

Survey Toplines

Opinion Poll: Small businesses support a national paid family & medical leave program

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Download the full report from our website: <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/small-businesses-support-national-paid-family-medical-leave-program>

Methodology

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey, which was conducted online. The survey reached a total of 500 small business owners nationwide, plus oversamples of 100 small business owners each in Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and 100 small business owners of color nationwide. The survey was conducted August 13-21, 2024. The sample was stratified by gender, region, race, and business size to reflect the demographic composition of small business owners nationwide. Where there were slight differences between our survey sample and the expected voting population, data were weighted accordingly. The margin of error is +/- 4.4% at a 95% confidence level.

1. Are you the owner of a small business in the United States?

Yes - An owner 100

2. In which state is your business headquartered?

New England..... 5
 Middle Atlantic13
 East North Central13
 West North Central 7
 South Atlantic21
 East South Central 5
 West South Central 11
 Mountain 8
 Pacific.....17
 Northeast18
 Midwest 20
 South..... 37
 West 25

3. Approximately how many people work 30+ hours a week at your business, including yourself? Please do not include contractors. If you own more than one business, please answer for the largest business you own.

2	27
3-4.....	22
5-9	20
10-19	14
20-49.....	11
50-100.....	6

4. Which of the following terms best describes your business?

For-profit	100
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5. Please indicate what category your age falls into.

18-24 years.....	3
25-29 years.....	6
30-34 years	7
35-39 years.....	14
40-44 years	12
45-49 years.....	13
50-54 years	13
55-59 years.....	11
60-64 years	9
65-69 years	5
70-74 years.....	4
Over 74 years	2
Under 30	9
30 - 39.....	21
40 - 49.....	25
50 - 64.....	33
65 & over.....	12

6. What is your gender? Select all that apply

Man	71
Woman.....	29
Nonbinary	0
Prefer to self describe.....	0
Prefer not to answer.....	0

7. Just to make sure we have a representative sample, please choose one or more of these racial or ethnic groups that you identify with: (Select all that apply)

White or Caucasian	72
Black or African American	8
Latino/Latina or Hispanic	11
Asian American or Pacific Islander.....	9
Native or Indigenous American	4
Middle Eastern or North African	2
None of these/other	1

8. Again thinking about the largest business you own, which of the following categories best describes your industry?

Construction & Mining	23
Retail.....	14
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	8
Consulting.....	6
Hospitality & Food Services	5
Finance, Insurance, & Economics.....	5
Computers, Science, & Technology.....	5
Transportation & Warehousing	4
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting.....	3
Manufacturing	3
Education.....	3
Real Estate	3
Communications & Marketing.....	1
Administrative & Business Support.....	1
Health Care & Pharmaceutical.....	1
Media & Information	1
Other	13

9. Approximately what percentage of your employees are women? A rough estimate is OK.

0-25%.....	40
26-50%.....	35
51-75%.....	14
76-100%.....	11
Not sure	0

10. Approximately what percentage of your employees are disabled? A rough estimate is OK.

0-25%.....	89
26-50%.....	5
51-75%.....	2
76-100%.....	1
Not sure	3

11. Approximately what percentage of your employees are people of color (Black, Hispanic or Latino/a, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, or Middle Eastern)? A rough estimate is OK.

0-25%.....	54
26-50%.....	23
51-75%.....	10
76-100%.....	10
Not sure	2

12. Approximately what percentage of your employees work part-time (less than 30 hours per week)? A rough estimate is OK.

0-25%.....	67
26-50%.....	16
51-75%.....	5
76-100%.....	9
Not sure	2

13. Approximately how many years has your business been in operation?

0-1	4
4-Feb.....	28
9-May.....	27
14-Oct.....	17
15-19.....	6
20-24.....	7
25+	12

14. What is your company's approximate yearly gross revenue? Just a rough estimate is OK.

Less than \$100,000	23
\$100,000 to under \$250,000	21
\$250,000 to under \$500,000	18
\$500,000 to under \$1 million	17
\$1 million to under \$2 million	13
\$2 million or more	7
Not sure	1

15. Would you say that your revenue at this point in the year has declined, stayed the same, or increased compared to the same time last year?

Declined	27
Stayed the same	38
Increased.....	34
Not sure	0

16. How challenging is it to find and retain good employees for your business?

Very challenging	22
Somewhat challenging	42
Not too challenging.....	20
Not at all challenging	14
Not sure	2
Challenging	64
Not challenging	35

17. Now on a slightly different topic, in your opinion, how important is it for people to have access to the following items to obtain financial security?

Sorted by "Very important"

Health insurance coverage.....	69
Paid medical leave for serious health conditions.....	64
Job protection while on family or medical leave	59
Paid family leave for a new child	53
Paid sick days for preventive care or short-term illness	52
Affordable childcare.....	50
Paid family leave for a family member's serious health condition.....	49

Health insurance coverage

Very important.....	69
Somewhat important	26
Not too important	3
Not important at all	1
Not sure	1
Important.....	95
Not important.....	4

Paid sick days for preventive care or short-term illness

Very important.....	52
Somewhat important	35
Not too important	8
Not important at all	4

Not sure	1
Important.....	87
Not important.....	12
Paid family leave for a new child	
Very important.....	53
Somewhat important	32
Not too important	8
Not important at all	6
Not sure	1
Important.....	85
Not important.....	14
Paid family leave for a family member's serious health condition	
Very important.....	49
Somewhat important	37
Not too important	9
Not important at all	3
Not sure	2
Important.....	86
Not important.....	12
Paid medical leave for serious health conditions	
Very important.....	64
Somewhat important	29
Not too important	4
Not important at all	2
Not sure	1
Important.....	92
Not important.....	7
Affordable childcare	
Very important.....	50
Somewhat important	33
Not too important	9
Not important at all	7
Not sure	1
Important.....	83
Not important.....	16

Job protection while on family or medical leave

Very important..... 59
 Somewhat important31
 Not too important 4
 Not important at all 4
 Not sure1
Important..... 90
Not important..... 8

18. Thinking about your business, which of the following benefits do you provide to most or all of your employees? (Select all that apply)

Health insurance coverage..... 50
 Flex time 50
 Profit sharing or bonuses..... 44
 Option to work from home 42
 Contributions to a retirement fund..... 28
 Help with health care costs outside of insurance coverage..... 23
 Help with childcare..... 22
 Other 3
 None..... 9
 Not sure1

19. Which of the following types of leave do you offer to most or all of your employees? If you do offer it, please select if it is paid or unpaid.

Sorted by “Offer at least some /Offer paid leave”

Vacation time 89
 Sick days for short-term illness or preventive care..... 86
 Medical leave or short-term disability leave for their own serious health needs..... 82
 Parental leave for a newborn child 78
 Family leave to care for relatives with serious health needs77
 Parental leave for pregnancy and/or childbirth.....75
 Parental leave for adoptive and/or foster parents 58

Parental leave for pregnancy and/or childbirth

Offer at least some paid leave to employees 50
 Offer unpaid leave to employees..... 25
 Do not offer 23
 Not sure 2

Parental leave for a newborn child

Offer at least some paid leave to employees51
Offer unpaid leave to employees..... 27
Do not offer.....21
Not sure1

Parental leave for adoptive and/or foster parents

Offer at least some paid leave to employees 29
Offer unpaid leave to employees..... 28
Do not offer..... 39
Not sure 3

Sick days for short-term illness or preventive care

Offer at least some paid leave to employees 59
Offer unpaid leave to employees..... 27
Do not offer.....13
Not sure1

Family leave to care for relatives with serious health needs

Offer at least some paid leave to employees 36
Offer unpaid leave to employees.....41
Do not offer.....21
Not sure1

Medical leave or short-term disability leave for their own serious health needs

Offer at least some paid leave to employees 56
Offer unpaid leave to employees..... 26
Do not offer.....16
Not sure1

Vacation time

Offer at least some paid leave to employees 63
Offer unpaid leave to employees..... 26
Do not offer.....11
Not sure1

20. How much of each of the following types of paid leave do you offer to your employees?
(Asked of those who offer paid benefit)

Parental leave for pregnancy and/or childbirth (N=252)

Less than one week 6
One to two weeks 22
Two weeks+ to one month 26

One month+ to three months	27
Three months+ to six months.....	5
More than six months but not unlimited.....	6
Unlimited.....	5
Not sure	3

Parental leave for a newborn child (N=255)

Less than one week	5
One to two weeks	23
Two weeks+ to one month.....	25
One month+ to three months	28
Three months+ to six months.....	10
More than six months but not unlimited.....	2
Unlimited.....	5
Not sure	2

Parental leave for adoptive and/or foster parents (N=147)

Less than one week	13
One to two weeks	29
Two weeks+ to one month.....	22
One month+ to three months	17
Three months+ to six months.....	4
More than six months but not unlimited.....	2
Unlimited.....	7
Not sure	6

Sick days for short-term illness or preventive care (N=293)

Less than one week	30
One to two weeks	47
Two weeks+ to one month.....	10
One month+ to three months	4
Three months+ to six months.....	1
More than six months but not unlimited.....	1
Unlimited.....	5
Not sure	3

Family leave to care for relatives with serious health needs (N=181)

Less than one week	13
One to two weeks	34
Two weeks+ to one month.....	24
One month+ to three months	10

Three months+ to six months	2
More than six months but not unlimited	3
Unlimited	12
Not sure	2

Medical leave or short-term disability leave for their own serious health needs (N=280)

Less than one week	12
One to two weeks	36
Two weeks+ to one month	19
One month+ to three months	13
Three months+ to six months	3
More than six months but not unlimited	3
Unlimited	11
Not sure	3

Vacation time (N=313)

Less than one week	7
One to two weeks	62
Two weeks+ to one month	23
One month+ to three months	4
Three months+ to six months	0
More than six months but not unlimited	0
Unlimited	3
Not sure	1

21. Within the past year, have you had one or more employees take extended (more than a week) paid or unpaid leave to care for a new child, for their own serious health needs, or for a family member with a serious illness, or have you not?

Many employees	5
A handful of employees	9
At least one employee	31
No	53
Not sure	2

22. What do you do when an employee takes extended time off? (Select all that apply)

Take on more work yourself	55
Assign work temporarily to other employees	44
Cover work some other way	34
Hire a temporary replacement	27
Put the work on hold until the employee returns from leave	10
Have the employee perform some work while on leave	9
Reduce business output or availability	9

Call-in an employee on vacation	5
Hire a permanent replacement	5
Not sure	3

23. [If Q21 = 1-3] For what reason have your employee(s) taken extended time off within the past year? (Select all that apply, N=224)

Sick days	55
Vacation time	45
Medical leave or short-term disability leave	43
Maternity leave	40
Family leave to care for sick relatives	34
Parental leave for new parents not giving birth	23
Not sure	1

24. Have any of the following caused a valued employee to quit or leave your business?

Sorted by "Yes"

Work-from-home or flex time needs	12
Childcare needs or expenses	10
Cost or lack of health insurance coverage	10
Insufficient paid family leave to care for relatives with serious health conditions	9
Insufficient paid vacation time	8
Insufficient paid sick days	8
Insufficient paid leave for pregnancy/childbirth	7
Insufficient paid parental leave for newborn, adopted, or foster children	7
Insufficient paid medical leave to care for their own serious health condition	7

Cost or lack of health insurance coverage

Yes	10
No	87
Not sure	3

Childcare needs or expenses

Yes	10
No	86
Not sure	4

Insufficient paid leave for pregnancy/childbirth

Yes	7
No	90
Not sure	3

Insufficient paid parental leave for newborn, adopted, or foster children

Yes.....	7
No.....	90
Not sure	2

Insufficient paid sick days

Yes.....	8
No.....	90
Not sure	2

Insufficient paid family leave to care for relatives with serious health conditions

Yes.....	9
No.....	89
Not sure	2

Insufficient paid medical leave to care for their own serious health condition

Yes.....	7
No.....	91
Not sure	2

Insufficient paid vacation time

Yes.....	8
No.....	89
Not sure	3

Work-from-home or flex time needs

Yes.....	12
No.....	85
Not sure	3

25. Thinking about your own experiences, have you personally spent an extended period of time (more than a week) focused mostly on providing care for a loved one?

Yes, immediate family member	43
Yes, extended family member or friend	16
No.....	45

26. [If yes] Did the caregiving you provided ever cause you to start a new business or modify the business you run? (N=274)

Yes, start new business	11
Yes, modify existing business	33
Yes, both	6
No.....	50
Not sure	1

27. Would you support or oppose a national paid family leave program that guaranteed employees wage replacement for up to 12 weeks, funded by 0.5% employer and employee contributions each? The family leave could be for welcoming a new child (born or adopted) or a serious health condition or injury for the employee or a family member.

Strongly support	38
Somewhat support	42
Somewhat oppose	7
Strongly oppose	7
Not sure	7
Support	79
Oppose	14

28. Here is a list of reasons some people say that having support to help businesses with family leave is beneficial for small businesses as well as employees. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the reasons listed.

Sorted by “Strongly agree”

Employee morale is better when they know they can take care of themselves and their families if needed without losing their job	60
Employees are more invested in the business when they know they can stay despite changes in life circumstances	52
Businesses have more reason to invest in employees, resulting in a more skilled and specialized workforce	48
Businesses have more cohesive teams when turnover is lower	47
Businesses are better able to retain highly skilled and experienced employees and do not have to do retraining	47
Businesses have the ability to attract and retain a more diverse workforce (women, people with disabilities, etc.)	41

Businesses are better able to retain highly skilled and experienced employees and do not have to do retraining.

Strongly agree	47
Somewhat agree	37
Somewhat disagree	9
Strongly disagree	2
Not sure	5
Agree	84
Disagree	11

Employees are more invested in the business when they know they can stay despite changes in life circumstances.

Strongly agree	52
Somewhat agree	36
Somewhat disagree	7

Strongly disagree	2
Not sure	3
Agree	88
Disagree	9

Businesses have more cohesive teams when turnover is lower.

Strongly agree	47
Somewhat agree	37
Somewhat disagree	10
Strongly disagree	3
Not sure	4
Agree	84
Disagree	13

Businesses have more reason to invest in employees, resulting in a more skilled and specialized workforce.

Strongly agree	48
Somewhat agree	35
Somewhat disagree	9
Strongly disagree	2
Not sure	5
Agree	83
Disagree	12

Employee morale is better when they know they can take care of themselves and their families if needed without losing their job.

Strongly agree	60
Somewhat agree	32
Somewhat disagree	6
Strongly disagree	1
Not sure	1
Agree	91
Disagree	7

Businesses have the ability to attract and retain a more diverse workforce (women, people with disabilities, etc.).

Strongly agree	41
Somewhat agree	43
Somewhat disagree	9
Strongly disagree	3
Not sure	4
Agree	83
Disagree	12

29. For each of the following statements, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement.

Sorted by “Strongly agree”

I support access to paid family leave, as an employer and also as someone who cares about the people who work for me.....	53
There are only so many benefits that I can cover, and I need to consider the costs of benefits like paid family leave	48
Having access to paid family leave is important to my employees' economic security.....	45
I would like to offer more paid family leave than my business can currently afford	45

I support access to paid family leave, as an employer and also as someone who cares about the people who work for me.

Strongly agree	53
Somewhat agree	33
Somewhat disagree	5
Strongly disagree	5
Not sure	4
Agree	86
Disagree	10

Having access to paid family leave is important to my employees’ economic security.

Strongly agree	45
Somewhat agree	37
Somewhat disagree	8
Strongly disagree	4
Not sure	6
Agree	82
Disagree	12

There are only so many benefits that I can cover, and I need to consider the costs of benefits like paid family leave.

Strongly agree	48
Somewhat agree.....	37
Somewhat disagree	9
Strongly disagree	3
Not sure	4
Agree	84
Disagree	11

I would like to offer more paid family leave than my business can currently afford.

Strongly agree	45
Somewhat agree.....	35
Somewhat disagree	11
Strongly disagree	5
Not sure	4
Agree	80
Disagree	16

30. If you had to choose, which of the following two statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right:

I would prefer a universal paid family leave program for small businesses which levels the playing field and makes it affordable for small businesses to offer family leave to employees and compete with large corporations.	61
I would prefer a voluntary insurance program for paid family leave that businesses could choose to buy into, with premiums set by the insurance companies rather than the government.....	31
Not sure	8

31. [If choice in Q30] And do you believe that strongly or not so strongly?

Universal paid family leave program – strongly.....	52
Universal paid family leave program - not so strongly	9
Voluntary insurance program - not so strongly.....	10
Voluntary insurance program – strongly.....	21
Not sure	8

32. Here is a statement people have made about paid family and medical leave. Please select whether this statement raises SERIOUS doubts, SOME doubts, MINOR doubts, or NO real doubts about paid family and medical leave. If you are not sure how you feel, please indicate not sure.

Benefits like paid family, parental, and medical leave are nice, but this big-government one-size-fits-all policy is unworkable. The cost of covering workers will fall on small businesses or come at the expense of taxpayers. With prices for essentials rising, businesses can't afford another expense and families can't afford another tax.

Serious doubts	17
Some doubts	33
Minor doubts	26
No real doubts.....	17
Not sure	8
Doubts	50
No doubts	42

33. Here are some statements people have made about paid family and medical leave. For each, please select whether the statement is a VERY convincing, SOMEWHAT convincing, NOT TOO convincing, or NOT AT ALL convincing reason to support paid family and medical leave. If you are not sure how you feel about a particular item, please select not sure.

<i>Sorted by "Very convincing"</i>	
Values.....	40
Increase productivity	37
Compete.....	35
Reduce cost.....	35

Paid family and medical leave is good for small businesses' ability to retain talented employees and compete with larger companies. Universal paid family leave insurance will offer small businesses the chance to care for their employees and provide similar benefits as larger companies, leveling the playing field and incentivizing workers to stay in their jobs at small businesses.

Very convincing	35
Somewhat convincing.....	41
Not too convincing.....	15
Not at all convincing.....	5
Not sure	3
Convincing	76
Not convincing	21

A program to provide paid family and medical leave for employees of small businesses will reduce costs for small business owners while also caring for valued employees. Small business owners won't have to bear the burden of care for employees themselves with a program that spreads the load and ensures that small businesses are treated fairly.

Very convincing	35
Somewhat convincing	40
Not too convincing.....	14
Not at all convincing	8
Not sure	3
Convincing	75
Not convincing	22

Paid family leave boosts employee morale and productivity. An analysis of firms' outcomes after implementing paid leave found that on average, they experienced 4.6% greater revenue and 6.8% greater profit. In New Jersey, employers noted that the state's paid leave program helped reduce stress and improve morale among employees who took leave and their co-workers.

Very convincing	37
Somewhat convincing	41
Not too convincing.....	13
Not at all convincing	5
Not sure	4
Convincing	78
Not convincing	19

Especially in times of economic uncertainty, people need to be able to take care of their families and keep their jobs. We never know when care may be necessary, but many people cannot afford to lose wages to provide it. Paid family and medical leave is the right thing to do, because no one should have to choose between caring for family or themselves and keeping their job.

Very convincing	40
Somewhat convincing	41
Not too convincing.....	12
Not at all convincing	5
Not sure	3
Convincing	81
Not convincing	16

One alternative to paid family leave programs is tax credits, which Congress has already enacted and is considering extending. Here is some information about these tax credits:

Under the current tax credit enacted in 2017, employers who offer up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave to employees and pay at least 50 percent of the wages normally paid to the employee are eligible. The leave can be used to take care of a worker's own health, a family member or newborn, or a newly adopted or fostered child. In exchange for offering the leave, employers who provide full wage replacement will receive up to a 25 percent tax credit for the amount of wages replaced. This tax credit is set to expire in 2025.

34. Have you used this Paid Family and Medical Leave tax credit for your small business?

Yes.....	22
No.....	74
Not sure	4

35. [If yes] How helpful was this tax credit to your business? (N=109)

Very helpful.....	58
Somewhat helpful	40
A little helpful	2
Not at all helpful	0
Not sure	0
Helpful	98
Not helpful	2

36. [If no] How helpful does this tax credit sound for your small business? (N=370)

Very helpful.....	22
Somewhat helpful	42
A little helpful	22
Not at all helpful	10
Not sure	4
Helpful	64
Not helpful	32

37. Here are some statements people have made comparing two different approaches to family leave for small businesses - family leave insurance or tax credits. For each, please select whether the statement is a VERY convincing, SOMEWHAT convincing, NOT TOO convincing, or NOT AT ALL convincing reason to support a family and medical leave insurance program rather than tax credits. If you are not sure how you feel about a particular item, please say not sure.

Sorted by "Very convincing"

Unfair to small	36
Out of pocket.....	31
Uneven.....	30

Under tax credit plans, employers are required to make out-of-pocket expenditures to provide paid family and medical leave, in exchange for a tax credit that would not be available until year-end tax filings. Waiting up to a year for a credit that only covers 25% of the cost is not really going to help most small businesses.

Very convincing	31
Somewhat convincing	38
Not too convincing.....	19
Not at all convincing	9
Not sure	4
Convincing	69
Not convincing	27

The current tax credit puts many small businesses at a competitive disadvantage. If the business is in a state with a paid family leave program, they get no credit for the leave they already must provide to their employees, so businesses in other states get an unfair tax advantage. A guaranteed national program would put small businesses in all states on a level playing field.

Very convincing	30
Somewhat convincing	41
Not too convincing.....	18
Not at all convincing	6
Not sure	6
Convincing	70
Not convincing	24

Small businesses that can't afford to wait for tax credits to pay off at the end of the year get no help from the tax credit, but still have to compete with larger corporations that can use their higher revenues to easily take advantage. Almost 90% of the tax credits have been claimed by billion-dollar corporations, giving them a leg up in retaining employees and driving small companies out of business.

Very convincing	36
Somewhat convincing	38
Not too convincing.....	17
Not at all convincing	4
Not sure	6
Convincing	73
Not convincing	21

38. If you had to choose, which of the following two statements about the proposed tax credit resonates the most with you:

- The tax credit is too little to make a difference. Under this scheme, small business owners still pay for family and medical leave out of our own pockets and receive a tax credit only up to 25% of these expenses. A guaranteed program of paid family and medical leave is better for small businesses. 50
- These tax credits give small business owners the flexibility we need to run our businesses the way we see fit. The federal government should provide tax credits to businesses who provide paid leave for their employees, rather than require it..... 43
- Not sure 8

39. [If choice in Q38] And do you believe that strongly or not so strongly?

- Too little to make a difference – strongly 38
- Too little to make a difference - not so strongly..... 11
- Give small business owners flexibility - not so strongly 9
- Give small business owners flexibility – strongly 33
- Not sure 8

40. The Family Leave Tax Credit is currently set to expire in 2025. Which of the following actions would you prefer Congress to take on family leave for small businesses?

- Extend the Family Leave Tax Credit as currently written.....16
- Replace the Family Leave Tax Credit with a guaranteed Family Leave Insurance program that would cover the full cost of family leave for most businesses 40
- Both..... 23
- Neither 10
- Don't know..... 11

The remaining questions are for statistical purposes only.

41. Just to make sure we have a representative sample, could you please identify which of the following descriptions best fit your company? (Select all that apply)

- Minority-Owned Business 26
- Woman-Owned Business..... 30
- Veteran-Owned Business..... 8
- None of the above 45

42. Would you best describe the area in which your business's office is located as urban, suburban, or rural? If you do business in multiple locations please answer for the location of your largest business.

- Urban 34
- Suburban..... 45
- Rural 17
- No physical office..... 4
- Not sure 0

43. Have any of your employees taken more than 3 weeks of family/medical/parental leave in the past 5 years?

Yes.....	33
No.....	66
Not sure	1

44. [If yes] As far as you know, were you required to keep that employee’s job open for them to return to? (N=165)

Yes.....	74
No.....	16
Not sure	9

45. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or something else?

[If democrat] Do you consider yourself a strong or a not-so-strong Democrat?
 [If republican] Do you consider yourself a strong or a not-so-strong Republican?
 [If independent] Towards which party do you lean, even a little bit?

Strong Democrat.....	19
Not-so-strong Democrat	11
Independent - lean Democrat	6
Democrat	36
Independent.....	14
Republican	45
Independent - lean Republican.....	11
Not-so-strong Republican.....	13
Strong Republican	22
Other	2
Not sure	2
Prefer not to answer.....	1