

# Sunday Working in Retail

# Is Sunday Working Working for Retail Staff?

September 2015

Report of Telsolutions Survey of Usdaw Members Working in Retail

*Usdaw*  
Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers



*"We already have no bank holidays and even Christmas and New Year are now eroded."*

*"I feel bullied into working, but they say it is the needs of the business so I have no choice."*

*"I could not attend my mosque for prayers or look after my grandchild."*

*"The pressure on current staff is immense now and management always hold a grudge for those staff who opt out."*

*"I am feeling pressured to work on a Sunday when it would cost me double in childcare which I cannot afford."*

*"As I am separated, I have my children every other weekend. I work every Saturday and 1 in 4 Sundays. I often struggle to arrange childcare and fear it has an effect on my relationship with my children."*

*"Sunday is the only day I get home before 9.30 so it is the only day I get to eat an evening meal with my family."*

*"If Sunday trading was extended I feel that we would lose our premium which would impact greatly on my wages."*





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# Introduction



Usdaw commissioned this survey from the independent company Telsolutions in order to give an accurate and up-to-date picture of the experiences and views about Sunday working from retail staff across England and Wales.

The survey was sent by email and SMS text to Usdaw members working in retail between 4 and 9 September 2015. A total of 10,536 members responded – 8,750 working in large stores and 1,786 members in small stores.

Those working in large stores were mainly from supermarkets Tesco, Morrisons and Sainsbury's, but with substantial responses from staff at other retailers including:

- Aldi
- Argos
- Asda
- B&M Bargains
- B&Q
- Boots
- Debenhams
- Dixons
- Homebase
- House of Fraser
- Iceland
- Ikea
- John Lewis
- Lidl
- Marks & Spencers
- Next
- Poundland
- Primark
- Selfridges
- The Co-operative Group
- Waitrose

The respondents from small stores were mostly from the Co-operative Group, Co-op Societies, Tesco Express and Sainsbury's Local stores, with some from smaller branches of Boots, Morrisons and Marks & Spencers.

The survey responses give a comprehensive picture of the views and experiences of Sunday working from a wide range of retail staff, young and old, part-time and full-time, in large stores and small.

Usdaw feels that the responses are representative of retail staff who are trade union members, mostly in trade union recognised companies. This is not the case for the majority of retail staff, only about 10% of whom are union members. About 80% of staff in retail work in companies which do not recognise trade unions.

It is widely accepted that staff in companies where a trade union is recognised are better treated and better protected than those in companies which do not recognise a union.

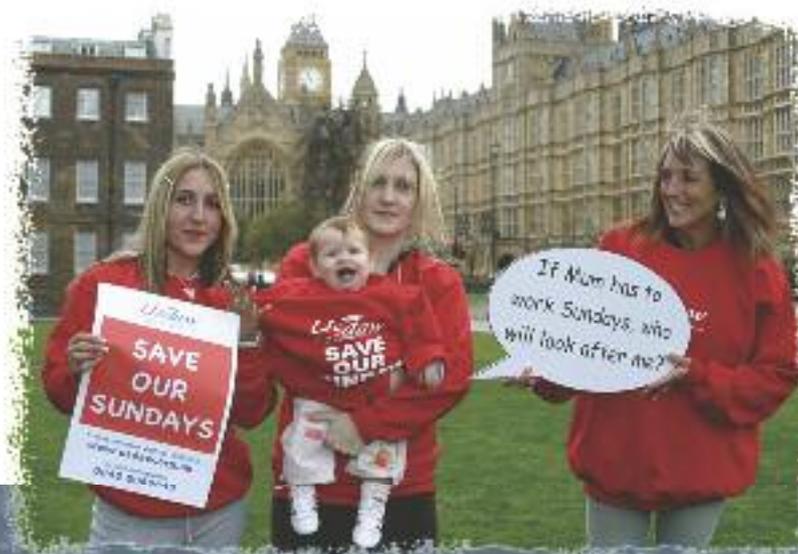
The experiences documented here are therefore those of the better treated and better protected workers in retail. The experiences of other retail workers, who have no access to a recognised trade union, are likely to be worse.

**John Hannett**  
General Secretary

# Key Findings

The survey offers a stark picture of Sunday working for staff in both small and large stores, where most staff already work Sundays and often Saturdays as well. Many staff want to work less Sunday hours yet a majority still come under pressure to work more:

- The vast majority of retail staff already work on at least some Sundays – 74% in large stores and 80% in small stores, with around a third of staff working every Sunday.
- Around 80% of shopworkers also work on Saturdays and in large stores over half of staff work every Saturday, making weekend time on Sundays even more precious.
- Staff in large stores are far more likely to receive premium pay for working on Sundays than those in small stores. 72% of respondents in large stores received premium pay – usually time-and-a-half – compared to just 32% in small stores (This is much higher than in retail generally where around half of staff in large stores receive premiums, due to Usdaw’s influence negotiating on behalf of staff.).
- Average shift times are slightly longer in small stores – 7.6 hours compared to 7.1 hours in large stores, but staff in small stores have to work more Sundays.
- Only around 6% of staff in both large and small stores wanted to work more hours on Sundays, whereas 35% in large stores and 55% in small stores wanted to work less.
- Only 21% of staff in large stores and 15% of those in small stores always have their requests for annual leave on Sundays granted. Around a third say their requests are not usually or never granted, meaning they miss out on special occasions.
- 58% of staff in large stores and 66% of those in small stores come under pressure to work on Sundays when they do not wish to.
- Around half of retail staff have caring responsibilities for children or elderly, sick or disabled relatives.
- Around two-thirds of carers say they find it difficult to arrange suitable alternative care when they have to work on Sundays.
- Carers come under more pressure to work on Sundays than non-carers.
- Only around 13% of staff in large stores and 10% in small stores have used their right to opt out of Sunday working, although around 5% of staff in large stores and 6% in small stores have tried unsuccessfully to use the right.
- The vast majority of retail staff do not want to see Sunday trading hours extended – 91% of staff in large shops and 76% in small shops.



# The Survey Results

## 1. Do you work on Sundays?

The responses showed that the majority of shopworkers in large stores, 74%, already work on a Sunday.

Of those who work on Sundays, 43% work every week, with a further 33% working at least 1 in 4 Sundays and 24% working less than 1 in 4.

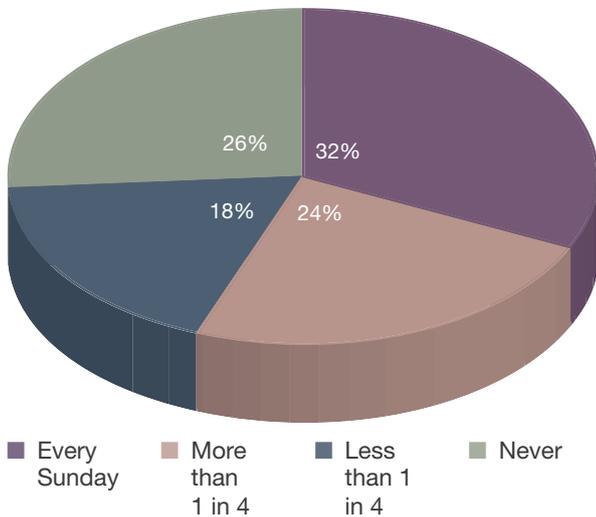
In small stores, a higher proportion of staff – 80% worked on Sundays. Of those Sunday workers, a similar proportion – 41% work every week, but a much higher number – 44% work more than 1 in 4 Sundays, with only 15% working less than 1 in 4.

So most retail staff already work on Sundays, but in small stores with longer opening hours, more staff have to work on more Sundays.

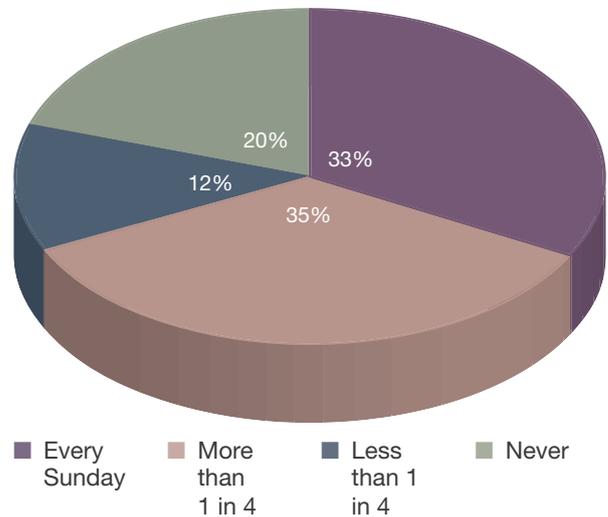
This is not surprising, but it shows the impact that longer Sunday opening in large stores would have and is worrying when compared to sections 3 and 4 that show staff already work longer hours than they wish and are under pressure to work more.

### How often do you work on Sundays?

Large stores



Small stores



*"I am a deputy manager and have to work when needed, usually 3 out of 4 Sundays."*

*"Sundays used to be a day of rest. Now my contract says 5 over 7, which means if you are lucky enough to have your rotas two weeks in advance you can make arrangements, however managers do ask you quite often to change hours at short notice which means family life is disrupted even more."*

*"Working in retail means you already have no normal weekend. People who don't work in retail simply don't understand the pressure we are put under for the 'needs of the business'."*

*"We are always short staffed because not many people like to work on a Sunday, including managers."*

## 2. Do you work on Saturdays?

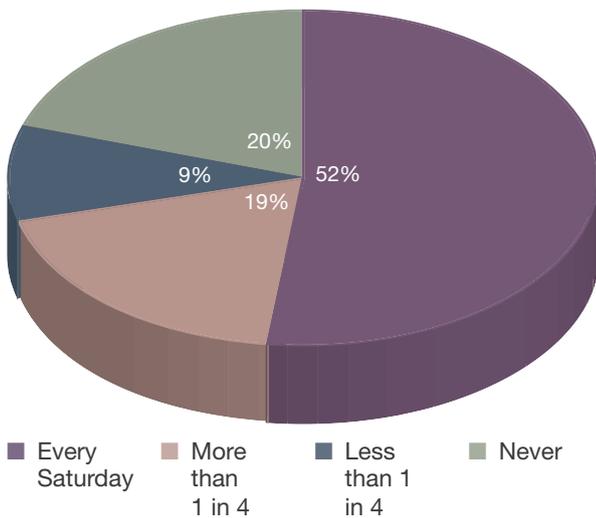
Most staff in large stores also work on Saturdays, with over half (52%) working every Saturday. An additional 19% worked more than 1 in 4 Saturdays.

So for shopworkers, Sunday is not just special because it is a weekend day – for most retail staff Sunday is the only weekend day they can get any time to spend with family or partners who work during the week, or with children who are at school.

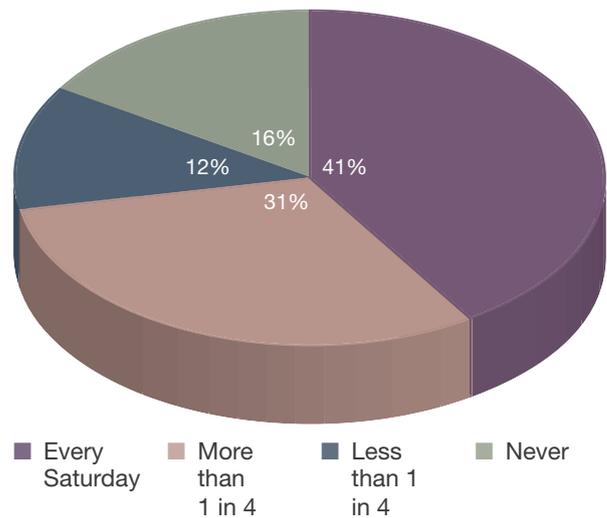
By comparison, 41% of staff in small stores worked every Saturday, although a further 31% worked more than 1 in 4 Saturdays. This shows that when the trading hours of both types of store are the same, a higher proportion of staff from the large store need to work, reflecting the need for fewer staff in small stores.

### Do you work on Saturdays?

Large stores



Small stores



*"Because I also work on Saturdays the early finish on a Sunday still enables me to spend time with my family at the weekend. If I had to work later I would miss out on this time together and most family occasions."*

*"Sunday is the only day of the week that I am guaranteed to have quality time with my children! They are in school Monday to Friday, I work most Saturdays. What is more important to this government, the family or the ability to shop later?"*

*"As I work every Saturday and the rest of my family work Monday to Friday, Sunday is the only day we can all meet up for family gatherings."*

*"I work all weekend every weekend so Sunday evening is the only time I get to see my family as they work Monday to Fridays."*

*"I've missed many family and friends social gatherings due to working many Saturdays. If Sunday hours are extended when could you come together with the people you love?"*

### 3. How many hours do you usually work on Sundays?

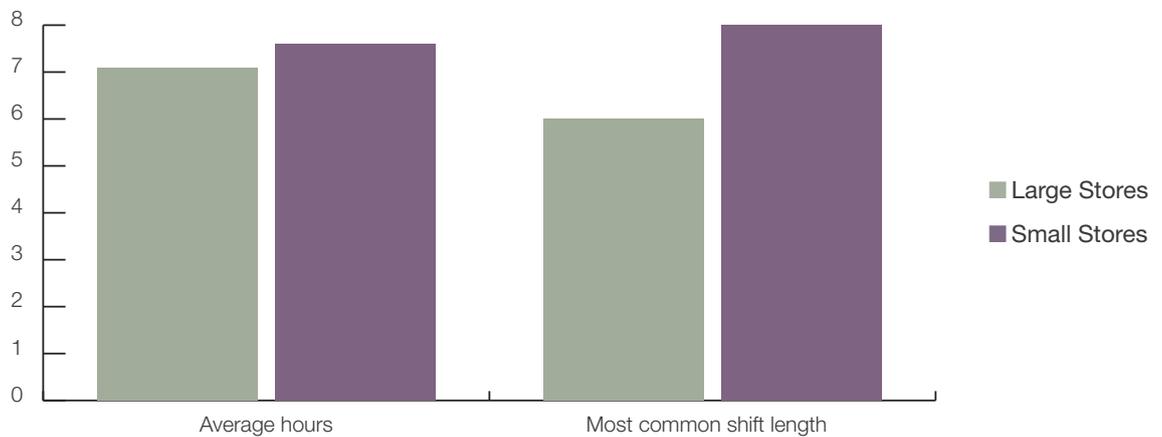
Staff work a wide variety of hours on Sundays, although generally for longer in small stores than in large stores.

In large stores, the most common shift length was 6 hours, whilst the average hours worked on Sundays was 7.1 hours.

In small stores, the most common shift length was 8 hours and the average hours worked were 7.6 hours.

Whilst there is not a large difference between the average hours worked in a large store than in a small store, when combined with the fact that staff in small stores have to work more Sundays, the difference in time off on Sundays between staff in large stores and small stores is considerable.

**How many hours do you usually work on Sundays?**



*“Every Sunday when I finish work at 5 we all go out for Sunday dinner. As a busy working family it’s all our time together as they know it’s my only early finish of the week.”*

*“I would lose some of my already limited time with my husband so I would be very unhappy to have to work later than 4pm.”*

*“I do rely on my Sunday premium but I would not want to work longer than I do now.”*

*“We already have no bank holidays and even Christmas and New Year are now eroded.”*

*“As I work random shifts and hours, and every weekend, it’s very difficult to see family and friends on a weekend and after 4 o’clock on a Sunday is the only time I can spend with them!”*

## 4. Would you like to work different hours on Sundays?

The consultation document on Sunday trading states that devolving Sunday trading rules would offer shop workers more opportunity to work longer hours on Sundays.<sup>1</sup>

Of the staff in large stores who worked on Sundays, 35% wanted to work less hours, whilst only 6% wanted to work more hours.

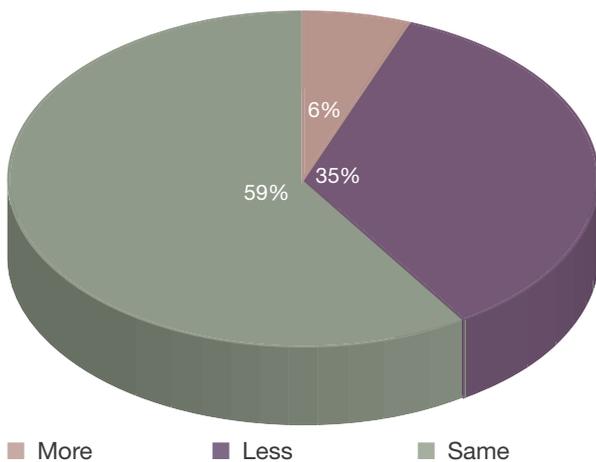
This shows that most retailers could already easily accommodate those staff who wished to work more on Sundays, simply by cutting Sunday working for over five times as many staff who wish to work less hours.

In small stores, where there is more Sunday working, over half of staff (55%) wish to work less on Sundays, whilst still only 6% want to work more.

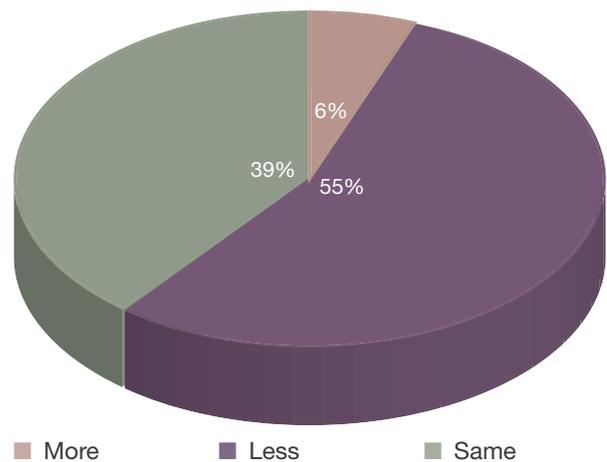
So when stores open for longer hours and staff have to work more on Sundays, far more staff are unhappy with their Sunday working and wish to work less. If large stores were to open for longer, that would mean far more staff having to work more on Sundays than they wish, missing out on time with their families and friends.

### Would you like to work different hours on Sundays?

Large stores



Small stores



*"I have to work every other weekend but would rather have every Sunday off. I can only go to church every other Sunday."*

*"I have difficulty in covering shifts sometimes as I am a line manager and it is not always easy to get staff to work overtime as like me they have family commitments."*

*"I am forced to work through pressure from management and change in contract."*

*"My worry would be that they would change my contracted hours as this has happened in the past. When it did I was offered two choices - take the hours being given or give in my notice."*

*"I do not want to work more hours on a Sunday than I do already. I have lots to do when I get home getting the children ready for school the next day."*

<sup>1</sup> Consultation on devolving Sunday trading rules, page 6, published 5 August 2015: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/devolving-sunday-trading-rules>

## 5. If you request a Sunday off, how often is your request accepted?

Many staff who work on Sundays sometimes wish to take a Sunday off as part of their annual holiday entitlement – to attend a family gathering, watch their child in a sports team, or take part in a community event.

Yet many respondents reported that they were unable to take a Sunday off when they wished. In large stores, only 21% of staff said that a request was always agreed, and in small stores this was only 15%.

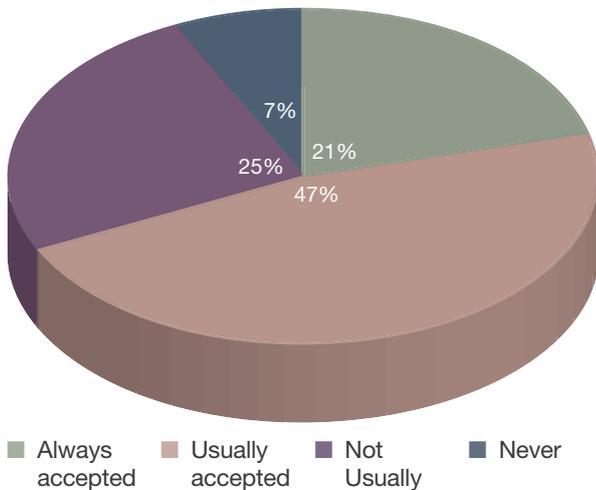
Worryingly, about 6.5% of respondents in both large and small stores were never allowed a

Sunday off when they requested one, and a further 25% of staff in large stores and 28% in small stores were not usually allowed a Sunday off.

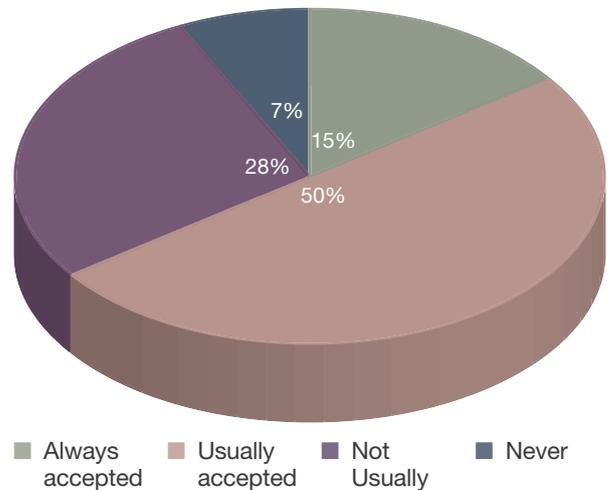
These figures show the pressure that managers are under to maintain staffing levels on Sundays, and the lack of people willing to work extra hours on Sundays to cover for those who want a day off. It also shows the impact that Sunday working has on retail staff, who have to miss family occasions, community events, and special times with their children, such as watching them play in a sporting event or take part in a carnival.

### If you request a Sunday off, how often is your request accepted?

Large stores



Small stores



*"I'm always put on the rota, I have to ask a few weeks before if I want a Sunday off but it's more often than not unsuccessful."*

*"When I first pleaded for just one in four Sundays off to attend church, my Manager laughed at me. It took about six months to agree to some regular time off. I now work a half shift every Sunday afternoon, however ever since I am a victim of a Manager's hate campaign."*

*"My employer now only takes on part timers willing to work every weekend."*

*"I Can very rarely book Sunday as a holiday as we're always needed on a Sunday."*

## 6. Do you ever feel under pressure to work on Sunday?

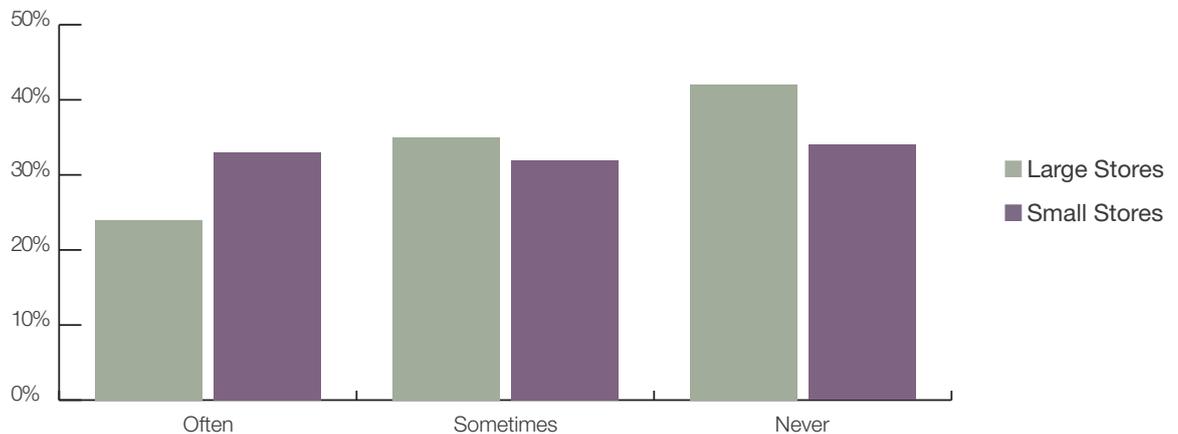
58% of staff in large stores felt under pressure to work on Sundays – 24% reported they often felt under pressure, and 34% said they were sometimes pressured.

These proportions rose to 66% of staff in small stores feeling under pressure to work on Sundays – 34% were often under pressure and 32% sometimes felt pressure.

This is consistent with the need for more staff for stores opening longer hours, and with the results that even more staff in small stores wanted to work less hours on Sundays, and were unable to take Sundays off when they wished.

If large stores were to open for longer, even more staff would come under pressure to work on Sundays when they did not wish to.

**Do you ever feel under pressure to work on a Sunday?**



*"We're asked in work, a list is put on the wall and we're even phoned at home as they say they must fill Sunday hours."*

*"We have no family life due to always working during hours my children and husband are at home. I have depression and feeling under pressure."*

*"I feel pressured to work when this is my only family day together."*

*"I've been told I'd be letting the team down if I don't work extra on a Sunday. If we refuse a request to work extra then they are extremely unlikely to honour an appointment or request for time off."*

*"I feel bullied into working, but they say it is the needs of the business so I have no choice."*

## 7. Caring responsibilities of staff

Nearly 50% of respondents in both large and small stores have caring responsibilities on Sundays.

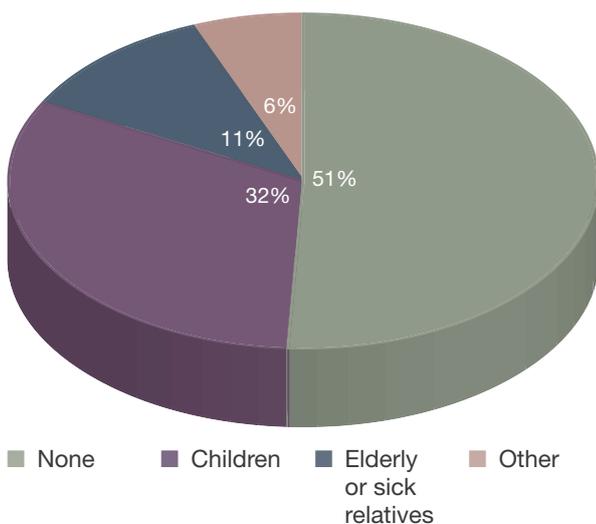
32% of staff in large stores and 34% of those in small stores had children to care for, whilst 12% of staff in large stores and 10% in small stores were caring for elderly or sick relatives. Around 5% of staff reported other caring responsibilities, including disabled relatives, grandchildren, visiting elderly relatives or family, and volunteering responsibilities such as sports team coaching.

Of those with children, 61% of staff in large stores and 64% of those in small stores reported that they had difficulty arranging suitable care when they had to work on a Sunday. In both groups, 64% of carers for elderly or sick relatives had difficulty finding suitable care, and 44% of other carers.

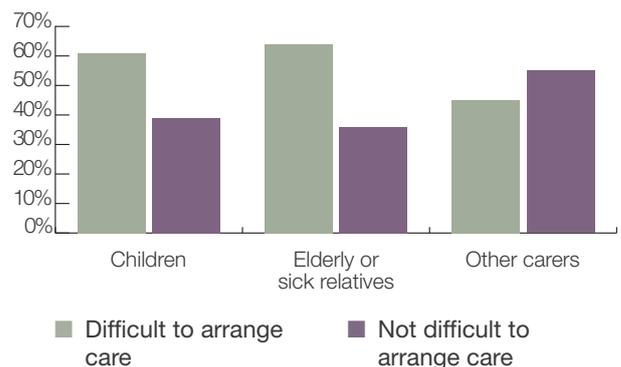
These difficulties arranging suitable care would only become worse if trading hours and Sunday working hours were extended.

### Do you have caring responsibilities?

All stores



### If you work on Sundays, is it difficult to arrange suitable care?



*"On Sunday it's homework, uniforms, lunch box ... all that to do on top of working a 7hr shift - stress comes to mind!"*

*"As a single parent of a lively 12 year old, longer Sunday hours would hugely impact on family time, having the guilt of having to leave my child for longer on a family day."*

*"I would be unable to find childcare. I already have to rely on family members to cover my Saturday shift!"*

*"As I am separated, I have my children every other weekend. I work every Saturday and 1 in 4 Sundays. I often struggle to arrange childcare and fear it has an effect on my relationship with my children."*

*"I have a disabled daughter and am a single parent. The pressure of working weekends and arranging suitable care is extremely difficult."*

*"As many people work Saturdays like me, longer Sundays would leave no time to visit elderly relatives as a family."*

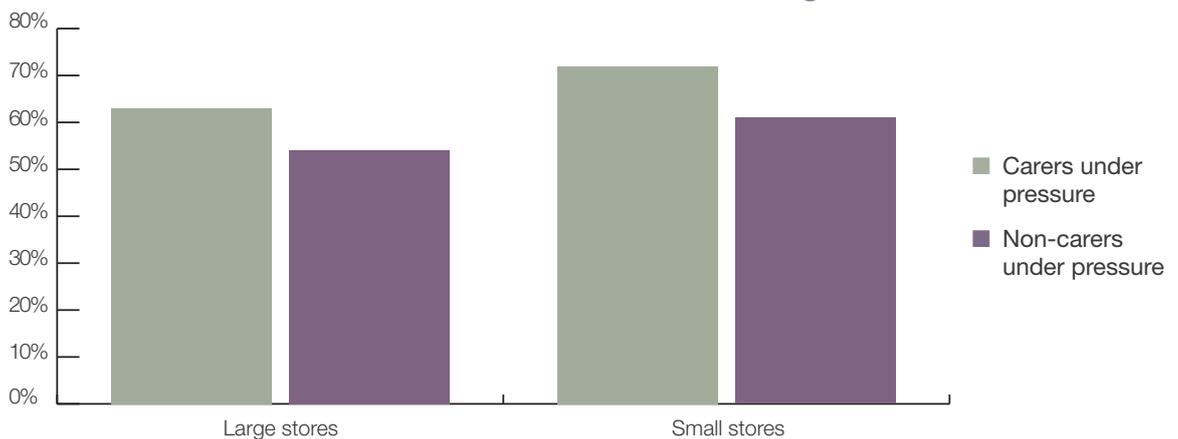
## 8. Pressure on carers to work more on Sundays

There is evidence from the survey that carers are suffering more pressure than non-carers to work more on Sundays, with around 10% more carers feeling under pressure. In large stores, 63% of carers felt under pressure, compared to 54% of non-carers. 26% of carers felt that they often came under pressure to work more Sundays, and 37% felt this happened sometimes.

In small stores, a similar picture emerges. 72% of carers reported being under pressure to work more on Sundays – 38% often and 34% sometimes. Whereas 61% of non-carers reported pressure to work Sundays – 29% often and 32% sometimes.

With around half of staff in retail having caring responsibilities, it is inevitable that they come under pressure to work more on Sundays as managers struggle to fill staffing rotas, in spite of the difficulties that most carers have in arranging suitable care on Sundays.

**Pressure on carers to work Sundays**



*"I would be under even more pressure to work a Sunday and as a single parent it would mean having more childcare issues. Also it would mean missing out on quality time with my children."*

*"Due to the lack of staff the pressure to do Sundays has increased over the last several years and I almost feel like they are losing tolerance as I have two special needs young adults and I cannot work Sundays."*

*"I am feeling pressured to work on a Sunday when it would cost me double in childcare which I cannot afford."*

*"I am expected to work because of a continuous right hours, right place policy, even if no appropriate childcare for my four children."*

*"As a mother I would not want to work Sunday evenings/late afternoon yet it would be forced on us as we would need more than one manager on a Sunday to cover the hours."*

## 9. If you work on Sundays, do you receive premium pay?

Most survey respondents in large stores – 72% – receive some premium for working on Sundays, reflecting the pressure from Usdaw to keep Sunday premiums in union-recognised companies.

The most common level of premium is time-and-a-half, which is earned by 54% of the respondents. A further 10%, most of who are longer-serving staff in Tesco, earn double time for Sunday working, whilst 7% earn a different rate of premium – often time-and-a-third, or a fixed additional hourly sum.

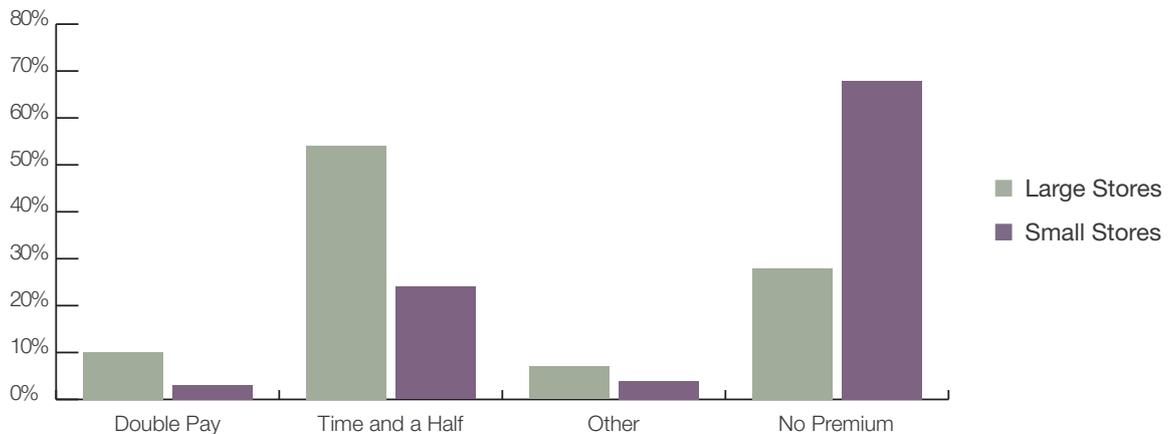
Premium pay can make a huge difference to the incomes of staff on low pay, and help many staff to come to terms with Sunday working. However, as Section 5 shows, even with premium pay,

there are still only a very few staff who want to work more on Sundays.

Workers in small stores are far less likely to receive a Sunday premium, and only 32% of respondents from small stores do so. This is partly because the longer opening hours in small stores spread the trade over a longer period of time, making it less viable to pay premiums.

Currently, premium pay is more viable in large stores as trade is condensed into a six hour window, making stores busier, with a higher turnover per hour. If large stores opened for longer hours in line with small stores, then the higher costs of opening and the fact that stores would be less busy during those hours would make Sunday premium pay less viable.

**Do you receive a Sunday premium?**



*"If Sunday trading was extended I feel that we would lose our premium which would impact greatly on my wages."*

*"I am concerned that I would lose my Sunday premium. I am also concerned that I would have to work different hours which would affect my responsibilities at home."*

*"I prefer to work Sundays because of premium pay I get and shorter trading hours."*

*"I'm most concerned over the loss in premium hour rate as I will lose around eighty pounds a month."*

*"If our store started to open more hours on a Sunday it wouldn't be long before it was classed as a normal working day thus you wouldn't get the premium pay."*

## 10. The right to opt out of Sunday working

All staff who work in shops have a right to opt out of Sunday working. However, in practice it is often difficult for staff to exercise this right, especially if their store struggles for staff on Sundays.

Almost all of the respondents in the survey worked in unionised workplaces, where there are usually union representatives to help members access their rights. Yet even among these respondents, only 13% in large stores and 10% in small stores had successfully exercised their right to opt out of Sunday working, with a significant number – 5% in large stores and 6% in small stores – having tried to opt out of Sunday working but been unsuccessful.

In October 2014, Usdaw surveyed members who had been unsuccessful in opting out of Sunday working.

The usual reason was because the applicant was told that if they opt out, their contracted hours will be cut – usually by six hours in large stores.

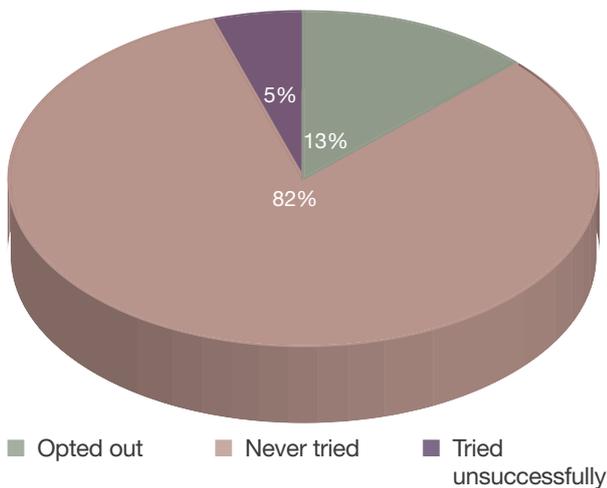
Most shopworkers are on part-time contracts and cannot afford to lose several hours of work a week. Some reported they were told their loyalty to their company or to colleagues would be questioned if they opted out, and others – especially junior managers – were simply told that opting out was not an option for them.

The right to opt out of Sunday working is therefore far from a guarantee that shopworkers will not have to work on Sundays if they do not wish to, and for every two shopworkers who successfully opt out, another one is unsuccessful in doing so.

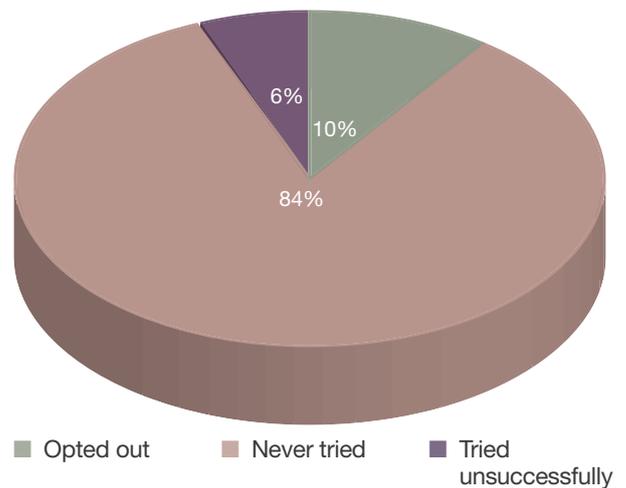
In smaller shops with longer hours of Sunday trading, fewer staff had succeeded in opting out, and a higher proportion had been unsuccessful. If hours are extended in large stores, more staff – including carers – will be pressured to work more, and the opt out does not give them protection from this.

### Have you used your right to opt out of Sunday working?

Large stores



Small stores



*"By asking to opt out of Sunday working, I would be told that if I couldn't fulfil my contract I am terminating my employment!"*

*"I put in my opt-out option, but I was told I could have my contracted hours reduced from 39 to 30."*

*"The idea that Sunday working is optional and that this is enshrined in law is laughable. They make you pay one way or the other for objecting to working on Sundays."*

*"The pressure on current staff is immense now and management always hold a grudge for those staff who opt out."*

*"As a manager I have signed out of the Sunday clause apparently. If I refused I wouldn't have been signed off as a Manager."*

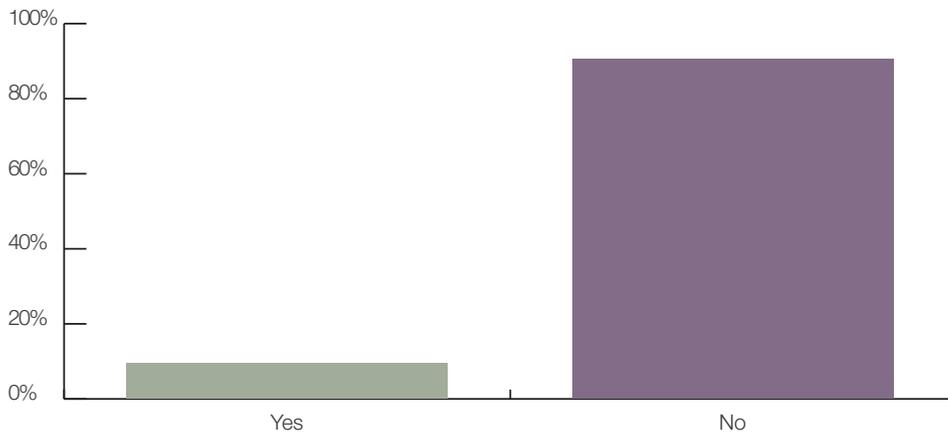
*"During busy times you are expected to work and to opt out would not be acceptable."*

## 11. Do you think large stores should open for more than six hours on Sundays?

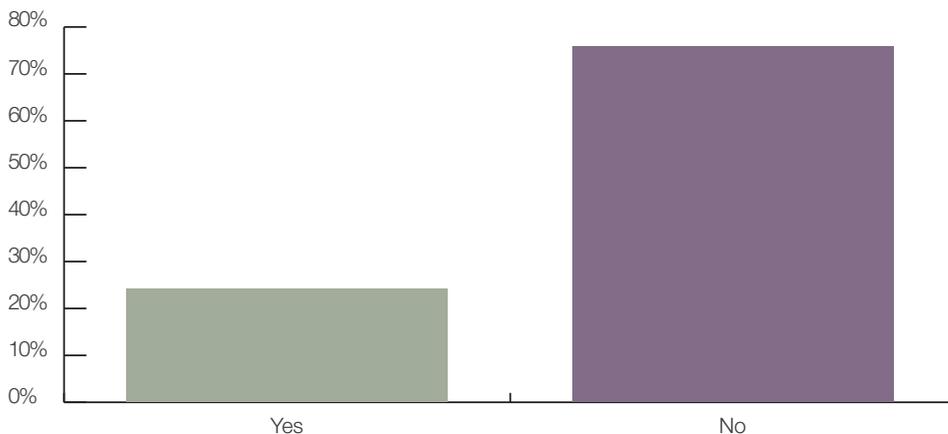
All shopworkers overwhelmingly opposed large stores opening longer on Sundays, although as expected, the number was even higher in large stores where 91% thought stores should not open for more than six hours.

Even in small stores, 76% of staff think large stores should only open for six hours.

### Do you think large stores should be open for more than six hours on a Sunday? (Large stores)



### Do you think large stores should be open for more than six hours on a Sunday? (Small stores)



"As a manager we may feel pressured into working and we give enough time each week that is unpaid without having to do Sundays."

"I would be pressured into all day working. They would change my days of working. It will have a big impact."

"Sunday is the only day myself and my husband sometimes get a day off together. If I had to work more hours on a Sunday we would spend even less time together."

"I will never get to see my family and get my kids all bathed and ready for school on Monday morning."

"Longer Sunday hours does not mean more sales for shops it simply means money spread out which impacts on stores spreading the staff even thinner, causing more problems."

"I would be under pressure to do more hours on Sunday so making it impossible for me to go to church."

"Sunday is the only day I get home before 9.30 so it is the only day I get to eat an evening meal with my family."

"Closing at six would mean missing my only family dinner of the week."

"As a night worker I see very little of my wife and family and to be asked to work longer hours on a Sunday will make it virtually impossible to see them."

"I could not attend my mosque for prayers or look after my grandchild."

"We open enough hours Monday-Saturday, leave Sunday as a family day. If we open then parliament needs to open on Sundays and all the ministers involved in this decision should be made to work too!"

"Considering the unsociable weekday hours already worked, any longer working hours on Sundays would completely kill any kind of social life or time off spent at home."

# The Campaign Against Longer Sunday Opening

From the evidence in this survey, it is clear that longer Sunday opening hours would have a devastating impact on retail staff in large stores and the little remaining leisure time they are able to spend with partners, children, friends and their wider family.

For these reasons, Usdaw is campaigning against the proposal to devolve responsibility for setting the hours of Sunday Trading to local authorities, as this would lead to an extension of trading hours in some areas and a 'domino effect' on neighbouring authorities.

For more information please contact Usdaw at [sunday@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:sunday@usdaw.org.uk) or visit the campaign website [www.keepsundayspecial.org.uk](http://www.keepsundayspecial.org.uk)





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