

The Timewise Flexible Jobs Index 2023

An annual index of the proportion of UK jobs advertised with flexible working options

Research partner:  Lightcast

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INTRODUCTION

Our 2023 Flexible Jobs Index shows negligible change on the previous year's level of job adverts that overtly offer some form of flexible working at the point of hire. Only 31% do so, signifying an end to the progress that was made during and since the pandemic, when hybrid working became the norm for many UK jobs.

The apparent stagnation in flexible hiring is surprising, in the light of the 2023 Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act and planned regulation giving people the right to request flexible working from day one in a new job. The act will come into being in 2024, yet there is plenty of evidence that many employers remain resistant to flexibility for new recruits.

To be fair to employers, complex workplace transformation takes time. And adapting to flexibility brings many challenges: different forms of flexibility need to be considered and assessed

in terms of their likely impact for the jobholder, the wider team, and the productivity of the business; jobs then need to be redesigned; managers need training in how to manage flexible teams to ensure cohesion and maintain productivity levels; and there is the question of how to address equity between employees when one person's job can easily be done flexibly while another cannot.

True, all of this requires investment in change processes and manager training. And the pressure to adapt to flex comes at a time when employers are facing huge challenges in terms of pay rises to cover their employees' increased cost of living, whilst simultaneously grappling with an economic downturn.

It's also true that there is currently much confusion about the efficacy of hybrid working, with some employers questioning the productivity of home-based employees and the impact on

workplace culture (the evidence actually points to blends of office/home-working being potentially beneficial, but with 100% home-working being problematic). Part-time arrangements are also disliked by some employers, on account of taking up the same amount of management time as a full-time employee, and also (if applicable) the extra costs involved with job-share handovers.

However, employers need to look beyond the barriers and consider the evidence: flexible working, done well, provides considerable ROI in the form of improved talent attraction, higher levels of retention, lower costs of replacing staff, better health and wellbeing, and reduced absenteeism.

If you are still sitting on the fence over flexible working, remember that the problem of worker shortages is not going away. Nor is worker demand for more autonomy and control over how and when they do their work.

And there are wider benefits to British workplaces and even to society. Embracing flexibility is one aspect of becoming a good employer – by doing so you will be helping to create more inclusive workplaces and reducing the environmental damage caused by commuting.

So, although progress has stalled and some organisations are rowing back on hybrid working, we urge employers to choose to be part of the change towards a more flexible workplace from day one. It remains the direction of travel, with good reason, and is worth the effort involved in 'getting it right'.



Claire Campbell
CEO, Timewise

CONTENTS

Executive summary	04
Aims and methodology	07
Research findings:	
• Supply lags behind demand	08
• Year on year growth	09
• Which types of flexible working are most common?	10
• Flexible jobs by salary	11
• Differences in types of flex by salary level	12
• Flexible jobs by type of role	13
• Differences in types of flex by role category	14
• Regional variances	15
What the findings mean for UK employers	16
What should policy makers do?	17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPLINE AVAILABILITY OF FLEXIBLE JOB VACANCIES

- In 2023, only 3 in 10 jobs (31%) are being advertised with options to work flexibly as an employee benefit. This has barely changed since the previous year's rate of 30%.
- The momentum of a shift to hybrid working during the pandemic has plateaued. 12% of job adverts offered an element of home-working in 2023, the same rate as in 2022.
- The supply of flexible vacancies continues to lag far behind workplace practice (6 in 10 employees work flexibly¹) and even further behind the level of demand (9 in 10 people want to do so²).

- It's clear that many employers remain reluctant to advertise jobs as flexible, in spite of the new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act that is expected to come into force in 2024 and which will be accompanied by regulations enabling the right to request flexible working from day one in a new job. A shift in mindset is needed urgently.

WHY THE LOW AVAILABILITY OF FLEXIBLE JOBS IS A PROBLEM

- **The problem for employers:** The failure to adapt recruitment practice to match what is happening in the workplace is inhibiting talent attraction. This is because many people who already work flexibly in their current role are reluctant to apply for new jobs that don't overtly offer flexible working.

Unemployed people are discouraged too, in particular the 500,000 who have quit the labour market since the pandemic due to factors including health or caring issues³. Sectors which are still struggling with worker shortages will fail to attract this cohort back to work in sufficient numbers unless they embrace flexibility.

- **The problem for employees:** Many people cannot work at all if they can't find a flexible job⁴. The current availability of 31% means that 7 in 10 vacancies are seen as off limits by these people, damaging their job mobility, career progression and living standards. This applies especially to certain groups such as parents (especially mothers), carers, older workers and people with health concerns.

MOST COMMON FORMS OF FLEXIBILITY

- There is similar availability for three types of flexibility: part-time and home-working (including hybrid arrangements) were each offered in 12% of job adverts in 2023, while the catch-all phrase 'flexible working' was used in 11%. This latter term often denotes a full-time job where the employer is open to flexible options by negotiation.
- Flexible times of work are offered less frequently, in only 4% of job vacancies in 2023.
- Employers need to clarify which types of flexibility are on offer in their job adverts. Although using the catch all term 'flexible working' is better than not referencing flex at all, it is unhelpful to candidates who need specific forms of flexibility and may deter applications.

- Employers should also be mindful that hybrid working is not always the type of flex that employees need. For parents and carers (women in particular), part-time is often the most sought-after form of flexibility, while home-working can be challenging at times when their children are at home. Other flexible working arrangements such as flexible or compressed hours are also popular.
- In spite of successful pilots and considerable reported interest from businesses, the '4 day week' (where all employees of an organisation work 4 days for full-time pay) has yet to register at all in job adverts. Either the hype is being made by a relatively small number of organisations, or those who have implemented it are not yet ready to promote it to new candidates.

DIFFERENCES IN FLEXIBILITY BY SALARY

- The overall availability of flexible job vacancies is fairly flat across most salary levels, with a rate of around 30%. The exception is jobs paid £60,000-£79,000 where the rate is slightly higher, at 35%. This peak is explained by increased offers of hybrid working at this salary band.
- However, disparities emerge when looking at the salary patterns by type of flex:
 - Part-time arrangements are more than twice as common in jobs paid £20k-£34k FTE (15%), compared to those paid £35k-£59k FTE (7%); and three times more common compared to those paid £60k or more (5%).
 - Conversely, home-working (including hybrid working) is least available (9%) in jobs paid £20k-£34k, and peaks at 20% for jobs paid £60k-£79k.

- The lack of part-time vacancies at higher salary levels is a particular problem, as it traps certain groups of people in low-paid roles or out of work. In particular, many mothers have to choose between part-time work below their skill level, or not working at all. This is a key driver for low pay, under-employment and the gender pay gap.
- Better job design can open up more options for different types of flexibility at all salary levels, to allow greater fluidity in the jobs market. Employers could look more closely at how jobs can be done; for example, an element of home-working will be possible in many lower paid roles even if they are not office-based.

DIFFERENCES BY ROLE CATEGORY

- As in previous years, social services have the greatest availability of flexible job vacancies (45%), with health occupations also relatively high (38%).

- Hospitality now ranks alongside the above public service sectors, having leapt from 33% last year to 43% in 2023. This may reflect labour shortages in the sector, and possibly also businesses running on reduced hours to cope with lower demand in the tough economic climate.
- Many office roles have higher than average rates, led by HR (39%), finance (38%) and marketing (38%). Hybrid working is naturally particularly prevalent here.
- Role categories with rates well below average include construction (10%), manufacturing (11%), and maintenance/repair (13%).
- The differences between role categories may be due to operational constraints – for example operating hours on construction sites, or office roles being more adaptable to hybrid working. However, gender differences can also play a part, as female dominated roles (eg health,

social services) have higher rates of flex, while male dominated roles (eg construction, engineering) have lower rates. These embedded imbalances can create 'institutional' barriers to flex.

- Whatever the reasons, unequal access to flexible jobs can create a sense of unfairness amongst workers. Some form of flexibility is usually possible in all roles, and employers can look at job design to try to provide a degree of equity. In particular, part-time or flexible hours are often possible in roles that cannot accommodate home-working.
- It is noteworthy that there are low rates of part-time job opportunities in professional roles such as HR and marketing, as these are occupations where women are well represented. This highlights the challenge to job mobility and career progression for many women who want to work part-time because of their caring responsibilities.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

- The availability of flexible job vacancies is broadly similar across the UK, but with Wales (35%) and the South West (36%) slightly out in front.
- Northern Ireland (28%), Greater London (29%), Yorkshire & the Humber (30%), and the East of England (30%) all have rates slightly below the UK average (31%).

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS DO?

- Read up on the new legislation and get ready for it.
- Gain knowledge and confidence on how you can make flexibility work in your organisation. Find examples of it working in your sector; seek guidance on flexible job design and how to support line managers to implement it successfully.
- Look particularly at how to make a success of hybrid working, which is currently the subject of much doubt

amongst employers. Before you row back on hybrid, or decide not to trial it, invest time in understanding models that are successful.

- Don't assume that candidates will know they can ask for flexible working at interview. People who need flex want to know it's on offer before they waste time on an application. This is especially true if they have been out of the labour market for a while, as they may lack the confidence to ask.
- Think through which specific types of flex you can offer – reduced hours, flex on start and finish times, home-working etc. Then make sure you articulate this clearly in job adverts.

WHAT SHOULD POLICY MAKERS DO

- The Department for Business and Trade should clarify the framework for the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 in relation to the day one right to request flex, as this currently falls under regulation not primary legislation.

- The Department for Business and Trade should ensure that comprehensive guidance for employers is included in the ACAS statutory code of practice, in relation to how to adapt to flex from day one. The guidance should include requirements on consultation standards needed to justify declining a request.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should consider further actions to incentivise and support employers to advertise job vacancies as open to flexible working from day one.
- A sectoral approach could help tackle skills and workforce shortages in certain industries. The Department for Business and Trade should task Sector Skills Councils with promoting advice and guidance to employers. More broadly, regional partnerships (such as the emerging employer charters) should consider how to build employer capabilities on job design at a sectoral level.

AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

AIMS OF THE INDEX

- To fill a knowledge gap in job market statistics in the UK, by reporting on advertised vacancies where flexible working is offered as a positive benefit to candidates.
- By updating the index annually, we are tracking progress in flexible recruitment.
- To use this insight to build a business and social case for employers in the UK, to encourage change in recruitment practices.
- Employers can benchmark their recruitment practices around flexible working against national averages - by salary, role type, region and types of flexibility offered.

METHODOLOGY

The Timewise Flexible Jobs Index 2023 is based on analysis of over 5.7 million UK vacancies, advertised on job boards between 1st January and 30th June 2023. The data source is Lightcast, and job adverts were filtered using 19 keywords relating to different forms of flexible working.

As our aim is to track employer behaviour in offering flexible working for quality jobs (rather than in insecure jobs where flexibility is common and pay is often below national living wage), the following types of contracts are excluded from the analysis where it has been possible to identify them: self-employed, freelance, zero hours, commission only and temporary posts.

We have also excluded all job adverts paid less than £20,000 per annum – a proxy for the national living wage rate in 2023, of £10.42 per hour.

TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING IN THE ANALYSIS

- Part-time, including job-share
- Home-working or remote working, whether this is a partial arrangement or 100%. This includes hybrid working patterns.
- Flexible hours or shifts. The term 'flexible hours' is usually used in job adverts to mean variable start and finish times to the working day. To be included in the analysis, shift patterns need to be described as 'flexible', involving an element of employee choice.

- The catch-all term 'flexible working' is also included in the analysis, together with the term 'agile working' preferred by some employers. These tend to be full-time jobs where the employer is open to flexible working patterns by arrangement with the candidate.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A 'FLEXIBLE JOB'?

In this report, 'flexible job' means an advertised vacancy that offers any form of flexible working as an employee benefit.

A note on salaries: Whenever a salary is mentioned in this report, it means the full-time equivalent salary. So, for part-time jobs, it means the salary that would be earned if the role were full-time, and not the actual part-time salary.

SUPPLY LAGS BEHIND DEMAND



31% OF JOBS
OFFER FLEX



60% OF EMPLOYEES
WORK FLEX



87% OF PEOPLE
WANT FLEX

KEY FINDINGS

- In 2023, only 3 in 10 jobs (31%) are being advertised with options to work flexibly as an employee benefit.
- Yet according to research by CIPD, double that proportion of

employees (6 in 10)⁵ already work flexibly in some way, while 9 in 10 people want to do so⁶.

- The supply of flexible job posts continues to lag far behind workplace practice, and even further behind the level of demand.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

A damaging imbalance People who already work flexibly want to continue to do so and research has found that many of them are reluctant to apply for jobs that don't overtly offer flexible working. The failure to adapt recruitment practice to match what is happening in workplaces therefore inhibits talent attraction and worker mobility by discouraging job switching.

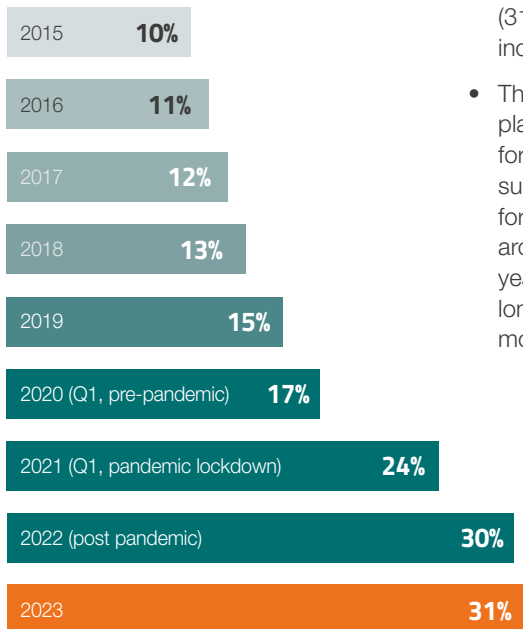
A partial solution to labour shortages? While we have clearly passed the hiring peak of 2022, employers are still seeing worker shortages across a number of sectors. Many people leave the labour market because of the lack of flexibility, and finding a job that offers it could help attract them back.

The wish to work flexibly is universal, and strong Flexible working is no longer a 'working mums issue' – since the pandemic especially, studies have found that it is valued and sought by all types of workers⁷. There is even growing evidence that flexibility is as or more important than salary for many people⁸. With flexible recruitment lagging a long way behind candidate demand, hiring managers ignore this powerful talent attraction tool at their peril.

Employer resistance to change Yet many employers remain reluctant to advertise jobs as flexible, citing a variety of reasons which are mostly surmountable⁹. With regulation coming down the line for the 'right to request day one flexibility', a shift in mindset is needed urgently.

YEAR ON YEAR GROWTH

PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING



KEY FINDINGS

- The rate of flexible jobs in 2023 (31%) represents a negligible increase on the previous year.
- The impact of the pandemic has plateaued. During 2020 and 2021, forced home-working and the subsequent shift to 'hybrid working' for many jobs led to increases of around 4 percentage points per year. But this has not developed into longer term momentum towards a more flexible workplace.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

Continued resistance to flexible recruitment

The stagnation in the growth of flexible jobs suggests that many employers are not prepared for the new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) legislation that is expected to come into force in 2024 and which includes regulation granting the right to request flexible working from day one of a new job. CIPD research published in May 2023 found that 49% of employers were not even aware of the planned new law¹⁰. When it is implemented, these employers may struggle to fill vacancies as well as to adapt their recruitment practices.

Blocks to career progression

Many people cannot work at all if they can't find a flexible job¹¹. The current availability of 31% means that 7 in 10 jobs are seen as off limits by these people, damaging their job mobility and career progression.

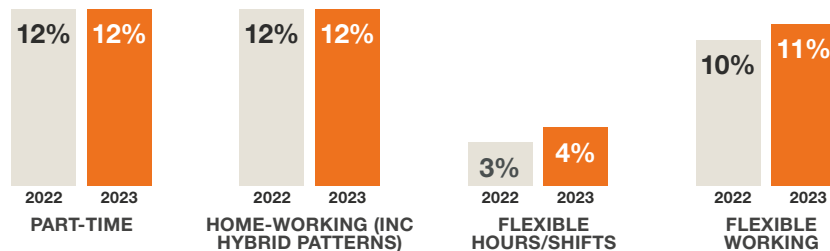
Suppression of living standards

People who need to work flexibly (especially those with caring responsibilities and health issues) also often need to take a temporary break from work. Without a jobs market for good quality flexible work, they are more likely to remain unemployed or be forced to take a flexible job below their skill level, which they often become trapped in. Flexible working is therefore fundamental to enabling access to quality work, progression in the workplace and improved living standards.

Managing work and health The rate of people not working due to long term ill health remains persistently high at over 2.6m, which is up 500,000 since the pandemic¹². These are people with skills and experience to offer the workplace. Employers still struggling with worker shortages will fail to attract this cohort back to work unless they offer a range of flexible working arrangements.

WHICH TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARE MOST COMMON?

PROPORTION OF JOB ADVERTS OFFERING SPECIFIC TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING



WHAT ABOUT THE 4 DAY WEEK?

Successful pilots of a 4 day week (where all employees of an organisation work 4 days for full-time pay) have caused a stir in 2023, with many businesses reportedly looking at it. However, we found negligible mentions of a 4 day week in job adverts and it is therefore omitted from our analysis. Either the hype around the 4 day week is being made by a relatively small number of organisations, or those who have implemented it are not yet ready to promote it to new candidates.

KEY FINDINGS

- The most striking finding here is how little change there has been since 2022 for any of the types of flexible jobs. The only noteworthy change is a semantic one – within the home-working jobs, the term ‘hybrid’ is now used more often (in 7% of job adverts versus 5% last year) than the term ‘home-working’. But this makes no difference to candidate experience; the rapid rise in the ability to find a job offering some form of home-working (from 3% of job adverts at the start of 2020 to 12% in 2022) has now ground to a halt.
- There is similar availability for three types of flexibility: part-time and home-working (including hybrid arrangements) are each offered in 12% of job adverts in 2023, while the catch-all phrase ‘flexible working’ is used in 11%. This latter term often denotes a full-time job where the employer is open to flexible options by negotiation.
- Flexible times of work are offered less frequently, in only 4% of job adverts in 2023.

TIMewise INSIGHTS

Employers need to be clear about which types of flexibility are on offer Using the catch all term ‘flexible working’ is unhelpful to candidates, who need to know whether the job can be done part-time, partially or totally from home, or with flexible start and finish times. Employers need to be specific in order to encourage interest in the job whilst avoiding wasted applications and interviews.

Hybrid working is not always the type of flex that employees need

While hybrid patterns are popular, they are not necessarily offered alongside options to work part-time or at variable times of day. Employers need to be mindful that these other forms of flexibility are more important to many workers – for mothers, for example, part-time is often the most sought after form of flexibility, while home-working can be challenging at times when children are at home.

FLEXIBLE JOBS BY SALARY

PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING, BY SALARY LEVEL



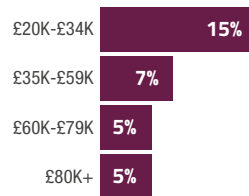
KEY FINDINGS

- In 2023, the availability of flexible jobs hovers around 30% for all salary bands except £60,000-£79,000 where it is slightly higher, at 35%. As seen in the next section, this peak is explained by increased offers of hybrid working at this salary band.
- The only noteworthy change since 2022 is the increase in flexible jobs paid £20,000-£34,000, from 28% in 2022 to 31% now. However, this will be due to wage inflation and in particular the increase in the national living wage, which has pushed many low-paid jobs into this salary bracket. These lowest paid jobs are far more likely to offer part-time arrangements compared to jobs at higher salaries, as seen in the next section.

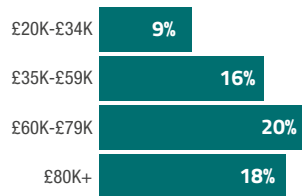
DIFFERENCES IN TYPES OF FLEX BY SALARY LEVEL

ANALYSIS BY SALARY LEVEL, FOR KEY FLEX TYPES

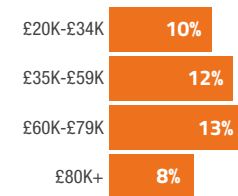
PART-TIME



HOME-WORKING



FLEXIBLE WORKING



KEY FINDINGS

Looking at the pattern across salaries for the three most commonly offered types of flexibility, great disparities emerge:

- Part-time arrangements are more than twice as common in jobs paid £20k-£34k FTE (15%), compared to those paid £35k-£59k FTE (7%); and three times more common compared to those paid £60k or more (5%).
- Conversely, home-working (including hybrid working) is least available (9%) in jobs paid £20k-£34k, and peaks at 20% for jobs paid £60k-£79k.
- Adverts using the non-specific term 'flexible working' are fairly similar across all salaries to £79k, but drop to just 8% above £80k.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

The part-time trap Certain groups of people need to work part-time at particular times in their lives. The lack of part-time jobs at higher salaries can trap them in their low-paid roles, so they become under-employed. And those who are out of work often need to choose between taking a part-time job below their skill level, or not to work at all. The lack of part-time jobs is therefore a key driver for low pay, under-employment and the gender pay gap. Employers who are keen to ensure inclusivity, and who want to grow their talent, should look at opening up higher paid roles to part-time options where possible.

















Home-working for the higher-paid Hybrid arrangements,

which make up the majority of home-working jobs, are primarily associated with higher-paid office roles, particularly professional ones. However, there will be many middle and lower paid roles where an element of home-working is possible, and employers could do more to look at this.

Greater parity is possible While the overall availability of flex is reasonably equal across salary levels, the underlying differences by types of flexibility can create inequalities and barriers to career progression. Yet there are often job design solutions at any salary level that can facilitate part-time arrangements, flexible working hours or partial home-working. Employers could look more closely at what is possible, and offer it at the point of hire.

FLEXIBILITY VARIES WIDELY BY TYPE OF ROLE

PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING, BY ROLE TYPE

ADMINISTRATION/ CLERICAL  34%	EDUCATION/ TRAINING  31%	ENGINEERING/QA  23%	CONSTRUCTION/ FACILITIES  10%
FINANCE/ ACCOUNTING  38%	HEALTH/MEDICAL  38%	HOSPITALITY/ SERVICES  43%	HUMAN RESOURCES  39%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  33%	LEGAL  36%	MAINTENANCE /REPAIR  13%	MANUFACTURING/ RESOURCES  11%
MARKETING/PR  38%	OPERATIONS/ LOGISTICS  22%	SALES/BIZ DEVELOPMENT  31%	SOCIAL SERVICES  45%

KEY FINDINGS

- As in previous years, social services have the greatest availability of flexible jobs (45%), with the health sector also relatively high (38%).
- Hospitality now ranks alongside the above public service sectors, having leapt from 33% last year to 43% in 2023. The rise may reflect labour shortages in the sector, and possibly also businesses running on reduced hours to cope with lower demand in the tough economic climate.
- Many office roles have higher than average rates, led by HR (39%), finance (38%) and marketing (38%).
- Role categories with rates well below average include construction (10%), manufacturing (11%), and maintenance/repair (13%). These actually have lower rates than last year, suggesting an element of rowing back following the end of the pandemic.

TIMESWISER INSIGHTS

Huge differences by role type Imbalances in access to flex have grown over the pandemic, with increased home-working for office workers. This can create a sense of unfairness within workplaces. Employers can try to offer other forms of flexibility (part-time or flexibility over start and finish times) to provide a degree of equity for roles where homeworking is not possible.

Reasons for the disparities The differences between role categories may be due to operational constraints – for example operating hours on construction sites, or office roles being more adaptable to hybrid working. However, gender differences can also play a part, as female dominated roles (eg health, social services) have higher rates of flex, while male dominated roles (eg construction, engineering) have lower rates. These embedded imbalances can create ‘institutional’ barriers to flex, but good job design can often overcome them.

DIFFERENCES IN TYPES OF FLEX BY ROLE CATEGORY

	PART-TIME	HOME-WORKING	FLEX HOURS SHIFTS	FLEX WORKING
ADMINISTRATION/CLERICAL	16%	13%	3%	10%
EDUCATION / TRAINING	18%	3%	2%	9%
ENGINEERING/QA	2%	14%	2%	11%
CONSTRUCTION/FACILITIES	2%	4%	2%	4%
FINANCE/ACCOUNTING	7%	25%	4%	13%
HEALTH/MEDICAL	22%	5%	6%	15%
HOSPITALITY/SERVICES	32%	2%	9%	7%
HUMAN RESOURCES	7%	25%	3%	14%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	3%	24%	2%	12%
LEGAL	6%	23%	2%	14%
MAINTENANCE/REPAIR	3%	5%	2%	5%
MANUFACTURING/RESOURCES	4%	3%	3%	4%
MARKETING/PR	6%	27%	3%	14%
OPERATIONS/LOGISTICS	5%	12%	2%	8%
SALES/BIZ DEVELOPMENT	13%	13%	3%	8%
SOCIAL SERVICES	24%	8%	8%	16%

■ high rate ■ low rate.

KEY FINDINGS

- Part time** Above average rates (the average is 12%) can be found in sectors characterised by female-dominated roles – education (18%), health (22%), social care (24%) and the hospitality sector (32%, which is up from 21% in 2022). Low rates are found in almost all other role categories.
- Home-working** Highs and lows (again against an average rate of 12%) generally relate to office versus non-office roles.
- Flexible hours** There are very low rates across all occupations. The rate doesn't rise above 9% (compared to the average 4%), even for role types where flexible hours and shifts are common in the workplace.
- 'Flexible working'** There is little variance in the use of the catch-all term 'flexible working', for which the average rate is 11%. Health (15%) and social services (16%) are the only categories with relatively high rates.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

Looking beyond hybrid working

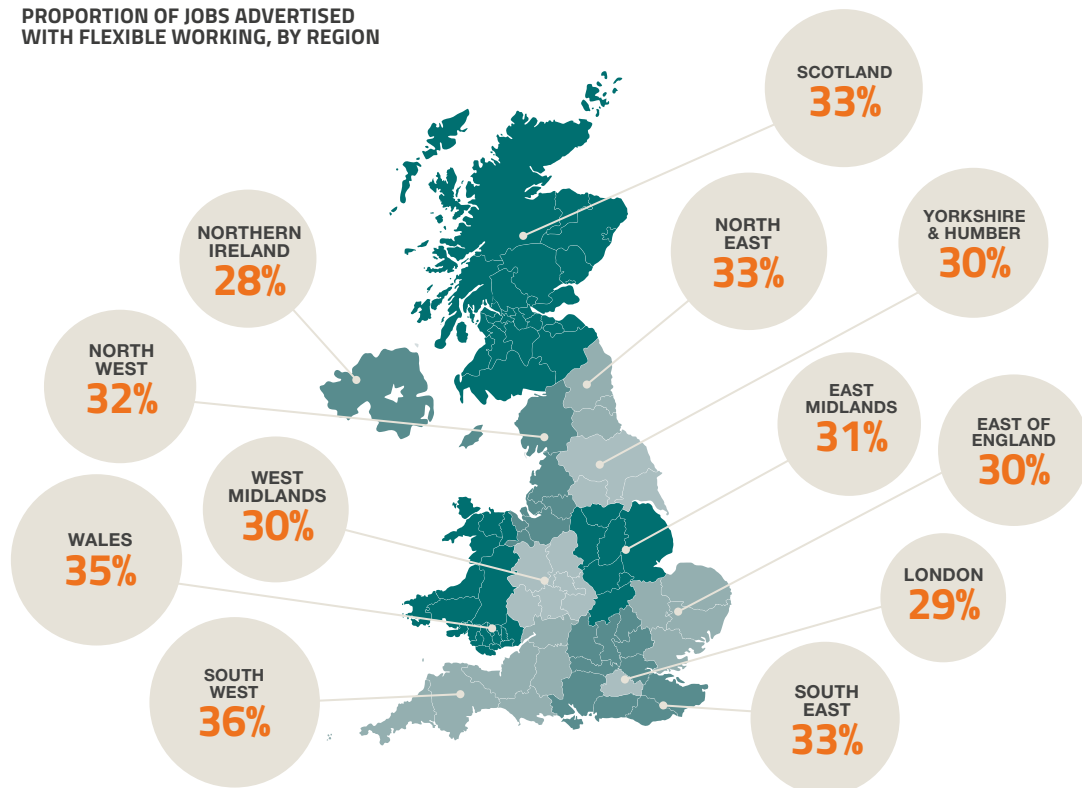
To support greater parity for people in occupations where hybrid/home-working is not possible, employers should look carefully at whether they can open jobs up to part-time or flexible hours arrangements. The low availability of flexible hours is particularly surprising, as it is relatively easy to accommodate for many roles.

Part-time should be more of a priority

Part-time has historically been the most highly prized form of flexibility, for women with caring responsibilities in particular. Yet there is a shortage of part-time job opportunities in professional office roles, highlighting the challenge to job mobility and career progression for part-time workers. This is true even in occupations where women are well represented, such as HR (7%) and marketing (6%).

FEW REGIONAL VARIATIONS

PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING, BY REGION



KEY FINDINGS

- The availability of flexible jobs is broadly similar across the UK, but with Wales (35%) and the South West (36%) slightly out in front.
- Northern Ireland (28%), Greater London (29%), Yorkshire & the Humber (30%) and the East of England (30%) all have rates slightly below the UK average (31%).

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

Before the pandemic, when part-time was the dominant form of flexibility, regional variations were much more marked than they are now. This was because high regional flex rates were linked to a high proportion of part-time jobs, which generally also indicated areas whose economies relied on low-pay sectors (as part-time is most often offered in low paying roles).

Recently, with the increase in hybrid jobs and increased use of the catch-all term ‘flexible working’, the flex rates have flattened; but within many regions, the pattern will persist of part-time jobs reflecting areas dominated by low-paying jobs.

There will also be sectoral differences between the regions. For example, if a region has a high proportion of jobs in social care, health and hospitality (where flexibility is more common), their overall flex rate will be higher.

WHAT THE FINDINGS MEAN FOR UK EMPLOYERS

There is barely any change from last year in the proportion of job adverts that offer flexible working. This is in spite of clear evidence, widely publicised, showing how many people want and need this. Although the vacancy peak of 2022 is slowing, employers are still reporting worker and skills shortages across a wide range of industries. Employers need to work harder to attract people back into the labour market and to switch jobs; offering flexibility from the point of hire (and saying so in their job adverts) should be in their toolbox.

For many employers, flexible hiring seems to be a blindspot in the jobs market – and a worrying one, especially in view of forthcoming regulation on the right to request flex from day one in a new job.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Read up and get ready for the new legislation Timewise can advise on what you will need to do differently – ask us if you feel unclear.

2. Gain confidence in how to make flexibility work in your organisation Start by finding examples of it working in your sector. Many forward thinking firms now offer flex as standard, so there are plenty of case studies. And talk to Timewise – we can help you make the case for flexible working; and to help you implement it successfully we can provide guidance on flexible job design and support for line managers.

3. Look particularly at how to make hybrid working a success Hiring with hybrid has

ground to a halt. Many employers are beginning to worry that employees are less productive or that the culture of the organisation is affected. But before you row back on hybrid, or decide not to trial it, invest some time in understanding hybrid models that are successful. The best people to approach for advice are teams who are making it work.

4. Get clear on the types of flex you can offer Reduced hours, flex on start and finish times, home-working... be clear about which you can offer for each job and articulate it using specific language. Two examples: “Flexible hours, within which you will always work 10-3pm” is much clearer to the candidate than “we offer flexible working”; be clear whether a ‘4 day

week’ is an organisation-wide working pattern with 5 days pay for 4 days work, or a part-time role with a pro rata salary. If the jobseeker isn’t clear on which type of flexibility is possible, they may just skip the job advert.

5. Be transparent even if your firm has an established and relaxed flexible culture

Anecdotal feedback suggests that some employers don’t feel the need to mention flexibility in job adverts as they assume that candidates will ask at interview. This simply isn’t true. Candidates who need flexibility want to know it’s on offer before they waste time on an application. This is especially true if they have been out of the labour market for a while, as they may lack the confidence to ask.

WHAT SHOULD POLICY MAKERS DO?

1. Clarify the legal framework for the new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act

2023 The Department for Business and Trade should clarify the legal framework for the new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 in relation to the day one right to request flex, as this currently falls under regulation not primary legislation.

2. Provide comprehensive guidance to accompany the legislation by ensuring that ACAS statutory code of practice includes case study examples and advice for business leaders, managers and resourcing leads on how to adapt to flexible working from day one. It should also include guidance on minimum standards of consultation needed to justify reasonable grounds for declining a request.

3. Build the capability of employment advisors The Department for Work and Pensions should consider further actions to incentivise and support employers to advertise job vacancies as open to flexible working from day one, to help attract more older workers back to the labour market and progress specific groups trapped in low pay (such as parents and carers). Action could include the provision of training on flexible job design for DWP's network of In Work Progression Champions and Older Worker Champions, to support them to influence employer hiring practices.

4. Take a sector approach The Department for Business and Trade should task the UK's current network of Sector Skills Councils with promoting advice and guidance to employers on flexible working and job design, as a route to tackling skills and workforce challenges. More broadly, regional partnerships focused on economic growth (such as the emerging employer charters) should consider how to build employer capabilities on job design at a sectoral level, and share examples of good practice.

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We're a social enterprise with commercial expertise, working with employers, policymakers and influencers to create stronger, more inclusive workplaces, powered by flexible working.

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