



**WERS**

The  
Workplace  
Employment  
Relations  
Study

**Changes in work life balance and other  
aspects of job quality: Findings from the 2011  
WERS**

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- In 2000s, increasing policy interest in job quality as
  - Pre-recession, more favourable economic climate allowed greater emphasis on quality of jobs (rather than quantity)
  - recognition of link between job quality and wellbeing
- Some improvements from late 1990s to mid-2000s
  - such as job security and task discretion
- How has this changed since 2004?
- What has happened to work-life balance?
  - An economic downturn may result in business needs taking precedence over practices to improve employees' WLB
  - But WLB initiatives may also aid employers through greater flexibility

# Overview

WERS

- What is WERS?
- Experiences of recession
  - workplaces and employees
- Changes in job quality
  - work intensity, job autonomy and perceived job security
- Work-life balance
  - Flexible working arrangements
  - Employer attitudes
  - Work-life conflict
- Further information

# What is WERS?

The logo for WERS, consisting of a dark purple square with the word "WERS" in white capital letters inside a white speech bubble shape pointing downwards.

- **National** survey mapping employment relations in workplaces across Britain
- **Unique and comprehensive:** rich data collected from managers, worker representatives and employees in the same workplaces
- **Well-established:** 1980, 1984, 1990, 1998, 2004, 2011
- **Large-scale:** almost 2,700 workplaces in 2011
- **Independent:** multiple funding sources
- **Endorsed** by a range of employer, union and independent organisations

# The WERS surveys

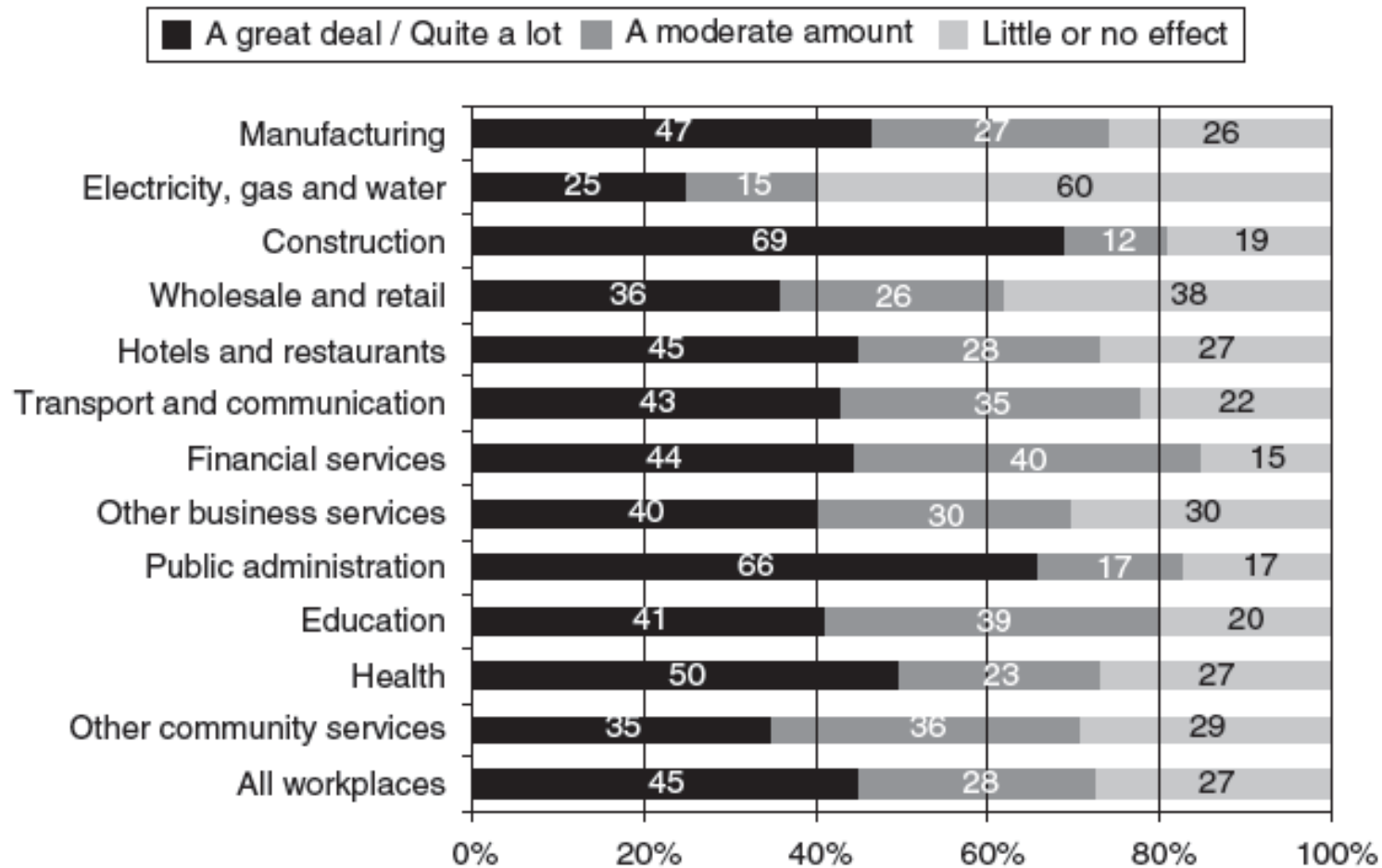
WERS

	Survey of managers		Survey of worker representatives		Survey of employees	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
<i>Cross-section workplaces</i>						
2004	2,295	64	984	77	22,451	61
2011	2,680	46	1,002	64	21,981	54
<i>Panel workplaces</i>						
2004	989	n/a	512	80	10,270	61
2011	989	52	432	66	8,821	55

# Experiences of recession

# Workplaces Most Adversely Affected

WERS



Base: All employment in workplaces with 5+ employees

# Actions in Response to Recession

WERS

	Private sector	Public sector	All workplaces
Freeze or cut in wages	38	<u>64</u>	41
Freeze on filling vacant posts	26	<u>44</u>	28
Change in the organisation of work	23	<u>36</u>	25
Postpone workforce expansion	22	22	22
Reduce paid overtime	19	23	19
Reduce training expenditure	14	<u>33</u>	17
Reduce agency or temporary staff	13	<u>30</u>	15
Reduce basic hours	15	<u>7</u>	14
Compulsory redundancies	14	10	13
Voluntary redundancies	5	<u>23</u>	7
Reduce non-wage benefits	7	7	7
Enforced unpaid leave	3	3	3
Increase agency or temporary staff	3	5	3
Other response	2	3	2
No action taken	27	<u>11</u>	25

Base: All employment in workplaces with 5+ employees



# Changes Experienced by Employees in Response to Recession

WERS

	Private sector	Public sector	All employees
Wages were frozen or cut	26	<u>49</u>	32
Workload increased	26	<u>36</u>	28
Work was reorganised	16	<u>25</u>	19
Access to paid overtime was restricted	18	<u>21</u>	18
Access to training was restricted	9	<u>19</u>	12
Non-wage benefits were reduced	5	<u>8</u>	5
Moved to another job	5	<u>7</u>	5
Contracted working hours were reduced	5	<u>3</u>	5
Required to take unpaid leave	2	2	2
None of these	45	<u>27</u>	40

Base: Employees present at workplace at time of recession

# Changes in job quality

# Work intensity

WERS

Employees agreeing that:	'My job requires that I work very hard'		'I never seem to have enough time to get my work done'		'People in this workplace who want to progress usually have to put in long hours'
	2004	2011	2004	2011	2011
Private sector	74	<u>83</u>	36	<u>38</u>	42
Public sector	80	<u>85</u>	51	48	37
All employees	76	<u>83</u>	40	41	41

Base: All employees

# Job control

WERS

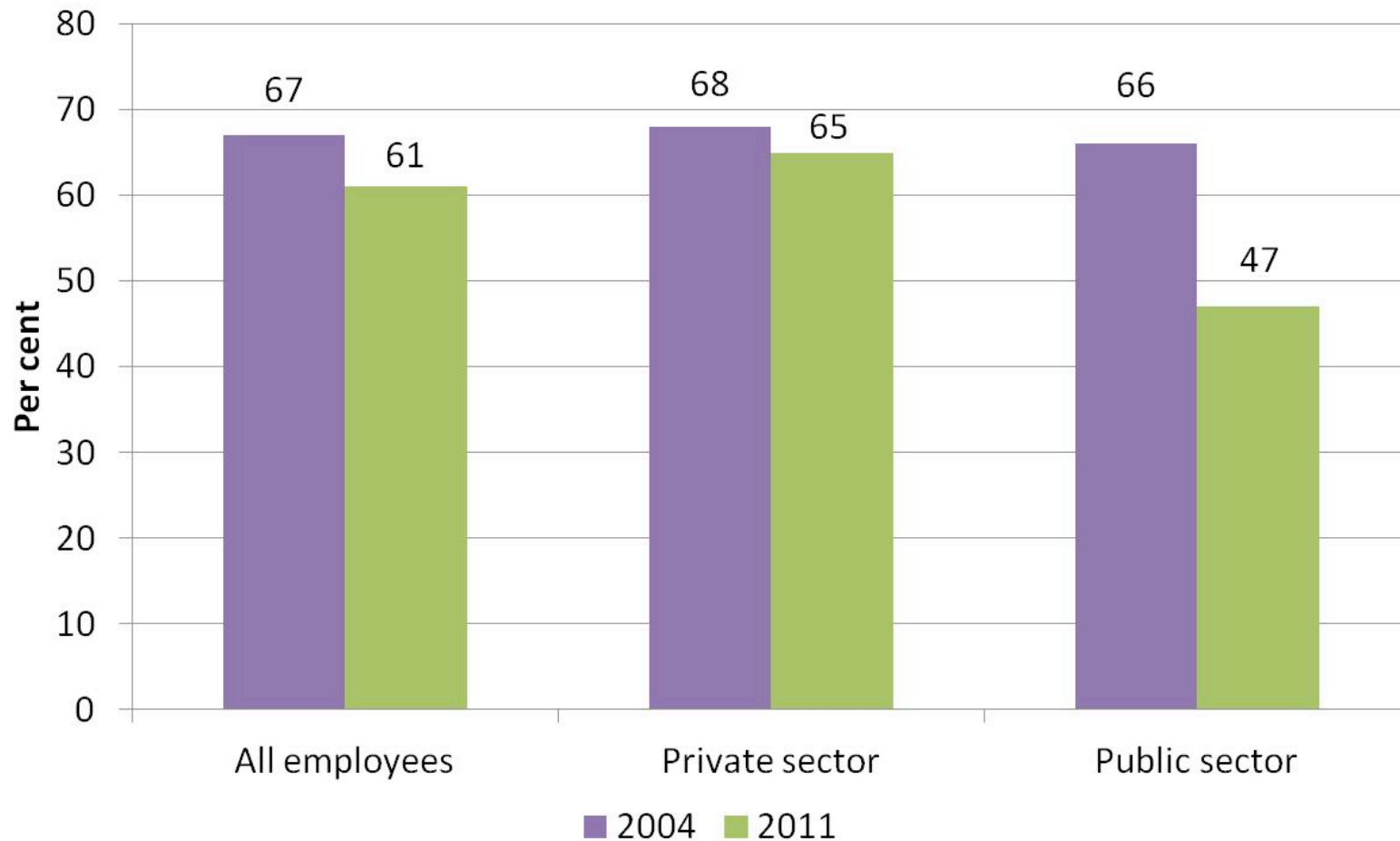
% of employees reporting 'a lot' of influence over:	Private		Public	
	2004	2011	2004	2011
How the work is done	52	<u>55</u>	45	47
The order in which tasks are carried out	50	<u>52</u>	46	47
The pace of work	40	<u>43</u>	32	<u>35</u>
The tasks done in the job	38	<u>44</u>	31	<u>36</u>
Start and finish times	26	<u>31</u>	28	30
All of the above	13	<u>16</u>	10	<u>12</u>

Base: All employees

# Job security

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Employees agreeing 'I feel my job is secure in this workplace'

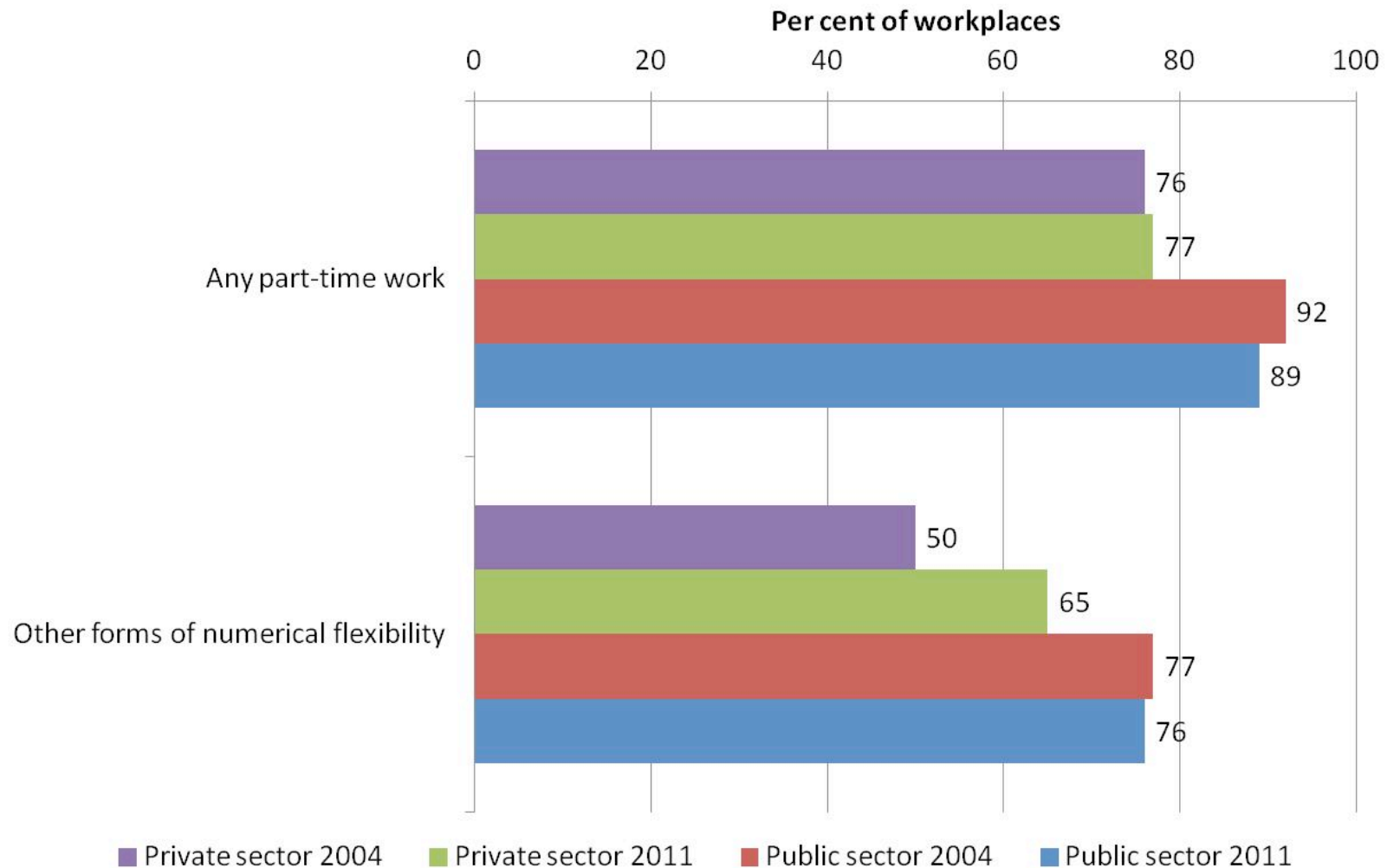


Base: All employees

Work-life balance

# Flexible working arrangements

WERS



Base: All workplaces

# Flexible working arrangements

WERS

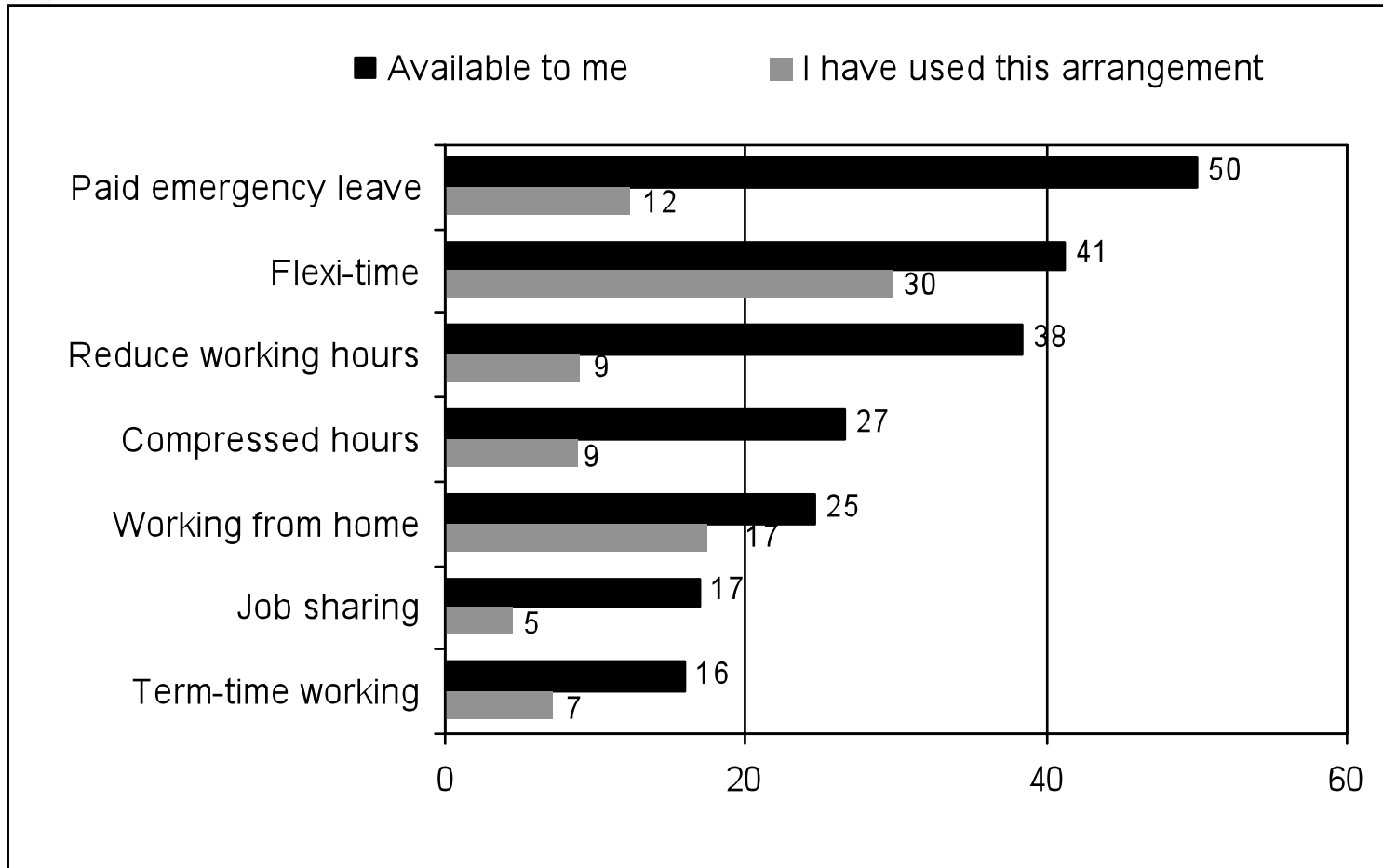
% of workplaces:	Private		Public		All workplaces	
	2004	2011	2004	2011	2004	2011
Reduce working hours	60	<u>54</u>	76	75	62	<u>56</u>
Flexi-time	34	32	43	49	35	34
Working from home	24	<u>29</u>	35	42	26	<u>30</u>
Compressed hours	10	<u>17</u>	21	<u>36</u>	11	<u>19</u>
Job-sharing	19	<u>11</u>	67	<u>53</u>	25	<u>17</u>
Term-time working	9	12	49	51	14	16

Base: All workplaces



# Flexible working arrangements

WERS



Base: All employees, excluding those who did not know if arrangement was available

# Work-life balance

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- Managers 'understand about employees having to meet responsibilities outside work'
  - Private sector: increase from 59% to 63%
  - Public sector: fall from 61% to 58%
- Rise in managers agreeing 'It is up to individual employees to balance their work and family responsibilities' (66% to 77%)
- 27% of employees agreed 'I often find it difficult to fulfil my commitments outside of work because of the amount of time I spend on my job'

# Work-life conflict

*'I often find it difficult to fulfil my commitments outside of work because of the amount of time I spend on my job'*

	<b>% of employees:</b>	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Hours worked	<10	19	21	60
	10-29	13	21	66
	30-48	26	26	47
	48 +	57	22	21
Organisation size (number of employees)	< 50	21	24	54
	50-249	27	25	49
	500 +	29	25	47
Dependent children	No	26	24	50
	Yes	30	26	44
<b>All employees</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>48</b>

# Summary

WERS

- Most employers took a number of actions in response to recession, and many employees experienced some form of change
- Changes in job quality 2004-2011: rising work intensity, falling job security, greater job autonomy
- Evidence on changes in WLB is mixed:
  - Some forms of flexible working more common, but others less so
  - More managers though it was up to the individual to balance work and family responsibilities
  - More employees felt managers were understanding of their responsibilities outside work (at least in the private sector)
  - Sizeable minority of employees reported conflict between their work and commitments outside

# Further information

The logo for WERS (Workplace Employment Relations Study) is a dark purple square with the word "WERS" in white, sans-serif capital letters.

- Van Wanrooy et al. (2013) *Employment relations in the shadow of recession*, published by Palgrave Macmillan: [http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/?sfl=id\\_product&stl=636376](http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/?sfl=id_product&stl=636376)
- BIS 2011 WERS website (including 2011 WERS First Findings and transparency data): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-2011-workplace-employment-relations-study-wers>
- WERS data available from the UK Data Service: <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/series/?sn=2000058>
- WERS special issue of NIESR review – call for papers: <http://www.niesr.ac.uk/national-institute-economic-review>

# Flexible working arrangements in unionised workplaces, 2011

WERS

	Recognised union	No recognised union	All workplaces
<b>% of workplaces:</b>			
Reduce working hours	74	<u>51</u>	62
Flexi-time	42	<u>32</u>	35
Working from home	33	29	26
Compressed hours	33	<u>15</u>	11
Job-sharing	43	<u>9</u>	25
Term-time working	36	<u>11</u>	14

Base: All workplaces

# Unionised workplaces

WERS

	Available to me		Used this arrangement	
	Recognised union	None	Recognised union	None
Paid emergency leave	58	<u>42</u>	15	<u>10</u>
Flexi-time	43	<u>39</u>	34	<u>26</u>
Reduced working hours	42	<u>35</u>	8	10
Compressed hours	28	<u>25</u>	9	8
Working from home	20	<u>28</u>	14	<u>20</u>
Job sharing	20	<u>13</u>	4	5
Term-time working	20	<u>11</u>	10	<u>4</u>

Base: All employees, excluding those who did not know if arrangement was available

# Caring responsibilities

- % employees with caring responsibilities rose from 15% in 2004 to 18% in 2011

	Available to me		Used this arrangement	
	Caring responsibilities	None	Caring responsibilities	None
Paid emergency leave	50	50	18	<u>11</u>
Flexi-time	42	41	33	<u>29</u>
Reduced working hours	40	38	10	<u>9</u>
Compressed hours	26	27	10	9
Working from home	21	<u>25</u>	14	<u>18</u>
Job sharing	18	17	5	4
Term-time working	16	16	9	<u>7</u>

Base: All employees, excluding those who did not know if arrangement was available



# Other entitlements

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- In 2011, in 10% of workplaces, at least some employees were entitled to a specific period of paid parental leave (in addition to maternity or paternity leave, and time off for emergencies)
- 3% provided workplace nursery
- 31% provided financial help with childcare (up from 5% in 2004)
- Less than 1% provided financial help with care of older adults
- 8% provided specific period of leave for carers of older adults (up from 6%)