

IP PR

 Persuasion UK

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of work for good

STRONGER RIGHTS, BETTER RESULTS

MANAGERS' ATTITUDES TO WORKERS' RIGHTS

October 2024

WHO WE ARE

- **IPPR (Institute of Public Policy Research)** is an independent charity working towards a fairer, greener and more prosperous society.
- **The TUC** exists to make the working world a better place for everyone. It brings together more than 5.5 million working people who make up its 48 member unions.
- **Persuasion UK** is an independent non-partisan, not-for-profit research initiative which aims to understand what's shaping public opinion on the issues that will define the next decade of public policy. We study the narratives, messengers and experiences which are moving public opinion now - and those which have the potential to do so in the future.



WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

- Assess levels of support for increasing workers' rights amongst managers.
- Explore the opinions of employers with direct responsibility for management and HR working in organisations across the economy.
- Determine whether people who make management decisions within businesses and who engage more frequently with employees are more or less optimistic about the potential impact of the government's employment rights policies.

METHODOLOGY

- Opinium conducted an online survey among 1,000 middle managers and senior decision-makers with a focus on HR and recruitment in businesses with 10 or more employees. Fieldwork was carried out between 6 and 21 August 2024. These were conducted through a bespoke approach, recruiting DMs from two specialist business panels and the B2B subset on Opinium's proprietary UK panel. All data has been checked to ensure results are consistent across all sample sources. This allows us to corroborate the overall findings, alongside all usual data checks that are included as standard within market research studies.

FINDINGS (1)

- The polling reveals strong support for the government's plans amongst those making decisions within businesses and frequently engaging with workers. Most managers support the idea of strengthening the rights of ordinary workers in principle and welcome specific policies announced by the government.
 - More than two-thirds (68 per cent) of senior decision-makers and middle managers in businesses, including six in 10 (61 per cent) in small businesses, believe that the rights of ordinary workers should be stronger.
 - A majority of managers (69 per cent) are aware of Labour's 'new deal for working people'.
 - A clear majority of managers (75 per cent) support Labour's 'new deal for working people'. This includes support from nearly seven in 10 managers (69 per cent) in small organisations. Only 17 per cent of managers oppose the government's policies.
 - Employers believe there will be economic benefits from making workers' rights stronger. A majority of believe that the government's employment rights policies will have a positive effect on productivity and investment, as well as the profitability of their business.

FINDINGS (2)

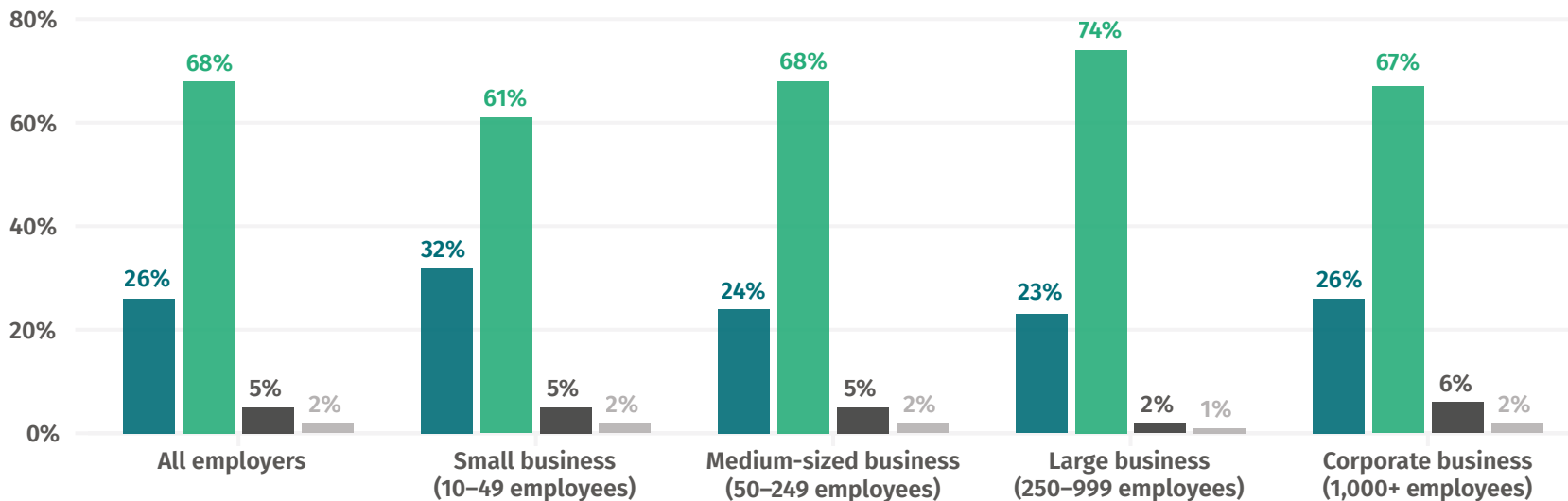
- A majority of managers support the government's proposed changes to individual employment rights. Most managers are in favour of the government's plans to:
 - give employees protection from unfair dismissal from the first day of employment
 - give employees access to sick pay and parental leave from the first day of employment
 - ban zero-hours contracts
 - raise the national minimum wage and remove age bands
 - ask large firms to develop, publish and implement action plans to close their gender pay gaps
 - ask large firms to publish their ethnicity and disability pay gaps.
- A majority of managers support the government's proposed changes to collective employment rights and trade union law. Most managers are in favour of the government's plans to:
 - make it easier for trade unions to achieve recognition for collective bargaining
 - allow secure voting on trade union ballots to be done electronically
 - strengthen rules against blacklisting, harassment and intimidation of trade union officials
 - establish 'fair pay agreements' in the adult social care sector.

GENERAL ATTITUDES TO WORKERS' RIGHTS

FIGURE 1

More than two-thirds of senior decision-makers and middle managers in businesses believe that the rights of ordinary workers should be stronger

Responses to the question: "Which of the following comes closest to your view?"



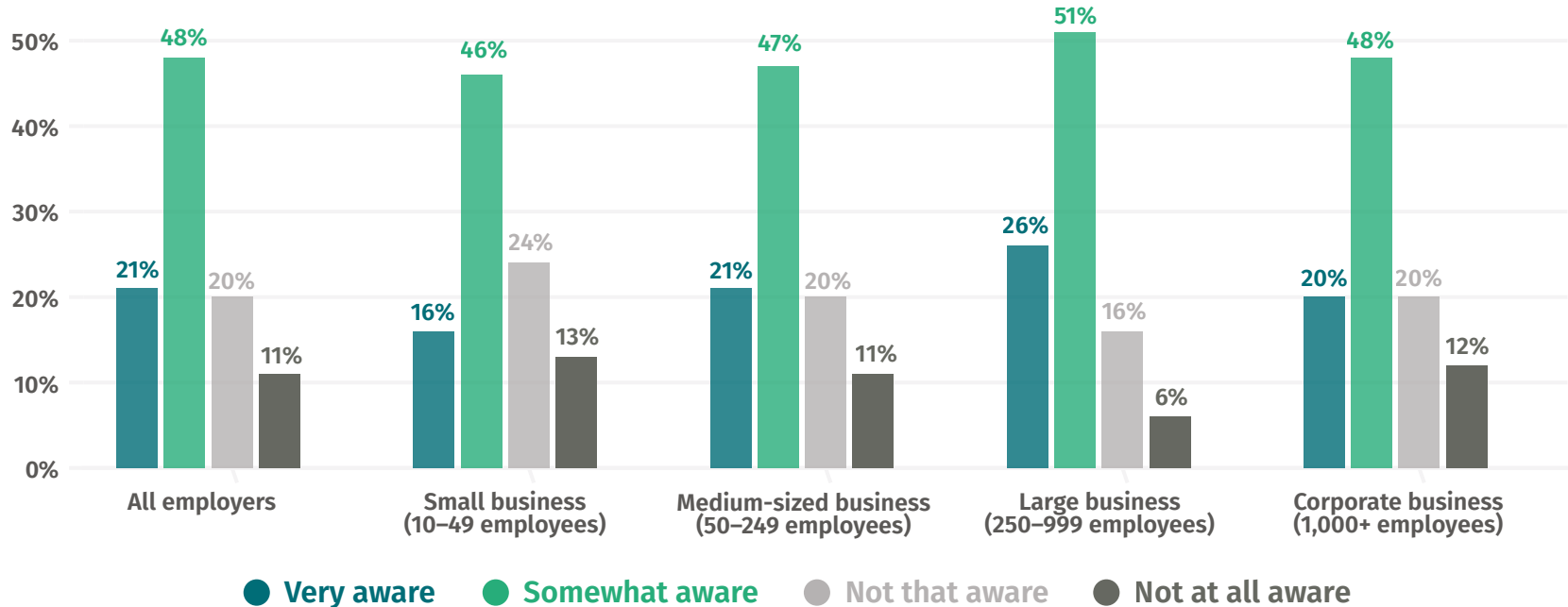
- In general, the rights of ordinary workers do NOT need to be strengthened any more than they are now
- In general, the rights of ordinary workers DO need to be strengthened
- Neither
- Don't know

AWARENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS

FIGURE 2

A clear majority of businesses are aware of Labour's plans to strengthen workers rights

Responses to the question: "The new Labour government currently plans to strengthen employment rights through what they call their 'new deal for working people'. Before taking this survey, how aware of these plans were you?"

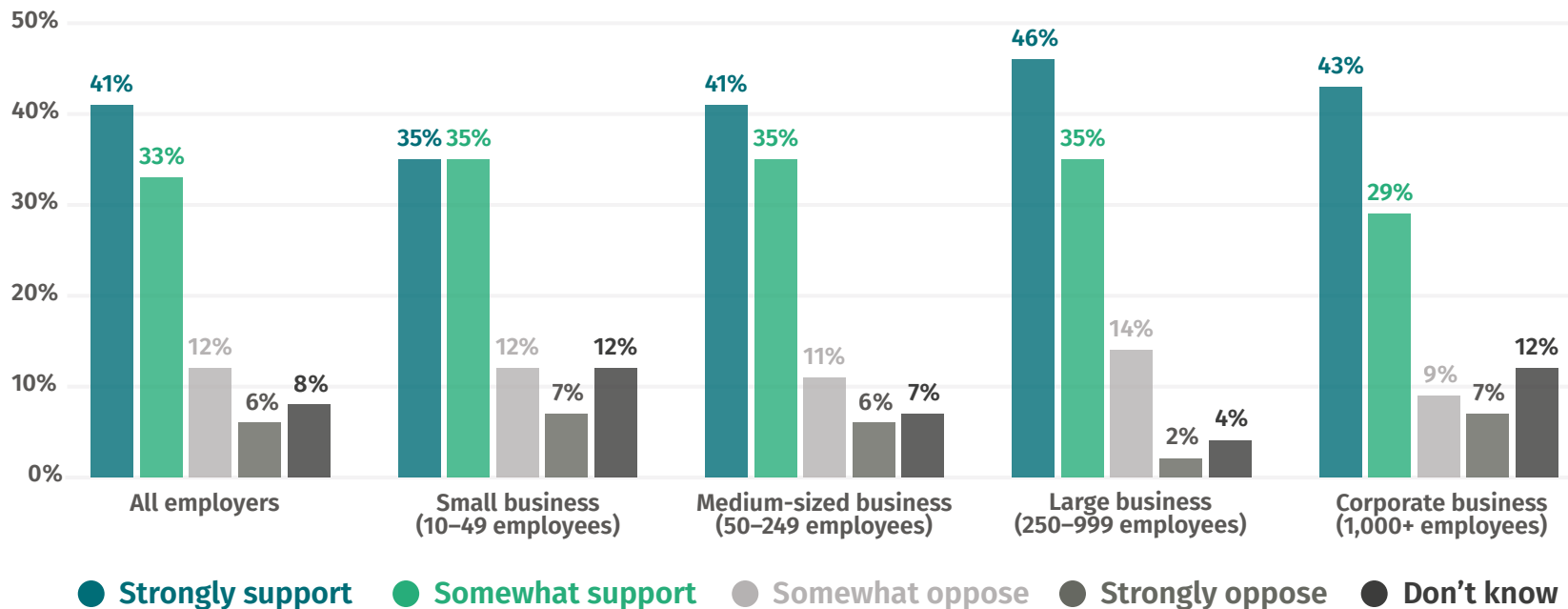


SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PACKAGE OF REFORMS (1)

FIGURE 3

74 per cent of employers support Labour's 'new deal for working people'

Responses to the question: "And do you support or oppose Labour's plans to strengthen employment rights?"



SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PACKAGE OF REFORMS (2)

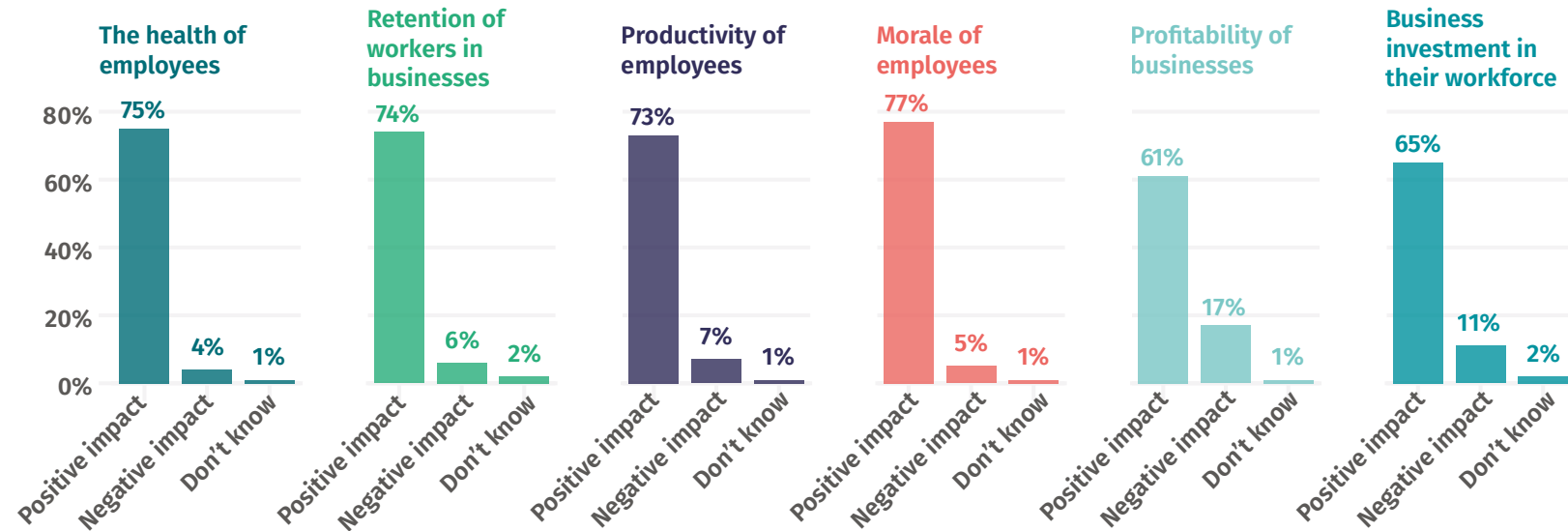
- A clear majority of managers (75 per cent) support Labour's 'new deal for working people'.
- This includes support from nearly seven in 10 managers (69 per cent) in small organisations. Only 17 per cent of managers oppose the government's policies.
- Managers believe that strengthening employment rights for ordinary workers would benefit their organisations in various ways.
 - **Profitability:** Six in 10 (61 per cent) think stronger employment rights will have a positive impact on business profitability, compared to fewer than two in 10 (17 per cent) who disagree.
 - **Investment:** Six in 10 (65 per cent) think stronger employment rights will have a positive impact on business investment in the workforce, compared to one in 10 (11 per cent) who do not.
 - **Productivity:** Seven in 10 (73 per cent) think strengthened employment rights will boost productivity, compared to just 7 per cent who disagree.
 - **Retention:** Seven in 10 (74 per cent) think that strengthening employment rights will improve workforce retention, compared to just 6 per cent who do not.
 - **Workforce health:** Seven in 10 (74 per cent) think that strengthened employment rights will improve employee health, compared to just 4 per cent who disagree.

SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PACKAGE OF REFORMS (3)

FIGURE 4

Employers believe that strengthening employment rights for ordinary workers would benefit their businesses in multiple ways

Responses to the question: "Some people have argued for the strengthening of employment rights for ordinary workers. Generally, what impact, if any, do you think strengthening employment rights will have on the following things?"



SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PACKAGE OF REFORMS (4)

- The UK economy has experienced significantly slower productivity growth than comparable countries since the financial crisis and has had the lowest levels of business investment in the G7 for three years in a row.
- A majority of employers believe that the government's employment rights policies will have a positive effect on productivity and investment, as well as the profitability of their business. These results suggest that employers believe there will be economic benefits from making workers' rights stronger.

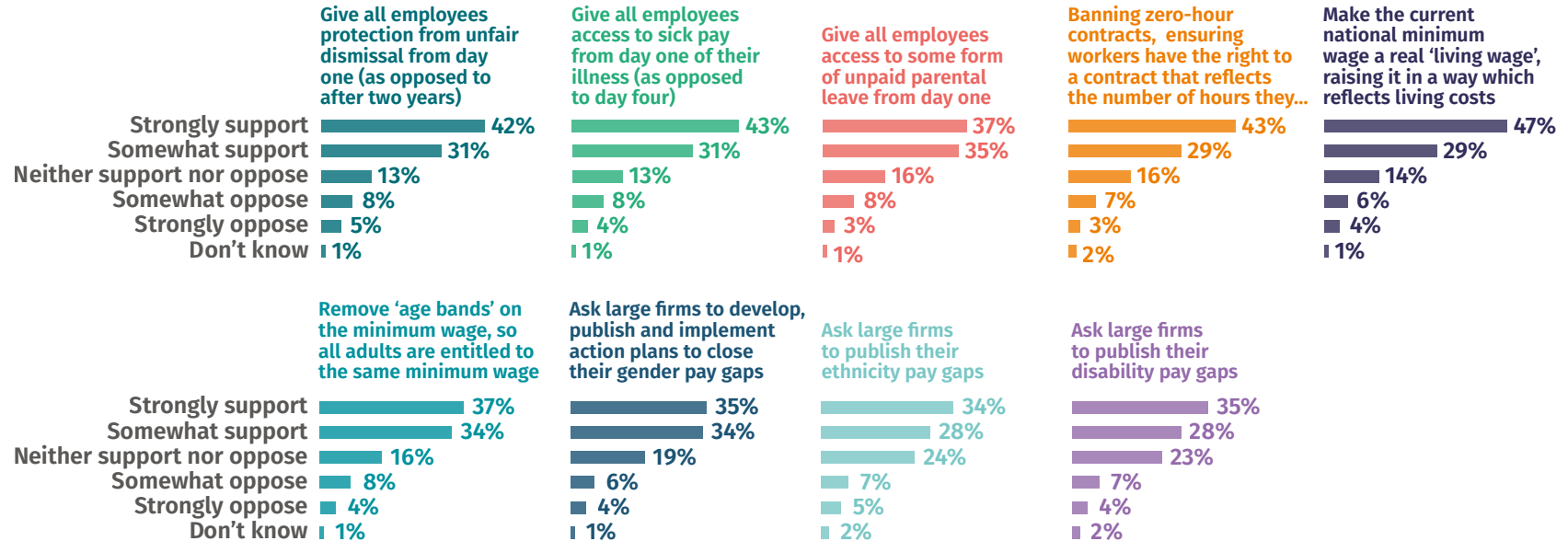
ATTITUDES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS POLICIES (1)

- A majority of managers support the government's proposed changes to individual employment rights.
- A significant minority of managers are strongly in favour of most of the government's employment rights policies.
- Most managers are in favour of the government's plans to:
 - give employees protection from unfair dismissal from the first day of employment
 - give employees access to sick pay and parental leave from the first day of employment
 - ban zero-hours contracts
 - raise the national minimum wage and remove age bands
 - ask large firms to develop, publish and implement action plans to close their gender pay gaps
 - ask large firms to publish their ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

ATTITUDES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS POLICIES (2)

FIGURE 5

There is majority support among employers for all of government's proposed changes to individual employment rights
Responses to the question: "Below is a list of changes to individual employment rights being proposed as part of Labour's 'new deal for working people'. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas?"



ATTITUDES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS POLICIES (3)

- **Protection from unfair dismissal:** Most employers (73 per cent) support giving employees protection from unfair dismissal from the first day of employment, known as 'day one rights', compared to a small minority (13 per cent) who opposed the measure.
- **Access to sick pay:** A majority of employers (74 per cent) also support giving employees access to sick pay from day one (compared to 12 per cent who oppose the idea).
- **Access to parental leave:** More than seven in 10 (70 per cent) of managers support giving employees access to parental leave from the first day of employment, compared to just 11 per cent who oppose.
- **Banning zero-hours contracts:** A clear majority (72 per cent) of managers support banning zero-hours contracts, versus just one in 10 (10 per cent) who disagree.
- **Introducing a real living wage:** More than three in four (76 per cent) of managers support raising the current national minimum wage to a real 'living wage', compared to one in 10 (10 per cent) who disagree.
- **Removing minimum wage age bands:** 71 per cent of managers support the idea of removing age bands on the minimum wage, ensuring that all adults are entitled to the minimum wage, compared to 12 per cent who oppose.

ATTITUDES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS POLICIES (4)

- **Gender pay gap action plans:** 69 per cent of managers support asking large firms to develop, publish and implement action plans to close their gender pay gaps, versus 11 per cent who disagree.
- **Ethnicity pay gap actions plans:** More than six in 10 (62 per cent) of employers support asking large firms to publish their ethnicity pay gaps, compared to 12 per cent who oppose.
- **Disability pay gap action plans:** 64 per cent of managers support asking large firms to publish their disability pay gaps, compared to 12 per cent who disagree.

ATTITUDES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S COLLECTIVE RIGHTS POLICIES (1)

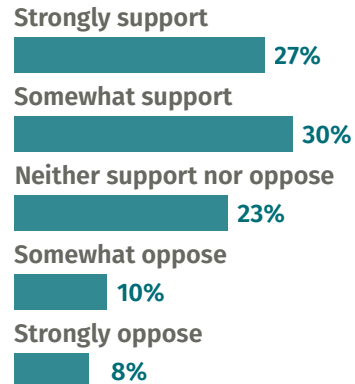
- A majority of managers support the government's proposed changes to collective employment rights and trade union law.
- Most managers are in favour of the government's plans to:
 - make it easier for trade unions to achieve recognition for collective bargaining
 - allow secure voting on trade union ballots to be done electronically
 - strengthen rules against blacklisting, harassment and intimidation of trade union officials
 - establish 'fair pay agreements' in the adult social care sector.

ATTITUDES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S COLLECTIVE RIGHTS POLICIES (2)

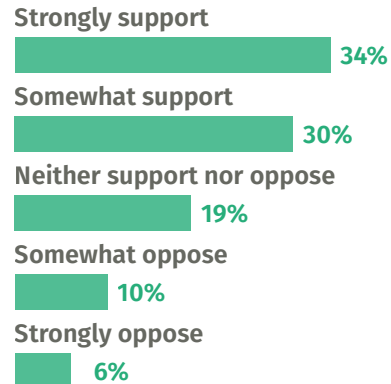
FIGURE 6

There is majority support among employers for all of government's proposed changes to collective employment rights
Responses to the question: "Here are a series of policies that the Labour government have proposed in relation to collective employee rights and trade unions. To what extent do you support or oppose these ideas?"

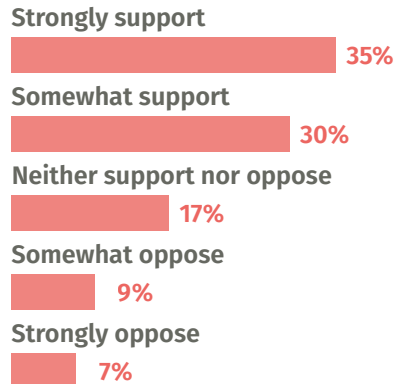
Make it easier for trade unions to achieve recognition for collective bargaining in workplaces



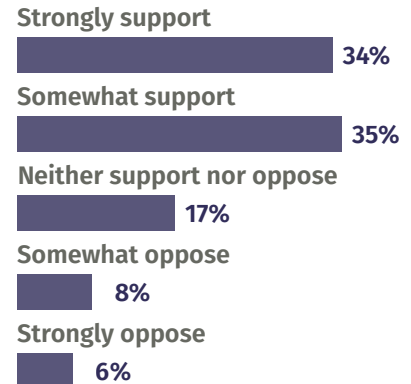
Allow secure voting on trade union ballots to be done electronically and not only through post



Strengthening rules against blacklisting, harassment and intimidation of trade union officials in the workplace



Establish 'fair pay agreements' in the adult social care sector, where workers and employers negotiate minimum terms and conditions to cover the entire industry



ATTITUDES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S COLLECTIVE RIGHTS POLICIES (3)

- **Trade union recognition:** More than half of managers (57 per cent) support making it easier for trade unions to achieve recognition for collective bargaining, compared to 18 per cent who are opposed.
- **Electronic voting for trade union ballots:** 64 per cent of managers are in favour of allowing secure voting on trade union ballots to be done electronically, compared to 16 per cent who disagree with the policy.
- **Protecting trade union officials:** 65 per cent of managers support strengthened rules against blacklisting, harassment and intimidation of trade union officials, versus 16 per cent who are opposed.
- **Establishing fair pay agreements:** 68 per cent of managers are in favour of establishing 'fair pay agreements' in the adult social care sector, compared to 14 per cent who disagree.

HOW STRONGER EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS WILL IMPACT THE BUSINESS (1)

- Most employers think the proposed changes to employment rights will have a positive impact on their business, or else it won't make much difference either way.
- A small minority of employers think the government's policies would have a negative impact on their organisation.

HOW STRONGER EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS WILL IMPACT THE BUSINESS (2)

FIGURE 7

Most employers think proposed employment changes will have a positive impact on their organisation, or else won't make much difference either way

Responses to the question: "And overall, what sort of impact, if any, would the following changes have on your organisation?"

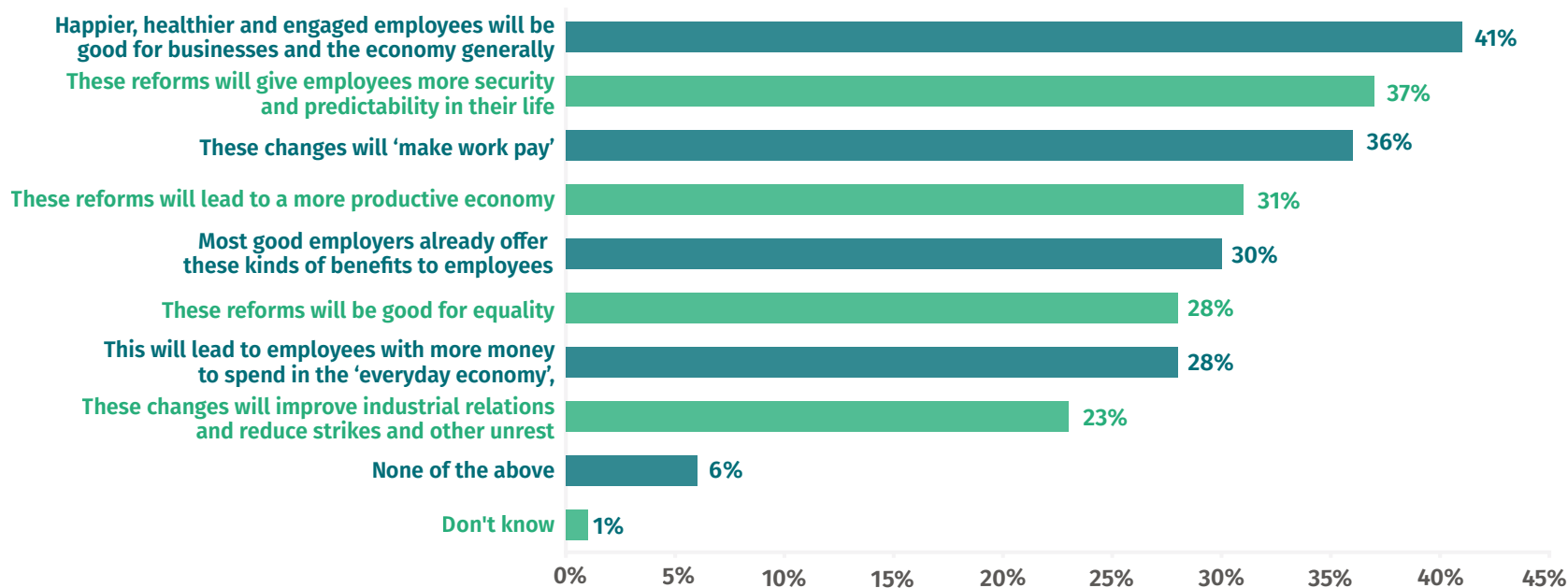


WHY MANAGERS SUPPORT THE REFORMS

FIGURE 8

Top reasons for supporting the reforms

Responses to the question: "Below is a list of reasons some have made FOR strengthening employment rights in the UK. Which, if any, of the following three do you think are the best reasons FOR strengthening employment rights overall? You can choose up to three, or select 'none of the above' if you don't agree with any of them?"

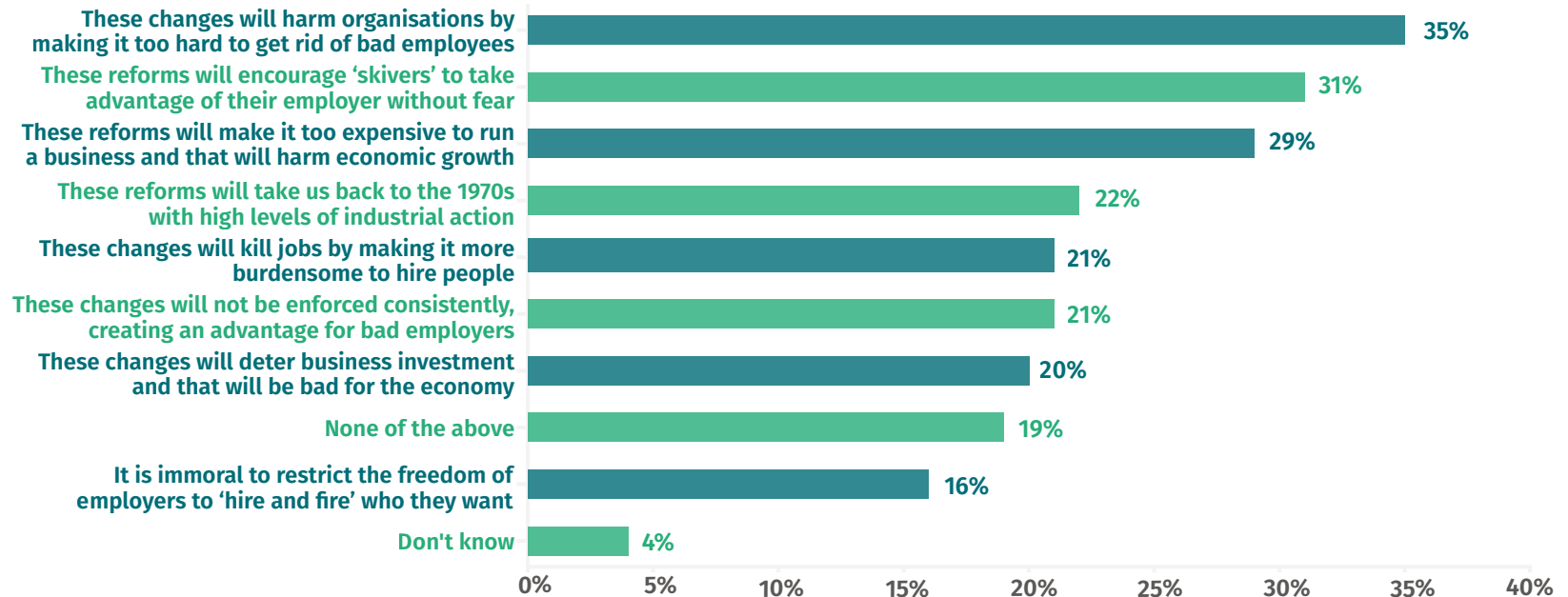


WHY MANAGERS OPPOSE THE REFORMS

FIGURE 9

Top reasons for opposing the reforms

Responses to the question: "And here is a list of reasons some people have made AGAINST strengthening employment rights in the UK. Which, if any, of the following three do you think are the best reasons AGAINST strengthening employment rights overall? You can choose up to three, or select 'none of the above' if you don't agree with any of them."



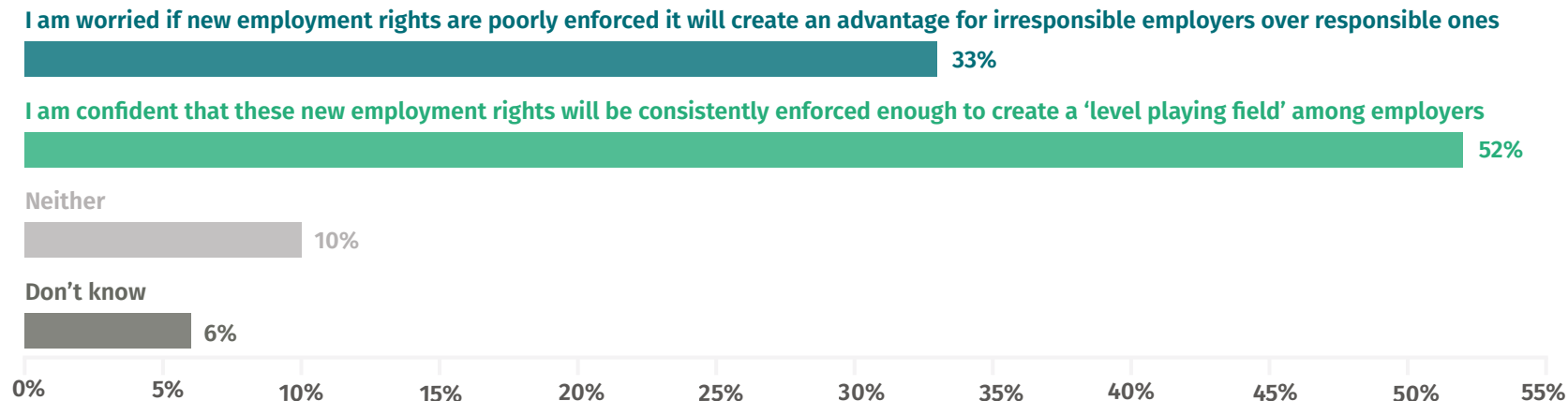
ENFORCING THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES

- A majority of managers (52 per cent) are confident that new rights will be consistently enforced to create a 'level playing field' among employers.
- A third of managers (33 per cent) are worried that irresponsible employers will have an advantage over responsible ones if new employment rights are not enforced properly.

FIGURE 10

A majority of managers are confident new rights will be consistently enforced

Responses to the question: "Which of these comes closest to your view?"



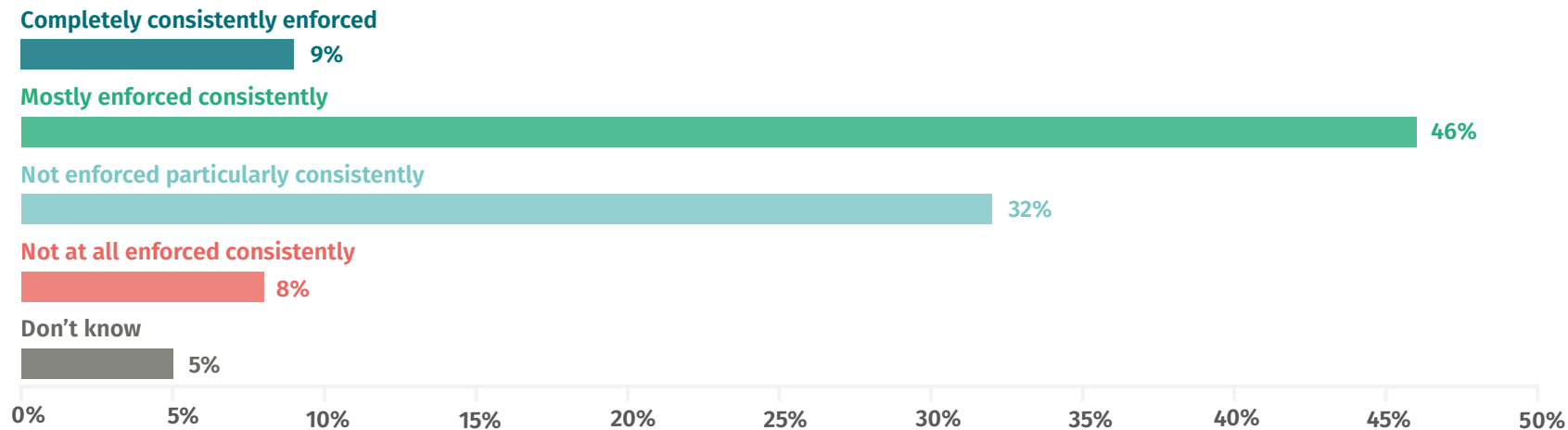
ENFORCING WORKERS' RIGHTS IN GENERAL

- A majority of managers (55 per cent) believe that employment rights are enforced consistently.
- Nearly four in 10 managers (39 per cent) believe that employment rights are not enforced consistently.

FIGURE 11

A majority of managers believe that existing employment rights are enforced consistently

Responses to the question: "And to what extent, if at all, do you think existing employment rights are being enforced consistently now? Employment rights currently are..."



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