

The Mass Observation Project

Spring 2010 Directive

Part 1: A working day

In 1995 we sent out a directive called "Doing a Job" which invited everyone to talk about their working life. Even longer ago, in 1983, we asked Mass Observers about their early experiences of work (first job, first pay packet and so on). This directive is to bring our archive up to date with some information about working life in Britain today.

We want you to describe an average working day for you. If you are not in a paid job, we would still like to have an account of a day in your life which typically describes what you do.

As usual, please start each part of your directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply.

A one-day diary - for people at work

Choose any day in the next two or three months when you are at work. Start recording what you do from when you get up in the morning. If you work from home, then please say so.

Describe your preparations for work – what you wear, what you need to take to work (eg equipment, packed lunch, money, clothing, papers), how you organise anyone else in the household while you are at work, whom you leave behind.

How you travel to work? How long does it take? What does it cost you?

During the day, make sure you describe (anonymously) your work colleagues if you have any.

Tell us about your place of work. What do you actually do all day? Of course, your hours may not fit with the usual 9-5 pattern so please describe if you do night work or shifts, or if you travel for your work.

Describe finishing work. Do you come straight home?

No day will be completely typical but the way round this is to comment at the end on whether this was an average day for you, or whether it was unusual in some way.

Did you enjoy the day? Are you planning to continue in this job? How does it compare to previous jobs you have done?

The more context you can provide the better - so please give as much background as you can. You may want to talk about changes you have seen during your working life. All sorts of issues might be relevant from new technology to equal rights, from flexi-time to risks and health in the work place, from perks and pay to annual leave and in service training and personal development, from stress at work to the impact of the recession. It's up to you what's most relevant.

If you are not in paid work

Please still choose any weekday day that might be typical during the next two or three months and record all you do. Voluntary work or unpaid work in the home is still work and we'd like to hear about it. Contrast with your experience of paid work would be of interest.

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If you have previously been in work, then please describe the contrast between the two experiences. If you are a student or at school (though you still might have a job!), then still record a day for us.

For everyone

Reflections on the world of work – how it's changed and how it may change in the future.

Part 2: Personal finances

Money – and how you manage it

This directive is about the way we handle our personal finances. The news is full of concerns about debt at both a national and an individual level. It seemed a good time to ask you to reflect on how you manage (or don't manage) your finances. We want to know how you learned to deal with money when you were younger because part of our interest lies in the ways in which young people today learn to deal with money.

Please start both Part 2 and Part 3 of your directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography (see page 1).

As a young person

No matter what age you are now, please think back to when you were growing up. Do you remember much about the way your parents dealt with money? Were you aware of financial issues in your home? What do you recall about the way your parents and older people generally dealt with money?

When you were younger (or you are under 18 now), do/did you receive pocket money from your family? Do/did you earn money from a job while you were still at school? Are/were you given gifts of money and if so, what did you do with them? Do/did your parents control your money, or advise you about saving or spending? Is/was your experience similar to that of your friends?

Did you have any bank or post office accounts in your youth? Please describe and tell us how you went on to adapt to adult life – starting work, handling your own wages, dealing with tax, paying bills and so on as a young person. How did your money-handling change?

You and your finances today

How far do you think the way you were brought up affects the way you handle your finances today? Please give as much detail as you feel able. Obviously we are interested in the principles behind what you do rather than in specific amounts or accounts so don't feel you have to reveal anything sensitive unless you want to.

For example, we would be interested in your attitude to borrowing money or lending money. And also your attitude to saving and planning for the future.

Other people and your money

Do you share managing your money with other people – your partner or spouse? How does that work? Do you have professional advisers: accountants, financial advisers, bank managers? Have you sought help from organisations like the Citizens' Advice Bureaux?

Do you help out your kids/parents/siblings/friends with their finance?

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Children and young people

If you are a parent or grandparent or have close contact with young people, we would be interested in your observations about how they learn to handle money.

Mobile phone accounts may be one of the first ways which many young people today have to face in terms of handling money. Do you have any observations to make on this from your own experience?

If you are a parent, how far do you help out either financially or with advice on mobile phone accounts? Are there good/bad examples?

Part 3: The General Election 2010

This part of the directive is not just for those who think of themselves as active politically but for all of you. Over the years, the directive replies on the general elections have been one of the most valued sources of information for historians and others seeking to understand the eras they are studying. The directive replies offer a glimpse of what people really feel about politicians and the country they live in and Mass Observation can get behind the statistics of the opinion polls.

At the time we were preparing this directive, it looked as if the Election was going to be on 6 May.

What do you think? Are you excited about the possibilities for change or are you bored already?

Are you actively involved in electioneering (or some other form of political activity) or will you let the whole thing pass you by? What does it mean to you?

I could write a very long directive on this, but I am going to leave it to you to write as much as you feel able on whatever issue strikes you as being crucial to record for the future about this Election.

If you want to write about MPs' expenses – please do, or the war in Afghanistan, or the NHS, or the banks, or poverty and wealth, or crime, or the media and how it deals with the Election, or education and the universities, or employment/unemployment, the UK/USA relationship, the general state of the world financially or politically, this is your opportunity!

PLEASE NOTE

To keep postage costs and processing time to a minimum, it would be helpful if you could:

- Send in your current views *with the rest of your directive reply* within the next 2-3 months.
- If you have time, please keep a diary or a log book of your reactions and thoughts about the Election over the next few months, jotting down any thoughts you have during the Election itself and its aftermath. Keep this at home and send it to us when you send in your reply to the Summer directive later in the year.

Please post your response to: **The Mass Observation Archive, FREEPOST BR 2112, The Library, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 1ZX** (no stamp needed)

Or email your response to: moa@sussex.ac.uk