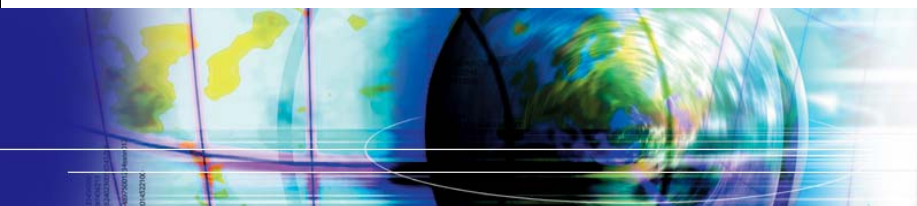


# **Mobility in the UK small business sector**

**Research Study White Paper**

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## Introduction

This report is based on a research study of 496 small UK businesses (those with less than 100 employees), which looked at the difficulties, frustrations, and the advantages of running a small business, and the impact (real and potential) that mobile working is having. The research was carried out during November 2005, and gathered information from 496 online questionnaire respondents, along with 20 qualitative telephone interviews.

The report is structured in six sections:

Section 1 – Time, wastage, and mobility

Section 2 – Time and mobility – Regional variations

Section 3 – Time and mobility – Company size variations

Section 4 – The ups and downs of running a small business

Section 5 – Running a small business – Regional variations

Section 6 – Running a small business – Founder/non-founder variations

Appendix – Demographics

Of the 496 respondents, 61.3% founded and/or owns their company. 59.5% of them are based in London or the South-East.

## Executive Summary

The simple summary of this report is quite straightforward – people that run small businesses need more time. They are worrying about how to keep their cash flow going and win some growth, yet only have around a third of their time to spend on actual work, partly because they are mired in red tape and other unproductive time. 65% have some form of mobile computing, but only 15% are truly “work anywhere” mobile; those that have the facility consistently rate it as surpassing their expectations, regardless of company size or geographic location.

If there were one simple conclusion to draw from these findings, it would therefore be that those that are already mobile should become more truly mobile – upgrade from wi-fi to 3G, for example, and that those who think they could benefit from mobility should waste no time in getting it – if we believe the respondents that already use mobile computing, it will actually be better for businesses than they think! If smaller business owners and managers want to gain more time to do what’s important for their businesses, this would seem to be one way of achieving it.

There is a cautionary note to sound however. If you achieve the ability to work from anywhere you will use it, and the number of hours you work will rise. It is important for even small business owners to recognise that maintaining some boundary between their business and non-business lives is important, and doing email 24 hours a day is unhelpful to that balance. Spending (an average of) 8 hours a week on email looks like too much time – look carefully at how you use email within and outside your company and be honest about what is productive and what is not. Look for ways to cut down on unnecessary communication and perhaps establish some strict processes about when, where and how email is handled.

## Section 1: Time, wastage, and mobility

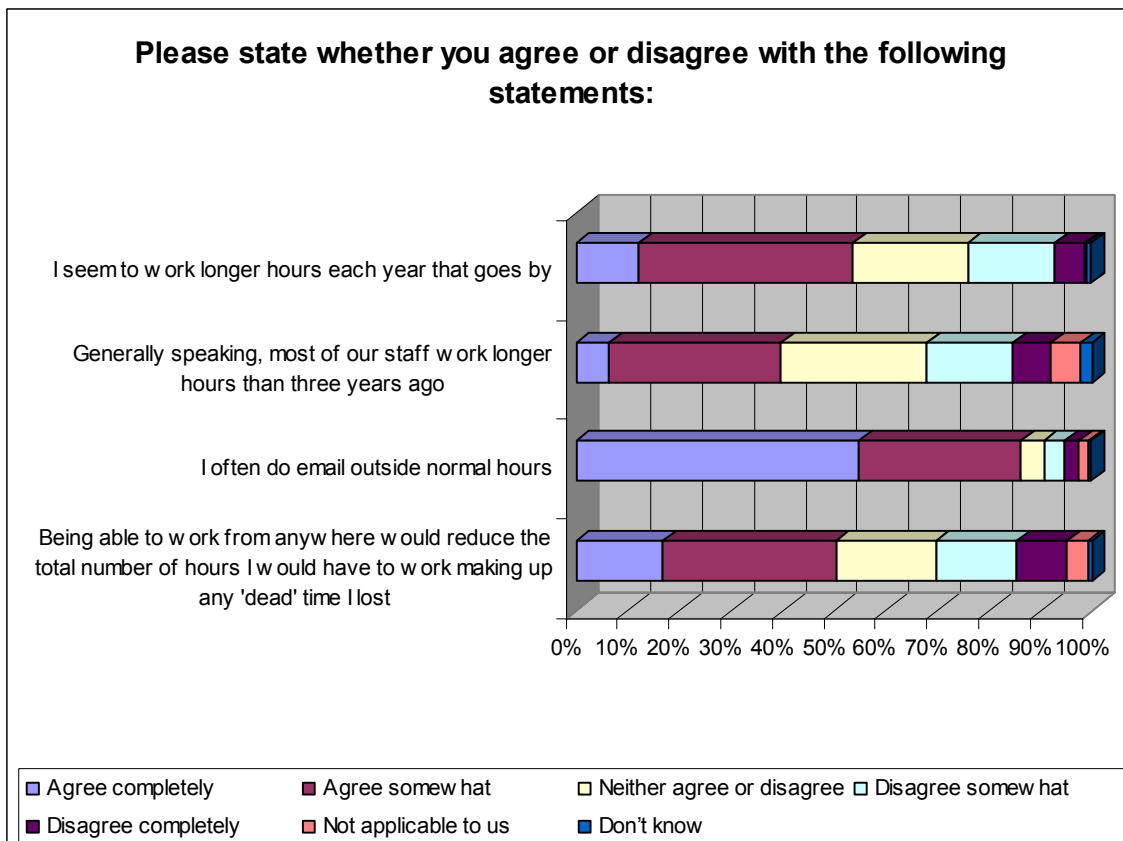
### How long are respondents working?

Across the whole sample, the average hours worked per week is 49.8. More than a quarter (26.2%) work 60 hours or more each week though. On average, the sample took 18.7 days holiday over the past year, excluding bank holidays. 24% have two weeks or less, and a lucky 7.3% take 6 weeks or more. Respondents are feeling a little more under pressure today. 54% agreed that they seem to work longer hour each year that goes by, and 86% often do email outside normal office hours. As one managing director based in the Midlands put it "Mobile IT has given me the ability to work when I need to. Unfortunately that seems to be all the time".

### What are they doing when they are working?

Respondents spend 10.7 hours a week (21.5% of their time) travelling to or from work or meetings, or otherwise being out and suffering dead time (like waiting at an airport). Respondents also spend a total of 13.6 hours a week (27.3%) doing email or surfing the web (that number excludes personal email and web access). Counting all time spent on the Internet, doing email, dead time, and non-value added paperwork (like government forms), respondents only have 34% of their time left over to do real work not connected to email or to surfing the web.

**Figure 1 – Views on working time**



Base: 496

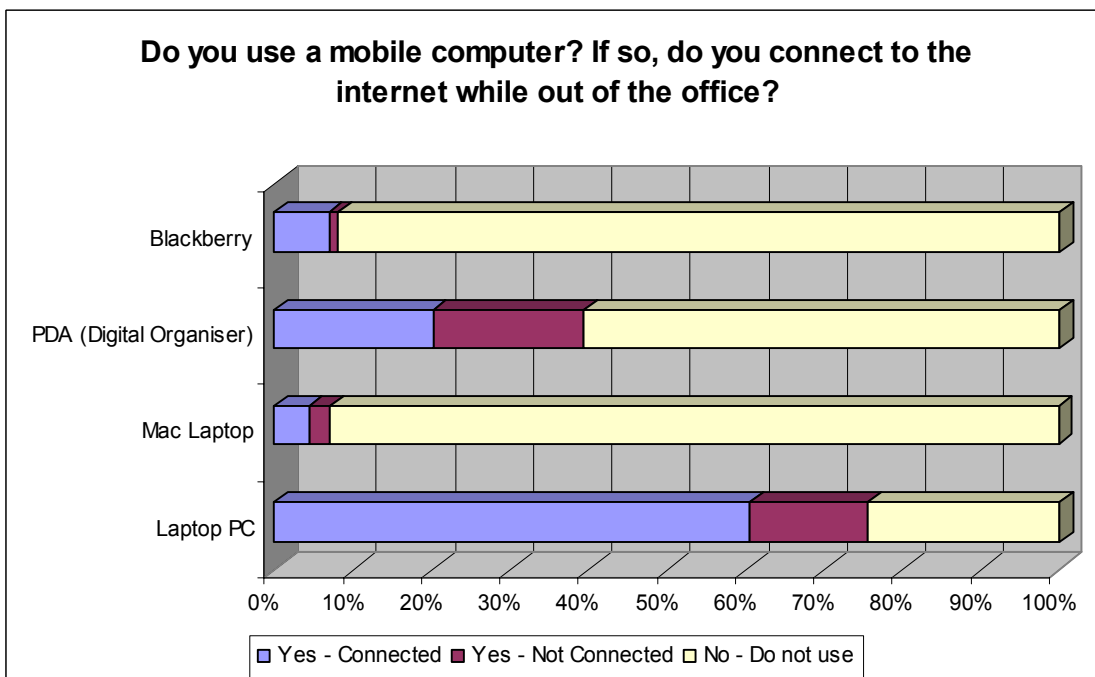
Clearly, any solution or approach that could reclaim some of that dead time could greatly increase work options and therefore productivity. There might also be an interesting productivity conclusion to be

drawn from the fact that respondents spend a whole working day a week – 8.2 hours – doing email. How much of that work has been generated because email exists, and how much is truly replacing other necessary communication methods? Many larger companies have email policies to try to curb the pervasive email problem – how many smaller businesses do so?

## Who's mobile?

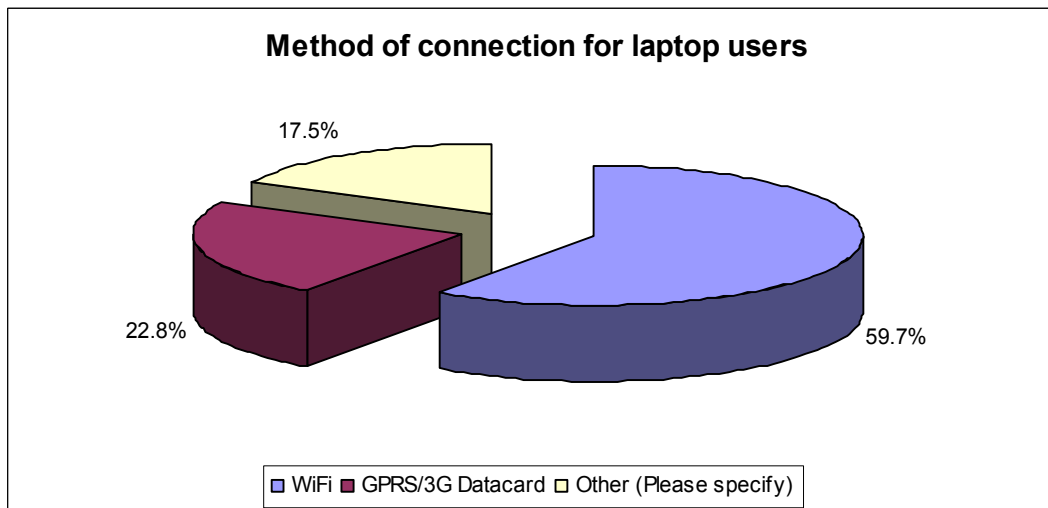
65% of respondents use a laptop computer and can connect to the Internet in some way when mobile, 18% use a laptop that is not connected. Of those that do connect, 60% use wi-fi, 23% use GPRS/3G datacard, and 17.5% some other means. True mobility – the ability to work anywhere, anytime – is today provided only by the GPRS/3G option, so around 85% of our respondents have either limited or no true mobility.

**Figure 2 – Use of mobile computing equipment**



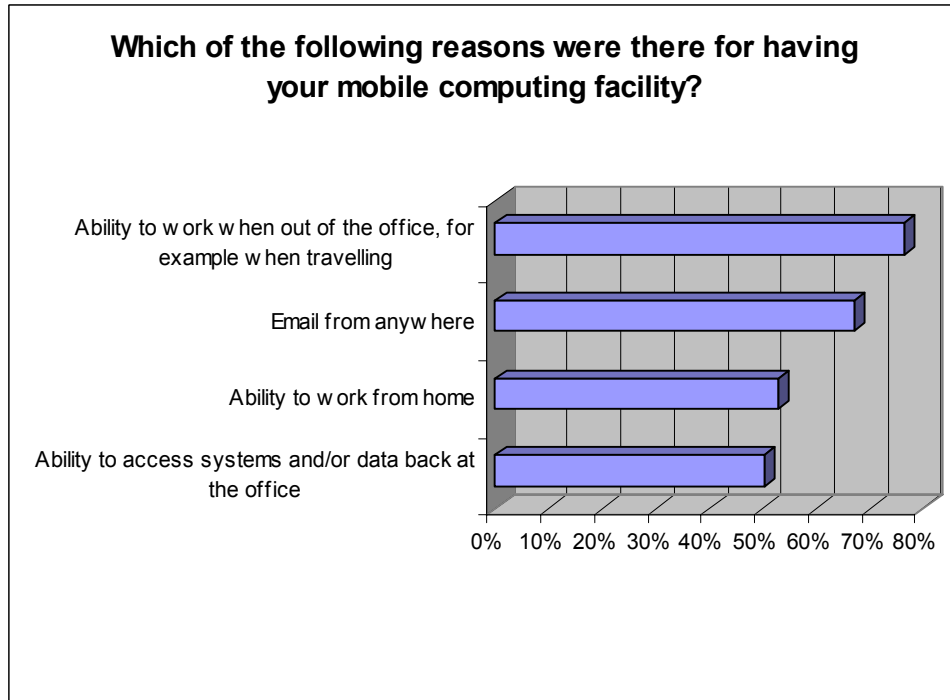
Base: 496

**Figure 3 – Mobile equipment connection methods**



Base: 320

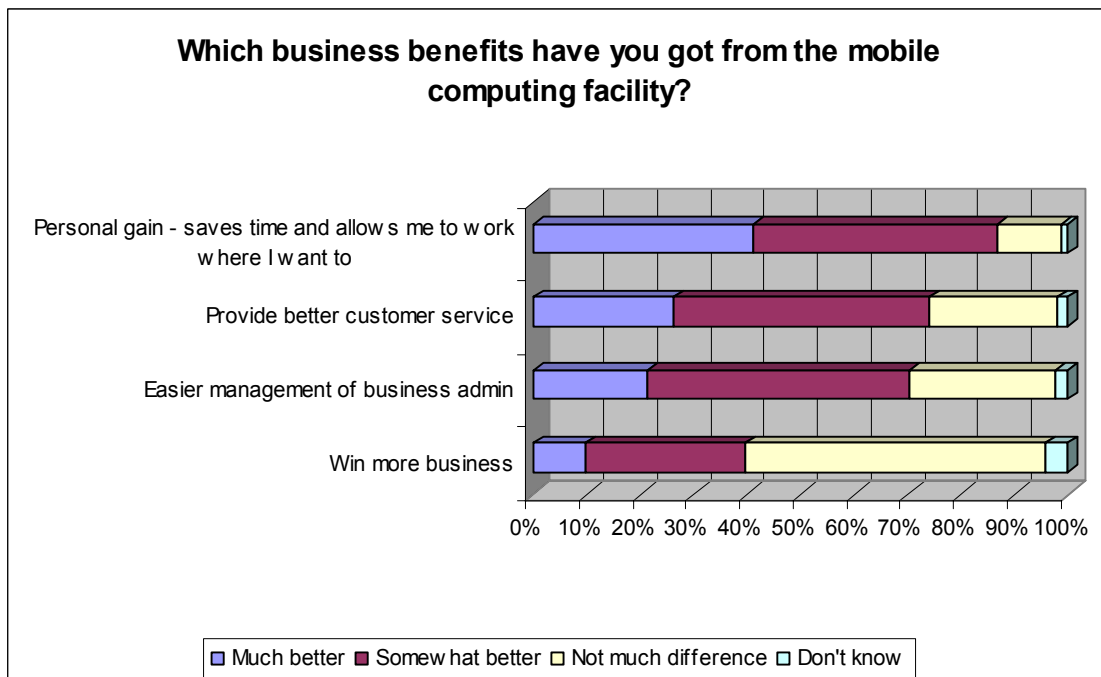
**Figure 4 – Reasons for acquiring mobile computing**



Base: 330

The reasons for acquiring a mobile facility are clear enough – the ability to work from anywhere is the most often cited, with email being the main application required. Technically, given the comments above about true mobility, few of the respondents are really gaining the ability to work *anywhere*.

**Figure 5 – Business benefits from mobile computing**



Base: 330