take back if possible. *(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Others reported constraints in the implementation of flexi-time arrangements, including the fact it is not possible to convert banked hours into overtime payments, or some restrictions exist in the ability to carry over banked hours.

Any time worked (clocked) over the standard day is banked as flexi. Use up to 2 days flexi a month but must work core hours. *(BAE, female, 46-55, 1-2 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Any TOIL accrued can only total 40 hours maximum.  
*(BAE, male, 56-65, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Bank maximum 37 hours. *(BAE, male, 56-65, 1-2 years, continental, FTP)*

Anything over 37 hours a week is banked and used when required. we cannot convert to overtime.  
*(BAE, male, 56-65, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Banked hours only last one week. Core hours of 10am-2pm must be worked.  
*(RR, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)*

At the same time, some reported that additional time worked could be translated into overtime pay or used as holiday pay.

Any time worked above 37 hours is added to flexi balance, which can then be used as leave or converted to overtime for additional pay. *(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Several members took this opportunity to recount personal experiences of how they used flexi-time to enhance work-life balance:

I finish 5 minutes early Monday to Thursday to collect my son from school. I then make 20 minutes extra on Friday. *(JLR, male, 36-45, permanent days, FTP)*

I have a flexible agreement in place to help with child care. If I work over an agreed limit of hours RR will (in theory) pay me for the excess hours. I can also take time off and owe the company hours.  
*(RR, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, PTP)*

Conversely, a number of members reported difficulties in the implementation of flexi-time, many of them Rolls Royce workers:

A modern working practices agreement that is interpreted differently by union and management.  
*(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Arrangements are inconsistent and unfair. Extra hours worked can be taken back, but the system is misused and abused. Time taken back should be agreed with your manager. Extra hours worked should also be agreed with your manager but in practice this isn't done because we're always working extra hours. In practice I just take a few hours back here and there when it suits, but it probably only amounts to 20 hours back for 200 hours extra worked.  
*(RR, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Did work well in the past but not now under new management  
*(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

MWP agreement where we are contracted to work 10% overtime AS and WHEN the business needs (in replace of overtime payments) - but its every week as we are under resourced and has been going on for years, so long that it has been normalised and anyone in my dept working their actual contracted hours is (informally) deemed a slacker.  
*(RR, female, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

### 9.2 Those Reporting No Flexi-time Agreements

An additional question asked those respondents, who did not have flexi-time arrangements, whether they would like to have them.

**Table 10:** If no flexi-time arrangement would you like to have them? (n=1,248)

	Number	%
Yes	888	71.2
No	360	28.8

Of the 1,248 who responded, a large majority (71.2 per cent) stated that they would like to have these arrangements, compared to the 28.8 per cent who said they did not.

#### 9.2.1 Reasons for Wishing to Have Flexi-time Arrangements

Analysis of the reasons why respondents would like to have flexi arrangements is instructive and contributes to the insights of the previous section. Many simply stated that they would want ‘any’ arrangement as they did not have one. A cluster expressed a desire for a 4-day week, working longer shifts in order to have Friday off, or even the ability to have a half-day on Friday. A frequently expressed desire was to be able to bank days and take time off when they wished either from week-to-week or in the longer-term.

A chance to work extra through the week for a Friday off. *(JLR, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, rotating, FTP)*

Ability to accrue hours over a longer period and take back as days at a later date.  
*(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, PTP)*

Agreed total hours option per week to allow to be banked. This will cover the extra hours commonly worked past my shift finish time to claw back. *(JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent earlies, FTP)*

A particularly insightful quote illuminates the potential consequences of shift-working on workers’ health and the effects on efficiency.

An earlier start and finish on late shift as working until 2.30 in the morning is not only non-productive but bad for health and the safety of staff also it can be detrimental to the quality and accuracy of work due to fatigue. *(RR, male, 56-65, 1-2 years, rotating shifts, FTP)*

That flexi-time arrangements would have advantageous outcomes for workers’ childcare and family commitments was a recurring theme.

Shifts that are childcare friendly. I was on backshift until Christmas due to childcare issues plus partners working time and this worked perfect for me. I am now forced onto dayshift as the workload for my department does not require backshift to which i am now struggling.  
*(BAE, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Some flexibility would be good for childcare and better work life balance.  
(JLR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

### 9.2.2 Reasons for Not Wishing to Have Flexi-time Arrangements

Of the minority stating that they did not want banked hours, a cluster reported that they were happy with the current arrangements.

At the moment if I work late it's my choice to. If I do work additional hours I think it's right to be paid for them, and this should be at a premium rate. We did have an unofficial flexitime arrangement some years ago, brought in by the company as a way of cutting costs. But this just gets something for nothing by the company and leaves the employee out of pocket.  
(JLR, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Banked hours can sometimes build to high levels during busy times and are then difficult to recoup.  
(JLR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Because I would have to work longer hours, and it's not practical when working three shift patterns.  
(JLR, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

Prefer to get paid if I do extra. (JLR, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

Disparity between working extra hours and overtime. Overtime is paid at a higher rate 150% hr rate.  
(RR, male, 56-65, 2-5 years, FTP)

While, as seen in previous sections, several workers stressed the benefits of flexi-time for childcare and family commitments, a small number suggested fixed shifts were preferable for these reasons.

Want to be able plan family life around fixed shifts.  
(JLR, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, double shift, FTP)

I like to know what I'm working to plan going forward.  
(JLR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, 3 shift pattern, FTP)

It should be noted that responses overall are heavily weighted in favour of flexi-time for personal or family reasons and that negative responses constitute a small minority. A clutch of respondents indicated that their reasons for not wishing flexi-time related to a distrust of management or because the arrangements would be used to management's advantage and discretion and would not lead to benefits for workers.

Because management would use this as a tool to send you home if work runs out and return let's say at a weekend or bank holiday to return the hours owed, when a premium payment should be paid.  
(RR, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

Don't trust the company to take advantage of such a system and shift working times around people. So long as it was fully optional and choice for the worker then I'd be ok with that.  
(RR, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

Management can then choose when to send you home and force you in at weekends as req.  
(RR, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, FTP)

Management would abuse the bank hours system - untrustworthy.  
(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)

While the majority, as demonstrated above, report benefits to family and personal life and well-being, a small number remained sceptical. For example:

Because you could complete your 38 hrs per wk contract by doing stupid 12/13 hr shifts then the rest is holiday, not only health reasons onto you but to other work colleagues by your absence and the company would suffer, therefore you suffer.  
*(RR, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

## 10 Possible Changes to Working Time

### 10.1 Desired Changes to Working Time

To meet a key objective of this research project, to gain an understanding of members’ perceptions of existing working time and aspirations towards changes, the answers to these next questions are particularly instructive. The first asked members what possible changes to working time would they like to see implemented. The responses are collated in Table 10.

**Table 11:** Which Possible Changes to Working Time Would You Like to See Implemented?

	Yes %	DNA %
Reduced working time without loss of pay (n=2,367)	93.0	3.1
Extended weekends (n=2,278)	72.9	14.9
Fewer shifts (n=2,205)	56.0	31.8
Flexible shifts so I can deal with family matters (n=2,232)	63.3	3.2
Flexible shifts so I can deal with caring responsibilities (n=2,198)	46	48.7
Flexible shifts so I can fit in with partner’s work times (n=2,205)	47.9	44.7

Evidently, the most widespread affirmative responses (93 per cent) relate to the possibility of reduced working time, with the essential caveat of no loss of pay. Almost three-quarters (72.9 per cent) expressed a preference for extended weekends. However, 14.9 per cent report that extended weekends do not apply to them. If we exclude these responses 88 per cent of respondents for whom extended weekends apply state that they would like to see them implemented. From Table 10, it is clear that a majority are in favour of fewer shifts. Once again, the ‘does not apply’ responses can be excluded, giving 82 per cent who express a desire for fewer shifts.

Almost two-thirds (63.3 per cent) stated that they would like flexible shifts, in order to deal with family matters. Excluding the large numbers for whom flexible shifts to deal with caring responsibilities and to fit in with their partner’s work time were reported as not applying, the percentages voting yes for these possible changes are considerable. Following these calculations, 89.5 per cent reported that they would like to have flexible shifts, in order to deal with caring responsibilities and 86.6 per cent that they would like flexible shifts in order to fit in with partners’ work times.

These findings presented above provide emphatic endorsement for the campaign for shorter working time. They deliver significant insight into the more detailed preferences regarding shifts, work days/ weekends and flexible arrangements.

A follow up question asked members to express these possible changes in terms of ranked preference. Respondents were asked to list in priority order, 1 for the most important, 2 for the second most important and



so on. While a number of respondents clearly gave a number 1 response to more than one item, the distribution is clear. The findings in Table 11, which lists these possible changes in descending order of number 1 ranked priority, corroborate those in Table 10.

### 10.2 Priorities in Desired Changes to Working Time

**Table 12:** Reported Number 1 Priorities

Possible Change	Number 1 Priority No	Number 1 Priority %
Reduced working time without loss of pay	1,693	72.4
Extended weekends	507	22.9
Fewer shifts	319	15.1
Flexible shifts so I can deal with family matters	268	12.9
Flexible shifts so I can deal with caring responsibilities	223	10.9
Flexible shifts so I can fit in with partner's work times	198	9.6

### 10.3 Additional Desired Changes to Working Time

The responses to a subsequent open question requesting members to indicate what other changes to working time and shifts they may want are additionally instructive. Some responses re-iterate the findings above, but many others provide complementary insight into workers' aspirations. A sizable number indicated their preferences for a four-day week or fewer shifts, often with reference to the benefits that would ensue for family and personal life, health and wellbeing and environmental concerns. The following are a representative sample:

It would be nice if we could fit are working week in Monday to Thursday.  
(JLR, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, double shift, FTP)

Would like to see same hours per week spread over 4 shifts not 5.  
(JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, double shifts, FTP)

Implement 4 day working week with Friday as opportunity for overtime or flexi banking.  
(BAE, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent nights, FTP)

4 Day working week and additional benefits for child care such as extended paternity leave.  
(BAE, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

4 day week so we can enjoy life instead of just work. (RR, male, 36-45, 2-5 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

4 day week would be nice, with the ability to choose my 'off' day is the ideal.  
(BAE, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Fewer shifts so less 108 mile round trip commutes. (RR, male, 26-35, permanent lates, FTP)

Fewer days to reduce commuting time, miles and carbon footprint (2.5-3 hours a day, 90 miles).  
(JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, double shifts, FTP)

It should be noted that a greater number of respondents emphasised their desire to have a shorter working week or reduced hours without making an explicit reference to a four-day week. Thus, it would be mistaken, on

the basis of this evidence, to equate the aspiration for shorter working time or reduced hours as synonymous with a desire for a four-day week. The quotes on shorter working time in this sub-section are selected to be representative of the main themes in the testimonies. One issue is the divide between those who state that they would accept shorter working time with some reduction in pay, and the far larger number who emphasise the importance of shorter working time but with no loss of pay.

Some indicate that the benefits of reduced hours with no loss of pay would result in increased productivity and efficiency, while others noted the possibility of job creation. Consistent with a theme recurring throughout the evidence, are the reflections on family and caring responsibilities and work life balance.

Reduced working time without loss of pay is highly important to me and I feel like the Union should make this the highest item on their agenda.

*(RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Reduced working week for no loss of pay.

*(Bentley, female, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Reduced working week with a loss of some pay. *(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, double days, FTP)*

Reduced working week, creating more jobs. *(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, split night shifts, FTP)*

Shorter working week so we can deal with caring and have time to get out to keep mentally stimulated with family. *(BAE, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Greater work life balance - Would allow me to be more productive in fewer days due to greater motivation of a good job with excellent work life balance.

*(RR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Increase in real-terms pay and benefits while working fewer hours. (i.e. benefitting from increased productivity and business growth over the long term).

*(RR, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)*

I would take less hours and even forgo the pay for the reduced hours to get a better work/life balance.

*(RR, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, continental shifts, FTP)*

Others expressed a desire for greater flexibility without necessarily being definitive about reductions in hours or days. In most of these cases, outcomes for health and improved work life balance came to the fore.

Flexible four day week, so can choose to work four days, four and a half or five days, which can be any of M-F off if a four day working. *(BAE, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Flexible shifts for people who are not family/caring/partners category. e.g. Single people might want to attend a group or something but it conflicts with work times, should they not have same flexibility as the 3 categories mentioned so they can also support their life in the same way.

*(BAE, female, 56-65, 1-2 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Flexible shifts to fit in with non work activities that are weather dependant and/or make the most of time away from work (e.g. walking, cycling, climbing, etc.).

*(BAE, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Flexible shifts to improve work-life balance for overall health benefits.

*(RR, female, 46-55, more than 20 years, days, weekends and night shifts as required, FTP)*

I believe a shorter working week would help with everyone's mental health and wellbeing, and in turn improve productivity during the remaining work days. This has been observed within other companies and it would be good to see it implemented here. However, due to the uncertain times at the moment, a reduction in pay for any workers would most likely add to peoples anxieties.  
(BAE, male, 25 or under, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)

Others commented on pay issues. A cluster highlighted the desire to have paid breaks.

Improved pay, so if our relative pay per hour is going to go up based upon a reduced working week. If this is not possible the same pay increase to be applied to the current working week.  
(BAE, male, 25 or under, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

Paid breaks to allow for reduced working time and maintained pay.  
(RR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

Paid breaks we work 40 hours a week however attend 42.5 hours.  
(RR, female, 26-35, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)

Unwelcome frequent changes in shift arrangements were cited. For example:

Not changing shifts several times a year. (JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, double shifts, FTP)

A final theme to emerge from these comments related to the Covid-19 induced experiences of working from home (WFH). Of course, the experiences of WFH and workers' preferences going forward do not apply to production, maintenance or ancillary workers, for whom on-site attendance is essential. Nevertheless, this survey was distributed to, and responses received from, office-based workers, many of whom have experienced WFH. There is no universal consensus, for some were emphatic in their desire to return to the workplace (see Section 18), but the majority wished to continue working from home where possible or, perhaps more commonly, to have hybrid working arrangements (see Taylor et al, 2021).

Permission to work remotely from home for some of the day.  
(RR, male, 36-45, 10-20 years, permanent days, FTP)

The option to work from home permanently only going in to the office for essential business purposes.  
(RR, female, 56-65, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

#### 10.4 Reasons for Wanting Shorter Working Time

Given the unequivocal overall preference for shorter working time, demonstrated in Tables 10 and 11 and in respondents' extensive testimony, the answers to the next question are particularly important as they probe these responses. Members were asked to indicate how important or unimportant were several reasons for wishing shorter working time. The results are presented in Table 12.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of these findings, compelling evidence that contributes greatly to the case for shorter working time. The degree of importance accorded to all of the listed reasons is notable, but three in particular stand out – better work-life balance, improved mental health and improved physical health. They are discussed in order of their perceived importance.

Better work life balance was regarded, almost universally (96.8 per cent), as being either very important (80.2 per cent) or important (16.6 per cent). Next in terms of overall importance (92.2 per cent) was improved mental health, with 74.8 per cent stating this to be very important and an additional 18.8 per cent as important. These overwhelming proportions are closely followed by those perceiving that a reduction in working hours would improve physical health (89.9 per cent), with 63.4 per cent believing this to be very important and an additional

**Table 13:** How important or unimportant are the following reasons to you for wanting shorter working time, without loss of pay?

	Very Important %	Important %
Less pressure of work (n=2,295)	42.1	31.3
Improved physical health (n=2,344)	63.4	25.5
Improved mental health (n=2,354)	74.8	18.8
Better work-life balance (n=2,368)	80.2	16.6
More time to spend with partner (n=2,334)	52.7	28.9
More time to spend with family (n=2,353)	51.8	28.0
More time for caring responsibilities (n=2,284)	25.0	19.9
Easier travel/commute to work (n=2,308)	28.7	23.6
I can be more efficient at work (n=2,338)	45.2	31.8

25.5 per cent as important. Closely related to these perceived outcomes and benefits, is the impact that shorter working time would have on lessening the pressure of work. In this regard, more than three quarters of respondents (75.4 per cent) regarded reduction of working time as either very important (42.1 per cent) or important (31.3 per cent).

Personal and family reasons were also significant. Accordingly, 81.6 reported 'more time spent with partner' as either very important (52.7 per cent) or important (28.9 per cent), and 79.8 per cent reported 'more time to spend with family' as either very important (51.8 per cent) or important (28.0 per cent). Clearly fewer respondents had caring responsibilities but 44.9 per cent believed 'more time for caring responsibilities' to be either very important (25 per cent) or important (19.9 per cent).

An additional finding of interest is the perception that shorter working hours would ease commuting to work; 52.3 per cent regarded this to be either very important (28.7 per cent) or important (23.6 per cent) a reason for wishing shorter working time. Indications from interviews suggest that flexibility from reduced working time might facilitate commuting outside of rush hours.

Finally, in terms of presenting a case to the employers for implementing shorter working time, the responses to the final item are relevant. Exactly 77 per cent of responding members considered that being more efficient at work was either a very important reason (45.2 per cent) or an important reason (31.8 per cent) for wanting shorter working time.

## 11 Impact of Covid-19 on Perceptions of Work, Life and Working Time

Interviews with Convenors and Shop Stewards of the case study companies provided contextual information which informed the construction of the survey. One issue discussed was the impact of Covid-19. The vulnerability of workers to infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus generated urgent health and safety concerns and compelled unions to work with their employers to ensure that workplaces were made as safe as possible and to facilitate WFH where practicably possible. During these conversations, the union officers raised another issue in relation to Covid-19, that the pandemic had prompted members to re-appraise their life and work priorities. Accordingly, the survey sought to understand the ways in which, and the extent to which, members might have re-evaluated their work commitments and working time. Members were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements. The responses are given in Table 13.

The findings are persuasive, indicating some attitudinal shifts precipitated by the threat posed by Covid-19. Beginning with the first two statements very strong agreement is evidenced in relation to statements on family life and work life balance. As many as 82.2 per cent either strongly agreed (58.3 per cent) or agreed (23.9 per cent) that 'Covid-19 has increased my appreciation of time spent with my family', while even greater numbers

**Table 14:** Extent of agreement or disagreement with statements on the impact of Covid-19

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neither %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
Covid-19 has increased my appreciation of time spent with my family (n=2,383)	58.3	23.9	14.7	1.8	1.3
Covid-19 has increased my appreciation of work life balance (n=2,387)	61.4	26.0	9.8	1.6	1.2
Covid-19 has made me more aware of the need for a shorter working week (n=2,380)	53.4	22.6	18.9	2.8	2.3
Covid-19 has made me realise the importance to me of my mental health (n=2,386)	70.1	19	8.8	1.0	1.1
Covid-19 has made me realise the importance to me of my physical health (n=2,383)	62.9	25.5	9.5	1.1	1.0

(87.4 per cent) either strongly agreed (61.4 per cent) or agreed (26.0 per cent) with the statement ‘Covid-19 has increased my appreciation of work life balance’.

Similarly sizable proportions reported on their attitudes to health. Almost nine-in-ten (89.1 per cent) either strongly agreed (70.1 per cent) or agreed (19 per cent) with the statement ‘Covid-19 has made me realise the importance to me of my mental health’. Almost as emphatic are perceptions of physical health, with 88.4 per cent either strongly agreeing (62.9 per cent) or agreeing (25.5 per cent) with the statement ‘Covid-19 has made me realise the importance to me of my mental health’.

The final statement to be considered - ‘Covid-19 has made me more aware of the need for a shorter working week’ - should be understood in the context of the responses to these other statements, and is most salient for the purposes of this report. More than three-quarters (76 per cent) either strongly agreed (53.4 per cent) or agreed (22.6 per cent). Such an overwhelming majority provides additional evidence in support of the case for shorter working time.

## 12 Workers’ Perceptions of Their Health Over Last Two Years

The evidence presented in Table 14 demonstrates the strength and breadth of agreement amongst the workers surveyed that the Covid-19 pandemic had provoked awareness of the importance to them of their physical health, mental health and well-being. Some understanding of the reasons for such emphatic findings, seems to come from answers to a further question, which asked respondents to evaluate the extent to which their physical and mental health has improved or worsened over the last two years (Table 14).

**Table 15:** How important or unimportant are the following reasons to you for wanting shorter working time, without loss of pay?

Physical Health (n=2,368)	%	Mental Health (n=2,373)	%
Improved a lot	7.8	Improved a lot	7.1
Improved a little	13.4	Improved a little	11.4
About the same	28.0	About the same	26.4
Worsened a little	33.4	Worsened a little	32.3
Worsened a lot	17.4	Worsened a lot	22.8

More respondents (50.8 per cent) report that their physical health had worsened, either by a lot (17.4 per cent) or a little (33.4 per cent), than those who report it to have improved (21.2 per cent), either by a lot (7.8 per cent) or a little (13.4 per cent). A similar distribution of responses is found when they consider their mental health over the pandemic years. In total 55.8 per cent believed that their mental health had worsened, either by a lot (22.8 per cent) or a little (32.3 per cent). A slightly greater but a notable number believed their mental health had ‘worsened a lot’ than did those experiencing physical health having ‘worsened a lot’.

Granular analysis of the data suggests that the majority of those reporting improvements in their health *tended* to include those in technical, software, analytical, or specialist roles or professional staff grades, cohorts most likely to be working from home. They would have been mostly spared the more acute anxieties generated by exposure to SARS-CoV-2 of those whose jobs required workplace attendance where the risk of infection was greater.<sup>8</sup> In all the case study companies, unions were involved in ensuring that working environments were made as safe as possible. Nevertheless, the extent to which workers were aware the potential workplace risks might have been a contributory factor to worsened mental health.

### 13 Perceived Benefits of Shorter Working Time

The next three-item question sought to deeper our understanding of members’ perceptions of the health and well-being benefits that might result from shorter working time.

**Table 16:** To what extent would shorter working time improve your health and well-being?

	A Great Deal %	To Some Extent %	A little %	Not Much %	Not At All %
Physical health (n=2,389)	57.3	31.2	7.1	2.9	1.5
Mental health (n=2,390)	71.8	19.5	4.5	2.4	1.7
Well-being (n=2,390)	74.2	19.6	3.8	1.2	1.2

These findings provide additional evidence of the benefits that members believe would result from shorter working time. Close to six-in-ten (57.3 per cent) respondents stated that their physical health would benefit ‘a great deal’, percentages that are even greater for mental health (71.8 per cent) and well-being (74.2 per cent). In contrast, only very small numbers believed that a reduction in working time would bring ‘no’, ‘not much’ or even ‘a little’ improvement. In short, the case for shorter working time is strengthened.

### 14 Pressure of Work and Perceived Reasons

In further contextualising the reasons why so many members have expressed such a strong desire for shorter working time, it is helpful to understand the degree of pressure that they experience at work and the perceived reasons for that pressure. The opening question was, ‘How pressurised do you feel as a result of working on a normal shift?’, the responses to which are presented in Table 16.

**Table 17:** Degree of Pressure on a Normal Shift (n=2,371)

	%
Not at all pressurised	8.5
Not very pressurised	28.9
Quite pressurised	49.7
Very pressurised	12.9

**Table 18:** Degree to which aspects of work contribute to the pressure of the job? (n=2,084)

	A Great Deal %	To Some Extent %	A little/Not much %	Not At All %	Does Not Apply %
Workload	36.9	40.1	40.1	5.0	2.7
Pace of work	22.8	40.0	40.0	9.1	3.2
Intensity of work	28.3	42.5	42.5	6.3	2.8
Having to meet targets/KPIs	28.7	39.3	39.3	7.5	3.8
Pressure from supervisors/managers	24.5	35.1	35.1	10.7	3.0
Pressure from fellow workers	6.6	23.1	23.1	25.4	5.2
Fear of making mistakes	24.6	32.5	32.5	11.9	3.8
Not enough time between tasks	25.4	32.9	32.9	11.0	4.1
Not given enough info to do the job	24.0	32.3	32.3	14.5	4.5
Not enough breaks	15.3	20.2	20.2	25.9	8.3
Breaks not long enough	15.8	20.7	20.7	25.0	9.2
Not enough workers to do the job	38.8	28.2	28.2	9.3	4.4
Not enough time to speak to colleagues	13.5	27.4	27.4	18.7	5.7
Speed of production line	8.5	10.9	10.9	15.1	40.8
Physical discomfort at work station	10.6	16.5	16.5	25.3	23.0
Timings of shifts	16.4	17.4	17.4	20.7	20.8
Length of shifts	20.3	24.5	24.5	16.0	16.6

That more than one-in-seven report being very pressured on a normal shift is a cause for concern, complemented by the fact that an additional one-in-two report feeling ‘quite pressurised’. For those who do report being pressurised the responses to a supplementary question, ‘to what extent do the following aspects of your work contribute to the pressures of the job?’ provides further insight. Combining the ‘a great deal’ and ‘to some extent’ percentages provides a reasonable indication of the relative importance the aspects as contributing to the pressures of the job. ‘Workload’ is more widely reported, by 77 per cent, followed by ‘intensity of work’ (70.8 per cent), ‘having to meet targets/KPIs’ (68 per cent), ‘not enough workers to do the job’ (67 per cent), ‘pace of work’ 62.8 per cent), ‘pressure from supervisors/managers’ (59.6 per cent), ‘not enough time between tasks (58.3 per cent), ‘fear of making mistakes’ (57.1 per cent) and ‘not given enough information to do the job (56.3 per cent).

## 15 Coming to Work Feeling Ill (Presenteeism) and Reasons

Another consideration that is important for understanding the experience of workers in these engineering and manufacturing plants is the extent of ‘presenteeism’. The phenomenon is best understood as occurring when people come to work in suboptimal health or, as the CIPD (2022) states more baldly, when they are ill. The evidence is incontrovertible that presenteeism grew significantly in UK workplaces across the pre-Covid-19.

For example, the CIPD (2022) reported that 86 per cent of 1,000 organisations surveyed had observed presenteeism in the previous 12 months, compared to 72 per cent in 2016 and just 26 per cent in 2010). Its prevalence is a matter of genuine concern, associated with increases in common mental health conditions and stress-related absence. The implications are self-evident in respect of presenteeism’s deleterious effects on workers’ health and, consequently, the untold consequences for performance and productivity. The data from this survey (Table 18) indicates widespread presenteeism as reported by members.

**Table 19:** Coming to Work When Feeling Ill (n=2,378)

Frequency	%
Several times a week	4.5
Several times a month	10.9
Several times a year	25.8
Occasionally	49.5
Never	9.0

That almost one-in-seven (14.4 per cent) report coming to work when unwell, either several times a week (4.7 per cent) or several times a month (10.9 per cent), must be a matter of profound concern. Indeed, the fact that more than one-in-four (25.8 per cent) report coming to work when unwell several times a year is additionally worrying. Only 9 per cent state that they never come to work when ill.

**Table 19:** Reasons for Coming to Work When Unwell (n=2,134)

Reason	Number	%
Not ill enough to warrant staying off	1650	77.3
Commitment/dedication to the company	1311	61.4
Commitment/dedication to my colleagues	1108	51.9
Pressure of work	1042	48.8
How the sickness absence procedure is implemented	944	44.2
Fear of getting put on a disciplinary	820	38.4
Worried about my appraisal	578	27.1
Pressure from targets/Key Performance Indicators	546	25.6
Didn't want to lose pay	542	25.4
Management/supervisor pressure	463	23.6

A follow-up, multi-item question asked respondents for the reasons why they come to work when ill. The results in Table 19 are listed in descending order of frequency of response. The final column gives percentages of the 2,134 who answered this question. As is evident from the analysis, respondents in the great majority of cases gave more than one answer. A total of 9,507 affirmative responses means that, on average, each respondent believed that four of the listed reasons applied to them.

Despite the fact that presenteeism, coming to work when ill, was attributable largely to a number of reasons in combination, the relative importance of each can be read off from Table 18. The most frequently cited reason, by 77.3 per cent, is 'Not ill enough to warrant staying off'. Now this prompts reflection on how this reason is interpreted. Essentially, the decision to attend is, up to a point, a subjective assessment by individuals who, while recognising the condition of their health may be sub-optimal, nevertheless feel obliged or compelled to attend. These decisions therefore are not made in isolation from other factors and influences. Many do attend when ill because of their commitment or dedication to both their companies and colleagues, reasons which indicates a high degree of motivation and responsibility and behaviour that is not instrumental. It raises the question, which this survey cannot answer, as to whether from the perspective of workers' health and wellbeing and from the perspective of the company, whether it would be beneficial for both parties if some at least of these workers were to remain at home. Coming to work when unwell, even if individuals consider their conditions to be not so serious, may mean workers being liable to spread infections among fellow workers or to exacerbate the conditions that are affecting them.



Coming to work when unwell may also be a reflection of the stigma associated with mental illness or the enduring and the incorrect assumption and perception that stress, depression and anxiety are somehow less legitimate as reasons not to attend than more manifest illnesses or injury. There is some support in the survey evidence for this reasoning.

Depression not considered a 'proper' reason to be off compared to physical illness.  
(BAE, female, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Stress related sickness. (JLR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Mental health. (JLR, male, 36-45, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate certain elements of compulsion, most prominently in the almost one-in-two (48.8 per cent) who report pressure of work. The following quotes provide insight, including the degree of obligation that might underlie the motivation not to let colleagues down.

Not enough people in our team currently so would feel awful to have time off and not have the support there as needed. (RR, female, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Being off will only delay the work needing to be done, work will be waiting for me when I get back. No change to loading while off. (JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent earlies, FTP)

No one else to do my job so if i am off, when i return its just more stress and work load until i have caught up. (BAE, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

The work will still all be there when I get back since no-one else will have done it.  
(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Furthermore, aspects related to human resource management policy and practice suggest a degree of coercion, specifically in relation to how the sickness absence procedure is implemented (44.2 per cent) and the fear of getting put on a disciplinary (38.4 per cent), being worried about appraisals (27.1 per cent) and pressure from targets/KPIs (25.6 per cent). The supplementary quotes suggest the existence of punitive sickness absence management policies and management driven presenteeism and disciplinary measures that compel attendance, cultures in which workers are 'Too Scared to Go Sick' (see e.g. Taylor et al, 2010). Two of the quotes gesture towards the operation of the 'Bradford Factor' which has been discredited by unions (e.g. UCU, n.d; Unison, n.d.) and by HR professional organisations, not least on the grounds that it unfairly penalises short-term absences, particularly when employees fall ill and return to work as quickly as possible (CIPD, 2022b). Furthermore, it does not make allowances for disability related absence, transgressing the duty on employers to tailor their actions to the individual circumstances of disabled employees as required by the 2010 Equalities Act.

The absence procedure is used aggressively, received phone calls in the past when I was off unable to walk for a month being pressured to come back to work.  
(JLR, male, 25 or under, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

Managers bullying tactics on the phone when calling into work making it feel like you are committing a crime. (JLR, male, 26-35, more than 10 but less than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)

Single period of absence can be 1 day to 3 months, x3 single days ill counts as 3 periods of sick.  
(BAE, male, 25 or under, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

3 occasions off work in a year reduced points in a matrix under redundancy situations.  
(RR, gender not given, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)

I need to be at work in order to provide for my young son and pay for his nursery. I cannot risk taking time off unless really essential in case of triggering absence disciplinary. It can be very stressful juggling full time work and being a full-time single parent which comes with a lot of stress. I don't have time to address my physical or mental health and have to just put up with it and carry on.  
(RR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

Several respondents made general references to the unhealthy cultures in their workplaces and organisations in relation to sickness absence management. Some even reported that sickness absence scores would be used as criteria for redundancy or being managed out of the organisation,

There is/was a culture of having to go in regardless of your illness.  
(BAE, female, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Pressure from senior management / board level in reducing absence.  
(BAE, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

The culture in my area is to man up, and come in if you are ill.  
(JLR, male, 36-45 years, 5-10 years, double shifts, FTP)

Culture driven by managers to work when unwell, comments made about other people who are off with 'Minor' illness. (RR, male, 56-65, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Being managed out and using health as an excuse. (JLR, female, 36-45, 2-5 years, double shifts, FTP)

Need to keep my job. (BAE, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Can count towards any redundancy. (RR, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

One-in-four (25.4 per cent) additionally report that one of the reasons they come to work when unwell is that they did not wish to lose pay which raises the issue of inadequate sick pay. Finally, although the least frequently reported reason, management or supervisor pressure was reported by almost a quarter (23.6 per cent), a finding reflected in some of the quotes immediately above.

It is legitimate to ask what the implications of these findings are for shorter working time. The evidence presented in Table 14 (Section 12) demonstrates workers' widespread conviction that a reduction in working time would generate improvements in well-being, mental health and physical health. It is not unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that these improvements would also lessen the pressure on workers to attend work when unwell and thus contribute additionally to better health and well-being and to improved performance.

## 16 Support for a Union Campaign on Shorter Working Time

Clearly, an important matter for this study to establish is the degree of support that members would have for a campaign for shorter working time. A straightforward question was included in the survey as follows. 'If the union launched a new campaign for a shorter working week (including shorter working week or annual hours and longer holidays), please indicate how strongly you would support that campaign?'. The responses are presented in Table 16.

The answers indicate that any campaign for a shorter working week would be overwhelmingly endorsed by the members. Almost three-quarters (73.4 per cent) stated that they would 'strongly support' a campaign, and an additional 20.4 per cent that they would 'support' a campaign. Only 4.6 per cent said they were indifferent and 1.6 per cent that they would not support a campaign.

**Table 21:** Degree of support for a union campaign on shorter working time (n=2,390)

Frequency	%
Strongly support	73.4
Support	20.4
Indifferent	4.6
Not support	1.6

## 17 Demographics and Profile

**Table 22:** Gender (n=2,386)

	Number	%
Male	2003	83.9
Female	356	14.9
Non-binary	3	0.1
Prefer not to say	24	1.0

**Table 23:** Contract (n=2,383)

	Number	%
Full-time Permanent	2286	95.9
Part-time Permanent	78	3.3
Full-time Temporary	4	0.2
Part-time Temporary	2	0.1
Fixed Term Contract	7	0.3
Contractor	6	0.3

**Table 24:** Ethnicity (n=2,376)

	Number	%
White (British and Irish)	2179	91.7
Mixed/multiple ethnic	34	1.4
Asian/Asian British	73	3.1
British/Afro Caribbean/Black British	13	0.5
White (Other)	11	0.5
Prefer not to say	66	2.8

**Table 25:** Age (n=2,378)

Age Band	Number	%
25 or under	94	4.0
26-35	523	22.0
36-45	527	22.2
46-55	715	30.1
56-65	505	21.2
Over 65	14	0.6

**Table 26:** Length of Service (n= 2,353)

Length of Service	Number	%
Less than 1 year	25	1.1
1-2 years	62	2.6
2-5 years	298	12.7
5-10 years	589	25.0
More than 10, less than 20 years	588	25.0
More than 20 years	791	33.6

## 18 Comments

### 18.1 Main Themes

As many as 515 respondents provided comments totalling 18,000 words. Given that many gave only brief statements, the remainder often volunteered lengthy comments, a breadth and depth of testimony that indicates just how important the issues of working times, shifts and hours and their effects are to the union members in these plants. The qualitative data because of its diversity is not reducible to quantitative analysis, particularly given that many combine several issues and frequently reflect on their differing individual experiences and aspirations.

Nevertheless, it is possible, first, to identify common themes and, second, to provide a judicious selection of instructive quotes that delivers fuller insight into the issues of greatest significance to members. It should be noted that many respondents commented on diverse aspects of their existing experiences of shifts and working times without necessarily focusing narrowly on the themes of shorter working time and desired future arrangements.

First, multiple themes can be identified. There is the cluster of respondents who expressed criticism of management policy and practice in areas not necessarily directly related working time. Condemnation of sickness absence management and its punitive effects amplified the findings and quotes of Section 15. Although not universally applicable across the sites, a lack of paid breaks, or the shortness of breaks, notably 15 minutes, were major discontents. While most are generally supportive of flexi-time, others criticise existing arrangements, as either being too complex or, despite agreements, are reliant on the discretion of managers and supervisors. Indeed, some emphasised the fact that flexi-time and TOIL might actually increase pressure rather than relieve it.

A substantial number of complaints are made regarding shift working, largely reflecting the specific individual experiences of shift lengths and timings and the differing arrangements in the case study companies. Analysis

reveals diversity, so that universal conclusions cannot be drawn. Nevertheless, a sizable minority were opposed to their existing 12-hour shifts, most often on grounds of their negative health effects, a ‘killer’ as one succinctly stated, and impacts on family life and childcare. Compulsory overtime or cancelled or changed shifts were additional grievances emphasised, particularly with regards to the abrupt disruption to carefully constructed childcare arrangements. Some reported their unhappiness that the shift systems that had been introduced by their employers due to the Covid-19 pandemic during a period that also redundancies and layoffs, had not been subsequently reversed and the previous systems re-introduced.

Another critical theme was that excessive workload and the pressures emanating from existing shift patterns and working time arrangements were the result of staff shortages and understaffing generally. Specific mentions were made of insufficient ‘headcount’. So considerable testimony in these open comments reinforces and gives nuance to the evidence above on pressure of work, workload, presenteeism, degraded mental and physical health and wellbeing (e.g. Sections, 12, 14, 16 and 17) that underlie the widely held desire for shorter working time.

In order to obtain a sufficient volume of responses that would provide a convincing evidence base, from which reliable conclusions could be drawn, it was necessary to ensure that the survey was not over lengthy. Inevitably, this meant that survey questions did not include certain aspects of members’ experiences. One of these was working from home. The comments, however, do provide extensive commentary on this important issue. Analysis shows that the majority were favourably disposed to the Covid-19 induced relocation of their working domain for various reasons including health benefits, improvements to work-life balance, saving time on commuting and productivity. Nevertheless, this positive experience was not universally shared, with a minority expressing a desire to return to the workplace, either wholly or in hybrid arrangements, largely because of isolation, missing socialisation and even deleterious consequences for mental health. Yet, in overall terms, WFH was regarded as an arrangement that most wanted to see continued. Some stated that continued working from home was even more important to them than reduction in working time.

Then there is the number who re-iterate the evidence presented in Section 11 of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on them that prompted reassessment of the priorities of their work lives, drawing the conclusion that greater time spent with their families, improvement in work life balance and better physical and mental health conditions had become essential considerations. These comments, which emphasise the importance of time and its value, certainly underpin the general desire by most to have shorter working time as evidenced in Tables 9, 10 and 11. Covid-19 does appear to have been a watershed episode in many workers’ attitudes towards work and working time.

A recurring comment, expressed in various ways, was the importance of a reduction in the number of working days to four. Some even indicated a preference for 12-hour shifts that would deliver a 36-hour week which, as seen in Table 2, would mean a reduction in working hours for a big majority. A majority favouring reduction in working hours were explicit that it should not lead to a reduction in pay. A few reported that they had voluntarily reduced their hours in recent years, in order to lessen pressure and to improve work life balance, but the reduction in pay meant that they would have to stay in employment for longer than they had intended. Others who favoured a reduction in working time with no loss of pay, were at the same time concerned that its implementation might mean management driving increases in workload and compelling more overtime working, outcomes that would be counter-productive given the benefits that shorter time working should bring.

Nevertheless, the view of a sizable minority was that fewer hours, even if this did involve a reduction in pay was desirable because of the health and well-being benefits. Yet, a balanced account of the comments should also acknowledge the fact that a number of respondents report that either they are generally content with existing arrangements or did not believe that achieving reduced working time was feasible, especially given the production priorities of, and potential, resistance from their employers

A final theme to emerge from the testimonies was the positive environmental effect that would derive from fewer commutes and car use, that would result from fewer shifts, days or hours worked. Relatedly, others

suggested changed shift finishing and starting times would shorten commuting times and contribute additionally to reducing the carbon footprint.

Second, selected quotes provide compelling insight into the experiences, perceptions and aspirations of a large number of the members in relation to working time, shifts and hours. While certain overall conclusions can be drawn, these testimonies deliver granular vignettes of, and often thoughtful reflection on, on these important matters. It may be appropriate to begin with three workers who were able to draw upon their experiences of the CSEU's shorter working time campaign of 1989-90, which in many respects can be seen as unfinished business.

I supported the TU initiative back in the 1980's to reduce working hours from 39 to 37 and would do so again. *(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

I campaigned for a 35 hour week in the 1980's, that's how long I've been waiting! On my shop floor based role we had a four day week (37 hours) thirty years ago. I now work as a professional engineer and have to work five days! It's quite shocking how little progress on working time and conditions has been made during my career. *(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Still remember contributing to strive for 35 campaign & feel stronger than ever that it would be beneficial. *(RR, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, rotating shifts, FTP)*

## 18.2 Insights from Selected Quotes

Next, it is helpful to present some of the testimonies of those respondents who are unequivocally in support of shorter working time. The majority express a desire for no loss of pay, while others simply express a general desire for shorter working time, while a smaller number say they would be prepared to accept shorter working time with some reduction in pay.

I feel less working time for no loss of pay would benefit my mental and physical health greatly. I feel I would be more motivated and ready to work as a result of this as well. *(BAE, male, 25 or under, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

It would make the company a more attractive company to work for. I believe a full week's work could be achieved in less time as I would feel more focussed and mentally present. *(BAE, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Having shorter work days would greatly impact on this but reduce my working hours. Having shorter working hours with no loss of pay would greatly benefit me. *(BAE, female, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Any reduction is greatly welcomed from a wellbeing perspective. *(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Less hours, more efficient, same pay, less commuter costs, less stress, better health, more time with family. *(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Less hours creates better concentration whilst at work with more productivity produced whilst at work. *(RR, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

A shorter working week should be flexible to the individual. Guessing most people would choose Monday or Friday off, but the company should have to accommodate that & as they have cut headcount so much and not replaced people the loss is their fault and should not affect staff. *(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

I would like a shorter working week in physical hours and I believe there would be no loss of efficiency or production with all milestones continuing to be met. However, if the reduced hours was not an option i'd be happy doing the same hours but over 4 days rather than 5 to allow for a more balanced arrangement between time at work and time away from work.

*(BAE, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

My place of work negotiated a 4 day working week 3 years ago and having a 3 day weekend has proven a shorter working week is a must. I must say more help for shop stewards mental health is needed more now than ever. *(JLR, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

I'm content to support on the basis that pay is not affected. I'm not sure how we will be able to reduce working times and agree that pay will remain the same; especially as we're so short on resource already. *(RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Shorter hours for same pay preferable but also happy to have shorter hours for less pay. I work a 95% week at the moment, was on 80% for 6 months and would happily stayed on that but company is understaffed and struggling to cope so I agreed to increase my hours some.

*(RR, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

I would be happy to work reduced hours (35) over 4 days (Mon to Thur). This would give an extended weekend. *(JLR, male, 56-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

A more flexible way of working combined with a shorter shift would suit me but I couldn't afford a cut in pay to achieve this. *(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, rotating shifts, PTP)*

Also, i will only support changes that result in no loss of pay.

*(BAE, male, 25 or under, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Shorter hrs would be great. *(RR, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, rotating shifts, FTP)*

Working too many hours. *(RR, male, 56-65, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Working less hours would improve my mental health and improve family life.

*(BAE, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Would like weekly hrs to be below 40hrs (i.e. 37hrs/wk). Currently 42.1hrs/wk.

*(McVities, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent earlies, FTP)*

I think in Finland they have already introduced a 30-hour working week in the public sector, and they did it for increasing productivity. Decreasing working time may be a win-win situation.

*(RR, male, 36-45, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Extra 1 hour a day and Fridays off. Or 35 hours over 4 days.

*(JLR, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)*

I feel strongly enough about my health to reduce my working week next year to 30 hours over 4 days (with pro-rata pay). Hence I will not support the Union in attempting to do this without loss of pay in general. There is a gender divide here in what to do about such things, as I feel a man would not take the action I am doing for myself. *(BAE, female, 56-65, more than 20 years, FTP)*

Reducing the working week by 5 hour would mean i could work 4, 8 hour days. ideally that would be to stop working fridays, however this day could move be a floating day to agreed with your manager.

*(JLR, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

The removal of the morning routine and commuting to and from work whilst working from home in 2020 highlighted the benefits of reducing the overall length of the day. By going back to site and reintroducing this extra time I have felt drained and tired and more of a resentment towards my job. Less working hours over the week along with flexi time would be the perfect solution in my opinion (for example with a 32 hour week, I would attend my 8 hour college day on Monday then split the remaining time over 4 days by working 6-12, getting rid of the need to have lunch breaks and giving me a full afternoon out of work every day. *(BAE, male, 25 or under, 2-5 years, FTP)*

Whilst I am now able to work shorter and more flexible week, when I was on 5 days all in the office I had health issues culminating in a heart attack and later a mental breakdown. I support your campaign because I don't think it should get to that stage before you get flexible working!  
*(RR, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

For myself and many others who work on a day shift at JLR Whitley, we would only need to reduce our weekly contracted hours from 37 to 36 if we worked a 9 hour day shift Monday to Thursday. Meaning would get a 3 day weekend with only losing 1 hours pay a week. Winner winner chicken dinner.  
*(JLR, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Sickness would go down and the company would still have people able to do overtime and attend courses if required. *(McV, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, rotating shifts, FTP)*

When we are working a straight day shift pattern of 07:00-15:30 then I'm having to rely on my mother to pick up my two children from school. If we are able to finish an hour earlier then I would be able to collect them myself. This would make a massive positive difference to my family life and also take some pressure of my mother who would no longer need to collect them.  
*(JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, constantly changing shifts, FTP)*

A few respondents commented on agreed arrangements by which older workers could benefit from progressive reductions in working hours.

At the age of 60 a reduced working time should be automatically on offer even with reduced pay. I would prefer to work a longer day over 4 days for 4.5 days of money.  
*(McV, male, 56-65, more than 10 and less than 20 years, rotating shifts, FTP)*

Shorter working week could be phased in as people get older.  
*(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

While others might not explicitly endorse a shorter working time, the only plausible implication from their words is that it should be introduced. The toll imposed by long working hours and shift patterns on workers' health, particularly mental health, and family life is a very serious concern.

Pay no longer reflects the gruelling shift patterns and nightshift working as part of this. All the while demands on employees have increased and the pressure of increasing workload alongside demanding shift patterns on physical and mental health without the reward of suitable remuneration leaves many seeking early help for avoidable health related issues at a young age.  
*(RR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Work/life balance must be improved. Manpower shortages and instances of employees being signed off from work with stress related metal illness are directly linked. This is very evident in my workplace.  
*(BAE, male, 36-45, 5-10 years, double shifts, FTP)*

The evidence in Section 10.1 and in Tables 10 and 11, provided statistical support for respondents' desire to benefit from extended weekends and fewer shifts, evidence confirmed by many of the members' comments.



I would feel much better doing 4 longer shifts and have a long weekend every week.  
(JLR, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Working a 4 day week would be beneficial as I know of many colleagues, myself included, who feel 'burnt out' and have lost motivation for work. Many people are 'living for the weekend', which I do not believe constitutes healthy working practices.  
(BAE, male, 25 or under, 2-5 years, 3.5 days and 1 day university release, FTP)

3 days on, 4 days off, bloody brilliant shift pattern.  
(RR, male, 56-65, more than 20 years, rotating shifts, PTO)

4 shifts covering 6 days. 3x12 hour shifts a week, Monday to Wednesday then Thursday to Saturday, 6am-6pm, 6pm-6am. 36hr week. (JLR, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

I work 5 days a week (Mon to Fri), day shift. I would like to see the working week reduced to 4 days, max 8 hours a day, with 42 minutes for lunch. No loss of pay. Flexi rules of -8hrs & +15 hrs to remain.  
(McVities, male, 46-55, more than 10 and less than 20 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

Actually working the contracted hours would help, but the best benefit would be a 4 day working week rather than coming to work on a Friday to tidy round and tick boxes. Some people are commuting for longer than they are in work on that day. (JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, shifts constantly changing, FTP)

I'd like to work 36 hour week. Then 3 shift pattern would only include 4 nights and not 5. This would be great. (RR, male, 56-65, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

A 4 day working week would improve my work /life balance.  
(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

I think there is a real case for a standard 4 day week across the board due to the health benefits. I recently moved position to get off night shift which has improved my physical and mental wellbeing.  
(RR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

My mental health has suffered and was glad to see it on the survey. More holidays to hrs and half day finish on a Friday would be amazing. (BAE, male, 36-45, 5-10 years, double shift, FTP)

4 Day working week even with the same hours would be great. I believe a study in Iceland recently shows the success of a 3 day weekend. (RR, male, 36-45, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)

I fully support a move to a 4 day working week. I believe it would increase productivity and on a personal level my ability to focus! It would also increase levels well being and ultimately enjoyment of coming to work / job satisfaction. (BAE, female, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

3 x 12 hour shift pattern would benefit me greatly. Meaning I can spend time doing things outside of work, recreational and well being activities. 3 days solid focus on work, then the other days of the week switch off and enjoy. Not just limited to Saturday and Sunday when the whole of the country is busy.  
(RR, male, 26-35, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)

I'd be happy to work 3 long days per week (35 of 36 hours).  
(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

I think a 3 day 12 hour working shift per day would be advantageous and this could be moved weekly to suit the business from week to week starting with working Tuesday - Thursday initially then moving where necessary. (BAE, male, 46-55, 2-5 year, permanent days, FTP)

I'd like to see more flexibility. If 37 hours is my contractual obligation, complete these hours in 4 days for example. (JLR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)

4 day working week Monday to Thursday 8 hour shifts Friday Saturday Sunday off perfection. (JLR, female, 26-35, 5-10 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

Would like to see the 4 day working week implemented. (RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)

I could work longer days but work for fewer days. I would feel more productive and gain more worklife balance. 2 day weekends are too short. (RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years. Rotating shifts, FTP)

4 day weeks would be much better I feel properly rested after having an extra day off in the week. (RR, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

4 shifts covering 6 days. 3x12 hour shifts a week, Monday to Wednesday then Thursday to Saturday, 6am-6pm, 6pm-6am. 36hr week. (RR, male, 36-45, 2-5 years, rotating shifts, FTP)

I fully support a move to a 4 day working week. I believe it would increase productivity and on a personal level my ability to focus! It would also increase levels well being and ultimately enjoyment of coming to work/job satisfaction. (BAE, female, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)

It would be beneficial based on the hours we do to drop a few hours from our Friday shifts and spread the rest over Monday to Thursday to give an extra day off each week. In previous role I worked a 9 day fortnight and believe the 3 day weekend every 2nd week was of great benefit to recharging my energy levels and focus. Have found that going back to being present 5 days a week every week takes a lot more toll on my fatigue levels as opposed to an extra hour or so per day to make up the time to have a full shift away from the facility and all that goes with it in terms of work issues etc. (RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)

The detailed evidence in Section 9 of flexi-time arrangements, that 60 per cent of respondents reported were in place, indicated widespread, though not universal approval. Support for flexi-time comes from the 70 per cent without flexi-time arrangements who wish to have preference them introduced. Yet, some did provide comments critical of flexi-time and TOIL in practice

Due to chronic high workload, and RR under-resourcing, taking TOIL/MWP is very difficult, because the tasks are not done by anyone else and therefore the pressure is even higher, after taking banked hours off, because the work has built up, whilst I am away, and needs to be completed, along with other tasks that have been given to me whilst away. So taking TOIL can be more stressful because it achieves the opposite of what it is supposed to and often, not taking the TOIL is better for my mental health. It's an awful situation to be in because doing the unpaid overtime in the first place leads to poor mental and physical health in the first place. (RR, female, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, PTP)

Then, there is the slew of comments by office-based respondents who had been working from home, and for whom the experience has been wholly positive or beneficial, albeit with certain qualifications.

I'm currently working from home and this is a vast improvement as it allows me to log on earlier and therefore finish earlier. This should be a permanent arrangement. (BAE, male, 46-55, 10-20 years, permanent days, FTP)

Home working more important than reduced hours for me. COVID has open the door on Home working. It has been a lifeline. (BAE, male, 56-65, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)

Although home working benefits me generally, there is a definite tendency to work longer hours and not to take time off sick. *(BAE, female, 56-65, 2-5 years, permanent days, FTP)*

JLR should push to have WFH as a permanent choice for those workers who can. Will save them money too. Excellent survey this. *(JLR, male, 56-65, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent earlies, FTP)*

This would cut commuting times and fuel costs by 20% or 40% respectively, which is quite significant. *(RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent lates, FTPs)*

More needs to be done to offer protection for those who work from home over the long term. Huge amounts of stress and anxiety exist around the company forcing people back into the office without a real need. Many will be resigning if this happens putting greater pressure on those that remain. *(RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Working from home has helped with time management and being able to reduce the number of hours working over time. It removes the commute dictating start times. Working from home is a key enabler to reducing working hours/days I think. The flexibility is ultimately what helps. I have found myself coming into the office for a morning workshop and then going home straight after to keep working. This is often more productive than staying in the office and clock watching. *(RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

The company has implemented a working from home process and this albeit driven by Covid-19, has benefitted both the employees as well as the employer. This has removed a lot of the issues around the commute, and has also allowed the Work/Life balance at times to be good, especially school pick up when you would have to leave work and come home, you can now just pop out for 10 mins to pick up and return to your home office and carry on. I see this as a good and bad issue, as you can always “just pop in” to work i.e. your laptop to catch up on emails etc. and miss the family discussion around the table for tea (occasionally). The non-commute has reduced my carbon footprint significantly and also stress levels of driving to and from work, and hence possible accidents. My boss has allowed more flexibility in my working hours, around my hospital visits, whereby I can bank hours and make hours up outside of the normal limits and pay back lost time on an evening or weekend from my home working. *(BAE, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

You've omitted the increased capability for WFH that COVID has brought. This is a two-edged sword in that it gives back commuting time to the employee, but the disadvantages are a) the critical social interaction needed for good mental health b) the demarcation between working time / non-working time. *(JLR, female, 56-65, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

In contrast to these generally positive experiences and perceptions that lead many to conclude that working from home should be maintained, some raised objections, citing negative impacts on mental health.

I don't think working from home is good for mental health due to the lack of face to face social interaction and the lack of demarcation between the work and home environment. Not all of us have the space for an office at home and are just making do working at home for the time being but would not a long term solution for me. *(RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

Being forced to work from home due to Covid has a massive negative effect on mental health. *(BAE, female, 26-35, less than 1 year, permanent days, FTP)*

Several respondents took advantage of the opportunity to provide broader reflections on the importance of shorter working time, on the nature and future of work, including automation, and the value of time spent away from work. These testimonies flesh out the statistical evidence in Section 11, that demonstrate the significance

of Covid-19 for stimulating a reassessment of workers' priorities in relation to work, life, health and family.

It always appears to me that the introduction and implementation of robotics/improved technology is seen as a way of reducing manpower while increasing output. There are, however, obvious benefits to employees, but these are predominately within their working hours. Until there is a dramatic change, the personal lives of most workers will be subject to and therefore lived within the parameters of their working life. What would enrich us further, more money or more time? I don't need extra money to relax with my family or pets. I don't need extra money to learn a language or an instrument. I don't need extra money to engage in more physical exercise. I don't need extra money to enhance and improve many aspects of my life; just more time. *(BAE, male, 46-55, 5-10 years, permanent days, FTP)*

I feel we should emphasise a work to live and not live to work policy. When I am happiest I am also my most productive. Working long shifts changes the dynamic of my social interactions and exercise outside work which in turn changes my positive mental state. Eat, sleep work repeat. *(RR, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)*

Of the opinion that most work being done in the world right now is just there to keep people busy for the sake of keeping them busy. Because ideology says people must work to prove their worth. This thinking is obsolete and silly, and needs to go directly into the bin asap. Less useless "work" being done = more time for necessary work = work can be spread around = less time required for work on an individual level. *(BAE, male, 36-45, more than 20 years, flexible shifts, PTP)*

It is important that we see lifestyle improvements to justify the increased growth in the economy and introduction of new technologies. With increasing wealth gaps, price hikes, etc it feels we are not seeing improvements and, worse, seeing worsening well being. A reduction in working hours, coupled with flexibility, will be a dramatic lifestyle improvement, justifying the economic gains of years past, because time is more valuable than material gain. It will help us to be a happier, more efficient and creative workforce. *(RR, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

COVID has changed the world in many ways (not in a good way) everyone has suffered in different ways in there life's. It would be nice if we can spend more time with family and friends because nobody nose what will happen next. *(Bentley, male, 36-45, more than 10 and less than 20 years, double shifts, FTP)*

My overall feeling is that for a sector such as car manufacturing, a four day working week is sufficient to meet production output resulting in sustainable profits industry wide. A shorter, contracted working week, with or without pay would greatly reduce the physical bodily impact of such a manual job on the work force and inturn, that of their mental health. Any burden on the company due to current staffing absences, through either physical or mental health issue would be greatly reduced as individuals 'work/life' balance improved. *(JLR, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, double shifts, FTP)*

This would help the company support the new ways of working model while helping with mental wellness through flexible working. People will value this approach to working which will help retain key personnel and skills, seems like an easy win if the company can trust the good intention. *(RR, male, 46-55, more than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

They would rather you be sat being unproductive within the workplace than giving employees time away from the workplace for their own benefit even if it makes no difference at that time. *(BAE, male, 26-35, 5-10 years, rotating shifts, FTP)*

## 19 Conclusions

This study sought to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perceptions of, and attitudes to, diverse aspects of working time from workers in the engineering, shipbuilding and automotive industries. It has successfully achieved this objective with a strong evidential base deriving from 2,390 union members, which delivered both breadth and depth. The case for shorter working hours is emphatically made in diverse ways.

First, the findings show that 91.7 per cent were working contacted hours greater than on average for the UK workforce overall. Overtime for many added to the volume of work, contributing to what can only be characterised as overwork. Just under a half worked overtime and did so for an average of 4 hours and 53 minutes. Almost one-in-ten worked 10 hours overtime each week. The reasons for often excessive overtime fall into a number of categories: money and financial; workload, volume of work and understaffing; business needs, compulsion or expectation.

The majority worked permanent days shifts, but rotating shifts and double shifts accounted for significant minorities. Four-in-five reported that their working hours were spread over five days or nights. In general terms, workers had little choice over the shifts they worked, or their ability to change their shifts at short notice. Nevertheless, workers report that managers in the main do respond positively to workers' need to change shifts in order to respond to family circumstances. Around 6-in-10 reported having flexi-time arrangements in place and quoted comments reveal both the benefits and difficulties encountered. Of those without flex-time, 71.2 per cent reported that they would like to see it implemented.

One of the most important sets of findings in the report relate to possible changes to working time that respondents wanted to see implemented. Here an overwhelming 93 per cent reported their wish to have reduced working time without loss of pay. This significant finding is accompanied by 88 per cent who desired extended weekends and 82 per cent wishing fewer shifts. For those, to whom it applied almost 9-in-10 stated that they wished flexi shifts either to deal with caring responsibilities or to fit in with their partners' lives.

Respondents then provided additional detail on the reasons why they would like to see reduced working time implemented, putting flesh on the bones of the statistical findings regarding fewer days and longer weekends. Other stressed the improvements in productivity and efficiency that would result. In these comments, many reiterated the importance of no loss of pay, unsurprising findings in the context of the rise in the cost of living that was growing at the time of the survey. A number did report that they would be prepared to accept some loss of pay in return for reduced hours, but this number was dwarfed by those insistent on no loss of pay.

A strong theme to emerge from the findings related to those workers who ordinarily, pre-Covid-19, would have been office-based. They mostly expressed a desire to remain working at home or in hybrid arrangements. However, a significant minority wished to return to the office, reporting isolation and the negative consequences for their mental health.

Additional reasons provide further evidence for the desire for shorter working time. Three stand out particularly; better work balance was seen as important by 96.8 per cent, improved mental health by 93.6 per cent and physical health 88.9 per cent. Three-quarters believed that shorter working time was very important for improving mental health. Three-quarters also believed that reducing the pressure of working was a reason for wanting shorter working time and very larger percentages saw being able to spend time with their partner or family as important. One-in-two reported the importance of reductions in commuting time. Finally, in a finding that supports the business case four-in-five believed that shorter working time would improve efficiency at work.

The Covid-19 influence is clear and supports the supposition made in the introduction that a dramatic change in attitudes to work-life balance may have been stimulated by the experience of the pandemic. More than four-in-five believed that Covid-19 had increased their appreciation of the time spent with their family and greater numbers (nine-in-ten) regarded work life balance as more important. Similar numbers believed that Covid-19

had engendered a greater appreciation of their physical and mental health. In confirmation, of the main conclusion of this survey, more than three-quarters agreed that Covid-19 had made them more aware of the need for a shorter working week.

That the last two years has taken its toll on workers is evidenced by the fact that majorities believed that both their physical and mental health had deteriorated over this period. Very large numbers reported, again, that shorter working time would benefit their physical health a great deal (57.3 per cent), their mental health (71.8 per cent) and their well-being (74.2 per cent).

The relief from pressure at work that reduced working time would bring is suggested further by the degree of pressure workers feel they are under on a normal day, 62.6 per cent reporting that they are either very or quite pressurised. A range of reasons is given by respondents. An additional finding that causes considerable concern is the extent of presenteeism, that is workers coming to work when unwell. As many as 1-in-7 report coming to work when ill either several times a week or several times a month. Diverse reasons are given for presenteeism. The most important are not being ill enough to warrant staying off, commitment/dedication to the company or colleagues, the pressure of work, the way the sickness absence policy is implemented and the fear of getting put on a disciplinary. In comments a number reported how they were fearful of being managed out of the organisation.

This report concludes with the most important findings of all for it relates to how shorter working time might be achieved in the engineering, automotive, shipbuilding and manufacturing sites and even more widely. As many as 93.8 per cent declare their support for a union campaign over shorter working hours, with almost 73.4 per cent stating that they would 'strongly support' such a campaign. The final words are those of a Rolls Royce worker who expresses the aspirations of many of those who participated in the survey:

Reduced working time without loss of pay is highly important to me and I feel like the Union should make this the highest item on their agenda.

*(RR, male, 26-35, more than 10 and less than 20 years, permanent days, FTP)*

## Appendix – Location by Site of Respondents from Rolls Royce, BAE and Jaguar Land Rover

## Location of Rolls Royce Respondents (n=857)

Location	Number	%
Derby	330	38.5
Bristol	250	29.2
Barnoldswick	64	7.5
Rotherham	55	6.4
Inchinnan	47	5.5
Washington/Sunderland	42	4.9
Ansty	15	1.8
Raynesway	10	1.2
Annesley	4	0.5
Working From Home	5	0.6
Not given/Various	35	4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>100</b>

## Location of BAE Systems Respondents (n=833)

Location	Number	%
Samlesbury	256	30.7
Warton	206	24.7
Coningsby	89	10.7
Lanacashire/North-West	75	9.0
Barrow	59	7.1
Glasgow	43	2.8
Washington	15	1.8
Lossiemouth	7	0.8
Glascoed	5	0.6
Cheshire	3	0.4
Other	41	4.9
Not Given	11	1.3
Working from Home	43	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>100</b>

## Location of JLR Respondents (n=581)

Location	Number	%
Solihull	221	38.0
Gaydon	140	24.1
Whitley	62	10.7
Coventry	52	9.0
Castle Bromwich	48	8.3
Wolverhampton	43	7.4
Hams Hall	4	0.7
Not given	11	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>100</b>



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- 1 The 6-month pilot and is organised by 4 Day Week Global in partnership with the think tank Autonomy, the 4 Day Week Campaign, and researchers at Cambridge University, Oxford University and Boston College.
- 2 See Sparks, K. et al. (2011). Long hours are associated with higher levels of serious injury and, from the perspective of productivity, diagnostic errors.
- 3 Relatedly, on the specific matter of automation, reduced working time can address many of the challenges it poses by proposals for a redistribution of working time.
- 4 Taking a date during the period when the survey link was open and completions were being submitted, we can see how widespread Covid-19 infection was. According to ONS (2021) at the week ending of 28 December 2021, 1 in 15 of the population in England, 1 in 20 in Wales, 1 in 25 in Northern Ireland and 1 in 20 in Scotland were infected with Covid-19.
- 5 The exception is Airbus, which registered only two responses. However, there is a compelling reason for this limited return, in that the union was preoccupied with pay claim negotiations, and this overriding priority which required full engagement with their members understandably thwarted the circulation of the survey.
- 6 Each quote is followed by a descriptor, a minimum biographic detail that enables the testimony to be contextualised, while maintaining the respondent's anonymity. The protocol consists of company (Rolls Royce – RR, British Aerospace – BAE, Jaguar Land Rover – JLR, Bentley, McVities – McV, Airbus); gender; age; length of service, shift; contract (Full Time Permanent – FTP, Part Time Permanent – PTP).
- 7 Research has identified chronic effects of shift work involving nights on metabolic dysfunction, cognitive function and chronic fatigue (e.g. IOSH, 2015). A recent study (Wang et al, 2021) has demonstrated that long-term night shift working is associated with the risk of atrial fibrillation and coronary heart disease. Eurofond (2017: 59) found close associations between night shift working and workers' perceptions of negative effects on health and feeling exhausted at the end of the working day.
- 8 Of the top three occupational categories that recorded highest mortality rates for men from Covid-19, two might be seen as encompassing groups of workers in this study - 'elementary occupations' and 'process, plant and machine operatives' (Sage, 2021) – workers who had no alternative but to attend the workplace. For women, statistics indicate that manufacturing is the fourth highest category (Sage, 2021). In contrast, professional, associate and technical occupations had markedly lower age standardised mortality rates than those occupations that rarely worked from home (process plant and machine operatives, sales and customer services occupations, caring leisure and other services occupations, skilled trade operations)..

# IER

## Institute of Employment Rights

### About the Institute

The Institute of Employment Rights seeks to develop an alternative approach to labour law and industrial relations and makes a constructive contribution to the debate on the future of trade union freedoms.

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This IER report, written by Professor Phil Taylor of the University of Strathclyde and commissioned by the Alex Ferry Foundation, is the largest survey on the matter of working time ever undertaken in the UK, with over two thousand individuals offering detailed responses. Their views and answers to the questions posed are fascinating and informative for union negotiators, company managers and policymakers alike. They go far beyond a narrow agenda for a four-day week and cover diverse topics such as the importance of mental and physical well-being, health and safety, productivity, job satisfaction, more family time and general happiness in the minds of workers when they think about working time. The report is not just informative – it is timely given the renewed focus on working time across our economy, which is itself probably overdue. This report should give shop stewards, union committees, full-time officers and union executives the confidence to launch full-throated campaigns for a step change in working time with no reduction in pay.