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**EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS  
RESEARCH SERIES NO. 63**

The First Fair Treatment  
at Work Survey:  
Executive Summary –  
updated

HEIDI GRAINGER AND GRANT FITZNER

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EMPLOYMENT MARKET ANALYSIS  
AND RESEARCH

## About EMAR

Employment Market Analysis and Research (EMAR) is a multi-disciplinary team of economists, social researchers and statisticians based in the Employment Relations Directorate of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Our role is to provide the evidence base for good policy making in employment relations, labour market and equality and discrimination at work. We do this through:

- Conducting periodic socio-economic benchmark surveys
- Commissioning external research reports
- Conducting in-house research and analysis
- Assessing the regulatory impact of new employment laws
- Monitoring and evaluating of the impact of government policies

We publicly disseminate the results of this research through the DTI Employment Relations Research Series and other publications. For further details of EMAR's work please see our web pages at:

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/research-evaluation>

## About this publication

The project manager for this report was Heidi Grainger, Statistical Adviser in the Employment Market Analysis and Research branch.

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Postal enquiries should be addressed to:

Employment Market Analysis and Research  
Department of Trade and Industry  
Fourth floor  
1 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0ET  
UNITED KINGDOM

Email enquiries should be addressed to: [emar@dti.gov.uk](mailto:emar@dti.gov.uk)

# Foreword

The Department of Trade and Industry's aim is to create the conditions for business success, and help the UK respond to the challenge of globalisation. As part of that objective we want a dynamic labour market that provides full employment, adaptability, fairness and choice, underpinned by decent minimum standards.

The imperative for employers to treat and reward all their staff fairly will grow as labour markets become more competitive and mobile. We need to ensure that vulnerable workers are not mistreated, but get the rights they are entitled to. We also wish to encourage diversity in the workplace, and help to protect employees from discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment and other forms of unfair treatment at work.

This report provides a summary of the findings from DTI's first Fair Treatment at Work Survey, based on face-to-face interviews with almost 4,000 employees across Great Britain. This is the first large-scale official British survey of its kind, covering employee perceptions on all forms of unfair treatment at work. It provides an important baseline against which to gauge progress on equality and discrimination issues in the workplace. We plan to conduct the second survey in 2008.

The survey found that more than two million British employees had experienced discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment or other unfair treatment at work in the previous two years. Bullying alone affected almost one million employees. While these are lower estimates than found in some previous studies, they are still cause for concern.

Unfair treatment is uneven in its impact, with some groups of employees found to be particularly vulnerable. For example, disabled employees and gay, lesbian or bisexual employees both experienced twice the rate of unfair treatment at work of other employees. Those with a disability or long-term illness are much more likely to be bullied or sexually harassed at work than other employees. The incidence of unfair treatment also varied considerably by industry and sector.

Readers should refer to the full report for more detailed findings: *The First Fair Treatment at Work Survey: Main findings*, Employment Relations Research Series No. 62, URN 07/692. Copies can be downloaded or printed reports ordered from the DTI website.



Grant Fitzner  
Director, Employment Market Analysis and Research

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# Key findings

DTI's first Fair Treatment at Work Survey is Britain's first large-scale official survey of employees' experience of unfair treatment, perceived discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace. The survey involved face-to-face interviews with 3,936 employees across Great Britain, between November 2005 and January 2006.

## *Overall findings*

The survey found that 2.1 million British employees had personally experienced unfair treatment, bullying or sexual harassment at work in the last two years.

Some groups of employees were found to be particularly vulnerable. Disabled employees and gay, lesbian or bisexual employees were twice as likely as other employees to be personally treated unfairly at work, while disabled women were four times more likely to be bullied than other employees.

Experiences also varied by industry. More than one-fifth (21 per cent) of employees in the financial intermediation and transport, storage and communication industries reported either personally experiencing unfair treatment, or said they were aware of others being treated unfairly.

## *Personal experience of unfair treatment at work*

The survey found that in total, around 1.6 million or 6.9 per cent of employees said they had personally been treated unfairly at work in the last two years.

There were relatively small differences in the rate of unfair treatment experienced by sex, religion or sector. Those with a disability or long-term illness, however, were twice as likely as other employees to have experienced unfair treatment at work. This was also the case for gay, lesbian or bisexual employees. More black employees (12.5 per cent) experienced unfair treatment at work than did Asians (8 per cent) or whites (6.5 per cent). Older employees, aged 45 or more, were less likely to report unfair treatment at work than those aged less than 45 years.

By industry, the highest rate was in financial intermediation, where one in nine employees (11.2 per cent) had personally been unfairly treated.

The most common reason given for unfair treatment was age, followed by long-term illness (both reported by 0.8 per cent of all employees). The third was 'accent or the way I speak' (0.5 per cent), followed by race and ethnic group, disability, 'physical appearance', gender, 'being pregnant', nationality, and 'the way I dress' (all 0.4 per cent). Union membership, religion and 'colour of skin' were reported by 0.3 per cent of employees.

### *Discrimination at work*

Seven in every ten employees who had been treated unfairly at work in the last two years considered this to be discrimination. If we confine those responses to the six equality strands covered by UK law (sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age), 3.5 per cent of all employees experienced discrimination at work in the last two years.

Some types of employees were more likely to have experienced discrimination at work: disabled employees (9.0 per cent), gay, lesbian or bisexual employees (8.1 per cent), black employees (7.3 per cent), foreign-born employees (6.4 per cent), Muslim employees (5.7 per cent), and Asian employees (5.5 per cent).

Of the six equality strands, discrimination at work relating to disability and long-term illness was the most common, reported by 1.2 per cent of all employees. This was followed by sex discrimination (0.9 per cent), race-related discrimination (0.8 per cent), age discrimination (0.8 per cent) and discrimination on the basis of religion and belief (0.2 per cent). The number of cases of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was too small to be reported.

### *Advice or information sought*

Over half of employees who had been unfairly treated sought advice or information about their problem. Women were more likely than men to seek advice, and trade union members more likely than non-unionists. Private sector and foreign-born employees were less likely to seek advice than the public sector and UK born employees.

Two-fifths of employees who sought advice said they contacted their line manager or supervisor, or a trade union or trade union officer. Trade unions provided the most helpful advice (30 per cent).

### *Steps taken to deal with the situation*

While one in six employees (16 per cent) who had been unfairly treated did nothing about their situation, one-third raised the issue with their employer and four-fifths said that they dealt with it in some way. One in twelve (8 per cent) resigned, and four per cent were dismissed or made redundant. Men were more likely than women to do nothing (20 per cent vs. 13 per cent). Women were more likely than men to leave the organisation (18 per cent vs. 10 per cent).

### *Unfair treatment experienced by other employees*

Eighty-five percent of all employees neither experienced unfair treatment themselves, nor were aware of any other person at their workplace being treated unfairly.

One in seven (14.0 per cent) employees who worked with others said that they *were* aware of another person at their place of work being treated unfairly in the last two years.

Of those employees who worked with others, disabled employees (21 per cent), gay, lesbian or bisexual employees (18 per cent), black employees (17 per cent) and public sector employees (17 per cent) were more likely to report unfair treatment of others at their workplace.

By far the most common reason given for unfair treatment was long-term illness, cited by 3.8 per cent of employees who worked with others. This was followed by age and 'the way they dress' (both 1.9 per cent), and race or ethnic group (1.6 per cent). The incidence of unfair treatment of others due to gender (1.2 per cent), religion (1.0 per cent) and sexual orientation (1.0 per cent) were lower.

By industry, the highest rate was in financial intermediation, where one in nine employees (11.2 per cent) had personally been unfairly treated.

By nation, Scottish employees reported more unfair treatment (7.1 per cent) than those in England (5.6 per cent) or Wales (5.1 per cent).

### *Workplace bullying*

The incidence of bullying in British workplaces was found to be quite high. Almost one million employees (3.8 per cent) said they had personally experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last two years.

Women (4.9 per cent) were more likely to have been bullied than men (2.8 per cent). More than one in ten employees with a disability or long-term illness said they were bullied in the last two years, and amongst disabled women the rate was 14.4 per cent: almost four times the national average. There were no significant differences by age or between white and non-white employees. The incidence of bullying was twice as high in the public sector as private.

More than one in ten employees said they were aware of another person at their place of work being bullied or harassed in the last two years.

### *Sexual harassment*

Relatively few employees had experienced sexual harassment at work in the last two years: less than one in every hundred employees (0.9 per cent). Women (1.1 per cent) had a higher incidence of sexual harassment than men (0.7 per cent). Nonetheless, two-fifths of British employees who said they had been sexually harassed were men.

Employees with a disability or long-term illness were five times more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than those without. Managers or supervisors were almost twice as likely as other employees to report sexual harassment.

Almost four per cent of employees said they were aware of another person at their place of work experiencing sexual harassment in the last two years.

# Executive summary

## Aim and objectives

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) commissioned the first Fair Treatment at Work Survey to fill a major gap in the evidence base. To our knowledge this is the first time that a UK government department or agency has conducted a robust, large-scale and statistically representative survey of employee's experience of unfair treatment at work. It was considered that a survey of this kind was required in order to:

- Provide a comprehensive survey of the extent of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment at work.
- Develop both a robust and reliable statistical instrument, and a discrete set of questions that can be used in future surveys.
- Provide a baseline against which to monitor and evaluate the impact of the 2003 legislation on religious and sexual orientation discrimination, and the 2006 legislation on age discrimination.
- Contribute to DTI's research programme on the nature and causes of racial discrimination at work.

Steps were taken to ensure the sample was statistically representative of British employees, and of sufficient size to obtain results for specific sub-populations (e.g. ethnic and religious minorities, younger and older workers, disabled employees and other vulnerable groups).

Northern Ireland was not included in this survey because the Fair Employment Act of 1989 covers different ground.

This survey forms part of a large and ongoing research programme on vulnerable workers and equality and discrimination in the workplace. The recent Employment Rights at Work Survey<sup>1</sup>, for example, provided valuable information on the nature of employment problems at work. Three research projects have been published on Employment Tribunal race discrimination cases. The 2006 British Social Attitudes Survey, which DTI sponsors, contains a suite of questions about employee attitudes on discrimination and fair treatment.

The DTI have also recently published major research reports on maternity and paternity rights, and age-related employment practices.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Jo Casebourne, et al (2006) *Employment Rights at Work - Survey of Employees 2005*, Employment Relations Research Series No.51, DTI, London. URN 06/837.

<sup>2</sup> See Debbie Smeaton and Alan Marsh (2006) *Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits: Survey of Parents 2005*, Employment Relations Research Series No. 50, DTI and DWP, London URN 08/836, and Hilary Metcalf and Pamela Meadows (2006) *Survey of employers policies, practices and preferences relating to age*, Employment Relations Research Series No. 49, DTI and DWP, London URN 06/674.

Finally, *Inside the Workplace*, the report of the Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) 2004, maps the incidence of equal opportunity policies and their implementation.<sup>3</sup>

## Key survey questions

**Care must be taken when interpreting these findings.** This is a complex survey, with at least seven major elements. It should also be remembered that the survey reports employee's perceptions, which are subjective and will vary between individuals.

Three key questions were asked about employees' personal experience at work in the last two years: whether they had been treated unfairly, or experienced bullying or sexual harassment.

Employees were also asked three equivalent questions about other employees at their place of work. In addition, those employees who said they had personally been treated unfairly were asked if they considered this to be discrimination.

The key survey questions are appended at Annex A of this report.

## Overall findings

By aggregating answers to the three main questions about employees' personal experiences at work, and adjusting for multiple responses, we can estimate the overall proportion of employees who experienced one or more forms of unfair treatment at work.

The survey found that 2.1 million<sup>4</sup> (8.9 per cent) of all British employees had personally experienced unfair treatment, bullying or sexual harassment at work in the last two years.

Employees with a disability or long-term illness were 2½ times as likely as the non-disabled to report one or more of these (19.7 versus 7.6 per cent). Women (9.8 per cent) were more likely than men (8.0 per cent) to report such treatment. By ethnic group, 11.2 per cent of non-white employees personally experienced unfair treatment, bullying or sexual harassment at work, compared with 8.6 per cent of whites. By industry, the highest overall incidence was in financial intermediation (11.0 per cent of employees).

## Personal experience of unfair treatment at work

The most important question asked by the survey was about employees' *personal* experience of unfair treatment in the workplace. We used the term 'unfair treatment' so as to be as broad and all-encompassing as possible; it was considered that alternative terms such as

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<sup>3</sup> See Barbara Kersley, et al (2006) *Inside the Workplace: Findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey*, London: Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Based on 23.84 million employees in Great Britain for the three months ending February 2006.

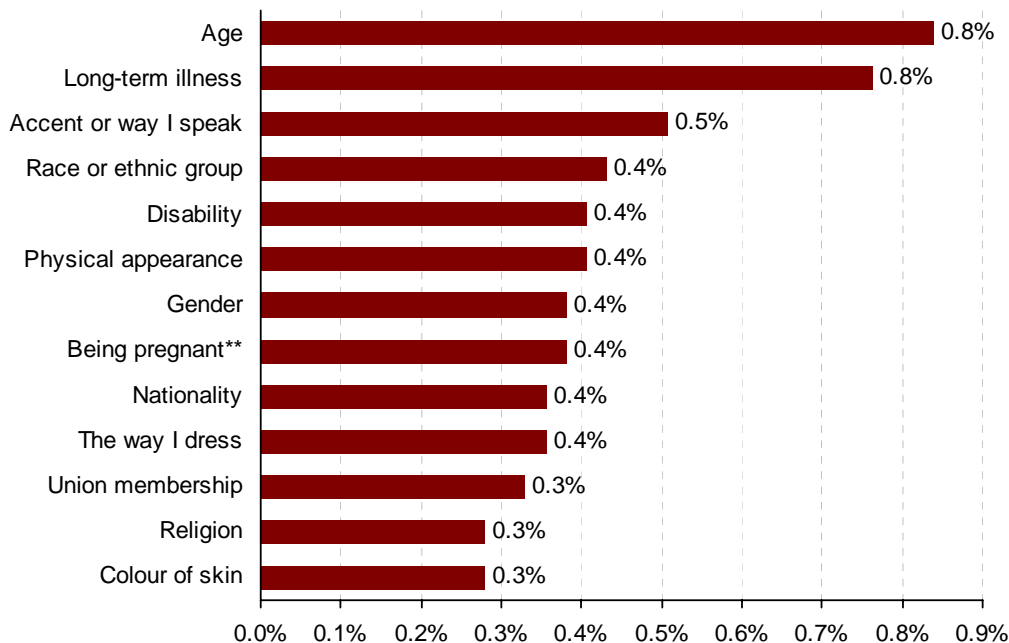
'discrimination' would lead to narrower and possibly more inconsistent responses.

Question 11 of the survey, included at Annex A of this report, asked all employees whether "in the last two years with your employer, have you PERSONALLY been treated unfairly because of any of the following?" The interviewer then showed a card listing 18 possible forms of unfair treatment (for details, see Annex A). Employees could also state 'other', and these responses were also recorded.

The survey found a relatively low incidence of unfair treatment at work. In total, around 1.6 million or 6.9 per cent of employees said they had personally been treated unfairly at work in the last two years. Conversely, 22½ million British employees (over 90 per cent) said they had *not* experienced any form of unfair treatment at work in the last two years, while another 2.6 per cent said they did not know.

Those with a disability or long-term illness were twice as likely as other employees to have personally experienced unfair treatment at work (15.1 per cent), as were employees whose sexual orientation was gay, lesbian or bisexual employees (13.8 per cent).

**Figure 1. Employees who personally experienced unfair treatment at work in the last two years, by type (% all employees, Great Britain)\***



Source: First Fair Treatment at Work Survey, DTI, Question 11. N=3,936 (all employees)

\* Forms of unfair treatment involving fewer than 10 cases are not shown. 'Other' (2.5 per cent) also not shown. \*\* See text below.

There were relatively small differences in the rate of unfair treatment experienced by sex, religion or sector. For men the rate was 6.6 per cent, compared with 7.3 per cent for women. Fewer private sector employees

reported unfair treatment (6.5 per cent) than those working in the public sector (7.7 per cent).<sup>5</sup>

More black employees (12.5 per cent) experienced unfair treatment at work than Asians (8.0 per cent) or whites (6.5 per cent). Muslim employees (8.5 per cent) were more likely to report unfair treatment than Christian employees (7.3 per cent).

Older employees were less likely to report unfair treatment at work: 5.6 per cent of employees aged 45 or more, compared with 7.7 per cent for those under 45 years. As regards unfair treatment on the basis of age, young employees (aged 16-24) were more than twice as likely to report age discrimination than older employees (aged 45+). Rates of age discrimination for 'prime age' employees (aged 25-44) were lower still.

Of the individual reasons cited by employees for their unfair treatment, the most common was age, followed by long-term illness (both reported by 0.8 per cent of all employees). Third was 'accent or the way I speak' (0.5 per cent), followed race and ethnic group, disability, 'physical appearance', gender, 'being pregnant', nationality, and 'the way I dress' (all 0.4 per cent). Union membership, religion and 'colour of skin' were each reported by 0.3 per cent of employees.

'Being pregnant' was cited by 0.4 per cent of all employees and 0.8 per cent of female employees, although it would obviously be a much higher percentage of women who were pregnant in the last two years.<sup>6</sup>

The most common forms of unfair treatment cited by employees were 'the type of work given' (21 per cent), working hours (17 per cent), 'being ignored' (15 per cent) or pay (13 per cent). However, different groups of employees tended to give different reasons for their unfair treatment. For example, long-term illness was reported to be the most serious form of unfair treatment for disabled respondents (six in every thousand). For those of a non-white background the most serious was race or ethnic group and colour of skin (four in every thousand).

When asked whether the unfair treatment was still ongoing, 54 per cent said that it was not. In approximately half the cases where men had been unfairly treated it was still ongoing compared with one-third of cases of unfair treatment for women. For those with a disability over half (57 per cent) the cases of unfair treatment were still ongoing. This was also the case for those of a non-white background.

By industry, the highest rate of personal unfair treatment at work was in financial intermediation (11.2 per cent), of which four-fifths were women. The lowest rate was in hotels and restaurants (4.8 per cent) and

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<sup>5</sup> In this report, the term 'public sector' includes charities and non-profit organisations.

<sup>6</sup> The survey did not ask women if they were or had recently been pregnant, so lacks the appropriate denominator. However the recent DTI-DWP report, *Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits: Survey of Parents 2005*, *ibid*, found that 11 per cent of new mothers said they were treated unfairly at work during their pregnancy as a result of their pregnancy.

education (4.9 per cent). Note that results for some industries could not be reported because of a small number of counts.

Across the three nations, the highest rate of unfair treatment was reported by Scottish employees (7.1 per cent), followed by those in England (5.6 per cent) and Wales lowest (5.1 per cent). By English region, the highest rate was in the East Midlands (9.2 per cent), and the lowest in the West Midlands (5.3 per cent).

## Discrimination at work

Employees who said they had been treated unfairly at work in the last two years were asked if they would describe this as discrimination. Seven in every ten employees said they did consider it discrimination. That is 4.9 per cent of all employees, or around 1.2 million people.

However if we confine those responses to the six equality strands covered by UK discrimination law (sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age), then 3.5 per cent of all employees said they had experienced discrimination at work in the last two years.

Three of the six discrimination categories have additional strands that make up part of the legislation: gender also included marital status and being pregnant; race included ethnic group, nationality and colour of skin, and disability also included long-term illness.

Some types of employees were more likely to have experienced discrimination at work: disabled employees (9.0 per cent), gay, lesbian or bisexual employees (8.1 per cent), black employees (7.3 per cent), foreign-born employees (6.4 per cent), Muslim employees (5.7 per cent), and Asian employees (5.5 per cent).

**Table 1. Personal experience of discrimination at work in the last two years by equality strand (% all employees, Great Britain)**

	Male	Female	White	Non-white	Total
Disability discrimination	1.4%	0.9%	1.3%	0.4%	1.2%
Sex discrimination	0.5%	1.4%	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%
Race discrimination	1.0%	0.6%	0.4%	4.0%	0.8%
Age discrimination	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%	0.8%
Religious discrimination	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	1.1%	0.2%
Sexual orientation discrimination	*	*	*	-	*
All types of discrimination at work	3.6%	3.5%	3.3%	5.6%	3.5%

Source: First Fair Treatment at Work Survey, DTI, Question 11. N=3,936 (all employees). Note: \* = less than 10 cases, - = nil response  
 Note: Disability\* includes discrimination because of long-term illness. Sex includes marital status and being pregnant. Race includes ethnic group, nationality and colour of skin.

Of the six equality strands, disability-related was the most common, personally affecting 1.2 per cent of all employees in the last two years. This was followed by gender (0.9 per cent), race-related discrimination (0.8 per cent), age (0.8 per cent) and religion (0.2 per cent). Sexual orientation was lowest – though too small to be accurately reported.

## Advice or information sought

Over half of employees who had been unfairly treated sought advice or information about their problem. Women were more likely than men to seek advice, and trade union members more likely than non-unionists. Private sector and foreign-born employees were less likely to seek advice than the average. Two-fifths of employees who sought advice said they contacted their line manager or supervisor, or a trade union/union officer. Unions provided the most helpful advice (30 per cent).

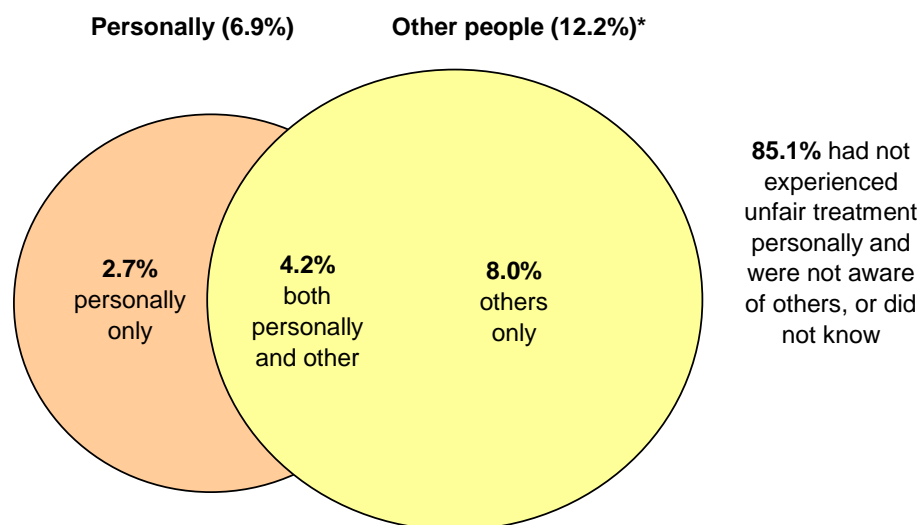
## Steps taken to deal with the situation

While one in six employees (16 per cent) who had been unfairly treated said they did nothing about their situation, one-third raised the issue with their employer and four-fifths said that they dealt with it in some way. One in twelve (8 per cent) resigned, and four per cent were dismissed or made redundant. Men were more likely than women to do nothing (20 per cent versus 13 per cent). Women were more likely than men to leave the organisation (18 per cent versus 10 per cent).

## Unfair treatment experienced by other employees

Question 3 of the survey asked all employees who worked with others whether in the last two years they were aware of anyone at their place of work, excluding themselves, "being been treated unfairly because of any of the following?" The same 18 possible forms of unfair treatment were shown (for details, see Annex A).

**Figure 2. Employee responses on unfair treatment at work in the last two years, personal and/or others (% all employees, Great Britain)**



Source: First Fair Treatment at Work Survey, DTI. Derived from questions 3 and 11. N=3,936 (all employees)

\* This figure uses all employees as the denominator, in order to be consistent with the figures for personal experience of unfair treatment.

One in seven (14.0 per cent) employees who worked with others said that they were aware of another person at their place of work being treated unfairly in the last two years. This is the equivalent of 12.2 per cent of all employees. In total, 11.5 per cent of employees said they did not work with others at their place of work (excluding senior managers or owners of the organisation), and 1.0 per cent did not know.

Of those employees who worked with others, disabled employees (21 per cent), gay, lesbian or bisexual employees (18 per cent), black employees (17 per cent) and public sector employees (17 per cent) were more likely to report unfair treatment of others.

By far the most common reason given for this unfair treatment were long-term illness, cited by 3.8 per cent of all employees. This was followed by age and 'the way they dress' (both 1.9 per cent), and race or ethnic group (1.6 per cent). The incidence of gender (1.2 per cent) and religion (1.0 per cent) and sexual orientation (1.0 per cent) were lower.

By industry, the highest rate of unfair treatment of others at work was reported in public administration and defence (19.2 per cent of those who worked with others), and the lowest in construction (7.5 per cent). Results for some industries could not be reported because of a small number of counts.

Across the three nations, the highest rate of unfair treatment of other employees was reported by Welsh employees (18.0 per cent of those who worked with others), followed by those in Scotland (14.9 per cent) and England (13.7 per cent). By English region, the highest rate was in the East of England (17.5 per cent), and the lowest in the South West (8.9 per cent).

## Combined results

As Figure 2 shows, the survey found that 6.9 per cent of all employees *personally* experienced unfair treatment at work, while 12.2 per cent said they were aware of unfair treatment of *other* employees at work. Combining these two measures, 14.9 per cent of employees had either personally experienced or were aware of unfair treatment at work.

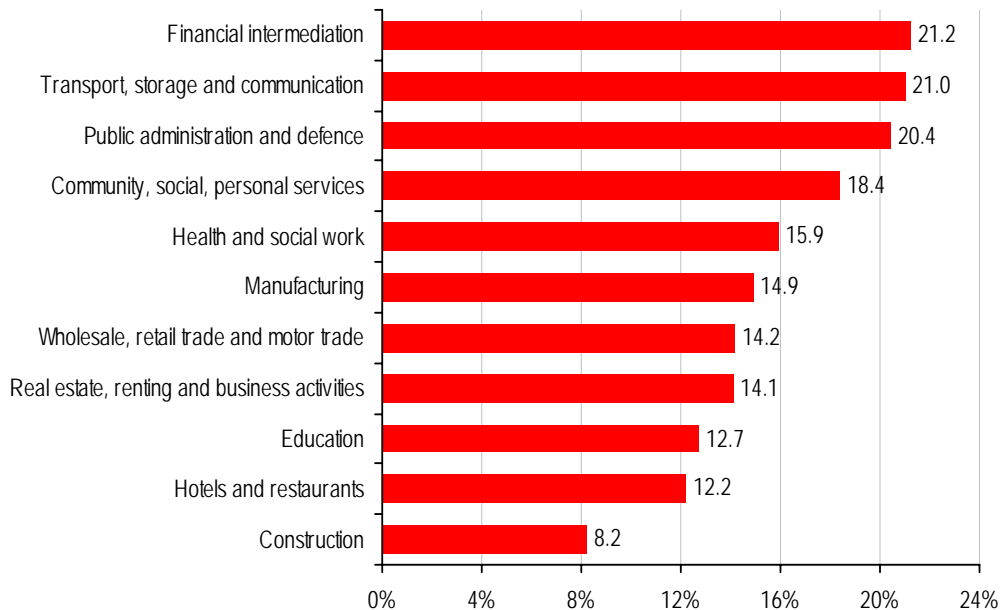
Men (15.0 per cent) were slightly more likely to report unfair treatment, personally or of others, than women (14.8 employees). Employees with a disability or long-term illness were around the average (14.4 per cent). Black employees (18.8 per cent) were more likely than white (14.7 per cent) or Asian (14.3 per cent) employees.

Employees whose sexual orientation was gay, lesbian, bisexual or other (22.3 per cent) were more likely to be report unfair treatment. Managers or supervisors (19.5 per cent) were more likely to report unfair treatment than those with no managerial or supervisory duties (12.7 per cent).

Experiences also varied by industry. Figure 3 shows that more than one-fifth (21 per cent) of employees in the financial intermediation and transport, storage and communication industries reported either

personally experiencing unfair treatment, or said they were aware of others being treated unfairly. The lowest rate reported was in construction (8.2 per cent). Note that results for some industries could not be reported because of a small number of counts.

**Figure 3. Personally experienced unfair treatment or aware of others unfairly treated at work in the last two years, by industry (% all employees, GB)\***



Source: First Fair Treatment at Work Survey, DTI. Derived from questions 3 and 11. N=3,936 (all employees)

## Workplace bullying

Employees were read a definition of bullying (see Q. 36 at Annex A) and asked: "In the last two years with you current employer have you experienced bullying or harassment at work".

The incidence of bullying in British workplaces appears to be quite high – almost one million employees (3.8 per cent of all employees) said they had personally experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last two years.

Women (4.9 per cent) were significantly more likely to have been bullied than men (2.8 per cent). There were no significant differences by age or between white and non-white employees. Foreign-born employees were more at risk to being bullied than UK-born (5.0 per cent vs. 3.6 per cent).

More than one in every ten employees with a disability or long-term illness (10.6 per cent) said they had been bullied or harassed in the last two years. Amongst disabled women the rate was even higher: 14.4 per cent, or almost four times the national average.

The incidence of bullying was twice as high in the public sector as the private (5.8 per cent versus 2.7 per cent). However this is in part a

compositional effect. The public sector hires a higher proportion of women and disabled employees than the private sector.

Across the three nations, the highest rate of bullying personally experienced by employees was in England (3.8 per cent), followed by Scotland (3.6 per cent) and Wales (3.1 per cent). By English region, the highest rate was in the West Midlands (5.8 per cent), and the lowest in the North West (2.8 per cent).

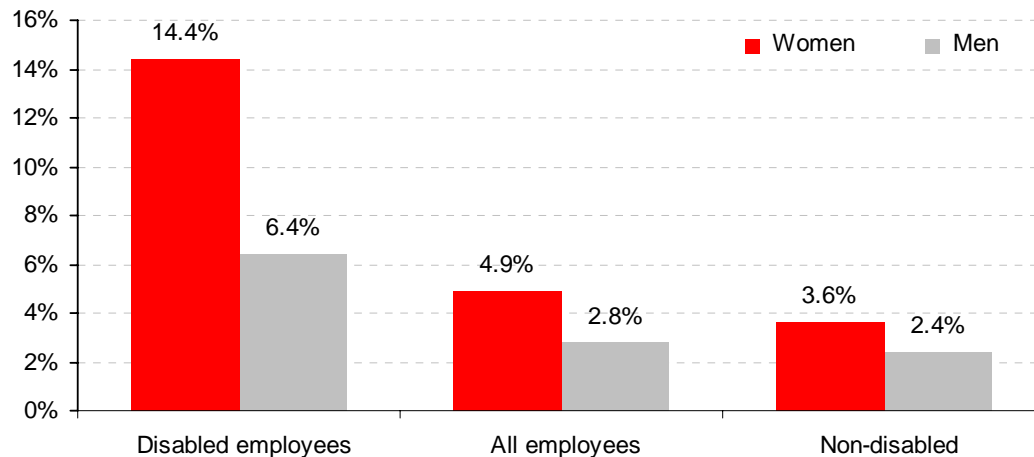
By industry, the highest rate of bullying at work was reported in public administration and defence (5.5 per cent), and the lowest in wholesale trade (2.2 per cent). Results for some industries could not be reported because of a small number of counts.

An employee's supervisor or manager was involved in two-thirds of bullying cases, and a work colleague in one-third.

Over half (54 per cent) of those employees who had been bullied said that it was still going on. Ongoing bullying was much more common for men (74 per cent) than for women (45 per cent).

Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of employees who had been bullied sought advice regarding the situation. However only one-quarter of black employees who had been bullied or harassed at work said that they had sought advice.

**Figure 4. Employees who personally experienced bullying at work in the last two years (% all employees, Great Britain)**



Source: First Fair Treatment at Work Survey, DTI, Question 36. N=3,936 (all employees)

More than one in ten (10.6 per cent) employees who worked with others said that they were aware of another person at their place of work being bullied or harassed in the last two years. This is the equivalent of 9.3 per cent of all employees. There was little difference by gender. By ethnic background, Asian employees were less likely to report bullying of others than white or black employees. Employees with a disability or long-term illness were more than twice as likely as other employees to report others being bullied at work.

More public sector employees reported bullying of others (13.7 per cent) than in the private sector (9.0 per cent). Twice as much bullying was reported in larger organisations (50+ employees) than in smaller ones, though this is in part a sectoral effect. Trade union members were twice as likely to report bullying of others as non-union employees.

## Sexual harassment

Employees were read a definition of sexual harassment (see Q. 30 at Annex A) and asked: "In the last two years with you current employer have you experienced bullying or harassment at work".

Relatively few employees had experienced sexual harassment at work in the last two years: less than one in every hundred employees (0.9 per cent). Women (1.1 per cent) had a higher incidence of sexual harassment than men (0.7 per cent). Nonetheless, two-fifths (41 per cent) of British employees who said they had been sexually harassed were men.

Less than one in five employees who had experienced sexual harassment in the last two years said that it was still going on.

Women who had experienced sexual harassment were somewhat more likely to say "it was sexual in nature" than "it was because I am a woman". Men were much more likely to say "it was because I am a man" (i.e. non-sexual in nature).

Employees with a disability or long-term illness were five times more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than employees without a disability. Managers or supervisors were almost twice as likely as other employees to report being sexually harassed.

An employee's supervisor or manager was involved in half of all bullying cases, and a work colleague in one-third.

Just under half (44 per cent) of employees who had been sexually harassed sought advice or information regarding the situation. Women were more likely to seek advice than men.

Of employees who worked with others, 3.7 per cent said they were aware of another person at their place of work who had experienced sexual harassment in the last two years. Men were somewhat more likely to report others being sexually harassed than women, and private sector employees more likely than those in the public sector.

Employees with a disability or long-term illness were three times as likely to be aware of another person experiencing sexual harassment as non-disabled employees (9.0 per cent versus 3.0 per cent).

## Summing up

The results of this survey paint a mixed picture. On the one hand, the vast majority of employees are unaffected by unfair treatment; 85 percent said they had *neither* experienced unfair treatment themselves, *nor* were aware of anyone else at their workplace being treated unfairly.

This is a lower incidence of unfair treatment at work than most other British or UK employee surveys have found<sup>7</sup>.

However, a sizeable minority of employees had experienced some form of unfair treatment in the last two years. The nature and incidence of this unfair treatment are not evenly dispersed; different forms of unfair treatment, at varied rates, affect different employee sub-populations.

Disabled employees and gay, lesbian or bisexual employees both experienced double the average rate of unfair treatment at work. Unfair treatment also varied considerably by industry and by region.

Unfair treatment at work appears to be clustered in certain workplaces and among specific groups of employees. For example, three-fifths of employees who themselves had experienced unfair treatment, were aware of other people at their place of work who had also been treated unfairly (Figure 2).

This clustering suggests that a targeted approach to government awareness, information and enforcement of equality and discrimination laws is likely to prove more effective than broad-based approaches.

Another finding is that some forms of discrimination are more complex than others. In particular, discrimination and unfair treatment involving race often involve more than one form of unfair treatment. National identity, country of birth, colour of skin, race and ethnic group are not discrete variables but overlapping ones. Race discrimination is multi-dimensional, and researchers need to avoid over-simplifying the issue.

Other key findings with potential implications for researchers and policy makers include:

- Unfair treatment on the basis of long-term illness was twice as common as for disability, and the second most common reason given by employees.
- Although much of the debate over age-related discrimination has focussed on older employees, younger workers are more likely to report age discrimination.
- The rate of bullying and sexual harassment of employees with a disability or long-term illness is much higher than for other employees.
- Black employees are much less likely to seek advice about bullying than Asian or white employees.
- Contrary to the conventional wisdom, two-fifths of the victims of sexual harassment are men.

We need to better understand the nature of these problems and their causes. There is clearly considerable scope for examining selected

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<sup>7</sup> A comparison with other surveys is included in the *Main findings*.

issues in more depth, and we encourage secondary analysis of the dataset.

## About this survey

The first Fair Treatment at Work Survey was carried out as part of the Department of Trade and Industry's employment relations research programme, under the direction of Heidi Grainger, Statistical Advisor in the Employment Market Analysis and Research (EMAR) branch.

TNS Social conducted the fieldwork for this survey. Using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), 3,936 face-to-face interviews were conducted with employees between November 2005 and January 2006 in the homes of individuals. The survey covered Great Britain, and results were weighted to reflect the composition of British employees. More details on the sample and survey methodology will be published in the forthcoming *Technical Report*.

This executive summary presents the key findings from the First Fair Treatment at Work Survey. The *Main Report* (URN 07/692) is published as report No. 62 in our Employment Relations Research Series.

To encourage secondary analysis of this survey, we will lodge the complete dataset with the UK Data Archive ([www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk)) soon after publication of these reports.

# Annex A: Key questions

## Unfair treatment

### **Question 3: Unfair treatment of others at work**

In the last two years with your current employer, have you been aware of anyone at your place of work, EXCLUDING YOURSELF, being treated unfairly because of any of the following? [CODE ALL THAT APPLY]

[SHOWCARD A]

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Nationality
4. Religion
5. Race or ethnic group
6. Sexual orientation (e.g. gay, straight, lesbian, bi-sexual etc.)
7. Disability
8. Long-term illness
9. Marital status
10. Political beliefs
11. Colour of skin
12. Physical appearance
13. The way they dress
14. Being pregnant
15. Union membership
16. Accent or the way they speak
17. Address or where they live
18. Social class
19. Other personal characteristics- [Interviewer to write in]
20. No
21. Don't know

### **Question 8: Whether unfair treatment of others is discrimination**

[IF UNFAIR TREATMENT] Would you personally describe this kind of unfair treatment as DISCRIMINATION?

**Question 11: Personal experience of unfair treatment**

In the last two years with your employer, have you PERSONALLY been treated unfairly because of any of the following? [CODE ALL THAT APPLY]

[SHOWCARD A]

[Same list as for Question 3 above]

**Question 17: What is unfair treatment related to**

So, to summarise what you have just been saying, what is the unfair treatment you have personally experienced related to?

[SHOWCARD B]

1. Pay
2. Pensions
3. Other benefits, perks and bonuses besides pay
4. Working hours
5. Taking holidays
6. Applying for a job
7. Being promoted
8. Getting training
9. Disciplinary action
10. Redundancy
11. Early retirement
12. Being allowed to work flexibly (changing hours of work)
13. Being ignored
14. Being excluded from social activities
15. Not being part of a social group
16. Type of work given
17. Bullying/harassment
18. Falsely accused of something
19. Something else [INTERVIEWER TO RECORD]
20. Don't know

**Question 18: Whether personal unfair treatment is discrimination**

[IF UNFAIR TREATMENT] Would you personally describe this kind of unfair treatment as DISCRIMINATION?

## Workplace bullying

### Question 10: Bullying of others at work

[READ OUT] Bullying or harassment is any unwelcome behaviour that creates a hostile working environment.

In the last two years with your current employer do you know of anyone at your place of work, EXCLUDING YOURSELF, who has experienced bullying or harassment at work?

### Question 36: Personal experience of bullying

[READ OUT] Bullying or harassment is any unwelcome behaviour that creates a hostile working environment.

In the last two years with your current employer have you experienced bullying or harassment at work?

## Sexual harassment

### Question 9: Sexual harassment of others at work

[READ OUT] Sexual harassment at work is any unwelcome sex or gender-related behaviour that creates a hostile working environment.

In the last two years with your current employer do you know of anyone at your place of work, EXCLUDING YOURSELF, who has experienced sexual harassment at work?

### Question 30: Personal experience of sexual harassment

[READ OUT] Sexual harassment at work is any unwelcome sex or gender-related behaviour that creates a hostile working environment.

In the last two years with your current employer have you experienced sexual harassment at work?

1. Yes - it was sexual in nature
2. Yes – it was because I am a woman/man

## Personal characteristics

### Question 72: Disability or long-term illness

Do you have any long-term illness, health problems or disability?

### Question 73a: Sexual orientation

Which of the answers on the card best describes your sexuality?  
[SHOWCARD 'S' SHOWN]

Straight or heterosexual

Gay or lesbian or homosexual

Bisexual

Other

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