

4. Awareness and Knowledge of Work-Life Balance Legislation

Key findings:

A minority (one in ten) of respondents named laws relating to work-life balance unprompted, or after an example was given, although half of all respondents said they were aware of parental leave legislation, when prompted.

Substantive knowledge of specific provisions in this area of law varied considerably between the provisions, but was generally more extensive on provisions relating to maternity leave than, for example, on provisions relating to parental leave or time off for dependants.

Faced with three scenarios describing employer behaviour in this area, two thirds of respondents identified employer actions relating to maternity provisions (time off for ante-natal classes) and to time off work for dependants as unlawful. In the third case (parental leave), however, only a third of respondents did so.

As might be anticipated, family status, gender and age are important influences on awareness and knowledge of work-life balance legislation. In particular:

- **Parents** are consistently more likely than non-parents to show awareness and knowledge of rights in this area and to identify infringements of rights from scenarios.
- **Women** are more likely than men to show awareness of employment rights in this area and to identify the unlawfulness of scenarios describing situations relating to time off (for ante-natal classes, and for a young child). There are no significant gender differences, however, in the extent of substantive knowledge of the details of work-life balance legislation.
- The **youngest respondents** are generally least likely to show awareness and knowledge of work-life balance provisions, and to identify infringements when presented with scenarios. There is some evidence that awareness and knowledge in this area is greatest in the 26-45 age range (*ie* the prime ages of family formation and child rearing).

There is also some evidence that some groups more likely to experience labour market disadvantage (eg members of ethnic minorities, those in lower level occupations, and temporary employees) have lower levels of awareness and/or knowledge of rights in this area. In particular:

- **White** respondents are more likely than non-white respondents to show informed awareness and substantive knowledge of rights in this area.
- **White collar workers**, especially managerial and professional employees, are more likely to demonstrate awareness of these rights than those in lower level or manual occupations, but these differences are not evident when it comes to substantive knowledge of the details of the legislation.
- **Permanent employees** have higher levels of awareness of these provisions than temporary workers, and this difference is also generally reflected in higher levels of substantive knowledge of the details of the legislation.
- **Union members** have higher levels of awareness of rights in this area than did non-members, but this is not consistently reflected in higher levels of substantive knowledge, when tested by specific questions.

The majority of respondents (around four in five, depending on the situation) faced with what they perceive to be an infringement of their rights with regard to work-life balance, claim that they would take action in such circumstances.

Having looked at self-assessed awareness and knowledge, and compared it with some measures of actual awareness of employment rights *in general*, we go on, in this chapter and subsequent chapters, to examine in detail the responses of individuals to questions about *specific areas of legislation*.

In this chapter, we focus on employment rights which aim to protect work-life balance.

A number of different measures of awareness and knowledge are discussed and readers are referred to Chapter 2 for fuller details of these variables. To recap briefly however, these measures are:

- *Informed awareness (unprompted, or partly prompted)*: individuals are able to provide an example of a law protecting their rights at work with or without an example given.
- *Informed awareness (prompted)*: individuals respond to direct questions about specific areas of law by stating that they are aware of that law.
- *Substantive knowledge*: individuals are able to provide the correct answer to knowledge testing questions about specific areas of employment law.
- *Perception of entitlements*: individuals are able to identify a hypothetical situation as unlawful.
- *Extent to which perception of entitlements is based on knowledge*: individuals are not only able to identify a situation as unlawful, but also able to identify the law that may have been broken.

When discussing this group of rights, it should be noted that some legislation has been only recently introduced and other legislation has undergone considerable recent change. For example, parental leave regulations only came into effect on 15th December 1999 and maternity rights have been extended and enhanced twice in the last six years, once in 1994 and again in 1999.

4.1 Informed awareness (unprompted/partly prompted)

In this section we examine the data for those responding to the question:

'Can you tell me of any laws that protect your rights at work?'

Where the individual named a law relating to work-life balance legislation, either unprompted, or after an example of such a right was given.

These results were first examined in Chapter 3 (Table 3.5), for all areas of employment rights. Looking specifically at rights in the area of work-life balance, Table 3.5 showed that rights in this area were much less commonly cited than those in some other areas of employment law. Specifically:

- 4.0 per cent of individuals named maternity rights
- 3.4 per cent named time off for dependants
- 1.2 per cent named paternity leave
- 0.9 per cent named parental leave.

The individual characteristics of these individuals who named any of these items¹ of work-life balance legislation (either unprompted or partly prompted) are examined in Tables 4.1 to 4.4.

Looking first at personal characteristics (Table 4.1), some clear patterns emerge:

- As might be anticipated, women are much more likely (four times more likely) to cite a right in the area of work-life balance than men.
- White respondents are twice as likely to name a right in the area of work-life balance than non-white respondents.
- The likelihood of naming a right in this area peaks in the 26-35 and 36-45 age ranges, again this is consistent with prior expectation, as these are the ages in which we might expect the greatest concern with family issues *etc.*

¹ Given the small numbers citing each item separately, it is not appropriate to break down each one separately by the characteristics of those citing it.

Table 4.1: Informed awareness of work-life balance legislation by personal characteristics

Personal characteristic	Informed awareness (unprompted/partly prompted)	
	Named a right related to work-life balance	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Gender (%)		
	Male	3.7
	Female	14.2
Ethnic origin (%)		
	White	8.5
	Non-white	3.7
Age (%)		
	16-25	5.0
	26-35	11.5
	36-45	10.0
	46-55	5.8
	56-64	2.8
Highest qualification (%)		
	No qualifications	3.1
	NVQ 1	6.7
	NVQ 2	9.4
	NVQ 3	4.6
	NVQ 4	10.1
	NVQ 5	13.2

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

- Finally, there is some relationship with educational level, in that those with the highest levels of qualification (NVQ 4 and 5) are most likely to cite a right in this area, and those with no qualifications least likely to do so.

Table 4.2 looks, in addition, at a specific set of personal and family characteristics relating to parenthood and caring responsibilities, which we might expect to be associated with awareness of work-life balance issues. The patterns observed are generally the expected ones. Thus:

- Parents are slightly more likely than non-parents to cite work-life balance legislation.

Table 4.2: Informed awareness of work-life balance legislation by family and caring characteristics

Characteristic	Informed awareness (unprompted/partly prompted)	
	Named a right related to work-life balance	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Parent? (%)		
	Yes	9.1
	No	7.8
Age of dependent children (%)		
	0-4 years	11.9
	5-11 years	6.6
	12-15 years	10.5
	16-18 years (and in full time education)	10.1
Caring responsibilities? (%)		
	Yes	7.2
	No	8.3

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

- Those with the youngest children (0-4 years old), are most likely to name a law in this area, although those with 5-11 year olds are less likely to do so than those with older children¹.

Turning to the characteristics of the respondent's employment (Table 4.3), the following patterns emerge:

- *Occupation*: those in 'white collar' occupations (clerical/secretarial, and managerial/administrative) are most likely to name rights in this area, and those in manual occupations (craft and skilled manual occupations, and plant/machine operatives) least likely to do so. This pattern may in part reflect the differences by gender noted above.
- *Sector*: there is some variation in this measure of awareness by sector, with respondents in the public administration, education and health sector most likely to name work-life balance provisions, and those in primary and extractive sectors, followed by those in manufacturing, utilities and construction least likely to do so. Again this may, in part, reflect gender differences, as the sectors with the highest proportion citing these provisions are also sectors with the highest representation of women among respondents (and *vice versa*). Equally, it may in part reflect the occupational variation

¹ Note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. Thus, for example, the group '0-4 years' includes all respondents with dependent children in this age group, irrespective of whether they also have children in other age categories.

described above, since there is some association between sector and occupation. The pattern is not a straightforward one, however. Thus, for example, we have noted that managerial/administrative and clerical occupations have the highest levels of informed awareness. The sectors which record the highest densities of these occupations are the business and financial services sector and the public administration, education and health sector, but it is notable that it is the latter which has a higher than average level of reformed awareness, but not the former.

- *Size of workplace*: there is some tendency for informed awareness of work-life balance provisions to increase with workplace size, although the pattern is not a clear-cut one.
- *Temporary employees* are slightly more likely to cite work-life balance provisions in response to these questions, as are *part-time employees*, and *non-union members*. Once again, it is worth noting that gender differences may play a role here. Although, among the sample as a whole there is no difference between men and women respondents in terms of the proportion whose jobs are temporary or permanent, it is clear that women are disproportionately represented in the sample among both part-time workers and non-union members.

In Chapter 10 we discuss respondents' reported experiences of problems at work which, in their view, related to their employment rights. As part of the questioning on experience of problems at work, respondents were asked to identify the nature of the problem(s) they had experienced and, in particular, whether it (they) fell into one of a set of specific categories, one of which related to work-life balance issues. Thus respondents were asked whether the problem/difficulty they had experienced related to:

'Family or dependant issues' (should include incidents relating to maternity leave, maternity pay, parental leave, emergency dependant leave).

Overall, very few respondents (see Table 10.1) reported having had problems in this area but, as Table 4.4 shows, this group were more likely than those who had experienced other types of problems, or who had not experienced problems at all, to show awareness of legislation in this area.

Table 4.3: Informed awareness of work-life balance legislation by employment characteristics

Employment characteristic	Informed Awareness (unprompted/partly prompted)	
	Named a right related to work-life balance	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Occupation (%)		
Managerial/admin	12.8	183
Professional/technical	7.9	196
Assoc. professional/technical	7.1	96
Clerical/secretarial	13.9	158
Craft/skilled manual	0.9	84
Personal/protective services	2.2	71
Sales	9.4	69
Plant/machine operatives	6.5	28
Other unskilled	10.9	101
Sector (%)		
Primary & extractive	0.0	21
Manufacturing, utilities & construction	6.2	198
Distribution, catering, transport etc.	8.4	234
Business and financial services	7.4	99
Public admin, education and health	11.4	313
Other services	8.3	68
Size of workplace (employees) (%)		
Under 15	4.8	173
15-49	8.5	198
50-199	7.7	211
200-499	11.1	123
500-1999	8.2	105
2000+	13.4	91
Employment status (%)		
Permanent	7.9	885
Temporary	10.9	102
Working time (%)		
Under 16 hours p.w.	11.1	75
16-34 hours p.w.	13.4	174
35 + hours p.w.	7.2	751
Union membership (%)		
Member	7.5	333
Non- member	8.8	642

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

Table 4.4: Informed awareness of work-life balance legislation by experience of problems at work relating to this area of law

Experience of problem in relation to work-life balance	Informed awareness (unprompted/partly prompted)	
	Named a right related to work-life balance	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Had experience of this area of law (%)	50.0	7
Experienced problems but not with this area of law (%)	5.1	157
No problems with employment law (%)	8.6	836

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

4.2 Informed awareness (prompted)

In addition to prompted and partly prompted awareness as discussed in the previous section, respondents were asked directly in each broad area of legislation about their awareness of one specific piece of legislation in that area.

In the area of work-life balance the piece of legislation chosen to test prompted awareness was parental leave. Thus, respondents were asked:

‘One employment right is that parents are allowed to take a set amount of time off work to spend with their child, until that child is five years old (or longer, if that child has a disability). Were you aware of that right?’

As reported in Chapter 3 (Table 3.6), 52 per cent of respondents said they were aware of the right to parental leave when asked this direct question (prompt). In this section, we look at the personal, employment and experiential characteristics of these individuals (in Tables 4.5 to 4.8).

Table 4.5 shows that:

- Women are more likely to be aware of parental leave than men.
- Whites are more likely to be aware of parental leave than non-whites.
- The age pattern is only partly consistent with prior expectation. Thus, as we might expect, awareness of this right increases with age up to the 36-45 group, before falling back in the 46-55 group. It then increases again, however, such that the oldest group (56-64 years old) has highest proportion (two thirds) reporting awareness of this right.
- Awareness of this right is highest among those with the highest levels of qualification.

Table 4.5: Prompted awareness of parental leave by personal characteristics

Personal characteristic	Prompted awareness	
	Aware of parental leave	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Gender (%)		
Male	49.6	444
Female	54.7	556
Ethnic origin (%)		
White	52.3	949
Non-white	44.4	45
Age (%)		
16-25	36.9	139
26-35	50.0	273
36-45	60.4	276
46-55	47.1	228
56-64	66.7	81
Highest qualification (%)		
No qualifications	45.9	150
NVQ 1	39.8	96
NVQ 2	48.1	221
NVQ 3	49.4	173
NVQ 4	59.2	283
NVQ 5	63.2	66

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

Table 4.6 looks at awareness of parental leave by family characteristics. As would be expected, parents are more likely to be aware of this legislation than non-parents, but surprisingly, perhaps, the group which is the main target of this legislation (parents of children under five years old), although more likely to be aware of the right than those with no children, are less likely to be aware of it than are those with older children.

Table 4.6: Prompted awareness of parental leave by family characteristics

Characteristic	Prompted awareness	
	Aware of parental leave	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Parent? (%)		
	Yes	56.8
	No	48.7
Age of dependent children (%)		
	0-4 years	54.8
	5-11 years	63.4
	12-15 years	55.6
16-18 years (and in full time education)	58.2	82

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

Turning to the employment characteristics of respondents (Table 4.7), the following patterns stand out:

- Those in managerial and professional occupations were most likely to report having heard of parental leave prior to the survey.
- Awareness of this legislation was highest among employees in business and financial services, followed by those in public administration, health and education.
- There was no clear pattern by workplace size, although those in the very largest establishments (2,000 plus) were most likely to report awareness of parental leave.
- Permanent employees were much more likely than temporary staff to report awareness of parental leave.
- Awareness was more common among respondents working 16-34 hours per week, than among those with other working time patterns.
- Once again, awareness was higher among union members than among their non-unionised counterparts.

Although it was not possible to identify respondents who had had problems at work relating specifically to parental leave, Table 4.8 shows that the small number of respondents who had reported problems relating to work-life balance issues in general (which included parental leave) were more likely to report prior awareness of the parental leave legislation than were those whose employment problems related to entirely different areas of the law, or who had not experienced employment problems at all.

Table 4.7: Prompted awareness of parental leave by employment characteristics

Employment characteristic	Prompted awareness	
	Aware of parental leave	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Occupation (%)		
Managerial/admin	61.4	183
Professional/technical	60.1	196
Assoc. professional/technical	48.5	96
Clerical/secretarial	56.2	158
Craft/skilled manual	50.0	84
Personal/protective services	46.7	71
Sales	44.0	69
Plant/machine operatives	37.7	28
Other unskilled	39.7	101
Sector (%)		
Primary & extractive	52.6	21
Manufacturing, utilities & construction	41.6	198
Distribution, catering, transport etc.	51.5	234
Business and financial services	63.8	99
Public admin, education and health	59.0	313
Other services	53.3	68
Size of workplace (employees) (%)		
Under 15	43.5	173
15-49	55.4	198
50-199	56.5	211
200-499	54.9	123
500-1,999	46.4	105
2,000+	58.5	91
Employment status (%)		
Permanent	53.4	885
Temporary	41.1	102
Working time (%)		
Under 16 hours p.w.	45.3	75
16-34 hours p.w.	56.0	174
35 + hours p.w.	51.5	751
Union membership (%)		
Member	58.0	333
Non- member	48.8	642

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

Table 4.8: Prompted awareness of parental leave by experience of problems at work relating to work-life balance

Experience of problem in relation to work-life balance	Prompted awareness	
	Aware of parental leave	Unweighted base (n = 100%)
Had experience of this area of law (%)	80.0	7
Experienced problems but not with this area of law (%)	41.0	157
No problems with employment law (%)	53.6	836

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

4.3 Substantive knowledge

In this section, the results of the substantive knowledge testing questions are presented.

As explained more fully in Chapter 2, the general principle underlying the substantive knowledge questions was that they were asked only of respondents who had already responded to a prior question indicating that they had been aware of the particular employment right, their knowledge of which was being tested.

For each broad area of law the prior prompted awareness question related to a specific piece of legislation within that area of law, and the detailed questions about substantive knowledge related to that piece of legislation. The broad areas of law, and the corresponding specific pieces of legislation as set out below.

Area of rights	Specific legislation/right used to test prompted awareness and substantive knowledge	Reported in
Work-life balance	Parental leave	Ch. 4
Working Time	Working Time Directive	Ch. 6
Terms and conditions	National Minimum Wage	Ch. 7
Anti discrimination legislation	Generic right not to be discriminated against	Ch. 8
Unfair dismissal	Right not to be unfairly dismissed	Ch. 9

In this chapter, the main focus, therefore, was on parental leave, for the prompted awareness and substantive knowledge testing questions. In addition, however, because of particular policy interest in some other areas of work-life balance legislation (relating to time off for dependants in an emergency, maternity leave and the rights of women on return from maternity leave), we were also asked to include some questions testing substantive knowledge of these areas. We also report the findings of these latter questions in this section, but it should be stressed that, because these questions were not preceded by a question relating to prior awareness of the issue in question, the findings are not

directly comparable to those relating to substantive knowledge of parental leave also reported here. Neither are they directly comparable with the substantive knowledge questions on other areas of legislation reported in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Finally, it should be noted that in the various knowledge-testing questions, two different question formats were used, depending on the nature of the knowledge being tested, *ie* multiple choice responses (with differing numbers of response options) and open questions, and this should be borne in mind in comparing the results from the various questions.

4.3.1 Details of the knowledge testing questions

Table 4.9 presents full details of the questions posed relating to legislation protecting work-life balance. The correct answer is emphasised in each case. This table also indicates the numbers of respondents who were asked each question and the type of question format.

Looking first at the responses to the open-ended questions on parental leave (asked of those who had already indicated that they were aware of the legislation), it is clear that only a minority (fewer than one in five) knew that the entitlement was thirteen weeks, and there was a greater tendency to underestimate rather than overestimate the amount. A third reported that they did not know.

A slightly larger minority (nearly three in ten) knew that there is no requirement for parental leave to be paid, while 37 per cent thought that it was paid, and a third did not know.

Turning to the multiple choice questions about time off for dependants and maternity leave (asked of all respondents), first, the tables show that roughly one in three individuals chose the correct answer to questions about time off for dependants and the return to work part-time after maternity leave, results that are no better than chance (each question had three response options). However, three quarters of individuals knew that a woman can take maternity leave each time she is pregnant, a greater proportion than would be achieved by pure chance (with two response options). It would appear therefore, that individuals are more knowledgeable about the basic right to maternity leave than about the more complex, and more recent, provisions for time off for dependants. There are also misconceptions around (lack of) right to return to work part-time after maternity, with around half of respondents believing there to be greater provision than actually existed at the time of the research.

Question	Question type	Response option	% of those asked question	% of total sample
Parental leave questions: asked of those with prior awareness of parental leave legislation				
How long can parents take off as parental leave? (parental leave, length)	Open ended	Those underestimating	30.5	15.8
		Correct (to within one week of 13 weeks)	18.3	9.5
		Those overestimating	18.0	9.3
		Don't know	33.3	17.3
		Unweighted base (n = 100%)	544	1,000
How much of parental leave is paid? (parental leave, pay)	Open ended	Correct (none of it)	29.0	15.1
		Incorrect estimate (anything over 0 weeks)	37.1	19.3
		Don't know	33.8	17.6
		Unweighted base (n = 100%)	542	1,000
Additional questions relating to time off and maternity leave: asked of whole sample				
If a person had to take time off to look after their child or another dependant in an emergency, what would be their situation under the law? (time off for dependants)	Multiple choice (3 options)	They can take time off for which their employer must pay them	11.4	
		They can take time off but their employer does not have to pay them	37.5	
		It is up to the employer whether or not time off can be taken	36.6	
		Don't know	14.5	
How many times can a woman take paid maternity leave? (maternity leave, entitlement)	Multiple choice (2 options)	Only once	3.4	
		As many times as she has a child	74.7	
		Don't know	21.8	
If a woman who used to work full-time wanted to come back to work part-time after having a child, what would be her situation under the law? (maternity leave – return to work part-time)	Multiple choice (3 options)	The employer must offer her a part-time role	22.7	
		The employer must offer her a part-time role if possible	32.5	
		There is no legal obligation for the employer to offer her a part-time role	32.2	
		Don't know	12.3	
		Unweighted base (n = 100%)	1,000	

4.3.2 Substantive knowledge by self-assessed awareness/knowledge

Table 4.10 explores the relationship between actual and self-perceived knowledge by comparing the results of the knowledge testing questions (simplified by presenting the proportion getting the answer ‘correct’) with the levels of self-assessed awareness/knowledge amongst the sample.

The numbers in the table present a complex picture:

- For the two general questions relating to basic entitlements (entitlement to time off for dependants, and entitlement to repeated maternity leave), the relationship is fairly simple, with the percentage of individuals choosing the right answer generally increasing with level of self perceived awareness/knowledge.
- The relationship is less clear-cut with regard to the right to return part-time after maternity leave — it nevertheless remains the case that in general, those who rate themselves as ‘well informed’ are more likely to get the answer right than those who are ‘not well informed’.
- Similarly when the questions move on to more specific topics relating to parental leave, the pattern is not a straightforward one (in these cases the ‘not well informed and not interested category’ is not presented due to small cell sizes). In the question referring to the length of parental leave, once again a higher proportion of ‘well informed’ than ‘not well informed’ respondents get the answer right, but this is not the case for the question referring to whether parental leave is paid.

Table 4.10: Knowledge of work-life balance legislation by self-assessed awareness/knowledge combined

Self-assessed awareness/knowledge	Substantive knowledge						
	Parental leave: length	Parental leave: pay	Un-weighted base	Time off for dependants: entitlement	Maternity leave: entitlement	Maternity leave: return to work part-time	Un-weighted base
	Correct	Correct		Correct	Correct	Correct	
Well informed and knowledgeable (%)	12.5	24.5	122	43.5	80.4	27.2	187
Well informed but could know more (%)	21.9	30.4	282	36.7	77.5	34.5	499
Not well informed and could know more (%)	12.6	30.3	126	37.7	67.8	32.3	287
Not well informed and not interested (%)	*	*	12	17.2	60.7	17.9	27

* = fewer than five respondents in cell.

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

4.3.3 Substantive knowledge by individual characteristics

In this section we look at the relationship between respondents' characteristics and their levels of substantive knowledge about employment rights related to work-life balance. As previously, we look at a range of personal, employment and experiential characteristics.

Personal characteristics

Table 4.11 looks at patterns by personal characteristics:

- Differences by gender are generally small. The largest difference occurs in the case of time off for dependants, where more women than men correctly identified that there is a right to unpaid time off. It is interesting to note that slightly more

Table 4.11: Knowledge of work-life balance legislation by personal characteristics

Personal characteristics	Parental leave: length	Parental leave: pay	Un-weighted base	Substantive knowledge			
				Time off for dependants: entitlement	Maternity leave: entitlement	Maternity leave: return to work part-time	Un-weighted base
	Correct	Correct		Correct	Correct	Correct	
Gender (%)							
Male	20.3	29.3	225	34.7	73.4	34.3	444
Female	15.9	28.7	317	41.2	76.5	29.1	556
Ethnic origin (%)							
White	18.4	29.9	521	37.3	74.8	32.6	949
Non-white	*	*	18	41.5	72.2	18.5	45
Age (%)							
16-25	15.4	30.2	56	38.6	65.2	35.0	139
26-35	16.3	38.6	144	35.5	78.9	31.5	273
36-45	23.3	30.4	168	40.4	78.4	31.2	276
46-55	17.1	21.9	122	37.7	75.9	33.6	228
56-64	14.6	14.3	50	34.2	58.9	29.2	81
Highest qualification (%)							
No qualifications	18.2	15.2	73	43.9	53.1	22.4	150
NVQ 1	17.1	8.6	49	30.7	76.1	51.7	96
NVQ 2	11.4	26.6	109	42.2	78.0	25.1	221
NVQ 3	15.7	31.6	88	37.7	72.5	42.5	173
NVQ 4	24.6	35.5	173	33.9	77.6	32.9	283
NVQ 5	24.4	41.9	43	29.9	82.6	27.9	66

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

* = fewer than five respondents in cell.

men than women were aware that there is no legal right to return to work part-time after maternity leave.

- More white than non-white respondents gave the correct response in four out of the five knowledge tests (although in two of the cases the cell sizes are too small for reliable analysis). The biggest differences occurred in the case of the right to return part-time after maternity leave (where whites were nearly twice as likely as non-whites to answer correctly).
- There were no consistent age patterns in responses to these questions, although in most cases the highest proportion getting the answer correct was found in the 26-35 or 36-45 age group.
- Similarly the pattern by educational level was by no means clear cut, and there was no consistent tendency for those with higher levels of educational qualification to be more likely to answer correctly.

Table 4.12 presents a similar analysis, looking at characteristics relating to family situation and caring responsibilities. Generally speaking the patterns revealed are very much in the expected direction. In particular:

Table 4.12: Knowledge of work-life balance by family and caring characteristics

Characteristic	Parental leave: length	Parental leave: pay	Un-weighted base	Substantive knowledge			Un-weighted base
				Time off for dependants: entitlement	Maternity leave: entitlement	Maternity leave: return to work part-time	
	Correct	Correct		Correct	Correct	Correct	
Parent? (%)							
Yes	18.8	39.2	218	44.0	83.3	33.9	380
No	18.0	22.2	324	33.6	69.6	31.2	619
Age of dependent children (%)							
0-4 years	28.4	55.6	69	50.0	86.6	33.6	129
5-11 years	21.3	35.	120	43.2	84.7	29.0	198
12-15 years	14.4	27.9	74	50.0	82.3	28.0	133
16-18 years (and in full time education)	10.7	26.1	45	41.8	85.0	18.8	82
Caring responsibilities? (%)							
Yes	27.5	20.0	43	47.6	79.5	24.1	84
No	17.6	29.7	499	36.5	74.3	32.9	916

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

- In all five tests, parents are more likely to give a correct answer than non-parents, in some cases significantly more likely to.
- In the two questions relating to parental leave, as well as the question relating to time off for dependants, parents with the youngest children are more likely to give the correct answer, and this likelihood decreases as the age of child increases.

Employment characteristics

Table 4.13 shows how the likelihood of giving a correct answer to the various questions testing substantive knowledge of work-life balance legislation varies by the characteristics of the jobs that respondents do.

Overall, there are no strong or clear patterns in this likelihood as far as the variation by occupation, sector or size of workplace is concerned. It would seem that there is no systematic relationship between occupation, sector and workplace size on the one hand and substantive knowledge of work-life legislation on the other, at least when the latter is measured across five indicators of that knowledge in this way.

Generally speaking, permanent employees are more likely to have substantive knowledge of these rights than temporary employees, the exception being knowledge that there is no right to return to work part-time after maternity leave (temporary workers are more likely to know this than their permanent counterparts).

It is notable that part-time workers are more likely to have knowledge of the two questions relating to parental leave, and the question relating to time of for dependants. It is interesting to note that this is unlikely to be purely a gender effect (*ie* due to a higher incidence of part-time working among women), given that Table 4.11 showed that women are, if anything, less likely to get these questions right. More plausibly, it might partly reflect an association between working part-time and having young children — as Table 4.12 showed, those with children aged under five are much more likely than average to get the answers right to these questions.

Finally, it is interesting also to note that there is not a clear union membership effect in these questions. Indeed, in two of the questions (the one relating to paid parental leave, and the one relating to time off for dependants), union members are less likely to get the right answer than non-members.

Experience of problems at work

Finally, Table 4.14 shows the relationship between substantive knowledge of these areas of law, and reported experience of problems at work.

Table 4.13: Knowledge of work-life balance legislation by employment characteristics

Employment characteristics	Substantive knowledge						
	Parental leave: length	Parental leave: pay	Un-weighted base	Time off for depend'ts entitlem't	Maternity leave: entitlem't	Maternity leave: return to work part- time	Un-weighted base
	Correct	Correct		Correct	Correct	Correct	
Occupation (%)							
Managerial/admin	24.5	45.3	115	38.4	81.9	25.6	183
Professional/technical	19.2	21.6	121	38.6	86.3	35.3	196
Assoc. professional/technical	10.2	25.0	44	30.6	81.6	36.7	96
Clerical/secretarial	14.1	20.8	92	31.4	78.8	36.8	158
Craft/skilled manual	26.3	35.1	38	50.9	63.2	30.7	84
Personal/protective services	18.7	14.0	36	33.3	60.0	15.6	71
Sales	19.5	47.1	31	40.5	72.6	33.3	69
Plant/machine operatives	*	*	13	31.6	69.7	56.6	28
Other unskilled	21.7	12.5	45	41.9	65.1	25.0	101
Sector (%)							
Primary & extractive	44.4	*	13	36.8	68.4	27.8	21
Manufacturing, utilities & construction	25.7	33.3	95	40.5	72.8	40.1	198
Distribution, catering, transport etc..	15.6	28.7	117	40.6	73.6	27.2	234
Business and financial services	21.4	34.4	56	35.5	80.9	31.9	99
Public admin, education & health	14.3	25.5	189	31.7	80.3	27.1	313
Other services	22.6	15.6	35	36.7	80.0	28.3	68
Size of workplace (employees) (%)							
Under 15	14.2	23.0	85	44.5	72.8	33.3	173
15-49	14.6	25.3	106	35.4	80.6	23.9	198
50-199	23.9	26.7	118	37.1	78.3	31.4	211
200-499	18.8	27.8	73	36.4	72.7	30.1	123
500-1999	20.0	36.5	60	36.0	86.5	46.4	105
2000+	14.3	34.7	53	35.4	78.0	24.4	91
Employment status (%)							
Permanent	19.2	29.9	492	37.7	76.4	30.1	885
Temporary	13.4	20.8	43	37.2	65.9	47.7	102
Working time (%)							
Under 16 hours p.w.	20.9	36.0	36	44.4	71.7	24.1	75
16-34 hours p.w.	16.9	16.0	98	39.8	78.4	24.6	174
35 + hours p.w.	18.3	31.0	408	36.6	74.3	34.0	751
Union membership (%)							
Member	19.0	23.0	210	34.3	79.4	33.9	333
Non- member	18.1	31.8	318	38.8	73.0	30.6	642

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

* = fewer than five respondents in cell.

Table 4.14: Knowledge of work-life balance legislation by experience of problems at work related to the legislation

Experience of problem in relation to work-life balance	Substantive knowledge						
	Parental leave: length	Parental leave: pay	Un-weighted base	Time off for depend'ts: entitlem't	Maternity leave: entitlem't	Maternity leave: return to work part- time	Un-weighted base
Had experience of this area of law (%)	*	*	5	*	100	*	7
Experienced problems but not with this area of law (%)	15.9	27.0	75	34.0	71.6	32.7	157
No problems with employment law (%)	18.4	29.4	462	38.2	75.3	32.0	836

Note: all percentages are row percentages.
** = fewer than 5 respondents in cell.*

Generally the numbers of respondents to these questions with experience of employment problems related to work-life balance are too small for analysis, although it should be noted that all of those with experience of such problems answered the maternity leave entitlement question correctly.

Otherwise, there is no consistent pattern in the relationship between experience of employment problems in general and likelihood of getting these questions right.

4.4 Perception of entitlements (scenarios)

As explained in Chapter 2, respondents were presented with a series of scenarios or hypothetical situations, describing an employment-related issue and an employer's action, and asked whether the action was lawful or not. There were three scenarios which dealt with legislation protecting the work-life balance. These were:

Parental leave

Your friend has just become a father and wants to take time off to spend with his new baby. He proposes to his employer that he take off a week each month, unpaid, for three months, starting in a month's time. His employer refuses.

Release from work for ante-natal classes

Your friend is pregnant. She needs to take time off in order to attend ante-natal classes. The employer refuses her the time off, insisting that

she make appointments which are outside her normal work hours or have her pay docked.

Time off for dependants

You are friends with a couple who have a new baby. Both parents work full time. The father is late arriving at work one day as the childminder was delayed arriving at his home. The employer issues a warning letter and says if it happens again the man faces dismissal.

These scenarios are drawn from a list of fifteen, three in each of the five areas of law. Each respondent answered questions relating three randomly selected scenarios, each from a different area of law. Therefore, some respondents will not have been asked any scenario questions about legislation protecting work-life balance, and no one individual will have answered more than one question about this particular legislation. The number of individuals answering each of the three scenarios, due to the random matching of individuals with questions, also differs slightly.

4.4.1 Extent to which respondents identified scenarios as unlawful

As presented in Table 4.15, around two-thirds of respondents identified as unlawful two of the three scenarios concerned with work-life balance legislation or support for working parents (*ie* release from work for ante-natal classes and time off for dependants). However, only just over a third of individuals perceived the scenario about parental leave as an unlawful employer action. It is not possible from these results, however, to determine how much this is based on knowledge or awareness of the specific legislation and how much on an individual's sense of fairness.

It is, nevertheless, notable that this is the only one of the 15 scenarios in which the majority of respondents did not identify the situation described in the scenario as unlawful. This is likely, in part, to imply that people do not yet know the details of the new parental leave legislation. This is a consistent theme, throughout the evidence we have so far presented in this report. Thus in Chapter 3 (Table 3.5) our analysis of unprompted and

Table 4.15: Perception of entitlement

Perception of entitlement	Scenario concerned		
	Parental leave (%)	Release from work for ante-natal classes (%)	Time off for dependants (%)
Correctly identified as unlawful	35.4	65.6	64.4
Unable to identify as unlawful (<i>ie</i> incorrect answer, or 'don't know')	64.6	34.4	35.6
Unweighted base (n = 100%)	180	215	201

partly prompted awareness showed that parental leave was one of the areas of law least commonly cited by respondents (and was cited less often than any of the other provisions relating to work-life balance and working parents). Similarly (Table 3.6) our analysis of the prompted awareness questions showed that awareness of the parental leave legislation was lower than that of any of the other four specific examples of legislation considered. Further, as Table 4.9 above has shown, responses to the two parental leave questions showed lower levels of substantive knowledge than did responses to the other questions relating to work-life balance (time off for dependants and maternity leave).¹

4.4.2 Perception of entitlement by self-assessed awareness/knowledge

Table 4.16 presents a comparison of the self-assessed awareness/knowledge of individuals and their perception of the lawfulness of the three scenarios concerned with work-life balance legislation. The table shows little evidence of a consistent relationship between these variables. Whilst those rating themselves as 'well informed and knowledgeable' are most likely to identify as unlawful the scenario concerned with the release from work for ante-natal classes, this is not the case for the other two scenarios in this group.

Table 4.16: Perception of entitlement by self-assessed awareness/knowledge

Self-assessed awareness/knowledge	Perception of entitlement					
	Parental leave		Release from work for ante-natal classes		Time off for dependants	
	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base
Well informed and knowledgeable (%)	25.8	33	83.3	37	60.4	50
Well informed but could know more (%)	39.8	85	56.8	118	70.0	87
Not well informed and could know more (%)	40.4	51	72.4	55	59.0	62
Not well informed and not interested (%)	7.7	11	*	5	*	2

*Note: all percentages are row percentages.
 = fewer than 5 respondents in cell.

¹ Caution needs to be exercised, however, in making this latter comparison, as the parental leave questions were asked of a sub-sample already aware of the parental leave legislation, and the other questions of the whole sample (although, if anything, one might expect this to result in higher levels of knowledge being recorded in the parental leave questions).

4.4.3 Perception of entitlement by individual characteristics

Table 4.17 looks at the variation in respondents' perception of the scenarios' lawfulness by personal characteristics¹. Key features from the table are as follows:

- Women are significantly more likely than men correctly to identify the unlawfulness of the scenarios relating to time off for ante-natal classes and the new father taking time off for dependants. Both men and women are similarly unlikely to identify the parental leave scenario as unlawful, however.
- The patterns by age are not clear cut, although generally the youngest respondents are least likely to identify these scenarios as unlawful, which is consistent with the hypothesis that these issues (which all relate to parenthood) are less likely to be of concern to younger respondents.

Table 4.17: Perception of entitlement of work-life balance legislation by personal characteristics

Personal characteristics	Perception of entitlement					
	Parental leave		Release from work for ante-natal classes		Time off for dependants	
	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base
Gender (%)						
Male	36.6	80	60.1	103	57.5	89
Female	34.5	100	76.6	112	72.9	112
Age (%)						
16-25	22.6	30	39.3	25	57.1	27
26-35	24.2	34	79.3	63	54.5	63
36-45	51.5	62	75.6	54	79.0	51
46-55	32.4	39	43.6	52	58.3	43
56-64	*	14	85.0	21	60.0	17
Highest qualification (%)						
No qualifications	44.4	25	80.0	27	63.6	34
NVQ 1	50.0	26	47.1	23	50.0	12
NVQ 2	45.3	36	81.5	48	69.3	50
NVQ 3	21.2	34	56.0	38	75.0	27
NVQ 4	28.3	50	59.2	63	60.7	62
NVQ 5	*	7	75.0	14	41.7	13

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

*= fewer than five respondents in cell.

¹ There are too few respondents to these scenarios from ethnic minorities to present a white/non-white comparison of the responses.

- Qualification level plays no clear role, and it is not the case in any of these scenarios that those with the highest educational qualifications are most likely to identify the scenario as unlawful.

When we look at responses relating to the scenarios' lawfulness broken down by characteristics relating to the family status of the respondent (Table 4.18), it is clear that being a parent has a strong influence on the likelihood of identifying each of the scenarios as unlawful. In each of the three scenarios, parents are significantly more likely to identify the scenario as unlawful than are non-parents. In this case, the age of children, however, seems to make less difference, and there is no consistent variation by age of child in the responses.

Table 4.18: Perception of entitlements by family characteristics

Characteristics	Perception of entitlement					
	Parental leave		Release from work for ante-natal classes		Time off for dependants	
	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base	Identified as unlawful	Un-weighted base
Parent? (%)						
Yes	50.8	60	86.3	79	72.7	78
No	27.3	120	56.1	139	58.9	123
Age of dependent children (%)						
0-4 years	46.7	22	83.3	20	76.5	34
5-11 years	53.1	32	81.8	48	75.0	38
12-15 years	61.9	23	80.0	36	82.8	27
16-18 years (and in full time education)	60.0	14	89.5	19	70.6	17

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

Turning to employment characteristics (Table 4.19), there are very few consistent patterns across the different scenario responses. Thus there is no clear or common variation in perceptions of lawfulness of the scenarios by occupation, sector, workplace size or employment status. Similarly union membership is in two cases associated with a higher likelihood of identifying a breach of the law, but a lower likelihood in the third scenario. The only consistent pattern occurs in the case of working time, where it appears that part-time employees working fewer than 16 hours a week are, in the case of each scenario, most likely to identify the scenario situation as unlawful. The relatively small numbers of respondents in this part-time category, however, suggest caution in interpreting this finding.

Table 4.19: Perception of entitlement of work-life balance legislation by employment characteristics

Characteristics	Perception of entitlement					
	Parental leave		Release from work for ante-natal classes		Time off for dependants	
	Correct	Un-weighted base	Correct	Un-weighted base	Correct	Un-weighted base
Occupation (%)						
Managerial/admin	38.5	39	80.8	31	72.1	39
Professional/technical	21.7	30	66.7	39	51.4	17
Assoc. professional/technical	31.6	15	65.5	26	80.0	25
Clerical/secretarial	47.8	30	78.4	35	66.7	19
Craft/skilled manual	*	14	64.3	21	72.0	20
Personal/protective services	47.4	12	85.0	16	48.0	12
Sales	42.9	17	60.9	13	*	7
Plant/machine operatives	*	6	*	10	*	1
Other unskilled	72.7	14	66.7	22	85.7	20
Sector (%)						
Primary & extractive	*	2	83.3	6	100	5
Manufacturing, utilities & construction	26.8	37	54.3	47	60.8	37
Distribution, catering, transport etc.	43.6	49	70.8	36	59.6	52
Business and financial services	31.6	17	85.0	21	57.1	18
Public admin, education & health	50.0	53	67.9	75	65.3	64
Other services	*	12	80.0	14	88.2	15
Size of workplace (employees) (%)						
Under 15	38.1	26	80.6	46	70.8	26
15-49	57.1	35	67.6	41	60.5	41
50-199	32.4	36	80.4	52	56.8	42
200-499	37.5	24	40.9	20	63.6	33
500-1999	25.9	25	35.5	17	70.8	25
2000+	26.3	16	53.3	16	60.0	19
Employment status (%)						
Permanent	36.8	163	67.0	187	63.3	179
Temporary	*	15	53.3	25	78.9	21
Working time (%)						
Under 16 hours p.w.	62.5	9	100.0	18	85.7	15
16-34 hours p.w.	21.9	40	67.7	43	66.7	30
35 + hours p.w.	36.6	131	63.6	154	61.8	156
Union membership (%)						
Member	44.9	58	57.1	73	68.2	71
Non- member	31.8	118	68.8	138	63.1	128

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

*= fewer than 5 cases in cell.

4.5 How far are perceptions based on knowledge?

Although the scenarios were designed to test an individual's ability to identify the lawfulness or otherwise of a particular situation, it is clearly possible that a respondent's perception that a scenario depicts an unlawful situation reflects their general sense of fairness or natural justice, rather than any specific knowledge of the legislation in question.

To explore this further, therefore, all respondents who identified the scenario in question as unlawful were further asked to explain the way(s) in which they believed the individual's rights at work had been infringed, and were encouraged by the interviewer to identify any law which they believed had been broken in that case.¹

In this section, therefore, we present the answer to these follow-up questions which examine the extent to which scenario responses identifying a breach of the law were, in some sense, based on knowledge. The relatively small numbers of respondents to these questions limits the extent to which the findings can be broken down by respondent characteristics *etc.*

Table 4.20 shows, for each of the three scenarios relating to work-life balance issues, the proportion of those who identified the scenario as unlawful who were also able to explain why (*eg* by citing the name or provisions of the legislation relevant to the scenario in question). There was some variation between the three scenarios in this respect in terms of the proportion citing the part of the law that might have been broken (varying from only one in five respondents in the case of the scenario relating to the new father taking time off, to nearly two-thirds for the scenario relating to time off for ante-natal classes).

Table 4.20: Whether perception of entitlement for work-life balance legislation is based on knowledge

Whether perception of entitlement is based on knowledge	Scenario		
	Parental leave (%)	Release from work for ante-natal classes (%)	Time off for dependants (%)
Named relevant area of law	59.6	62.3	22.0
Named other area of law/don't know	40.4	37.7	78.0
Unweighted base (n = 100%)	77	148	130

¹ Responses were recorded verbatim, and then categorised by the researchers into those who were judged to exhibit knowledge of the legislation and those who were not.

The data suggest, therefore, that in a significant proportion of cases, even where respondents are able to identify infringements of their rights in this area, this is likely to reflect their general view of what is 'fair' or 'natural justice', rather than any specific knowledge of the relevant legal provisions.

Table 4.21 looks at the extent to which respondents' reliance on 'knowledge' rather than 'intuition' (or similar) in identifying infringements in the area of work-life balance, varied with their own self-assessment of their general level of awareness and knowledge of employment rights.

Although relatively small cell sizes dictate caution in interpreting these data, there would seem to be little or no correlation between self-assessed awareness/knowledge and the extent to which their perceptions of infringement of rights in the area of work-life balance was based on knowledge of the underlying legislation. Indeed in two out of the three scenario examples, the judgements of those who regarded themselves as 'not well informed' were actually more likely to be based on knowledge of the laws involved than were those of respondents who saw themselves as 'well informed'.

Table 4.21: Knowledgeable perception of work-life balance entitlements by self-assessed awareness/knowledge

Self-assessed awareness/knowledge	Knowledgeable perception of entitlement (<i>ie</i> respondent named relevant area of law)								
	Parental leave			Release from work for antenatal classes			Time off for dependants		
	Relev't (% of those recog'g scenario as unlawful)	Relev't (% of all asked scenario question)	Un-weigh -ted base	Relev't (% of those recog'g scenario as unlawful)	Relev't (% of all asked scenario question)	Un-weigh -ted base	Relev't (% of those recog'g scenario as unlawful)	Relev't (% of all asked scenario question)	Un-weigh -ted base
Well informed and knowledgeable (%)	37.5	9.7	31	53.3	44.4	31	13.3	8.2	32
Well informed but could know more (%)	54.5	21.7	39	61.3	34.8	77	30.4	21.3	59
Not well informed and could know more (%)	79.2	32.8	23	69.0	50.0	36	19.4	11.5	37
Not well informed and not interested (%)	*	*	2	*	*	4	*	*	2

Note: all percentages are row percentages.
 *= fewer than five respondents in cell.

Table 4.22 repeats the analysis by a range of individual (personal and job) characteristics (fewer characteristics are used here than in some earlier analyses, because of small cell sizes).

Looking at the proportion of all those asked each scenario question who *both* identified unlawfulness, *and* demonstrated knowledge of the relevant legislation, it seems that this proportion was higher among men with regard to the parental leave scenario, but higher among women with regard to the time off for ante-natal classes scenario.

In all three scenarios the proportion identifying unlawfulness and displaying knowledge about the reasons for the infringement was higher among parents than non-parents.

Finally, the union/non-union member difference was not consistent; in some scenarios the proportion displaying a knowledgeable perception of entitlement was higher among union members, in others it was higher among the non-unionised respondents.

Table 4.22: Knowledgeable perception of work-life balance entitlements by individual characteristics

Characteristic	Knowledgeable perception of entitlement (ie respondent named relevant area of law)									
	Parental leave			Release from work for ante-natal classes			Time off for dependants			
	Relev't (% of those recog'g scenario as unlawful)	Relev't (% of all asked scenario question)	Un-weigh-ted base	Relev't (% of those recog'g scenario as unlawful)	Relev't (% of all asked scenario question)	Un-weigh-ted base	Relev't (% of those recognising scenario as unlawful)	Relev't (% of all asked scenario question)	Un-weigh-ted base	
Gender (%)										
Male	62.2	22.8	32	59.8	35.9	62	23.0	13.2	48	
Female	57.1	19.3	45	66.1	40.6	86	21.3	15.5	82	
Parent? (%)										
Yes	58.8	29.4	32	73.8	53.3	68	22.0	16.3	58	
No	59.4	16.2	45	53.5	32.9	80	22.2	12.8	72	
Union membership (%)										
Member	50.0	22.4	29	75.0	42.9	53	13.3	9.1	51	
Non- member	66.7	21.2	46	57.5	39.6	92	27.3	17.2	78	

Note: all percentages are row percentages.

4.6 Taking action

Individuals who identified a scenario as unlawful were then asked to comment on whether they would take action (such as seeking advice from an independent source, or discussing the matter with the employer) if they found themselves in that situation. The pattern is consistent across all three scenarios (Table 4.23). In each case around four out of five respondents faced with this situation believed that they would take action as a result (the proportions are slightly higher in the cases of time off work for dependants and release from work for ante-natal classes than they are for parental leave).

Table 4.23: Whether individuals would take action if scenario happened to them

Whether individual would take action in that situation	Scenario		
	Parental leave (%)	Release from work for ante-natal classes (%)	Time off for dependants (%)
Yes, would take action	77.5	81.6	82.0
No, would not take action	22.5	18.4	18.0
Unweighted base (n = 100%)	77	148	130

Table 4.24 shows the breakdown of this ‘propensity to take action’ by some key individual characteristics:

- Men would be more likely than women to take action in the parental leave scenario, while women would be more likely to take action in relation to ante-natal classes or (especially) in relation to time off for dependants.
- Perhaps surprisingly, comparing parents with non-parents, the former would be significantly less likely to take action over parental leave or release for work for ante-natal classes, and significantly more likely to do in the context of time off for dependants.
- Trade union members would be more likely to take action than non members in two of the scenarios (ante-natal classes, and time off for dependants), and less likely to do so in the case of parental leave.

Table 4.24: Propensity to take action in work-life balance scenarios by individual characteristics

Individual characteristic	Scenario					
	Parental leave		Release from work for ante-natal classes		Time off for dependants	
	% would take action	Un-weighted base	% would take action	Un-weighted base	% would take action	Un-weighted base
Gender (%)						
Male	83.8	32	81.3	62	78.7	48
Female	69.0	45	83.1	86	85.2	82
Parent? (%)						
Yes	72.7	32	73.8	68	91.7	58
No	83.9	45	87.2	80	73.0	72
Union membership (%)						
Member	72.7	29	85.0	53	86.7	51
Non-member	81.0	46	80.2	92	78.9	78

Note: all percentages are row percentages.