

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill Survey Results

The Economy Committee carried out an eight-week consultation on the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill from 23rd June to 16th August 2021.

The Committee received 382 responses to the survey.

The purpose of the survey is primarily to provide a quantitative evidence base to consultation on the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill.

Additionally, separate to the survey, and not recorded or included in this analysis, is written evidence provided by a number of representative bodies as follows:

- NIPSA
- Unison
- Women's Policy Group NI
- Women's Resource and Development Agency
- Women's Regional Consortium
- NI Human Rights Commission

The following is a summary of the questions asked and the responses.

What is your name?

Name

There were 377 responses to this part of the question.

NB. For the purposes of identifying representative bodies, employers etc, along with those individuals who have expressed a willingness to engage further, a stakeholder database has been developed from those who responded to Q14, at the end of the survey.

What is your email address?

Email

There were 364 responses to this part of the question.

What is your organisation (if applicable)?

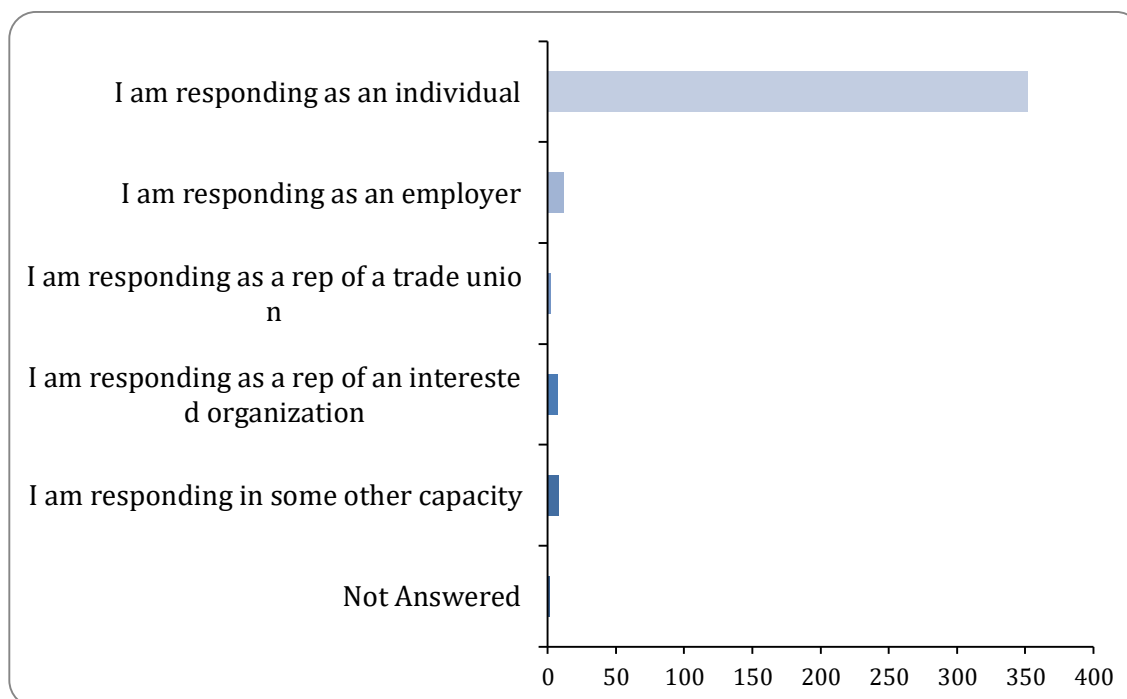
Organisation

There were 93 responses to this part of the question.

Please let us know, in what capacity you are responding to this survey.

Respondent description

There were 381 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
I am responding as an individual	352	92.15%
I am responding as an employer	12	3.14%
I am responding as a rep of a trade union	2	0.52%
I am responding as a rep of an employers' association	0	0.00%
I am responding as a rep of an interested organization	7	1.83%
I am responding in some other capacity	8	2.09%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

The majority of respondents were individuals. Of those 73 indicated that they would be willing to engage further. Only six of those identifying as employers were willing to engage further, those who did not tended to be either individuals or small businesses.

If you selected 'I am responding in some other capacity', please specify.

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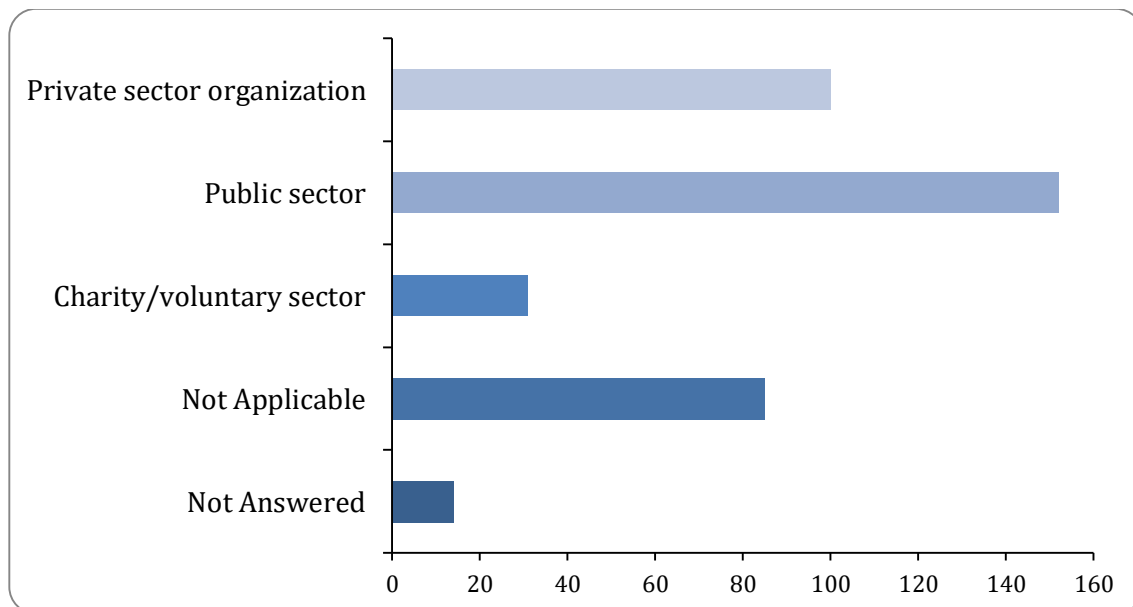
There were 13 responses to this part of the question.

The anomaly between this and the prior question, that is in what capacity are you responding, reflects that a respondent may not always have answered both questions.

Employment sector

Employment sector

There were 368 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Private sector organization	100	26.18%
Public sector	152	39.79%
Charity/voluntary sector	31	8.12%
Not Applicable	85	22.25%
Not Answered	14	3.66%

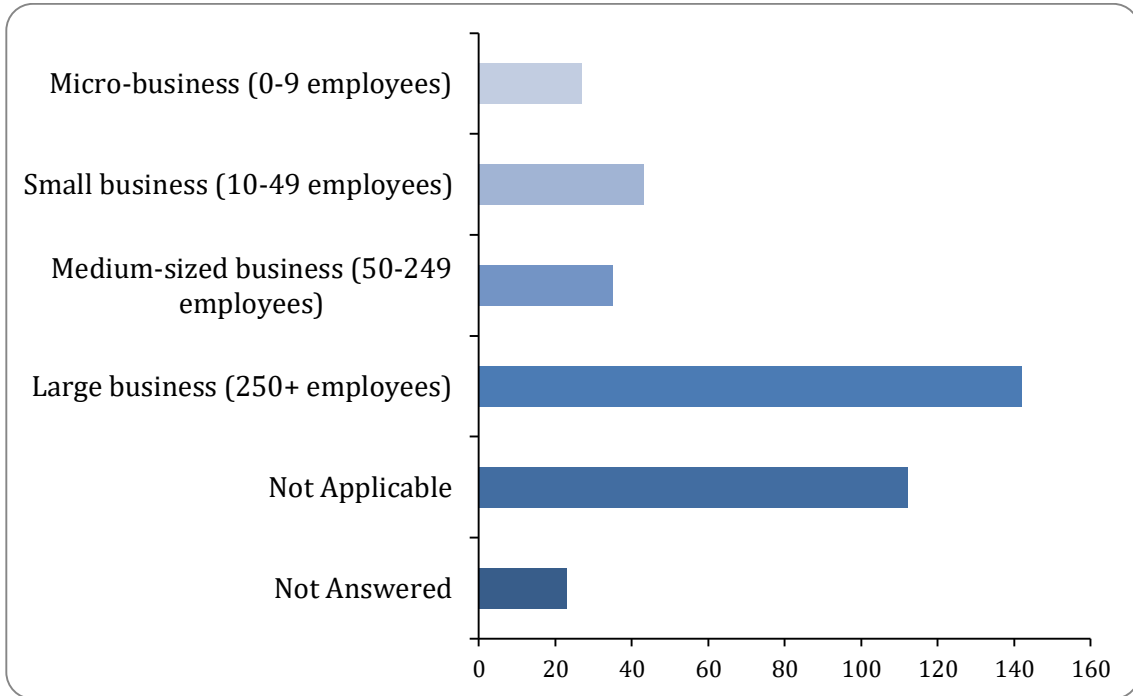
This question and the following, organization size, include individuals responding in a personal capacity who have indicated their employment profile. For the purposes of the

survey it may indicate the breadth of experiences of individuals across sectors they are employed in.

Organisation Size

Organisation Size

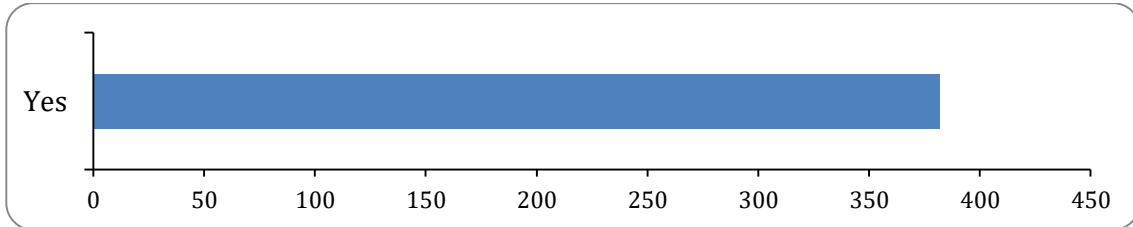
There were 359 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Micro-business (0-9 employees)	27	7.07%
Small business (10-49 employees)	43	11.26%
Medium-sized business (50-249 employees)	35	9.16%
Large business (250+ employees)	142	37.17%
Not Applicable	112	29.32%
Not Answered	23	6.02%

Q1. There should be a legal entitlement to employee parental leave and pay (if eligible) in NI?

There were 382 responses to this part of the question.

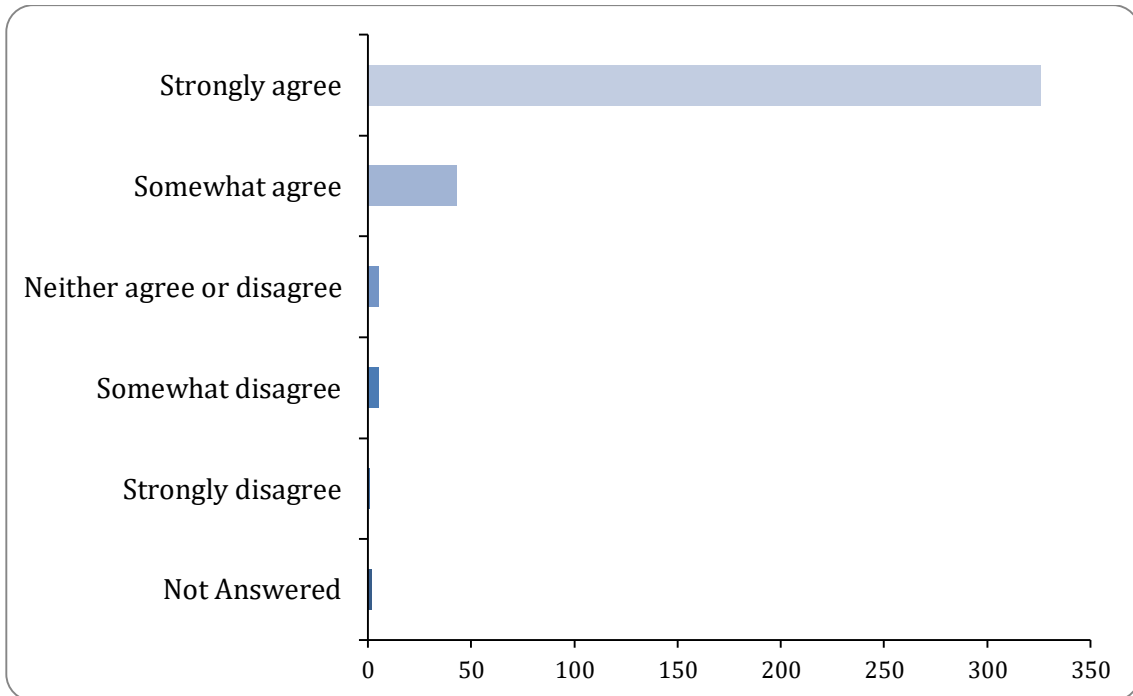


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	382	100.00%
No	0	0.00%
Don't know/Not sure	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

This is a significant endorsement of the purpose of the Bill in that all respondents have indicated that there should be provision for such support.

Q2. The definition of 'a parent' should extend beyond biological parents to 'primary carers'. What is your view?

There were 380 responses to this part of the question.

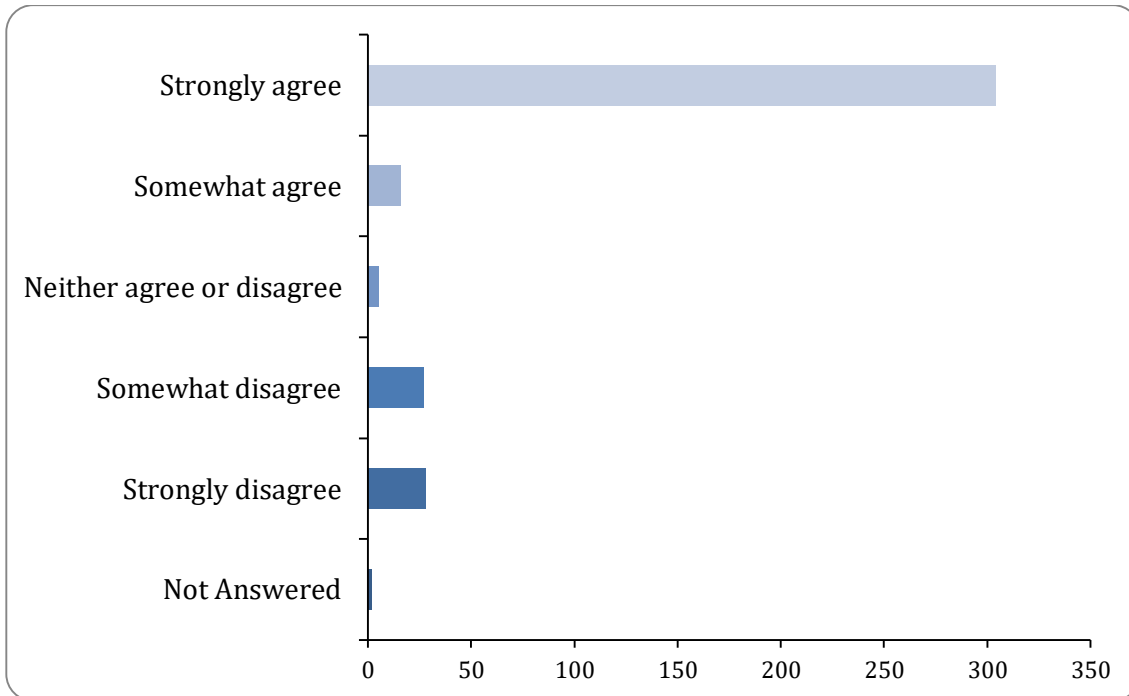


Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	326	85.34%
Somewhat agree	43	11.26%
Neither agree or disagree	5	1.31%
Somewhat disagree	5	1.31%
Strongly disagree	1	0.26%
Not Answered	2	0.52%

The majority of respondents, 96%, either strongly agreed/agreed that the definition of a parent should extend beyond biological parents to that of primary carer.

Q3. The Bill should apply to parents/ primary carers of a child up to the age of 18? What is your view?

There were 380 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	304	79.58%
Somewhat agree	16	4.19%
Neither agree or disagree	5	1.31%
Somewhat disagree	27	7.07%
Strongly disagree	28	7.33%
Not Answered	2	0.52%

Whilst the majority agreed that the Bill should apply to children up to 18 years of age, amongst those who disagreed are bereaved parents of young adults.

Q4. If answered 'disagree' to Qn3, in what circumstances do you consider it should apply?

There were 62 responses to this part of the question.

Many of the respondents were of the view that the Bill should apply to the loss of a child regardless of age. Some suggested that there should be no age limit. Others suggested that the upper limit should be 25. Some referred to circumstances where an older child has an illness or a disability. A number of respondents stated that the difficulties faced by parents following the death of a child are the same regardless of the age of the child.

The issue of the definition of parent/primary carer was raised and that the following groups should be explicitly included within the definition: biological parents, step-parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, kinship carers (this would need to include caring for a child in informal arrangements as well as those who hold a Special Guardianship Order, a Child Arrangements Order or are kinship foster carers. This response refers to the definitions in the Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Family and Friends Care in England¹

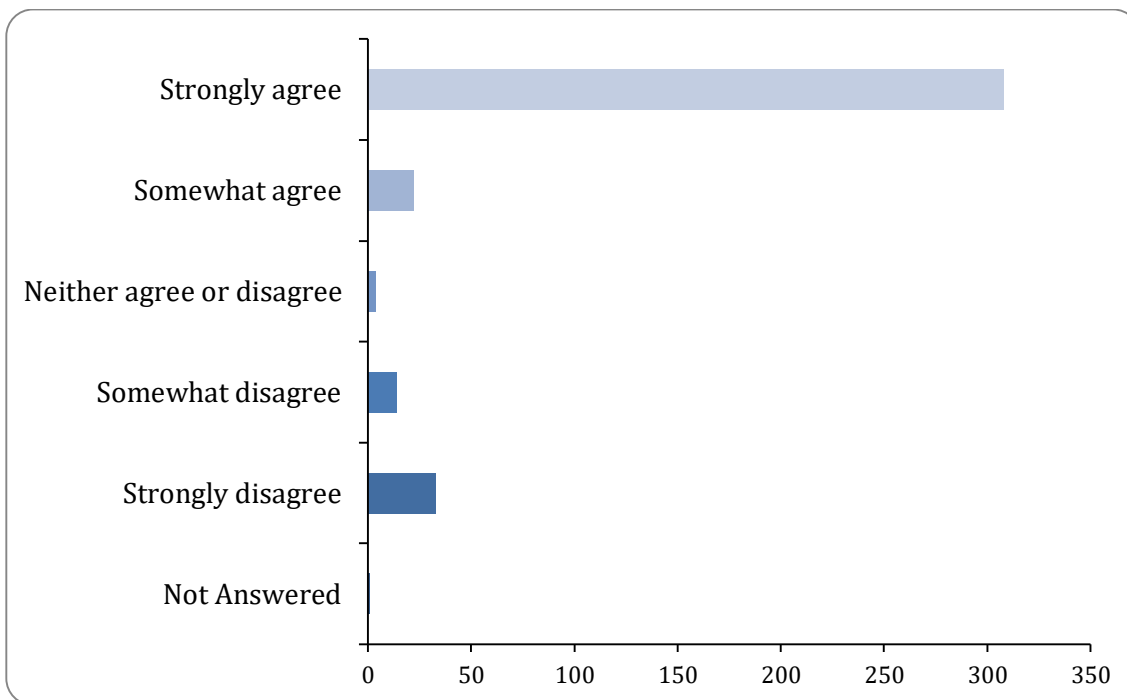
An additional specific point raised in relation to the definition of bereaved parents was that whilst some parents will be resident, others will be non-resident, and this should not affect entitlement.

An issue was raised in relation to self-employed people, those on zero hours contracts and those who had been employed for less than 26 weeks (the qualifying period for pay in the regulations). It is suggested that it is unfair that those parents who have opted to become self-employed to enable them to care for a child with a long-term disability should not receive a period of paid statutory leave if their child dies and that the protections offered by the regulations should be extended to these groups.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/288483/amily-and-friends-care.pdf

Q5. The leave entitlement is for a period of at least two weeks. What is your view?

There were 381 responses to this part of the question.

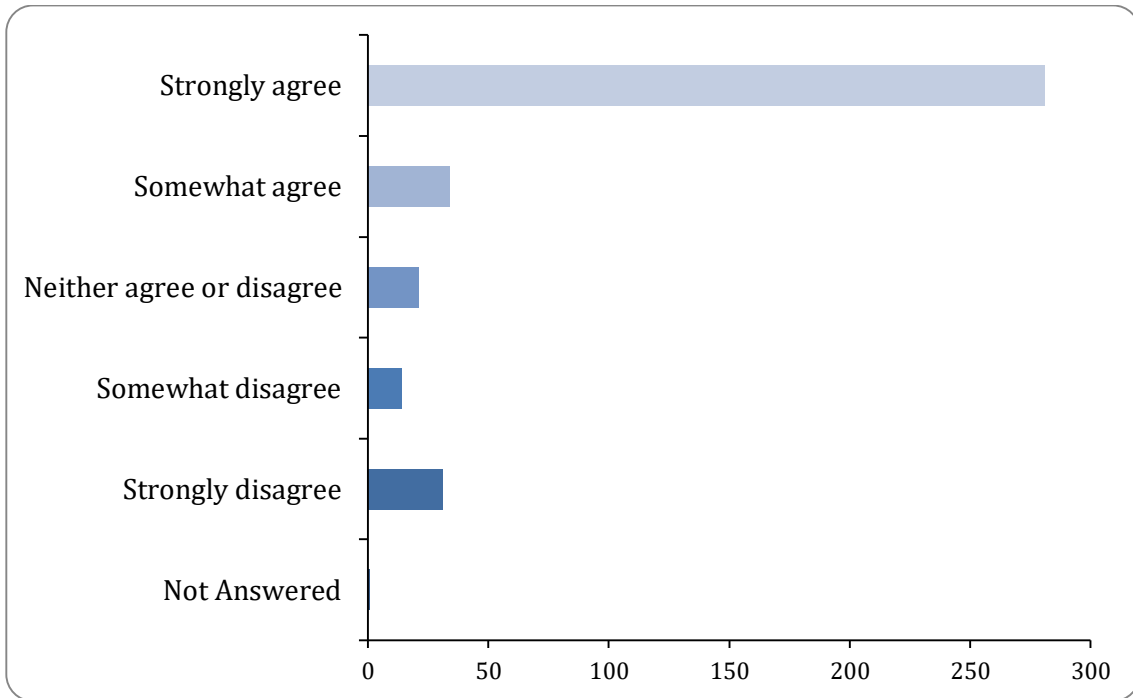


Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	308	80.63%
Somewhat agree	22	5.76%
Neither agree or disagree	4	1.05%
Somewhat disagree	14	3.66%
Strongly disagree	33	8.64%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

There was strong agreement that leave entitlement should be at least two weeks, and, in taking in the round responses to question 6 and to question 7, agreement that there should be an option to split leave, and to allow leave to be taken up to 56 weeks after a bereavement.

Q6. The Bill will allow for two weeks leave to be taken together or in separate blocks of one week. What is your view?

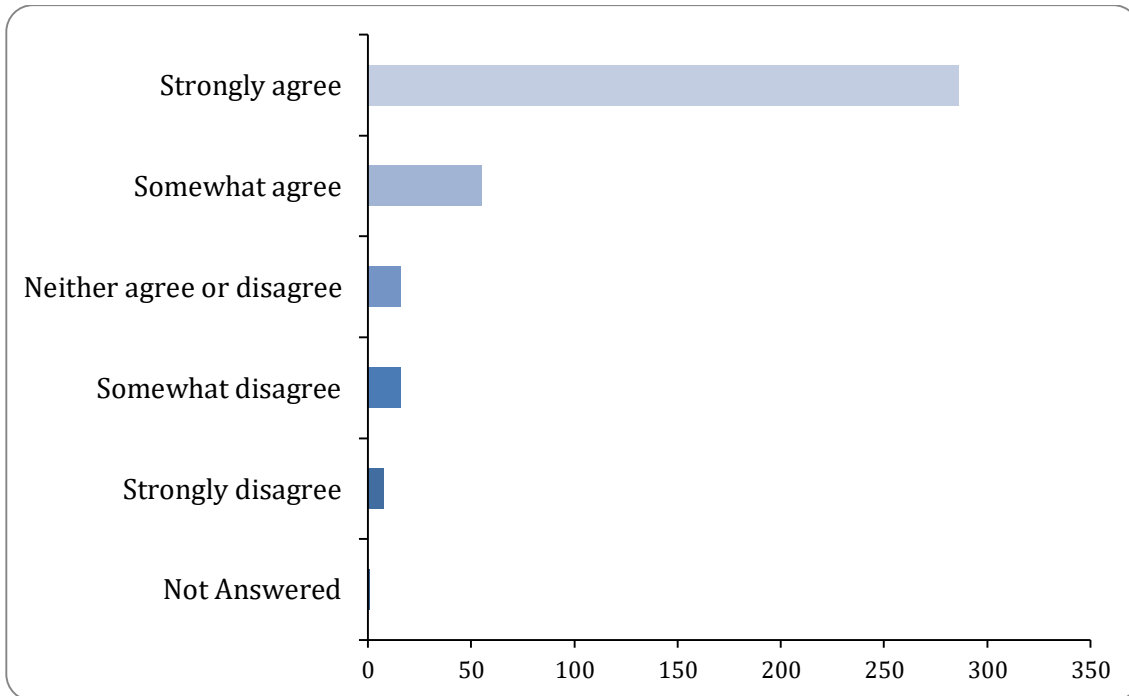
There were 381 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	281	73.56%
Somewhat agree	34	8.90%
Neither agree or disagree	21	5.50%
Somewhat disagree	14	3.66%
Strongly disagree	31	8.12%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

Q7. Regulations to follow at a later date intend to allow for leave to be taken up to 56 weeks after the death of a child. Is this appropriate?

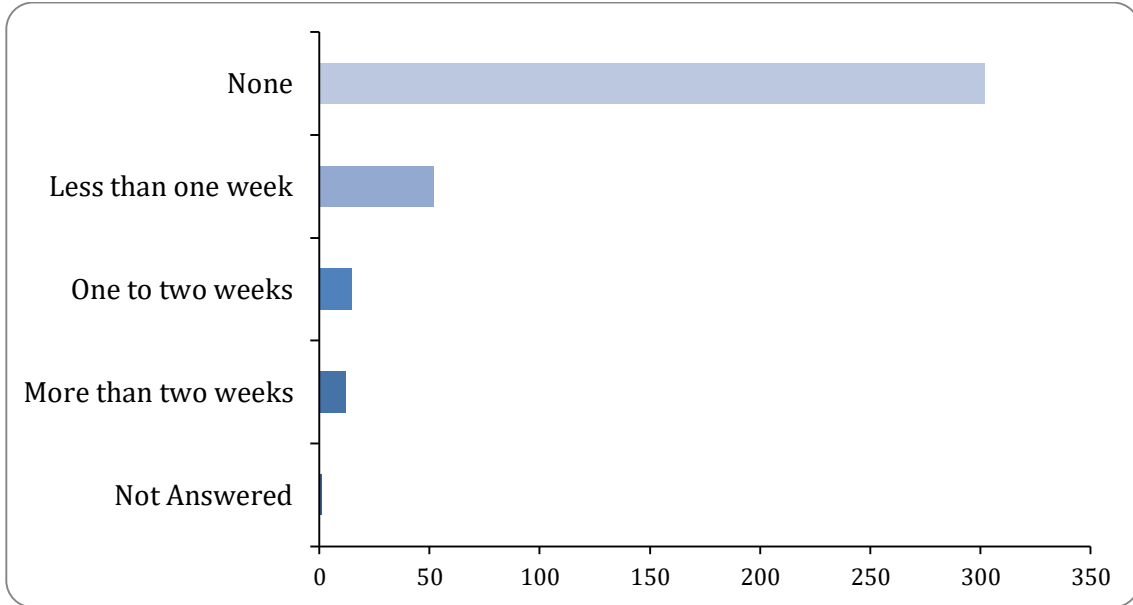
There were 381 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	286	74.87%
Somewhat agree	55	14.40%
Neither agree or disagree	16	4.19%
Somewhat disagree	16	4.19%
Strongly disagree	8	2.09%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

Q8. What notice should be required very soon after the death of a child?

There were 381 responses to this part of the question.

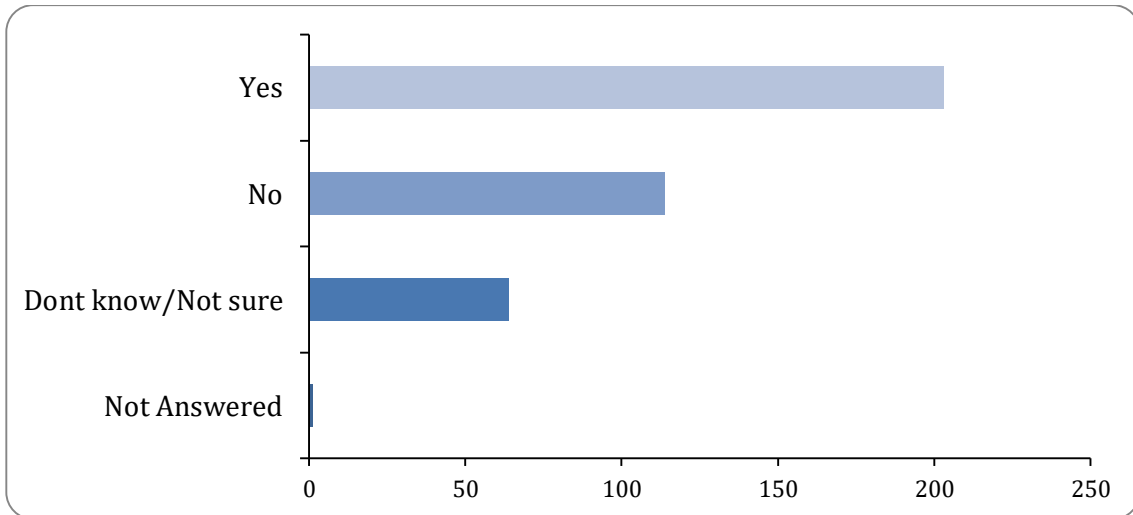


Option	Total	Percent
None	302	79.06%
Less than one week	52	13.61%
One to two weeks	15	3.93%
More than two weeks	12	3.14%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

The response reflects that there was broad consensus that notice for leave should not be required in the immediate aftermath of a bereavement.

Q9. Do you consider that notice should be required if leave is taken at a later date?

There were 381 responses to this part of the question.

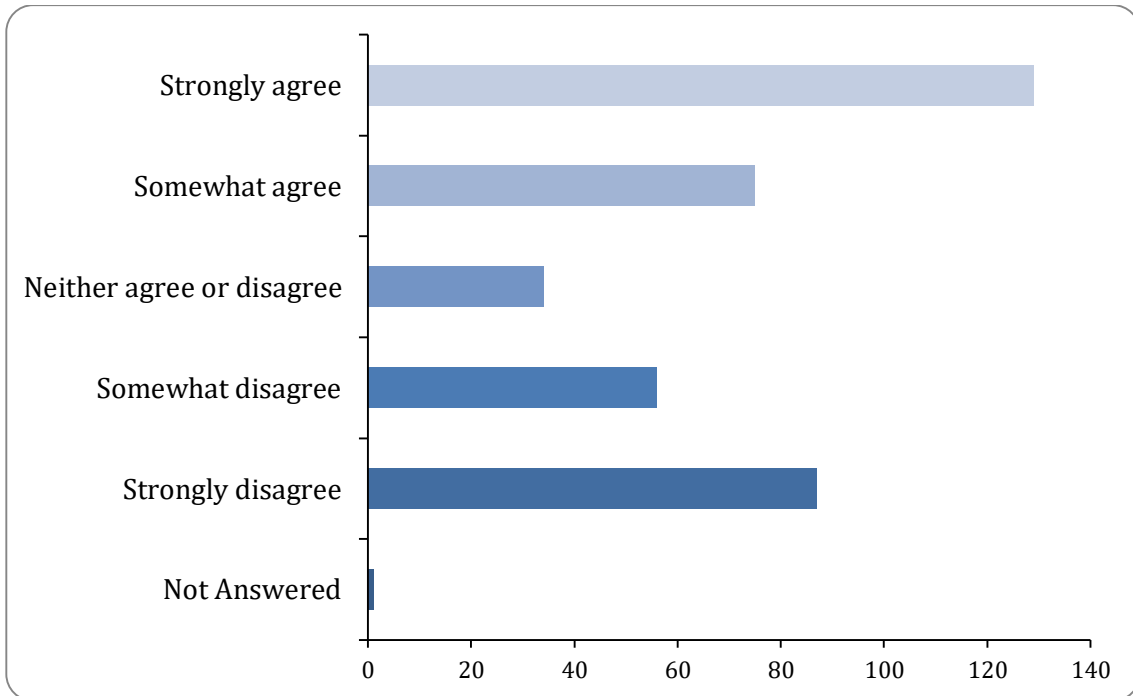


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	203	53.14%
No	114	29.84%
Dont know/Not sure	64	16.75%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

Whilst just over 50% of respondents agreed that notice should be given for leave taken at a later date, there was a notable 30% who disagreed. This may reflect that the majority of respondents to the survey have identified as individuals.

Q10. The qualifying period for bereavement pay will be 26 weeks' continuous employment. What is your view?

There were 381 responses to this part of the question.

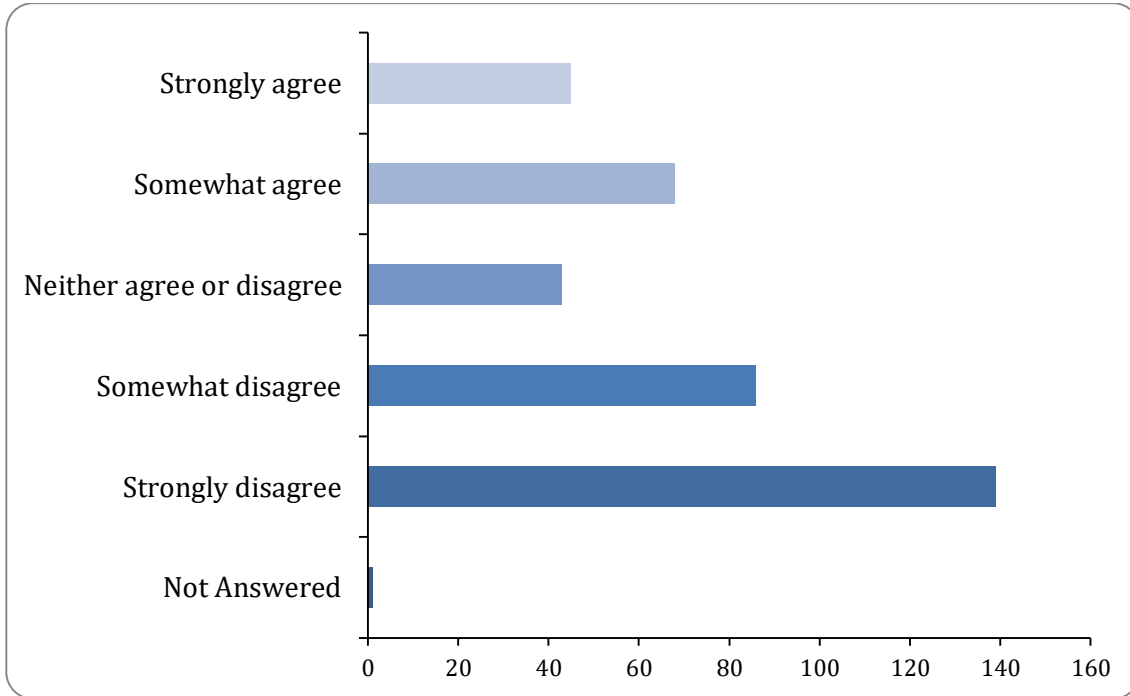


Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	129	33.77%
Somewhat agree	75	19.63%
Neither agree or disagree	34	8.90%
Somewhat disagree	56	14.66%
Strongly disagree	87	22.77%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

There was no consensus with regard to eligibility for pay to be dependent on 26 weeks' continuous employment, views were notably split between those broadly in agreement and those not.

Q11. What is your view that in order to receive payments an employee must give notice of when they are intending to take leave?

There were 381 responses to this part of the question.

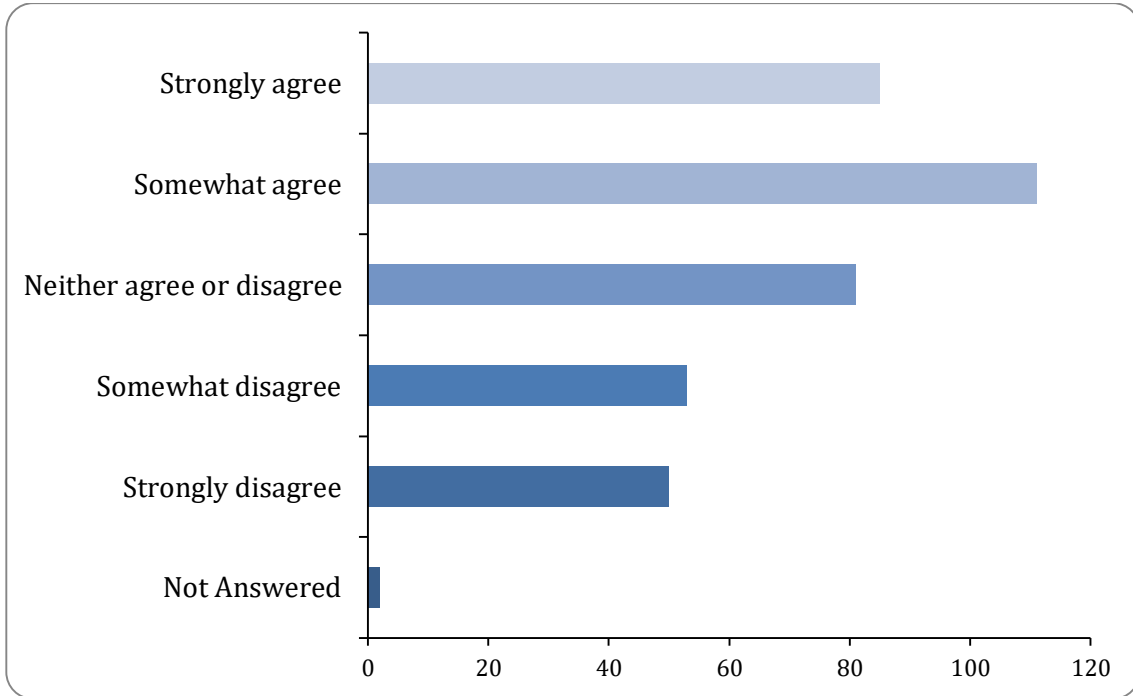


Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	45	11.78%
Somewhat agree	68	17.80%
Neither agree or disagree	43	11.26%
Somewhat disagree	86	22.51%
Strongly disagree	139	36.39%
Not Answered	1	0.26%

The majority disagreed that notice should be given in order to receive pay. This may reflect that some who consider that notice should not be required in the aftermath of a bereavement, do not then consider that notice should have to be given in order to receive pay.

Q12. What is your view that evidence to be provided for parental bereavement PAY should be in line with employer guidance?

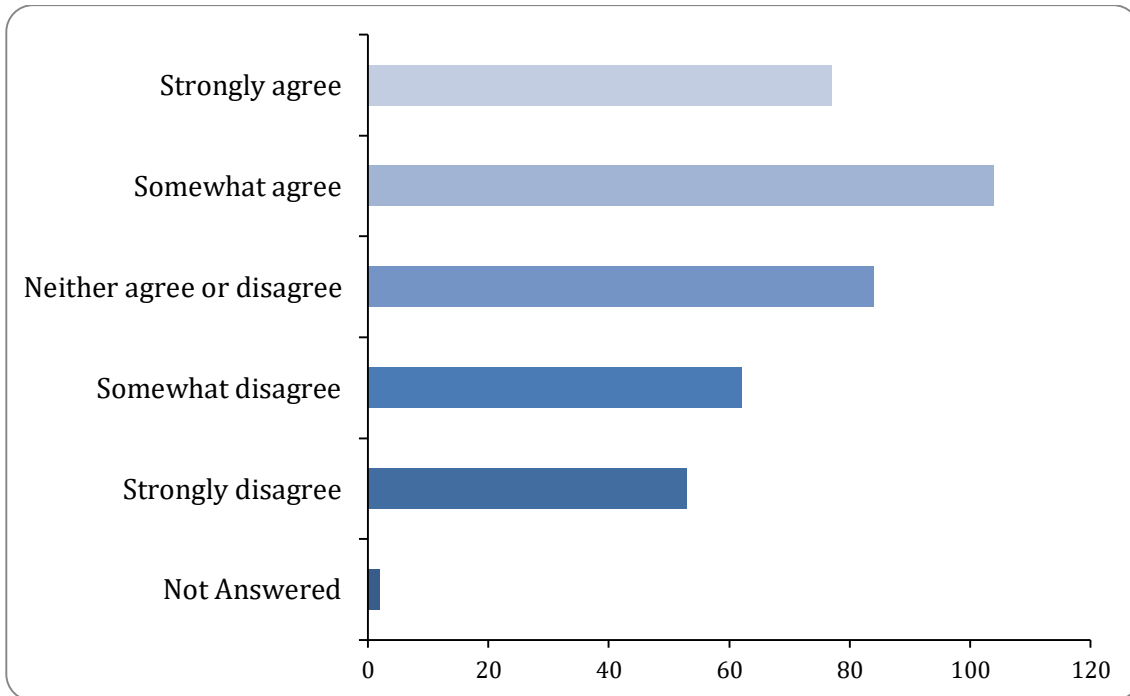
There were 380 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	85	22.25%
Somewhat agree	111	29.06%
Neither agree or disagree	81	21.20%
Somewhat disagree	53	13.87%
Strongly disagree	50	13.09%
Not Answered	2	0.52%

Q13. What is your view that evidence to be provided for parental bereavement LEAVE be in line with employer guidance?

There were 380 responses to this part of the question.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	77	20.16%
Somewhat agree	104	27.23%
Neither agree or disagree	84	21.99%
Somewhat disagree	62	16.23%
Strongly disagree	53	13.87%
Not Answered	2	0.52%

There was a split in support for whether evidence provided for leave should be in line with employer guidance with no definite consensus emerging. This may reflect that respondents are unsure to what extent employer guidance may require to be adapted to provide for the Bill, and for some the provision that may already be in place for supportive arrangements.

Q14. Finally, do you have any additional comments you wish to add?

There were 132 responses to this part of the question.

Comments largely reflected the experiences of individuals, including those who have suffered a bereavement. A comprehensive summary of the comments will be provided for the Committee's consideration as part of the Bill Report. However, a sample of some of the views is provided below.

- *The more **complex** the requirements for notice, pay, qualifying periods, length of service, blocks of one week, etc. is likely to **confuse employers** and potentially dissuade them from supporting the legislation.*
- *The ICTU believes that a statutory entitlement to bereavement leave and pay should be **available to all workers as a day one right** and should not be subject to a qualifying period. Further more, we believe that **payment should be at earnings related rate** so that workers are not penalised financially at this very difficult time.*
- *Yes they should give notice if it is some time after the child dies but they **cannot give notice immediately** and they shouldn't be made to go through **onerous paperwork**.*
- ***Notice periods to an employer are not compatible** as the employee will be unable to contribute much in the workplace in any case. Whatever is affordable to support bereaved parents will be so welcome but the value of immediate emotional support and understanding shouldn't be underestimated.*
- *While the intention behind this policy is positive, the **initial 2-week period is incredibly problematic** and I feel will likely cause further distress, hurt and offence to grieving parents and caregivers.*
- *I believe a **minimum of eight weeks** is needed for bereaved parents to allow them time to grieve before having to return to work.*
- *2 weeks is very short, **should be at least 6 to 8**. Also, the notice is not workable. You can't pinpoint a tragic accident or even if a child is sick you can't know exactly when they will pass. Should be extenuating circumstances clause*
- *For leave granted to caregivers who are **not biological or adoptive parents**, there is likely to be much more complexity so it would be important to work with*

*appropriate agencies (social workers, foster agencies etc) to determine how this is best applied with a **""do no harm"" approach to designing the eligibility.***

- *I believe that **businesses** are being made to carry more **financial burdens** on behalf of government. If the government want to do this they should 100% fund it rather than passing it to the employer.*
- *Some **employers may exploit** the situation so government should make a **fair set of guidances** that considers both parent and employer.*
- *Consideration needs to be given to **pregnancy loss**.*
- *The issue of **miscarriage** is regrettably not included at all in this discussion. This is a grave oversight.*

If you are interested in engaging further with the Committee on the contents of this Bill, please provide your email address below.

Please let us know if you would be interested in engaging further with the Committee on the contents of this Bill by providing a contact email address in the box below.

There were 92 responses to this part of the question.

These accounted for:

73 individuals

6 employers

1 Trade Union (note the same union appears twice)

7 representing interested organisations

4 in a other capacity