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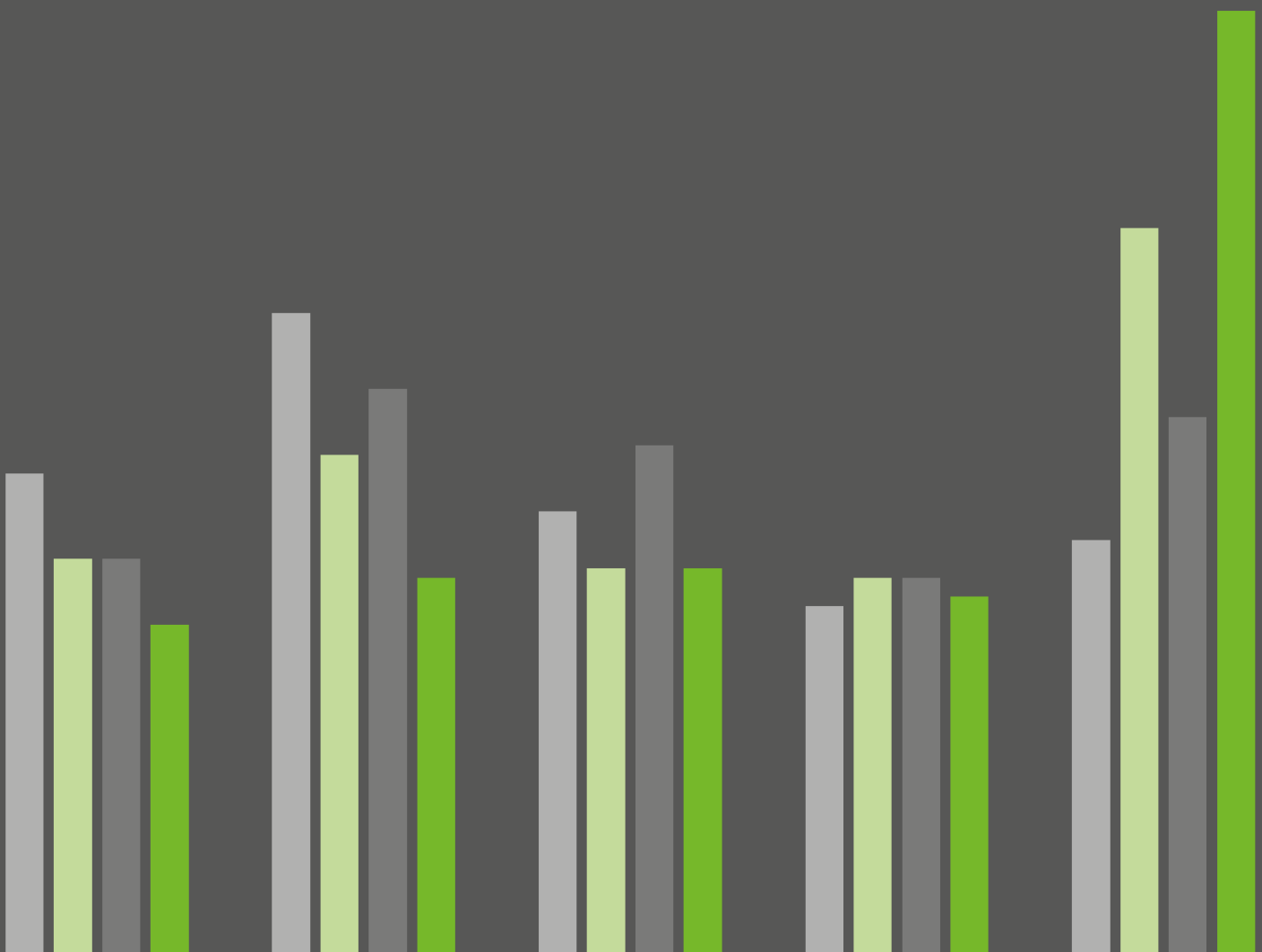
JANUARY 2019

MEGATRENDS

FLEXIBLE WORKING



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MEGATRENDS

The trends shaping work and working lives

FLEXIBLE WORKING

Contents

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Any remaining errors are of course the author's responsibility.

1 Foreword

Flexible working is not easily defined. This is because it is often seen by what it isn't – not the 9-to-5, not the daily commute to a central workplace – as opposed to by what it is. Nevertheless, people think they know it when they see it, and as a result certain working patterns or ways of working, such as flexi-time, working part-time hours, or working from home are regarded as types of 'flexible working'. This report looks at recent trends in flexible working, and since we have to set boundaries around the analysis, we've concentrated on trends in when and where work is done.

The findings of this report point to an apparent paradox. The incidence of some commonly accepted measures of flexible working seems to have been broadly flat, or increasing very slowly, over the past 10 to 15 years. Yet there is a suggestion that many employees make use of informal arrangements to work flexibly, either alongside or instead of more formal arrangements. Furthermore, in recent years there seems to have been an increase in the proportion of employees who work from home or work remotely on at least an occasional basis.

Perhaps this isn't such a paradox. Flexible working was conceived 20 or more years ago – and measures of it fail to capture all the ways in which employees are able to work flexibly today.

The report also highlights the uneven distribution of flexible working across the economy – between public and private sectors, large and small employers, men and women.

Flexible working isn't equally important for everyone. At any time, evidence suggests the majority of employees are prepared to go along with existing norms for how work is organised – or, generally improvements to this aspect of their working lives is not a high priority. But for some employees, at various points in their working lives, flexible working becomes of much greater importance and value, possibly even essential to participating at all in paid employment. For example, working part-time can have damaging effects on earnings and career prospects, yet a quarter of people work part-time – most of them, to some extent, voluntarily.

The report reminds us that some of the factors helping or hindering the spread of flexible working, such as attitudes to the division of unpaid caring labour in the home, change slowly. This is regardless of the fact that some of the enablers, such as the technology that allows remote working, can change more quickly. In the workplace, organisational culture, management capability and attitudes towards flexible working are also factors in understanding why the pace of change can be uneven.

Overall, the report suggests that while many people already benefit from flexible working, a significant proportion of the workforce are not being given the option to work flexibly. Ultimately, informing managers of the many benefits of flexible working, and training them on how to manage flexible workers, is the most effective way of significantly increasing the quantity and quality of flexible working. To this end, the CIPD is working with government and a range of stakeholders, including business lobby organisations, professional bodies, unions and key charities, as part of a Flexible Working Taskforce, with a remit to boost flexible working across the economy. The taskforce, which was established in early 2018 and is due to run until autumn 2019, will use its ability to collectively reach and influence hundreds of thousands of employers. It will highlight the wide-ranging business case for flexible working, while also promoting guidance on how to create more flexible jobs and how to manage flexible workers.

2 Summary

There is no agreed definition of flexible working. In this report, though, we look at trends in where and when employees work, with flexible working being arrangements that deviate from whatever the standard pattern of work is (be it 9-to-5 hours, shift work, a central workplace and so on). There are, though, a few main types of commonly recognised flexible working arrangement or flexible working practice (see Box 1).

Box 1: Typical flexible working arrangements

Part-time work	When employees are contracted to work anything less than full-time hours.
Term-time work	An employee remains on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays.
Job-sharing	Where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for a job between them.
Flexitime	Allows employees to choose, within certain set limits, when to begin and end work.
Compressed working hours	This doesn't necessarily involve a reduction in total hours or any extension in individual choice over which hours are worked. The central feature is reallocation of work into fewer and longer blocks during the week. Examples are four-and-a-half-day weeks and nine-day fortnights.
Annual hours	The total number of hours to be worked over the year is fixed but there is variation over the year in the length of the working day and week. Employees may or may not have an element of choice over working patterns.
Working from home	Employees regularly spend time working from home.
Mobile working	Employees work all or part of their working week at a location remote from the employer's workplace (which may be the employee's home).
Zero-hours contracts	An individual has no guarantee of a minimum number of working hours, so they can be called upon as and when required and paid just for the hours they work.

Source: adapted from CIPD guidance

These practices offer varying degrees of flexibility both to the employer – to align the amount of labour used (and sometimes paid for) better with the demand for labour – and to the employee – by making it easier to manage paid work alongside other aspects of their life. But some forms of flexible working also have undesirable consequences for employers or employees. Perceptions of the balance of advantage and disadvantage will influence which practices are made available and which of these practices are used by employees.

Evidence

The most common flexible working arrangement is part-time hours. The proportion of employees working part-time hours was very low in the 1950s but increased as the employment rate for women increased. By the 1980s, a fifth of employees worked part-time hours. In 2016, the proportion was nearly a quarter.

For a wider range of flexible working arrangements, trend data are only available for a shorter period. It appears that the proportion of employers offering a wider range of

flexible working arrangements increased during the years running up to the financial crisis. However, there has been little change in either availability or take-up during the last decade. In 2017, 27% of employees had one of a set of specified flexible working arrangements (as defined in the Labour Force Survey). In addition, 18% of employees worked part-time without one of these flexible working arrangements. In 2012, the comparable figures were 23% and 21% respectively.

The possible exception to this pattern was that there has been a big increase in the proportion of employees who sometimes work from home – either replacing, or adding to, the time they spend at their usual place(s) of work. But some flexible working arrangements, such as job-sharing, seem to have become less widely used since the last recession.

Women are more likely to use flexible working arrangements than men as are the youngest and oldest age groups and people with dependent children (compared with those without dependent children).

Employees in the public sector are more likely to use flexible working arrangements than employees in the private sector as are employees in some industries and occupations (such as the retail sector, parts of the service sector and associated service occupations). Managers are less likely to work part-time than the people they manage. Employees in small workplaces are more likely to work part-time. However, employees in larger workplaces are more likely to have a wider range of other flexible working arrangements available.

International comparisons are limited, especially beyond Europe. The UK appears to have a relatively high proportion of its workforce working part-time or with some degree of influence over their working time arrangements – although not as much, perhaps, as Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland or (for part-time employment) the Netherlands.

Possible explanations

In recessions there tends to be an increase in the number of 'involuntary' part-time workers. But adverse economic conditions may discourage employers from offering, or employees from asking for, flexible working. As the labour market has recovered from the last recession, the tightening of the labour market should act as an incentive to employers. However, the relative decline of employment in the public sector – most likely to offer flexible working – has worked the other way.

Most employers still think there are barriers to flexible working, even if there are also benefits, and culture and resistance from management are often identified as obstacles by both employees and those with people management responsibility.

Broader attitudes about the suitability of full-time work for both parents of young children shape flexible working patterns, especially for working parents.

Legislation giving eligible employees the right to request flexible working was implemented and progressively extended between 2003 and 2014. Data on availability and take-up of flexible working suggests the legislation's greatest impact may have been in its early years.

It is, in any case, questionable how important flexible working is to most employees when choosing a job (compared, say, with pay, job security or career prospects). While fit with other priorities is important to some employees, such as those shouldering the burden of domestic or caring commitments, most employees seem content to go along with prevailing norms (such as the 9-to-5 or 'the office'). However, if given the chance to introduce more flexibility into these ways of working, some employees would prefer more flexibility (for example, over starting and leaving times).

The picture of slow change presented by official data may understate the change in many employees' working patterns due to technological change (remote access) permitting more employees to work at times, and in places, that suit them. And informal arrangements seem to be widespread. As a result, many employees may think they are working more flexibly even if they don't have a formal flexible working arrangement.

Potential implications

Availability of flexible working may enable a higher rate of labour force participation and use of people's skills.

Working part-time hours damages employees' earnings and career prospects, both at the time and in the long term, whatever its other benefits, because of the concentration of these roles in low-paid, less senior positions.

Most employers, when asked, see benefits to flexible working, such as an improvement in organisational commitment. But systematic reviews of the evidence reach more mixed, or nuanced, conclusions. How flexible working practices are implemented, and the context in which they're introduced, affects their impact on businesses.

A challenge for public policy may lie in stimulating awareness of the full range of flexible working possibilities, and of how to make them work, given the limited management time and knowledge in many firms, especially smaller firms. The public sector may have a role as a testbed and exemplar.

The last change to legislation in this area, in 2014, needs to be reviewed carefully to determine its impact.

The labour market is expected to remain tight in the period up to, and after, the UK's exit from the European Union. Will employee-focused forms of flexible working become more important to employers wanting to attract and retain people?

At the same time, population ageing means that the (relative) demand for flexible working patterns suited to the needs of older age groups may increase. These may be different from those of younger people, such as the parents of young children.

Mobile working is expected to reach 70% by 2020. If this happens, the demand for some of the more long-standing flexible working arrangements may wane but remote access and always-on working could become the new arena for debate (and, perhaps, conflict).

3 Introduction

Although the right to request flexible working is enshrined in legislation, there is no simple definition of what flexible working is. The government guidance states simply that *'flexible working is a way of working that suits an employee's needs, e.g. having flexible start and finish times, or working from home'*.[1] The motive behind the working arrangement seems paramount. CIPD guidance is slightly clearer on the aspects of a job covered by the term: *'"Flexible working" describes a type of working arrangement which gives a degree of flexibility on how long, where, when and at what times employees work.'* [2]

But if definitions remain elusive, there has been no shortage of attempts to identify the specific types of working that could be considered a flexible working arrangement or flexible working practice. The CIPD guidance covers the main items:

Flexible working practices include:

- **Part-time working:** work is generally considered part-time when employees are contracted to work anything less than full-time hours.
- **Term-time working:** a worker remains on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays.
- **Job-sharing:** a form of part-time working where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for a job between them.
- **Flexitime:** allows employees to choose, within certain set limits, when to begin and end work.
- **Compressed hours:** compressed working weeks (or fortnights) don't necessarily involve a reduction in total hours or any extension in individual choice over which hours are worked. The central feature is reallocation of work into fewer and longer blocks during the week.
- **Annual hours:** the total number of hours to be worked over the year is fixed but there is variation over the year in the length of the working day and week. Employees may or may not have an element of choice over working patterns.
- **Working from home on a regular basis:** workers regularly spend time working from home.
- **Mobile working/teleworking:** this permits employees to work all or part of their working week at a location remote from the employer's workplace.
- **Career breaks:** career breaks, or sabbaticals, are extended periods of leave – normally unpaid – of up to five years or more.
- **Commissioned outcomes:** there are no fixed hours, but only an output target that an individual is working towards.
- **Zero-hours contracts:** an individual has no guarantee of a minimum number of working hours, so they can be called upon as and when required and paid just for the hours they work.

However, *'The list above isn't exhaustive. Flexible working can include other practices, for example employee self-rostering, shift-swapping or taking time off for training.'* Indeed, the list *cannot* be exhaustive. A flexible working arrangement is characterised as much by what it is *not* (full-time hours or regular, fixed hours or at a fixed workplace), as by what it is.

These practices offer varying degrees of flexibility to the employer – to align the amount of labour used (and sometimes paid for) better with demand – and to the employee – by making it easier to manage paid work alongside other aspects of their life. But some forms of flexible working also have undesirable consequences for employers or employees. Perceptions of the balance of advantage and disadvantage will influence which practices are made available by employers and which of these practices are used by employees.

Sometimes there has been a tendency to view these flexible working practices as part of a wider range of 'non-standard work' alongside other forms of work such as agency work and temporary work (Kalleberg 2000, Rubery et al 2016). Whether a particular working practice is judged 'good' flexibility (mainly in the interests of employees?) or 'bad' flexibility (mainly in the interests of employers?) depends on who is making the judgement as well as on the state of the labour market at the time and on how the arrangement works in practice.

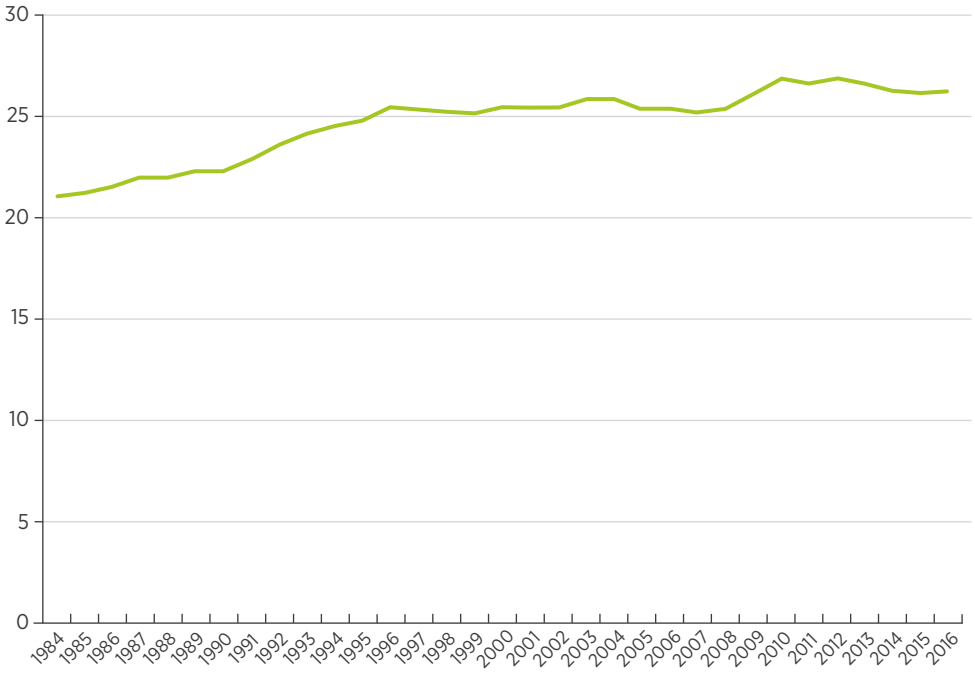
4 Evidence

Where possible, this assessment of evidence excludes the self-employed. Most of the self-employed have a greater feeling of control over their working lives than employees. Indeed, this is one of the main reasons why many become self-employed in the first place (CIPD 2018a).

Flexible working over time

In the 1950s, just 4% of people worked part-time (Philpot 2012).[3] Yet by the mid-1980s, over a fifth of employees worked part-time hours (Figure 1).[4] However, the proportion levelled off between the mid-1990s and 2008. There was a small increase in this proportion again during the last recession, since when it has stabilised at just over a quarter.

Figure 1: Employees working part-time hours, 1984–2016 (%)
(UK, seasonally adjusted, % of employees)

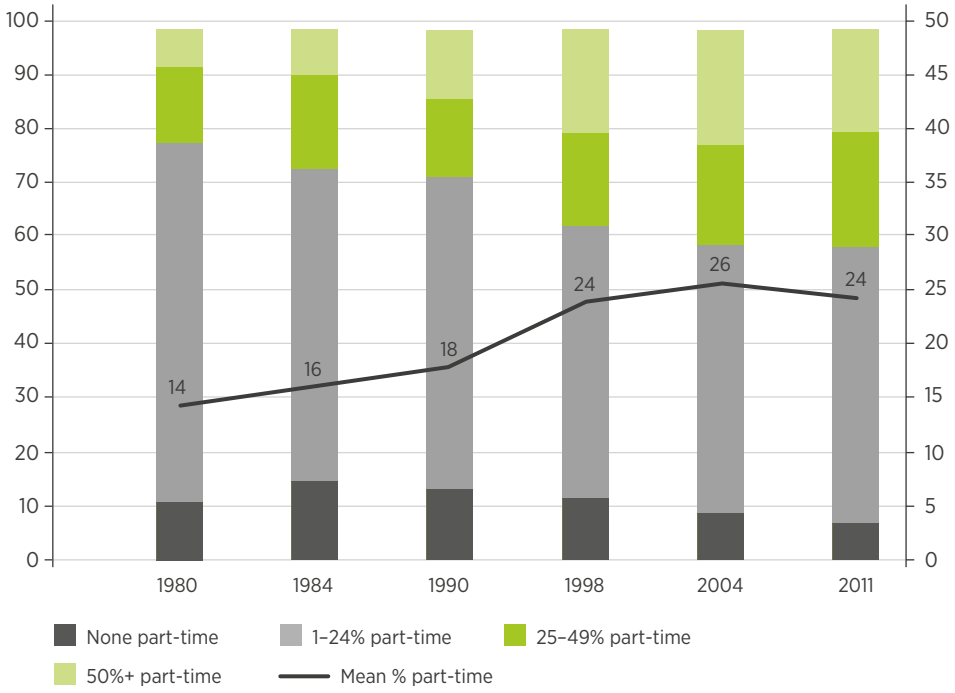


Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

Estimates based on employer-provided data, only available for larger workplaces, suggest that the average percentage of part-time employees in these workplaces, around a quarter, has not changed much since the end of the 1990s (Figure 2).[5]

Figure 2: Part-time employment, 1980–2011 (%)

(GB, % of employment in workplaces with 25 or more employees excluding agriculture and mining and quarrying)



Source: Workplace Industrial Relations Survey series, employment-weighted

Regular data on how many employees have one or more of the main flexible working arrangements are collected through the Labour Force Survey (see Box 2).

Box 2: Measuring flexible working using the Labour Force Survey

The following Labour Force Survey (LFS) question captures most of the examples of flexible working arrangement listed in guidance.

Some people have special working hours arrangements that vary daily or weekly.

In your (main) job is your agreed working arrangement any of the following...

Code up to 3

1 flexitime (flexible working hours),
2 an annualised hours contract,
3 term-time working,
4 job sharing,
5 a nine-day fortnight,
6 a four-and-a-half-day week,
7 zero hours contract,
8 on-call working, or
9 none of these?

Continued on next page

With explanatory notes as follows:

Flexible working hours – Employees can vary their daily start and finish times each day. Over an accounting period (usually four weeks or a calendar month) debit and credit hours can be carried over into another accounting period. Variable start and finish times on their own are not enough for a flexitime system. There must also be a formal accounting period.

Annualised hours contract – The number of hours an employee has to work are calculated over a full year. Instead of, say, 40 hours per week, employees are contracted to, say, 1,900 hours per year (after allowing for leave and other entitlements). Longer hours are worked over certain parts of the year and shorter hours at other periods. Variations in hours are related to seasonal factors or fluctuation in demand for the companies' goods or services.

Term-time working – Respondents work during the school or college term. Unpaid leave is taken during the school holidays, although their pay may be spread equally over the year.

Job sharing – This is a type of part-time working. A full-time job is divided between, usually, two people. The job sharers work at different times, although there may be a changeover period.

Both nine-day fortnights and four-and-a-half-day weeks working arrangements involve the five-day working week being compressed into fewer full days. Such arrangements refer to full-time working only.

Nine-day fortnight – involves individual employees having one day off every other week. The actual day off may vary so long as the employee keeps to an alternating pattern of one five-day week followed by one four-day week.

Four-and-a-half-day week – Typically involves the normal working week finishing early on Fridays. The short day need not necessarily be Friday, but this is the most obvious and common day.

Zero hours contract – is where a person is not contracted to work a set number of hours, and is only paid for the number of hours that they actually work.

In most cases a respondent who works any of these particular type of shift patterns will recognise the term and will require no further explanation. Where a respondent asks what is meant by the term it is unlikely they work such shift patterns and are generally coded as (8) or (9).[6]

The question is now asked in the April–June and October–December quarters. Responses to the April–June 2017 survey are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Measuring flexible working (Labour Force Survey)

		%
1	Flexitime	10.7
2	Annualised hours contract	5.3
3	Term-time working	5.0
4	Job-sharing	0.4
5	Nine-day fortnight	0.3
6	Four-and-a-half-day week	0.5
7	Zero-hours contract	2.8
8	On-call working	1.8
9	None of these	73.2

This question omits the most common form of flexible working – part-time hours. Hence this question is combined with another to divide employees into three groups:

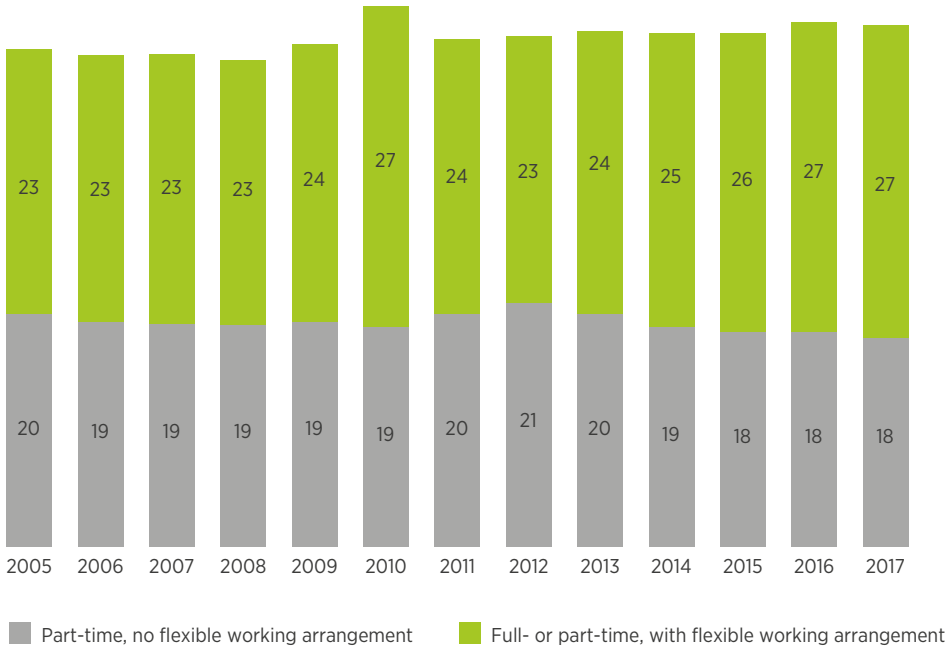
1 full-time and part-time employees with one or more of the flexible working arrangements listed above (26.8%)
2 part-time employees with none of the other flexible working arrangements listed above (18.0%), which, combined with (a), provides an estimate of the total number of employees with flexible working arrangements (44.8%)
3 a residual category, full-time employees with no flexible working arrangement (55.2%).

Combining these and other questions in the LFS can produce wider-ranging definitions of flexible working:

- If *working from home* is also considered a flexible working arrangement, the proportion of employees with a flexible working arrangement increases from 44.7% to 48.8%.
- Alternatively, if 'flexible working' is interpreted to mean that *one's working hours vary each week*, as many as 63.9% of employees work flexibly (as this would capture shift workers, even if the shift length or schedule were fixed).

These data suggest little movement from 2005 onwards (Figure 3). The 'spike' in 2010 could be due to a question change.[7]

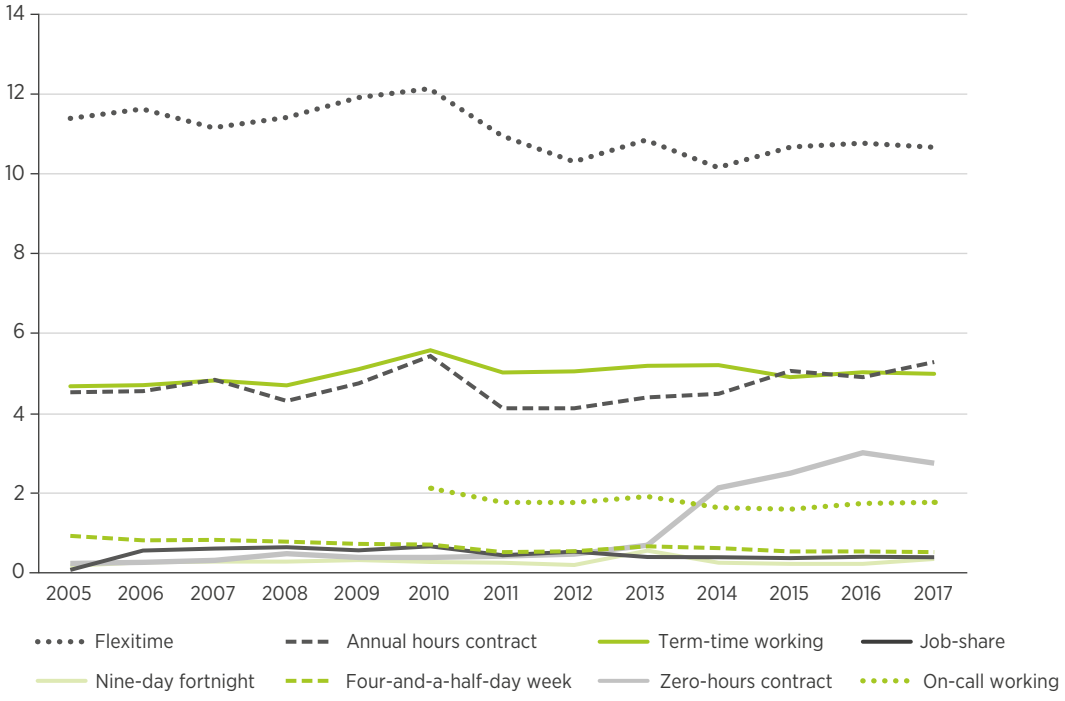
Figure 3: Employees with flexible working arrangements, 2005–17 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June

The most common flexible working pattern by far among those measured remains part-time hours. Other popular forms of arrangement are flexitime, annual hours contracts and term-time working (Figure 4). In contrast, job-sharing and formal versions of a compressed working week (four-and-a-half-day weeks or nine-day fortnights) appear to be used by few employees.

Figure 4: Incidence of specific flexible working arrangements, 2005–17 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June

The only form of arrangement that has become significantly more widespread – according to the LFS – has been zero-hours contracts. However, most of the sharp increase in their use after 2012 may be due to greater employee awareness of these contracts rather than being due to an increase in their actual prevalence (CIPD 2013, 2015).

There has also been a slow but steady increase over time in the proportion of employees who say they work mainly at or from home (Figure 5).[8] The majority of these said they work in different places, using home as a base.[9]

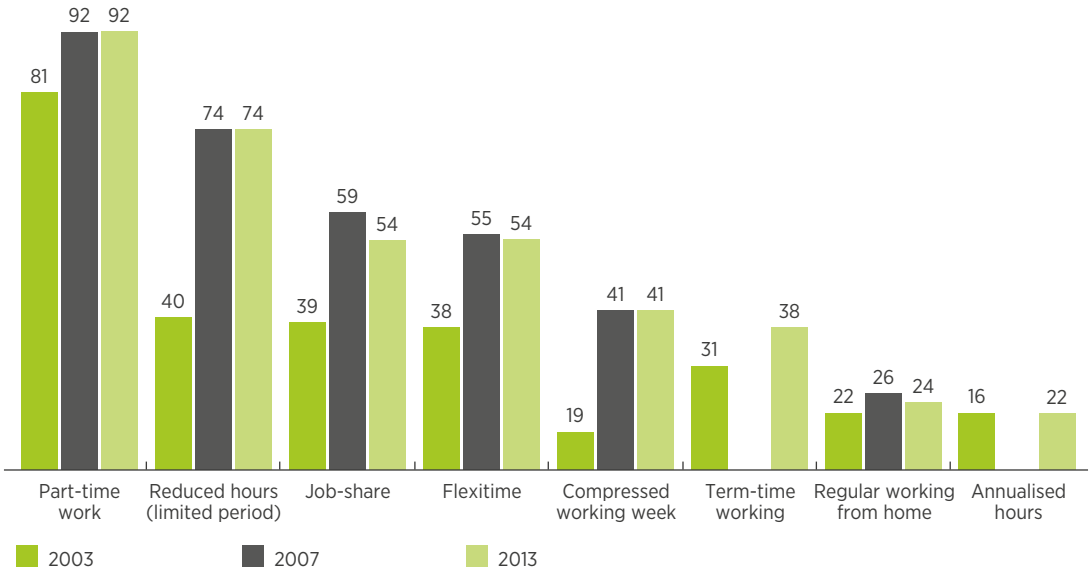
Figure 5: Homeworking, 2002–17 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)

Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June

Whether employees work flexibly – whichever practices are included in the definition – depends upon whether flexible working options are *available* – usually an employer decision – and upon their take-up by employees.[10]

There has been an increase in the availability of some flexible working practices since these started to be measured, but this probably took place before 2007 (Figure 6).

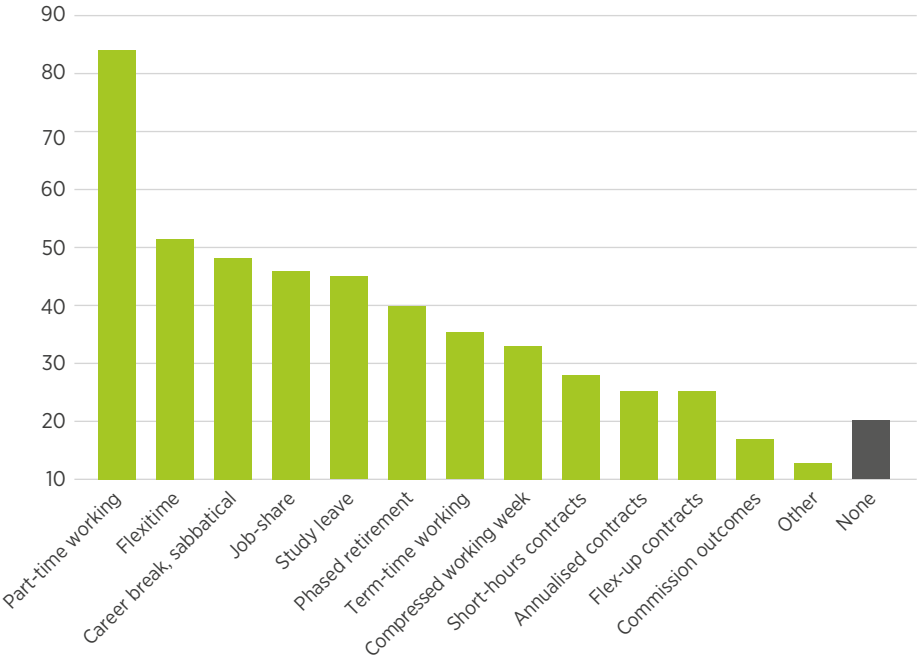
Figure 6: Availability of flexible working arrangements, 2003–13 (%)
(GB, % of employees working in establishments with five or more employees)



Source: BIS work–life balance employer surveys (BIS 2014)

A one-off CIPD survey of HR managers in 2014 confirmed that most employers offer some form of flexible working: just 10% of employees worked in organisations where managers said they offered no flexible working (Figure 7).[11]

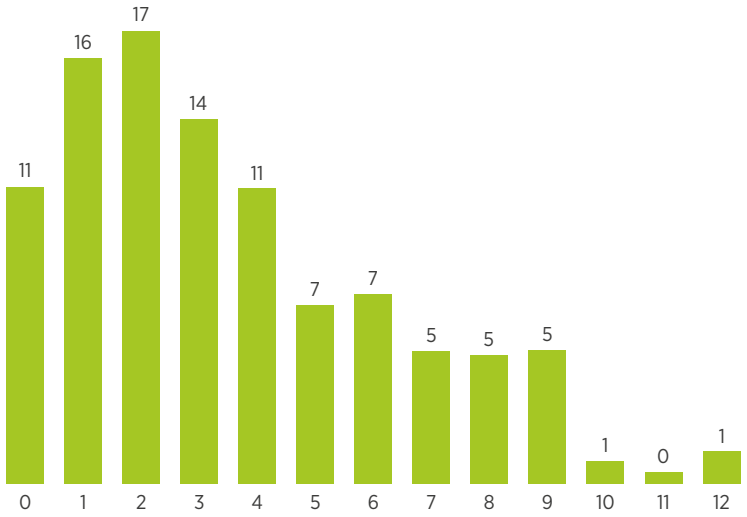
Figure 7: Availability of flexible working, 2014 (%)
(UK, % of employees working in organisations with one or more employees)



Source: CIPD survey of employers (CIPD 2014b)

The opportunity to work part-time was the most widely available form of flexible working. In many cases, however, few other types of flexible working were offered. When asked about the availability of the 12 practices listed in Figure 7, the median number of practices offered was just three. Less than a fifth of employees were employed in organisations where employers said they offered more than half of these practices (Figure 8).

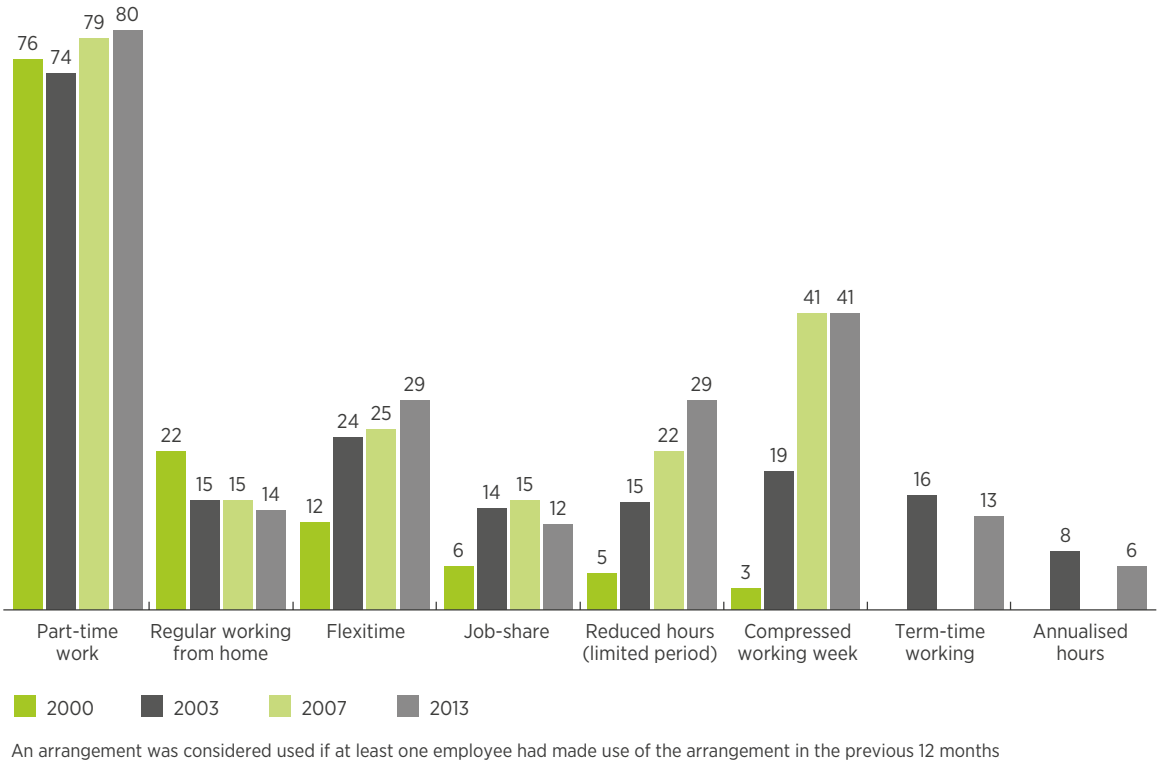
Figure 8: Number of flexible working arrangements offered by employers, 2014 (%)
(UK, % of employees working in organisations with 1+ employees)



Source: CIPD survey of employers (CIPD 2014b)

According to employers, employee use of most flexible working arrangements did not increase between 2007 and 2013 (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Take-up of flexible working arrangements, 2000–13 (%)
(GB, % of employees working in establishments with five or more employees)



An arrangement was considered used if at least one employee had made use of the arrangement in the previous 12 months
Source: BIS work–life balance employer surveys (BIS 2014)

Employee surveys suggest that availability and use of most forms of flexible working has not changed greatly since 2011, which is consistent with the LFS data (Table 2).[12] The exception was working at or from home, which appears to have increased greatly in its availability and use, far more than the LFS homeworking data would suggest, although the criteria to be described in these surveys as having worked from home were less stringent.[13]

Table 2: Availability and use of flexible working arrangements, 2011 and 2018 (%)
(GB, % of employees with job tenure 12 months or over, excludes agriculture and mining and quarrying)[14]

	Workplace Employment Relations Survey 2011: Survey of employees		CIPD UK Working Lives Survey 2018	
	I have used this arrangement	Available to me but I do not use this arrangement	I have used this arrangement	Available to me but I do not use this arrangement
Flexitime	27	10	33	9
Job-sharing	4	10	2	12
Reduced working hours	8	24	11	27
Compressed working week	8	15	9	17
Working at or from home	16	6	33	7
Term-time working	6	7	3	8

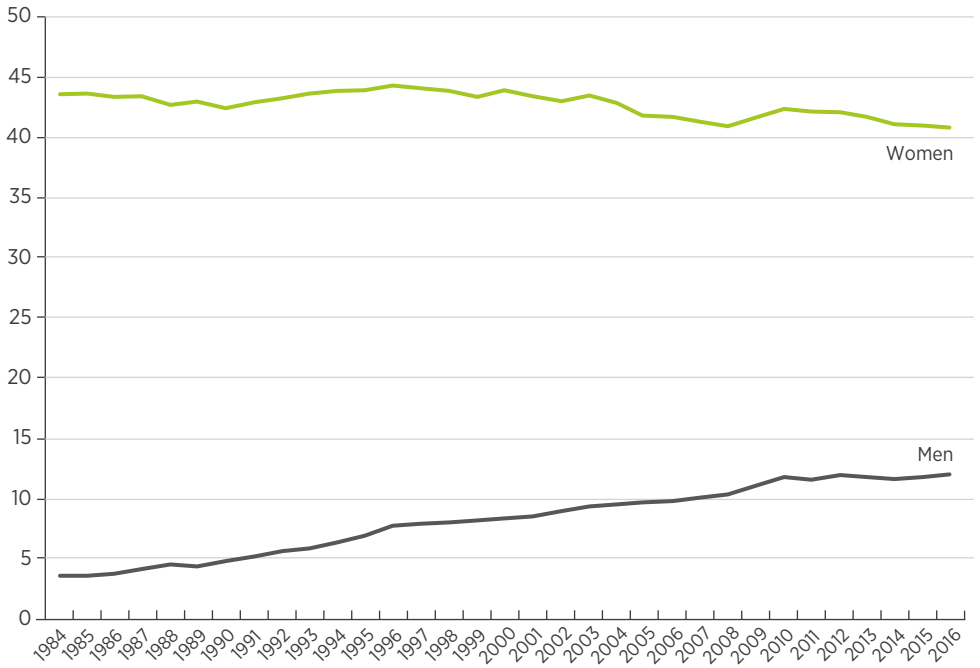
Like flexitime, most employees who said working from home was available to them had in fact used it at some point in the preceding 12 months.

Part of the gap between availability and use will be because of the circumstances and preferences of individual employees. Another factor may be that some employees may see the practice as available but – correctly or incorrectly – don't see it as available to *them*. Employees and their managers (especially HR managers) may differ in their perceptions of availability. Managers may regard a practice as available but their employees' perception of whether it is available may depend on the effort invested in communicating its availability and experience on the ground (whether it is used and recognised as such).[15]

Who is most likely to have flexible working arrangements and who is least likely to have flexible working arrangements?

Part-time hours are far more common for women than men (Figure 10). However, while the proportion of female employees working part-time has drifted down since the 1980s, the proportion of men working part-time, although much lower, has risen. By 2016, nearly a quarter of all part-time employees were men.

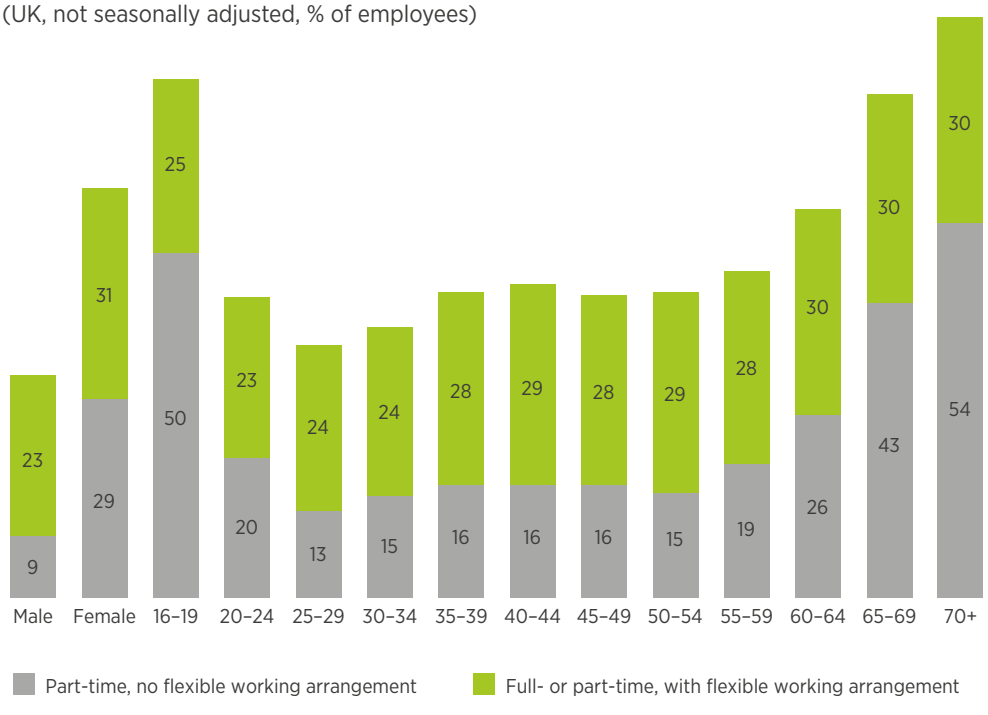
Figure 10: Employees working part-time hours, by gender, 1984–2016 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

Women are more likely to have flexible working arrangements than men (Figure 11). But employees aged 16–19 and those aged 65 and over are the age groups most likely to work flexibly, as part-time jobs are now especially common in these age groups. The youngest and oldest age groups are also more often employed on zero-hours contracts (Table 3).

Figure 11: Employees with flexible working arrangements, by gender and by age group, 2017 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June 2017

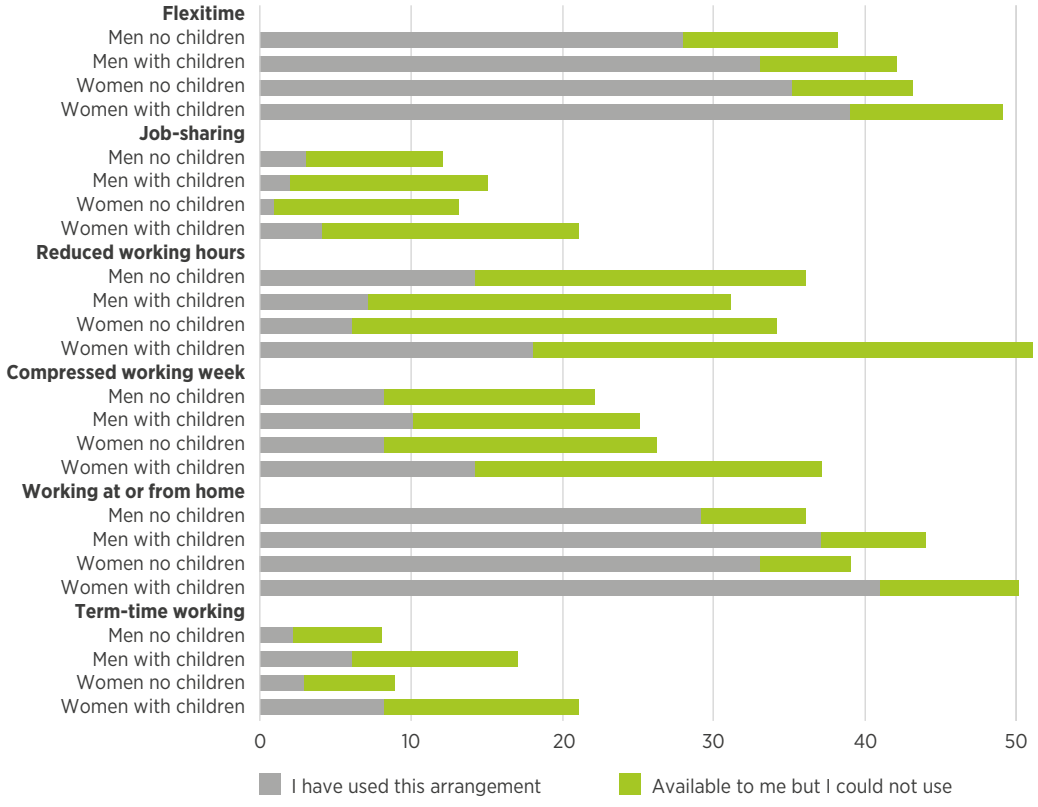
Women with dependent children in their household were the group of employees most likely to use all six of the flexible working arrangements covered in the CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey (Figure 12).[16] They were also the group most likely to say each of the arrangements was available to them. This may be the result of women with dependent children being more likely to choose jobs, or remain in jobs, that offer flexible working.

Table 3: Prevalence of flexible working arrangements, by gender and by age group, 2017 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)

	Male	Female	16–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49	50–54	55–59	60–64	65–69	70+
Flexitime	10.1	11.2	5.4	7.3	9.2	10.0	11.9	11.6	11.6	12.2	12.0	11.7	11.5	9.6
Annualised hours contract	5.3	5.2	2.5	5.3	5.5	5.4	5.5	5.2	5.1	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.1	1.7
Term-time working	1.7	8.4	1.1	2.3	4.1	4.1	4.7	7.6	6.8	5.9	5.6	5.2	6.0	6.3
Job-sharing	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.9	2.0
Nine-day fortnight	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.3
Four-and-a-half-day week	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.3
Zero-hours contract	2.3	3.4	14.8	6.3	2.9	1.8	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.7	3.5	3.9	6.6
On-call working	2.4	1.1	1.0	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.1	2.5	1.8	2.0	1.3	1.5	1.9	3.0
Part-time only	9.1	28.7	49.8	20.1	12.6	15.2	16.5	16.1	16.2	15.1	19.5	26.4	42.9	54.1

Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June 2017

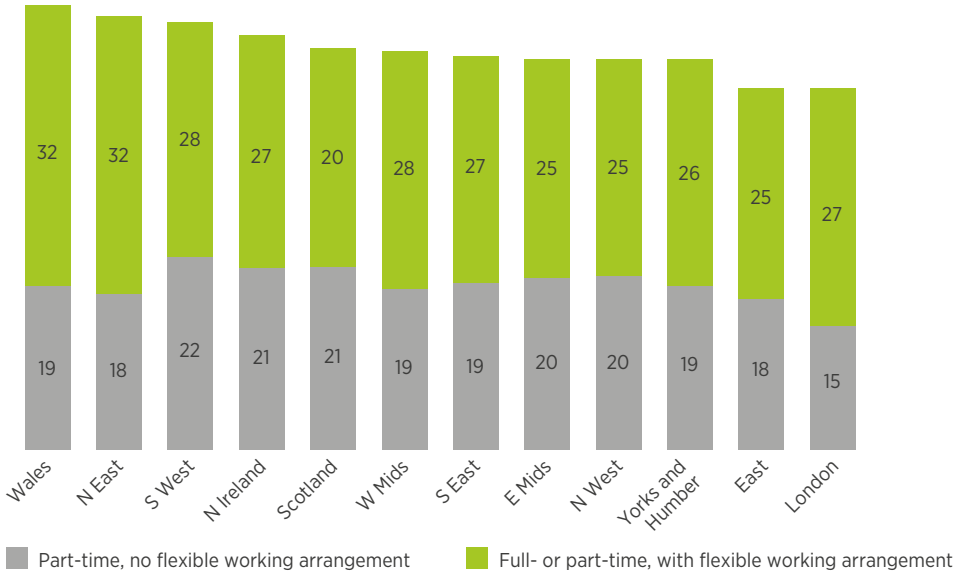
Figure 12: Flexible working arrangements, by gender and presence of dependent children in the household, 2018 (%)
(UK, % of employees with job tenure over 12 months)



Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

Differences across the English regions and the devolved administrations are not great, although part-time employment is least common among employees who live in London (Figure 13).

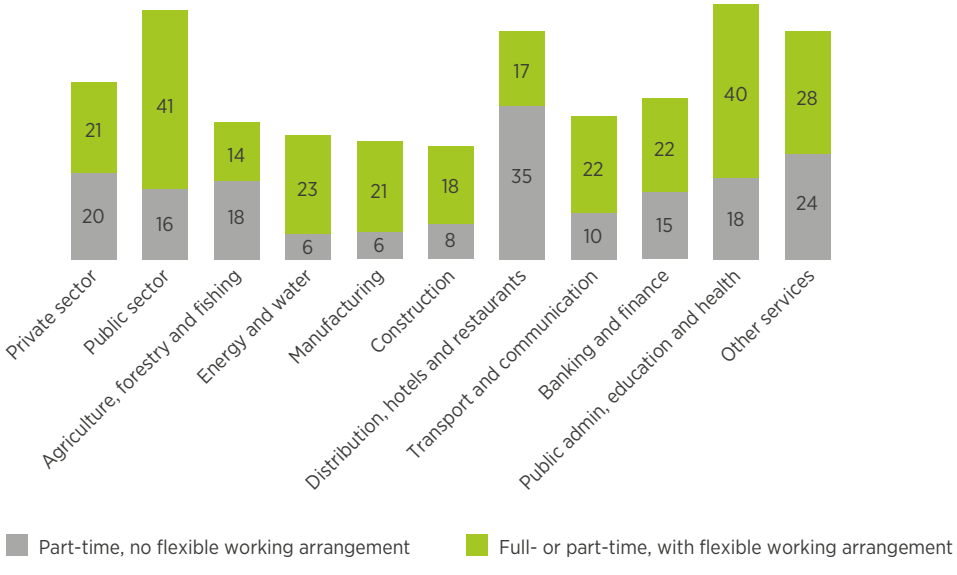
Figure 13: Employees with flexible working arrangements, by region/country, 2017 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June 2017

The employer's ownership (private or public sector) and line of business (reflected in its industry grouping) appear to have a strong influence on the chance of an employee working flexibly (Figure 14). They also influence the type of flexible working arrangement used. For example, the proportion of employees with flexitime is more than twice as high in the public sector as it is in the private sector.[17]

Figure 14: Employees with flexible working arrangements, by sector and by industry, 2017 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)

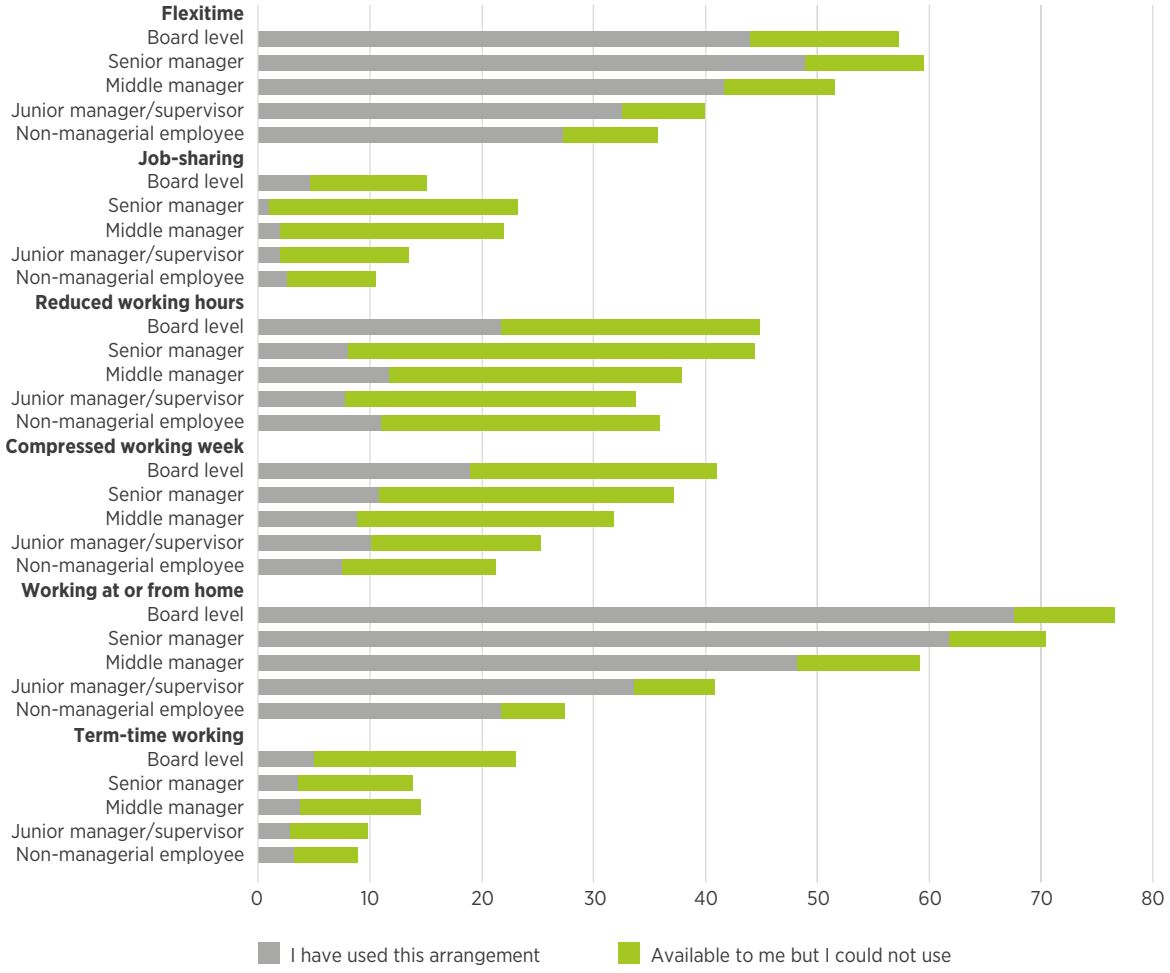


Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June 2017

However, the nature of the job also seems to make a difference. Managers are less likely to have a flexible working arrangement, with just 34% doing so in 2017, compared with 41% of foremen/supervisors and 51% for employees with no managerial responsibilities.[18] This difference is entirely because of a lower proportion of managers working part-time. However, position in the management hierarchy is associated with greater access to other flexible working options (Figure 15).[19]

Figure 15: Availability and use of flexible working arrangements, by managerial status, 2018 (%)

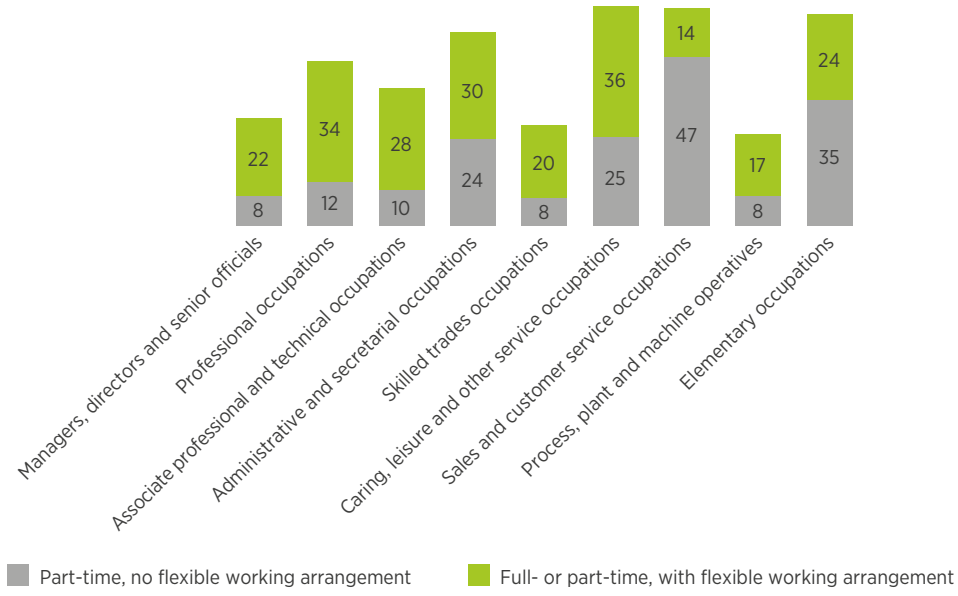
(UK, % of employees with job tenure over 12 months)



Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

There is greater variation across major occupation groups in the percentage working part-time than there is variation in the percentage with any other type of flexible working arrangement (Figure 16).

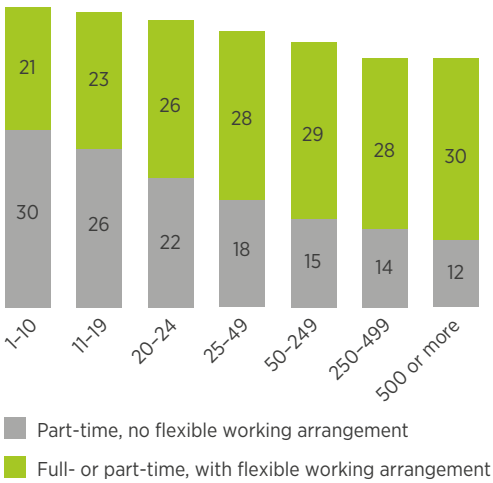
Figure 16: Employees with flexible working arrangements, by occupation major group, 2017 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June 2017

Likelihood of flexible working also varies by workplace size (Figure 17). Employees in smaller workplaces are more likely to have a flexible working arrangement because these workplaces contain higher proportions of part-time employees. Employees in larger workplaces are, however, slightly more likely to have another of these working arrangements (for example, flexitime is most common in the largest workplaces, those with 500 or more employees).[20]

Figure 17: Employees with flexible working arrangements, by workplace size, 2017 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Excludes those who do not know workplace size

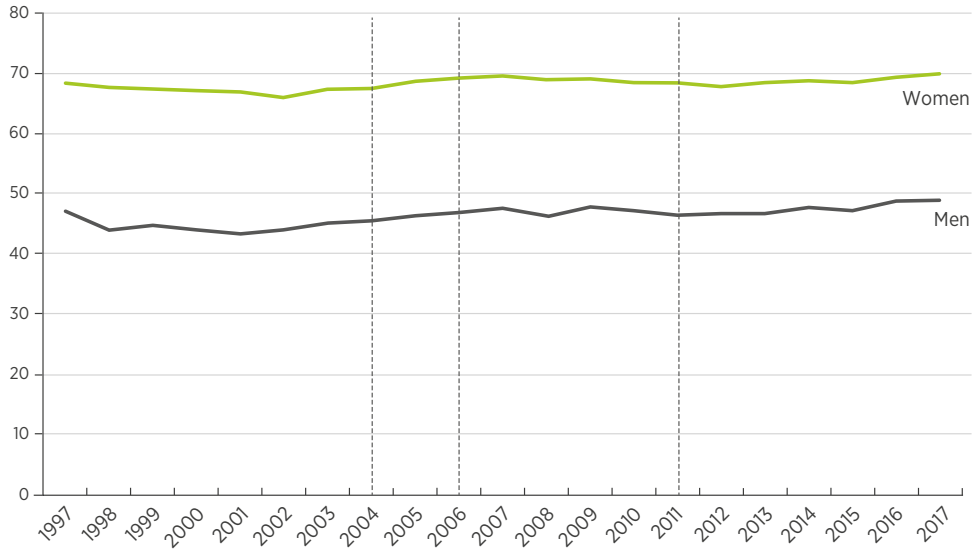
Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June 2017

Working conditions and well-being

There has been a long-standing 'part-time pay penalty' that applies even when correcting for hours worked (and despite legislation prohibiting pay discrimination against part-time employees since 2000) (Figure 18). This is because part-time work is less common in highly paid jobs and management roles (Manning and Petrongolo 2006). However, part-time employees are *more* likely to agree they are paid fairly than full-time employees![21]

Figure 18: The part-time pay penalty, 1997–2017 (%)

(UK, employees on adult rates whose pay for the survey period was unaffected by absence, median hourly earnings excluding overtime, part-time earnings as % of full-time earnings)



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

However, most forms of flexible work arrangement are associated with lower hourly earnings (Table 4).[22] Only flexitime and on-call working are associated with higher hourly pay (than for those with no flexible working arrangement).

Table 4: Hourly pay of employees with flexible working arrangements, 2017 (%)

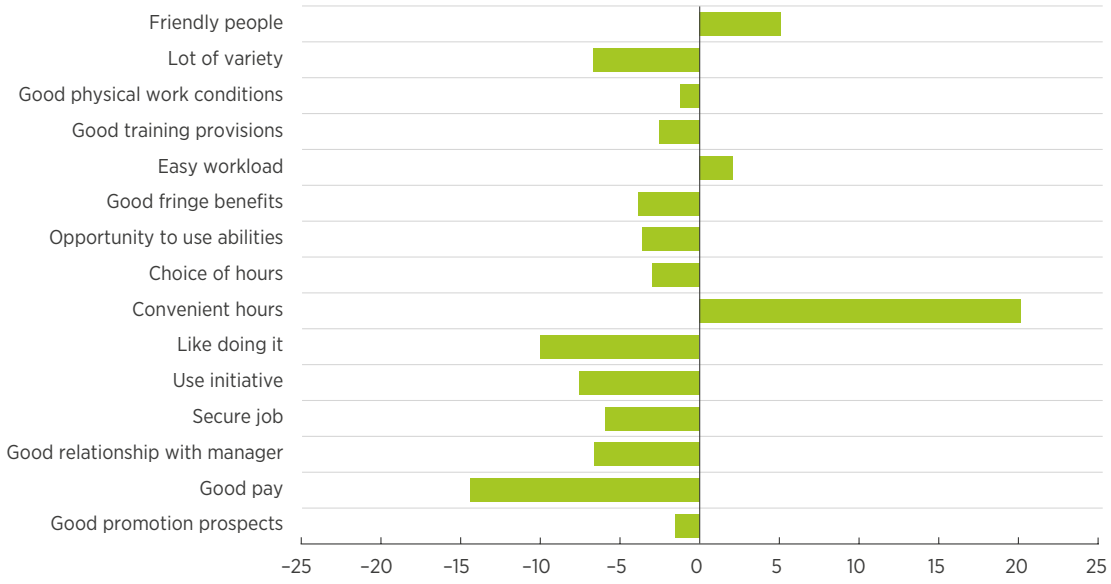
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)

		25th percentile	Median	Mean	75th percentile
Full-time	Flexitime	11.05	14.54	17.05	20.43
	Annualised hours contract	8.91	12.50	14.47	17.86
	Term-time working	8.65	11.62	13.48	17.30
	Zero-hours contract	7.00	8.03	8.76	9.74
	On-call working	11.53	15.59	18.37	23.53
	No flexible working arrangement	8.97	12.49	15.68	18.90
Part-time	Flexitime	7.50	11.05	13.75	16.60
	Annualised hours contract	7.27	8.75	12.59	14.52
	Term-time working	6.86	8.33	10.69	12.00
	Zero-hours contract	5.60	7.50	10.21	11.08
	No flexible working arrangement	7.19	8.47	12.75	12.36

Note: insufficient part-time, on-call employees (n<50)

Employees working part-time hours, however, appeared to attach less weight to their pay than full-time employees, instead being more likely to regard convenient hours as important or essential (Figure 19).

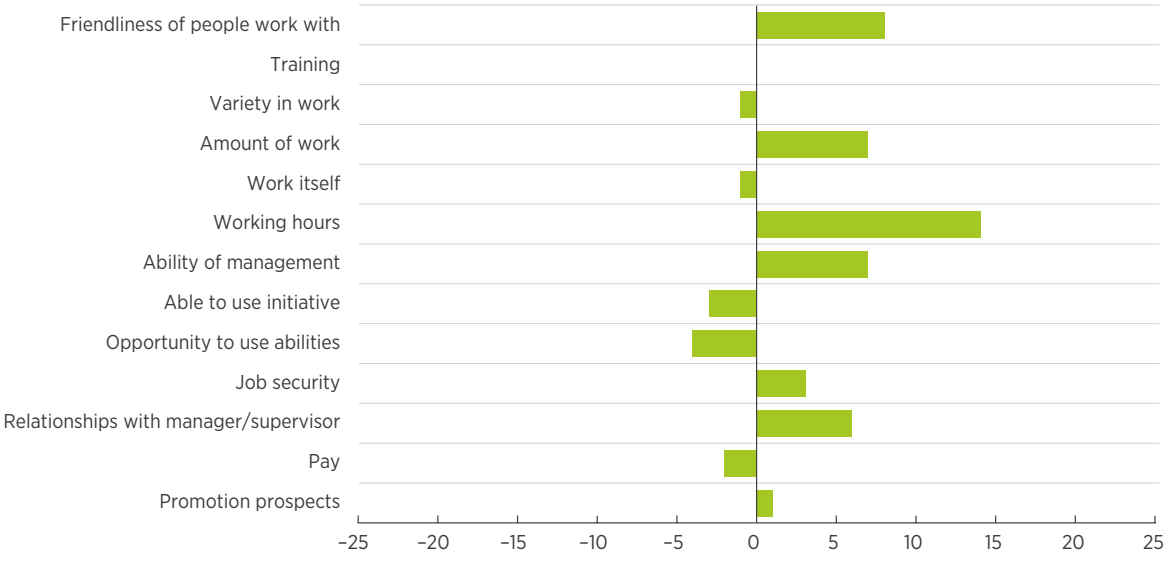
Figure 19: Important attributes of a job for part-time and full-time employees, 2012 (%)
(GB, % of part-time employees saying essential/very important *minus* % of full-time employees saying essential/very important)



Source: Skills and Employment Survey 2012

And it seems part-time employees have found jobs for themselves that mean they are more satisfied than full-time employees with their working hours and with workplace relationships (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Satisfaction with attributes of a job for part-time and full-time employees, 2012 (%)
(GB, % of part-time employees saying they are completely/very satisfied *minus* % of full-time employees saying they are completely/very satisfied)

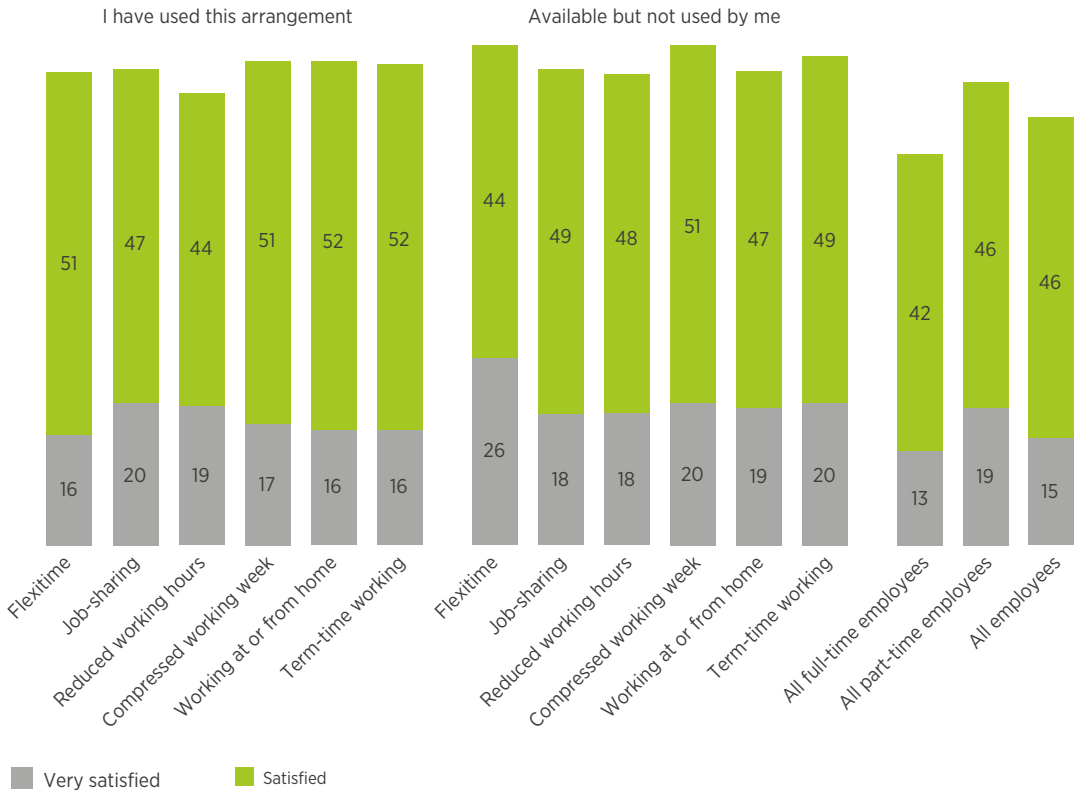


Source: Skills and Employment Survey 2012

Perhaps as a result, job satisfaction among part-time employees in 2012 was similar to that for full-time employees.

More recent data shows that the percentage of employees satisfied (or better) with their job was greater for part-time employees than full-time employees (Figure 21).[23]

Figure 21: Job satisfaction, by access to flexible working arrangements, 2018 (%)
(UK, % of employees with at least 12 months' tenure)



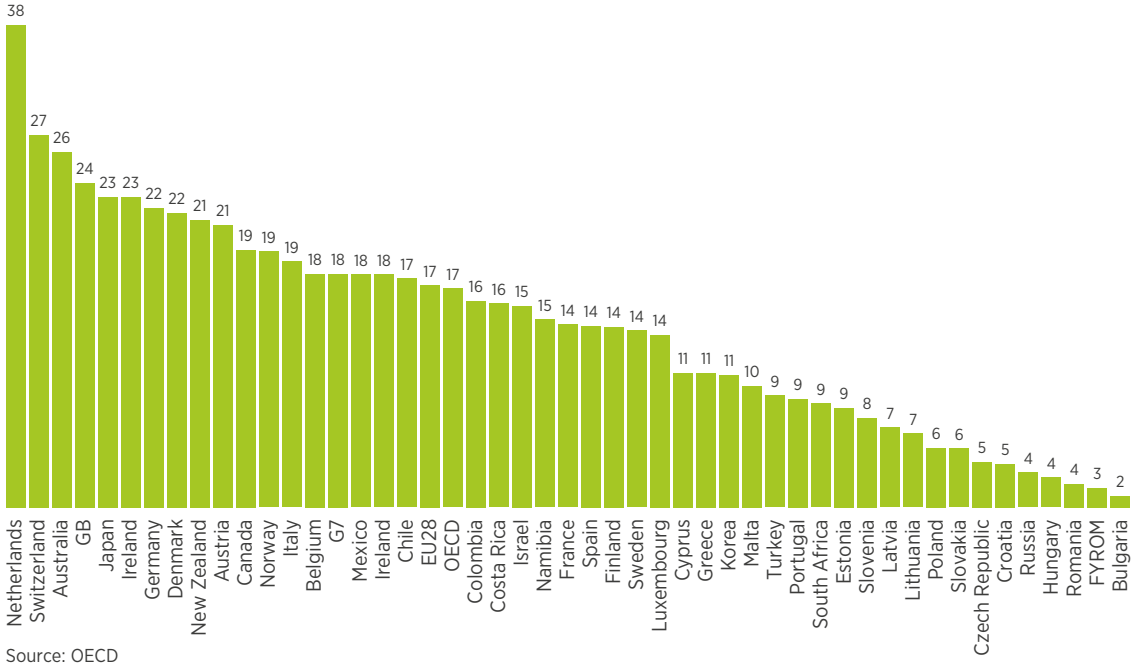
Source: CIPD *Working Lives* survey 2018

On this measure, job satisfaction was also slightly higher for those employees with access to flexible working arrangements than it was for employees as a whole – irrespective of whether or not employees actually used the flexible working arrangement.[24]

International comparisons

Comparable international data are only available regularly for part-time work (Figure 22).[25] The UK's part-time share is high relative to other OECD countries but well below the rate seen in the Netherlands (where more than three-fifths of employed women work part-time hours).[26] In contrast, part-time hours are relatively rare in some countries in east and south-east Europe, and also in countries where female employment rates are relatively low.[27] Outside the OECD economies, part-time shares of employment vary hugely (ILO 2016).

Figure 22: Part-time employment share, 2016 (%)
(common definition, % of dependent employment)

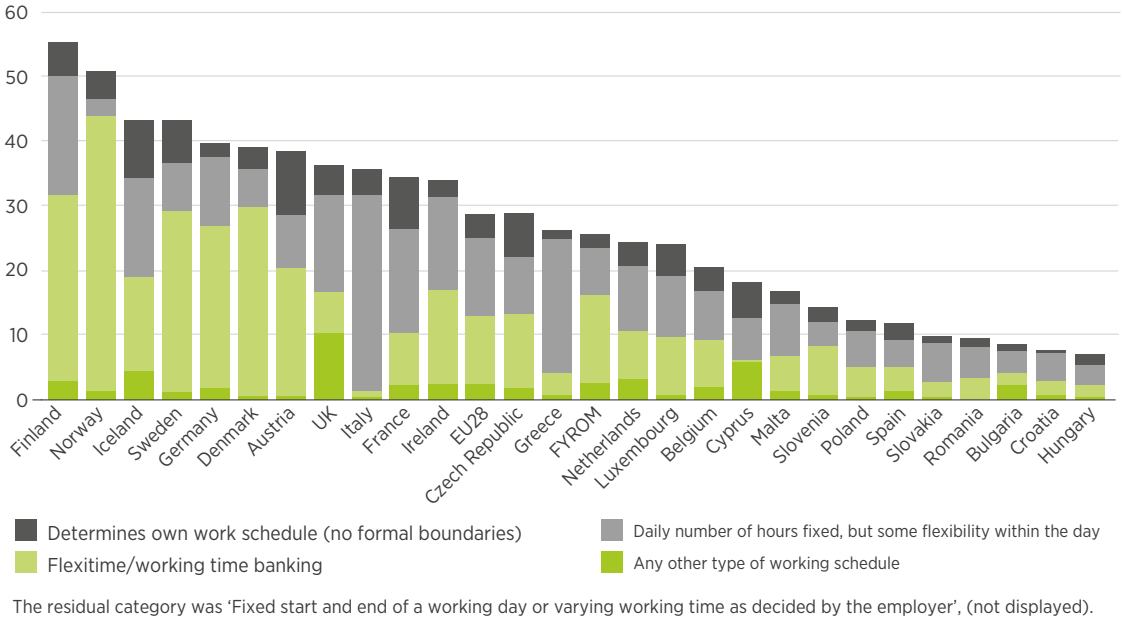


Source: OECD

Otherwise, the lack of standardised definitions means that data are collected periodically or only shed light on aspects of flexible working. However, this may not be a great problem in making comparisons across Europe as *'the working time setting regimes in the EU have remained essentially unchanged for the past 15 years'* (Eurofound 2016).

A 2010 supplement to the LFS found that more than half of employees in Finland and Norway said they had some flexibility in their working time arrangements, largely because flexitime and time banking/working time accounts were especially common in these countries at that time (Figure 23).[28]

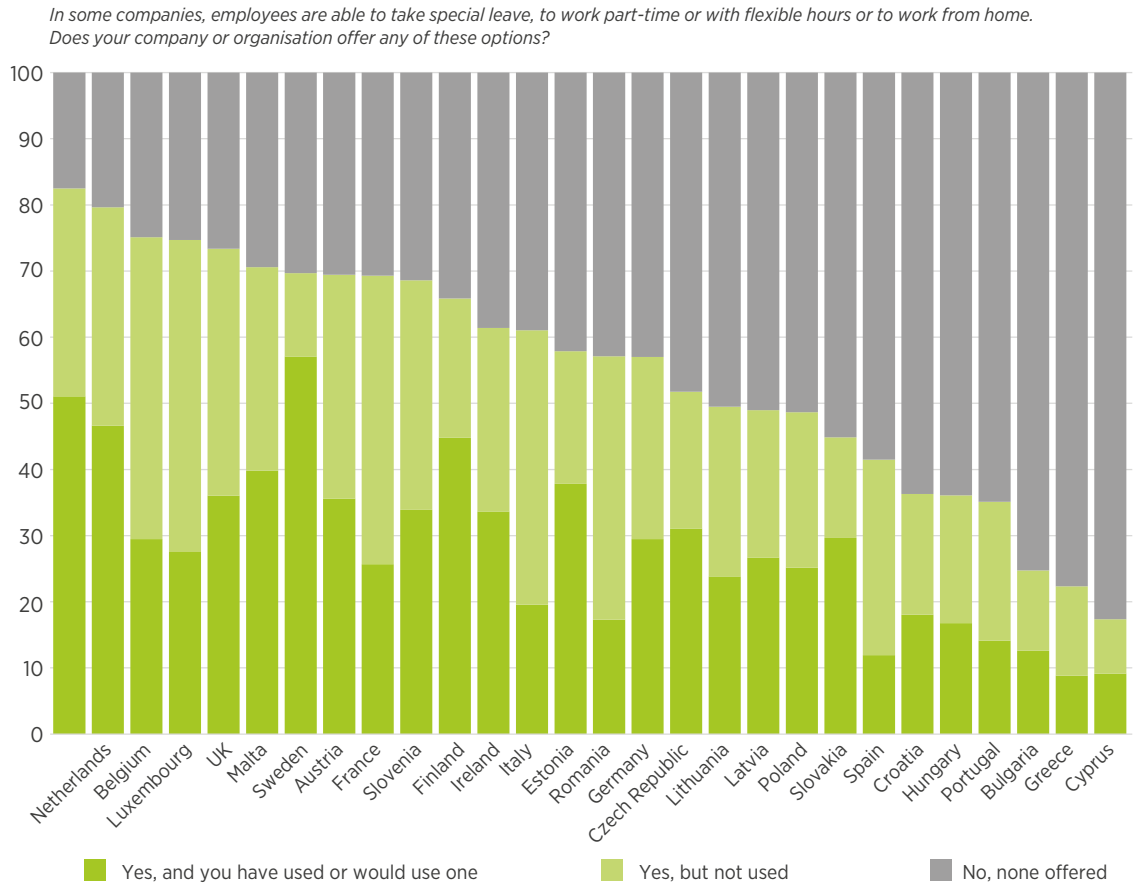
Figure 23: Employees with some flexibility in working time arrangements, 2010 (%)
(% of employees aged 15–64)



The residual category was 'Fixed start and end of a working day or varying working time as decided by the employer', (not displayed).
Source: Eurostat, LFS ad hoc module

A 2014 Eurobarometer survey asked a very general question about provision of flexible working (Figure 24). Whereas over 80% of Danish employees said such arrangements were offered by their employers, in Cyprus the proportion was under 20%. The UK, like Belgium, had both a high rate of availability and a high proportion of employees who said they didn't use these arrangements personally (which may have been because they were only available to some employees at their workplace).[29]

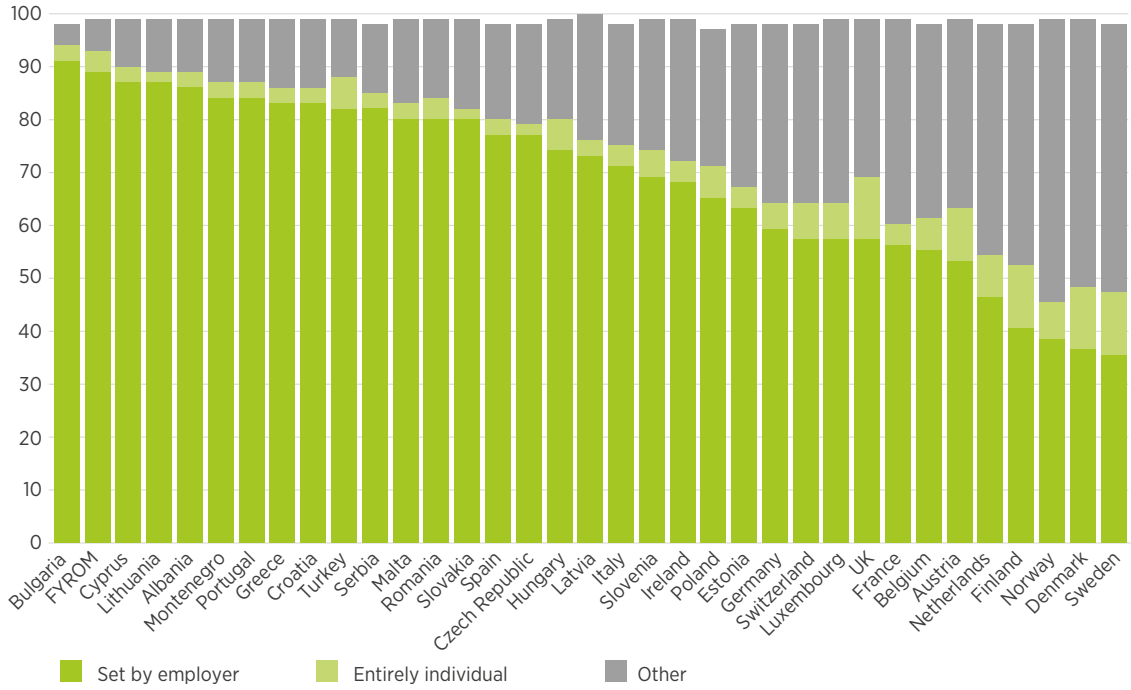
Figure 24: Availability and take-up of flexible working across Europe, 2014 (%)
(% of employees)



Source: Flash Eurobarometer 398

In some European countries, employers set working time for the vast majority of employees – in general, these were countries where full-time work remains the norm (Figure 25).

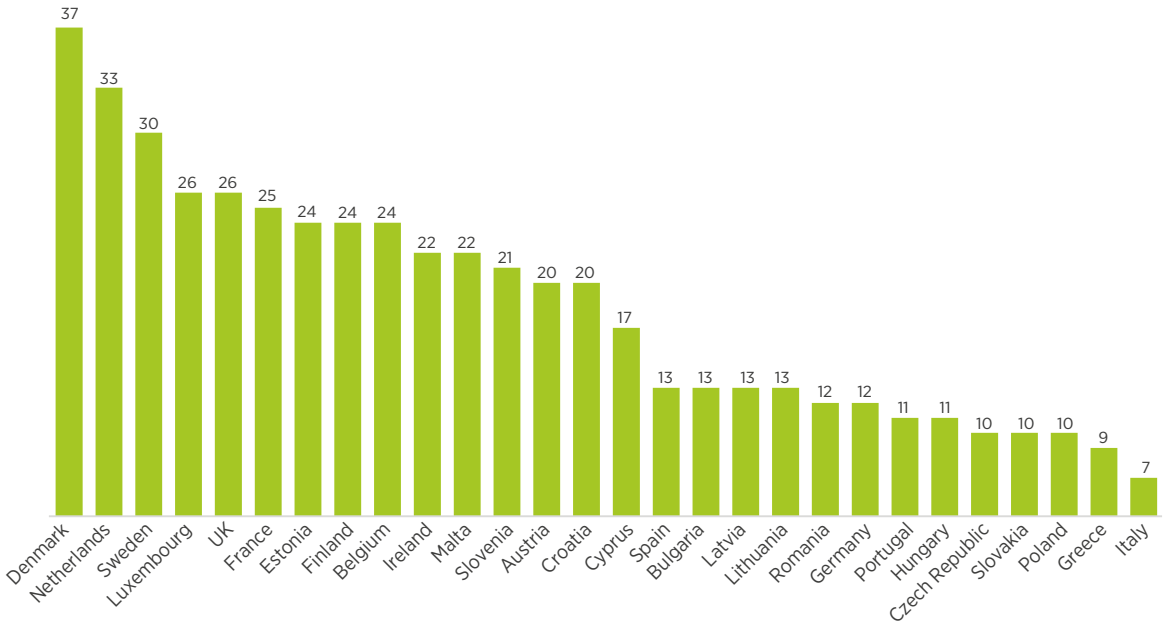
Figure 25: How working time arrangements are made, 2015 (%)
(% of employees)



Bar totals may not add to 100% because 'don't know' and refusal to answer not reported.
Source: European Working Conditions Survey

What is described as telework or mobile ICT-based work was most common in Denmark in 2015 (Figure 26). In those countries where it was most common, including the UK, the majority of these employees were using technology occasionally to work away from their employer's premises, rather than always working at home or on the move.[30]

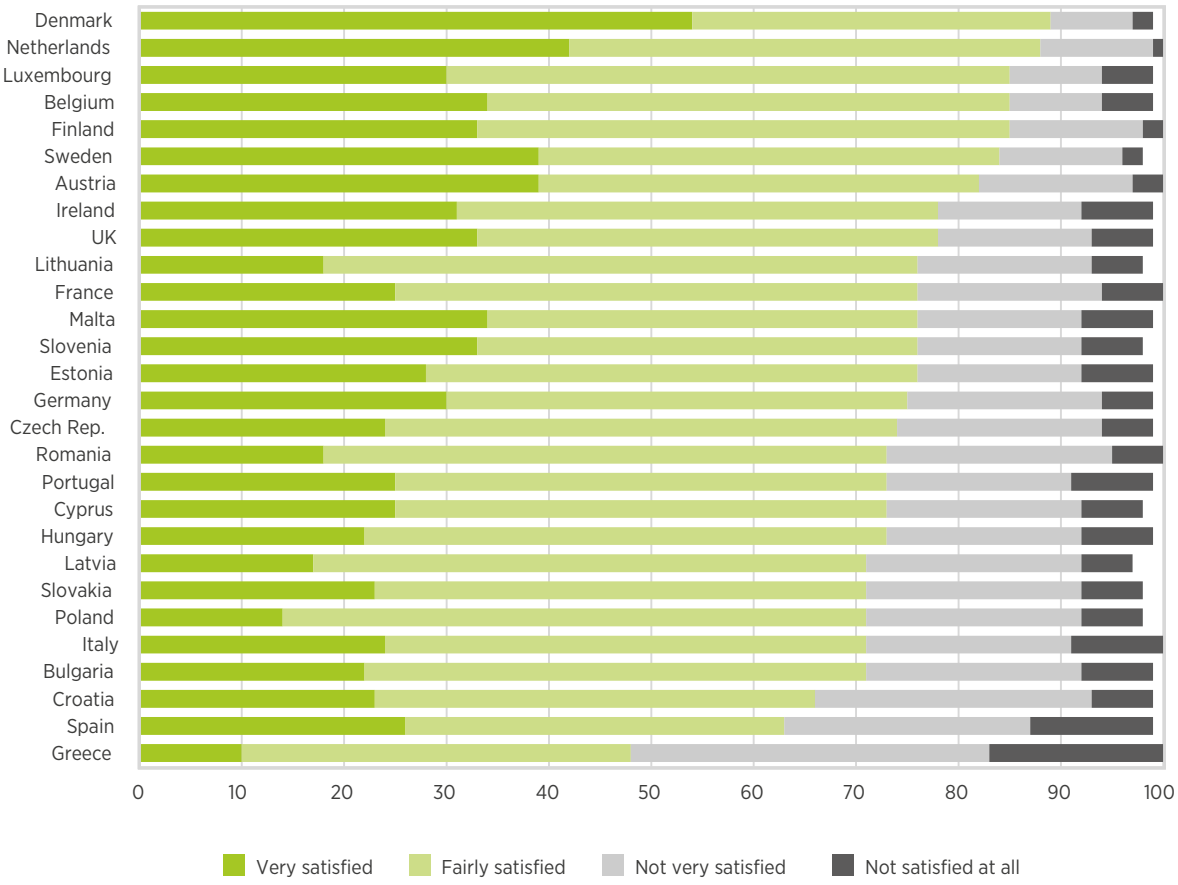
Figure 26: Home or mobile teleworking, 2015 (%)
(% of employees)



Source: Eurofound/ILO (2017)

Satisfaction with work–life balance was relatively high in the UK and highest in Denmark, whereas dissatisfaction was greatest in Greece (Figure 27). Employees across Europe were also more likely to be satisfied with their work–life balance if their employer provided some sort of flexible working – the question illustrated in Figure 24 – and they had used it or intended to use it.[31]

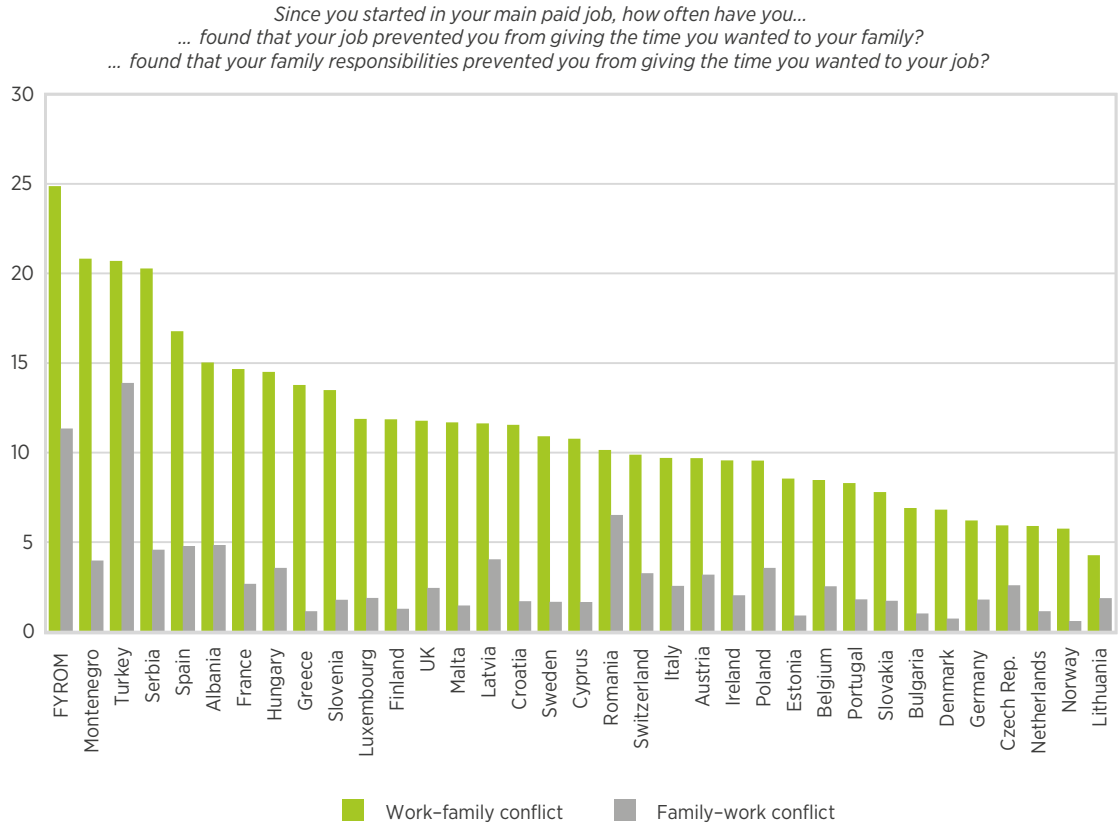
Figure 27: Satisfaction with work–life balance, 2014 (%)
(% of employees)



Source: Flash Eurobarometer 398

Conflict between work and home or family occurs more often where the demands of paid employment limit the time available for family life than it does where family life restricts time for paid employment (Figure 28).[32] These conflicts are greatest in south-east Europe, where low average incomes combine with the demands of large agricultural sectors, large informal sectors, and high levels of family working. Of course, responses to these questions will reflect employees' views on what constitutes a reasonable demand on their time, and these may vary between countries.

Figure 28: Work–family time conflicts, 2015 (%)
(% of employees saying 'always' or 'most of the time')



Source: European Working Conditions Survey 2015

In developing countries outside Europe, work–family conflict has been seen as a less pressing social issue (Lee et al 2007).[33]

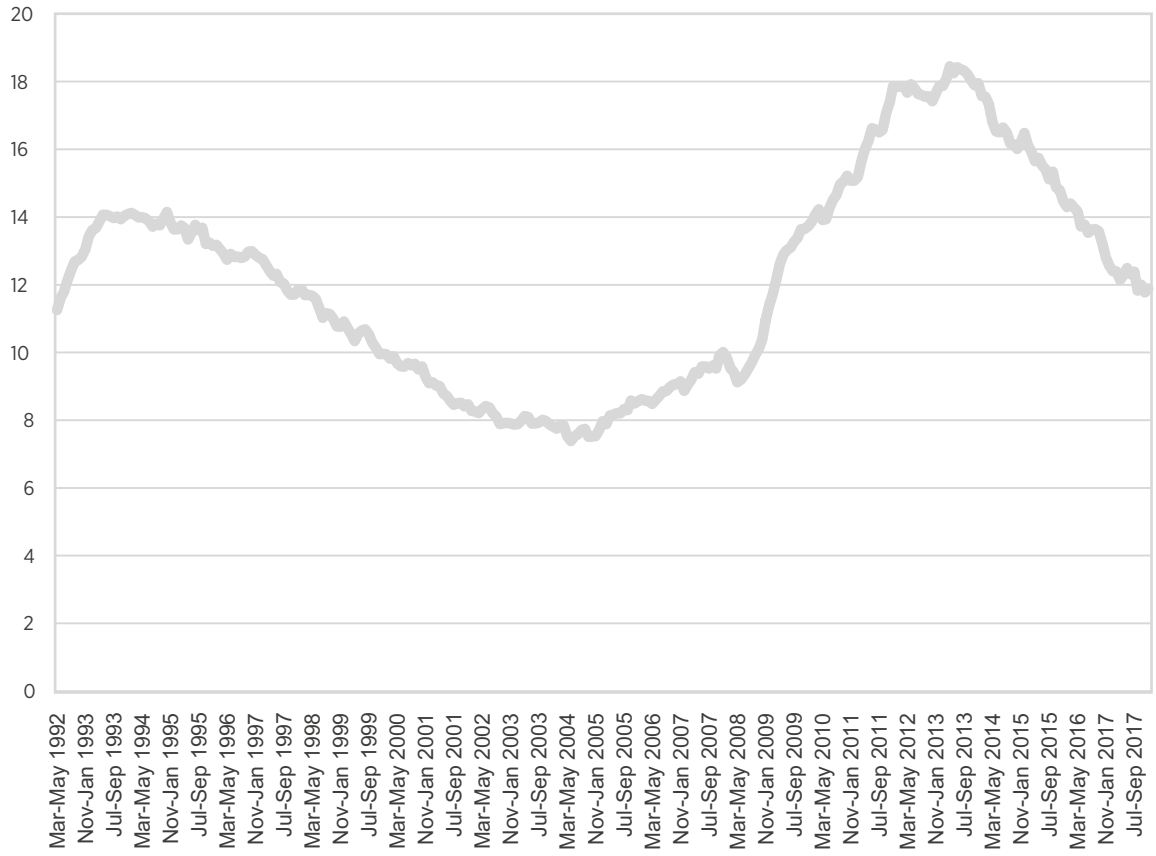
5 Possible explanations

The years since 2010 – when the last recession ended in the UK – appear to have seen little or no increase in the proportions of employees taking up the main flexible work arrangements, with the likely exception of mobile or occasional home-based telework. This section reviews some of the possible explanations.

The state of the economy and its structure

Part-time working tends to increase during recessions as some firms cut hours to cope with reduced demand without laying off workers. This leads to an increase in 'involuntary' part-time employment, where an individual works part-time but says this is because they could not find a full-time job (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Involuntary part-time employment, 1992–2018 (%)
(UK, seasonally adjusted, people working part-time because they could not find a full-time job as % of part-time employment)



Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

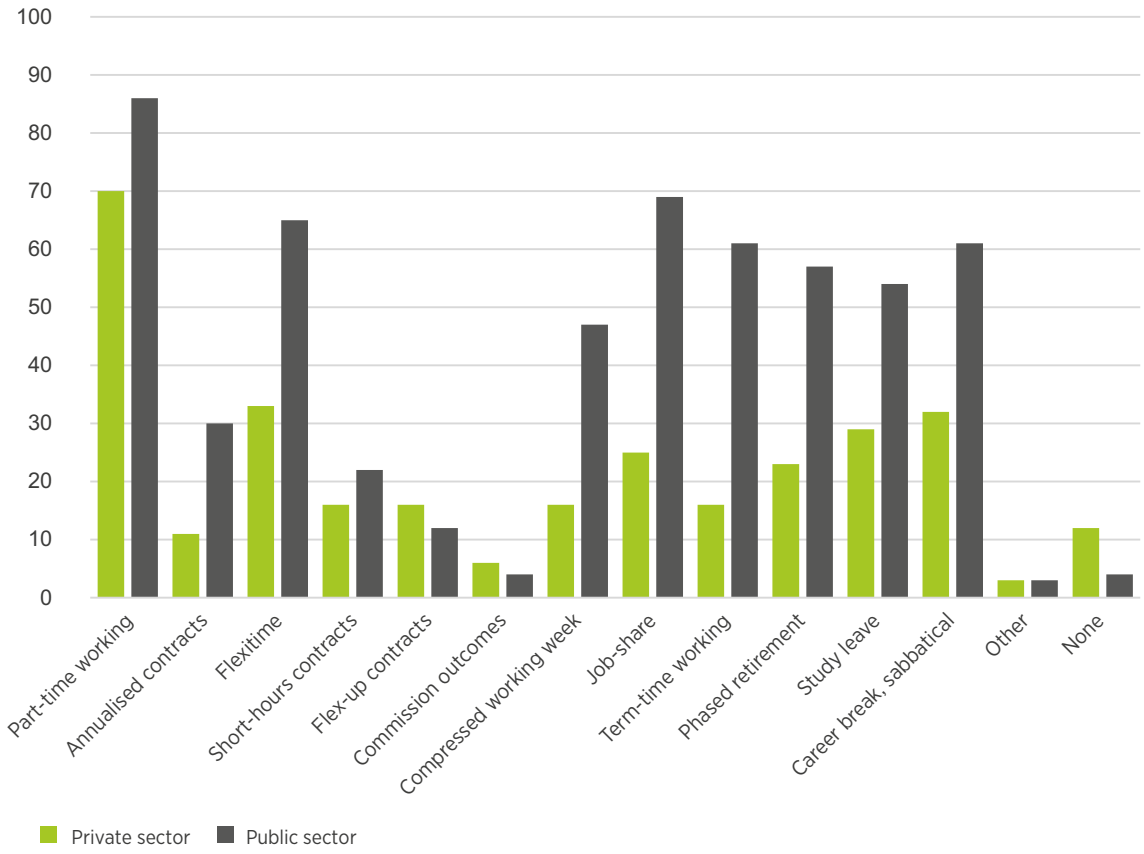
This could help to explain the rise (and subsequent fall) in the percentage of UK employees working part-time hours (see Figure 3).

In addition, experience of the last recession, by increasing the fear of job loss, may have discouraged employees from asking for flexible working. Although the labour market has recovered, any such effect on expectations could persist.[34] And some employers may have regarded flexible working initiatives as non-essential costs, to be shelved or deferred in times of economic hardship.

Below-inflation wage rises for most of the post-recession period may have in addition discouraged some employees from seeking those forms of flexible working that involve a loss of earnings.

Public sector organisations offer a greater range of flexible working practices than private sector organisations, especially when going further than part-time working (Figure 30).[35]

Figure 30: Availability of flexible working practices, by sector, 2014 (%)
(UK, % of employees working in organisations with one or more employees)



Source: CIPD survey of employers (CIPD 2014b)

The contraction of the public sector since 2010, relative to the private sector, will therefore be a factor contributing to the lack of expansion of flexible working practices.[36]

Employer attitudes and behaviour

The 2011 WERS found an apparent hardening of attitudes among employers about whose responsibility it was to manage work and home. The proportion of management respondents who agreed that 'it is up to individual employees to balance their work and family responsibilities' rose from 66% in 2004 to 77% in 2011.[37] However, this may have been the result of the recession.[38] There was no such change in attitudes visible between 2007 and 2013 in the Government's work–life balance surveys (BIS 2014).

The adoption of flexible working by organisations – and its diffusion within them – may be limited if those making decisions think flexible working presents obstacles or problems that have to be overcome. In 2014, when asked about barriers to flexible working, HR

managers accounting for just 14% of employment said there were no barriers. The barrier most commonly mentioned was 'operational pressures' (by managers accounting for 58% of employment) and 'lack of operational capacity to manage fluctuations in workforce numbers' (36%). This is a judgement made by someone with responsibility for HR. It is impossible to tell whether these concerns about operational pressures or lack of managerial capacity are justified; perceptions of them, however, seem to be widespread. The CBI's annual Employment Trends surveys for the period from 2015 onwards point to concerns about ensuring the infrastructure is appropriate (such as ICT) and concerns about the management and/or workforce mindset as the barriers most often faced by private sector businesses in implementing flexible working practices.[39]

Employee accounts of what they see as the main obstacles to employers providing or increasing the use of flexible working arrangements sometimes focus on the nature of the work that employees do (mentioned by 27% of employees) or are based on the view that flexible working is of limited relevance to the sector they work in (mentioned by 14% of employees).[40] However, negative attitudes among senior managers, line managers and supervisors are also seen as a barrier (CIPD 2016). In larger and/or more bureaucratic organisations, individual employees often have to negotiate flexible working arrangements with one or more managers. Some managers are more comfortable with flexibility than others, so the precise working arrangements achieved can be different even within the same employer (Collins et al 2013).

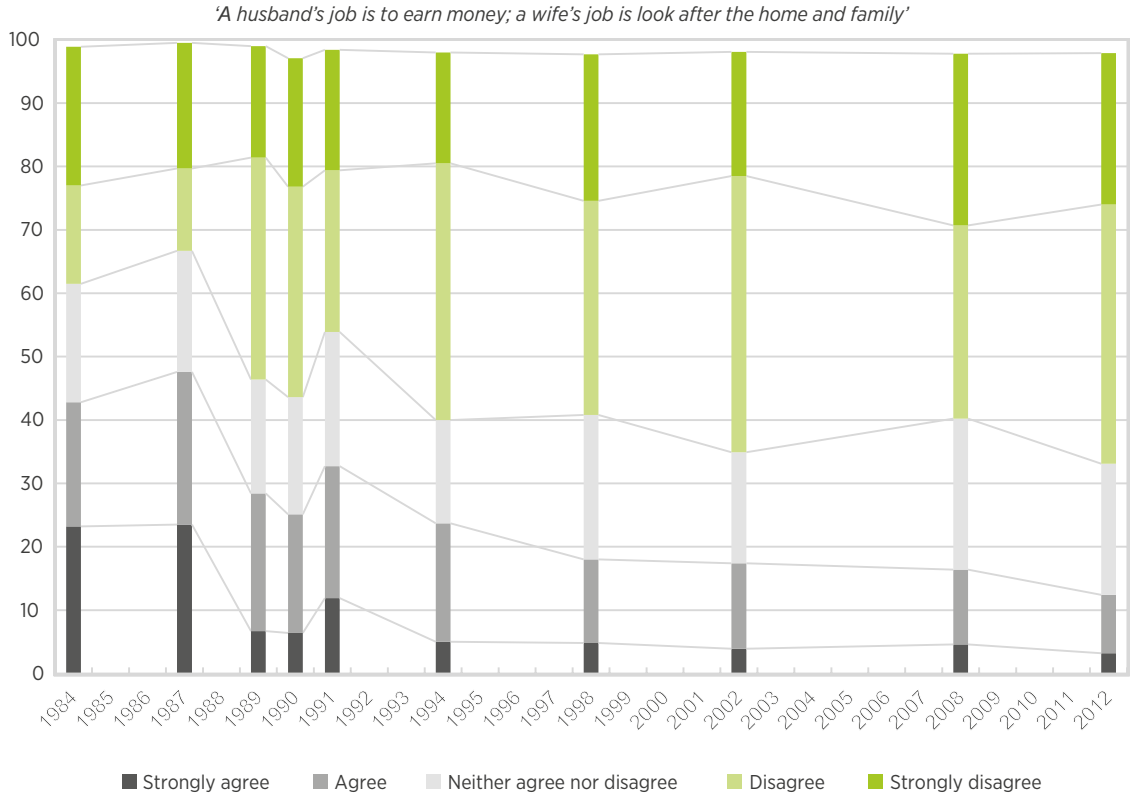
New models of how employers do (or should) organise their activities and their workforce have emerged, such as the agile organisation or the liquid workforce (Bazigos et al 2015, Accenture 2016). These sometimes do not appear to highlight flexible working as a distinguishing feature, instead tending to emphasise standardised systems and ways of working. To the extent that employer behaviour is driven by fashion in management thinking, it's possible that some employers' attention has been captured by other aspects of managing their workforce.

Social attitudes

The attitudes held by the population at large matter because they condition attitudes about what is acceptable and thus shape the psychological consequences of not behaving in accordance with previous generations' norms (Barigozzi et al 2017).[41]

In Britain, attitudes towards married women working have changed in the past three decades (Figure 31).

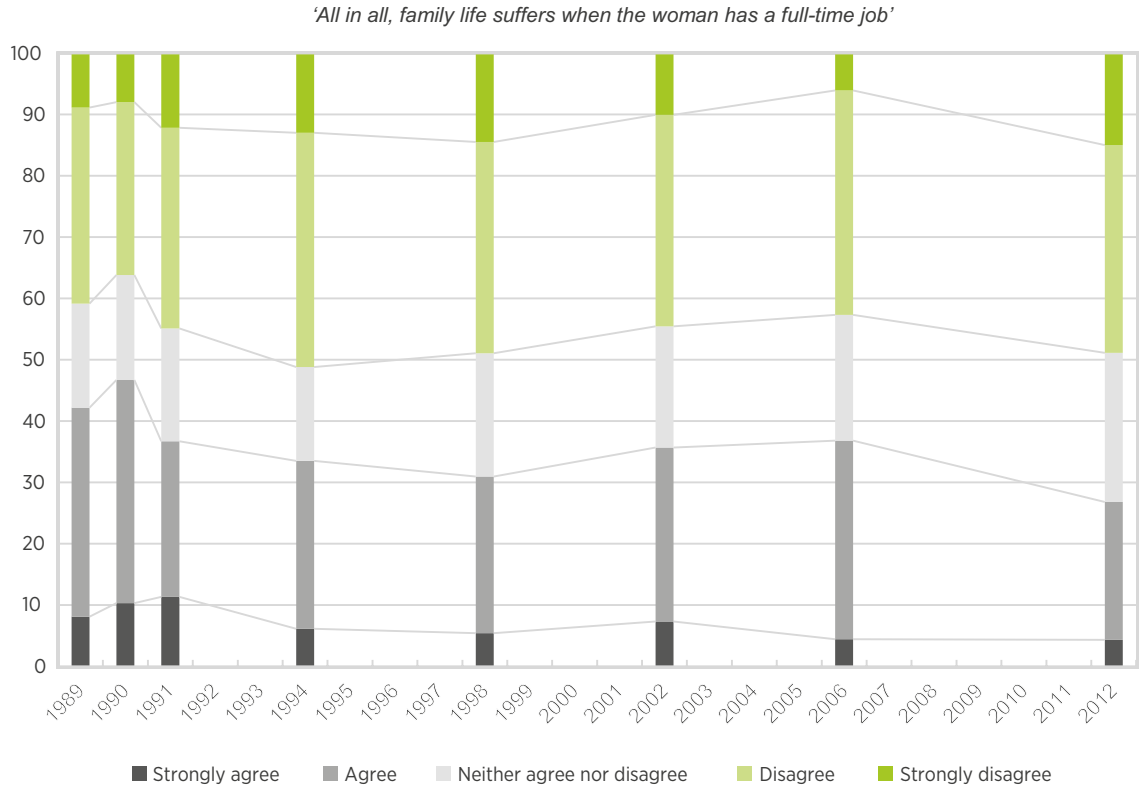
Figure 31: Attitudes to married women working, 1984–2012 (%)
(GB, % of adult population)



'Don't know' and refusal to answer not reported.
Source: British Social Attitudes Surveys

However, attitudes toward the desirability of women with children working full-time appear to have changed less (Figure 32). Indeed, just over 50% of British adults in 2012 agreed that 'most mothers with young children would prefer having a male partner who is the main family earner rather than working full-time themselves' while, in the same year, less than 10% thought that mothers of children below school age should work full-time.

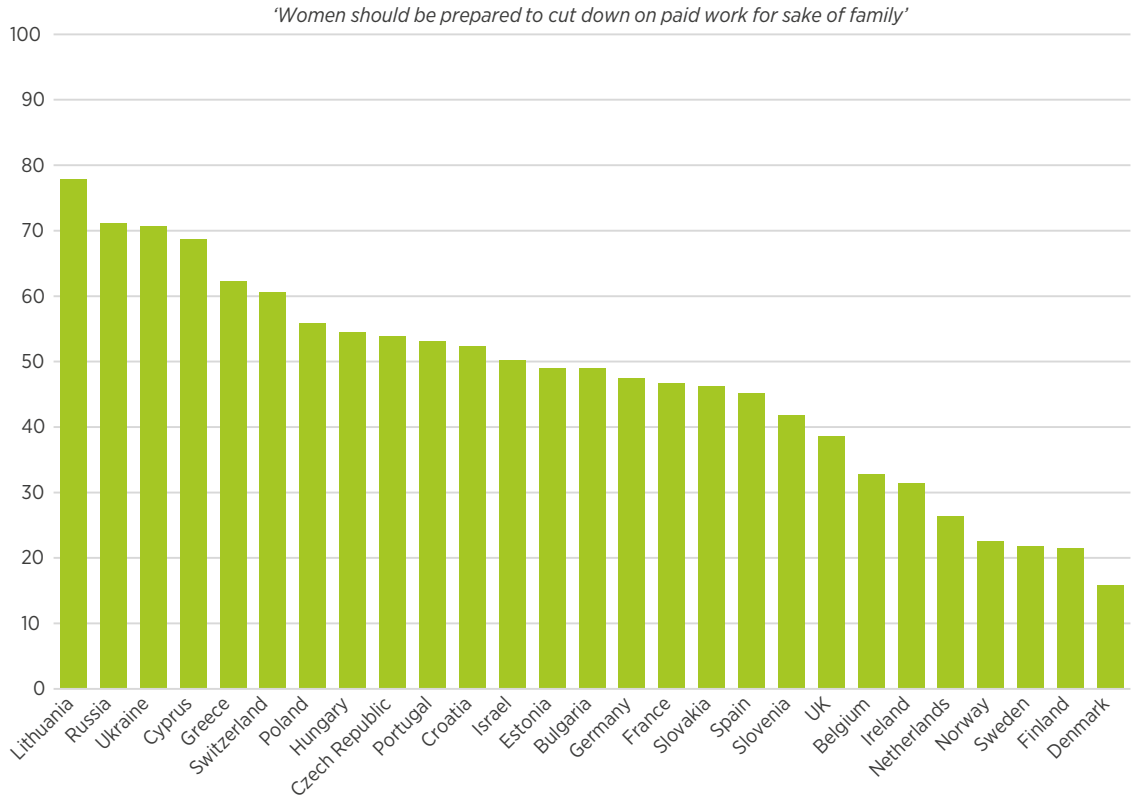
Figure 32: Attitudes towards mothers working full-time, 1984–2012 (%)
(GB, % of adult population)



'Don't know' and refusal to answer not reported.
Source: British Social Attitudes Surveys

There are large differences in these attitudes between countries (Figure 33). These attitudes seem to make a difference: those countries where the highest proportions of people thought women should reduce their hours to look after the family tended to be those countries with relatively low employment rates of women.[42]

Figure 33: Attitudes to mothers' working hours, 2010 (%)
(% of adults aged 15 and over who strongly agree/agree)



Source: European Social Survey Round 5

Views may have changed little in recent years. Norms, being transmitted from one generation to another, tend to change slowly (Giuliano 2017).

However, there does appear to be widespread support among employees in Britain for the idea that employers have some degree of responsibility for supporting people with their life outside work. In 2012/13, 69% of male employees and 73% of female employees agreed, or strongly agreed, that 'employers should help mothers [sic] combine jobs and childcare'.[43] There is also recognition that most employers are trying to be supportive. In 2011, 60% of employees in workplaces with five or more employees agreed that 'managers here understand about employees having to meet responsibilities outside work'.[44] Just 15% of employees disagreed with this statement.[45] Nevertheless, unsupportive or inflexible managers was one of the most common reasons why a tenth of employees in 2016 had a 'bad time at work' (Tait 2016).

Government policy

The effects of individual policies to promote flexible working are difficult to estimate (Olivetti and Petrongolo 2017). Related policies such as maternity leave and pay, paternity leave and pay, time off for dependants, public and/or private expenditure on childcare and early years education and the provision and funding of social care also need to be considered.

The Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 did set down the principle of equality of treatment for part-time and full-time workers, although their practical effect may have been limited.[46] The regulations did not affect employers' discretion over whether to offer, or withdraw, part-time work. Hence, where there were reservations about the suitability of certain roles for part-time hours, these views were not challenged directly.

Of probably greater significance in the UK was the right to request flexible working, which was expanded in stages over more than a decade (Table 5).

Table 5: Chronology of right to request flexible working

2000	Proposal floated in Green Paper. Work and Parents Taskforce set up to develop proposal.
2001	Publication of report of Work and Parents Taskforce.
2003	Right to request flexible working introduced for employees with six months' service who are parents of children aged under six or of a disabled child aged under 18.
2006	Right extended to cover caring of adults aged 18 and over.
2009	Right extended to parents of children aged under 17.
2014	Right extended to all eligible employees. Statutory procedure replaced by requirement to 'consider reasonably'.

Source: Pyper (2015)

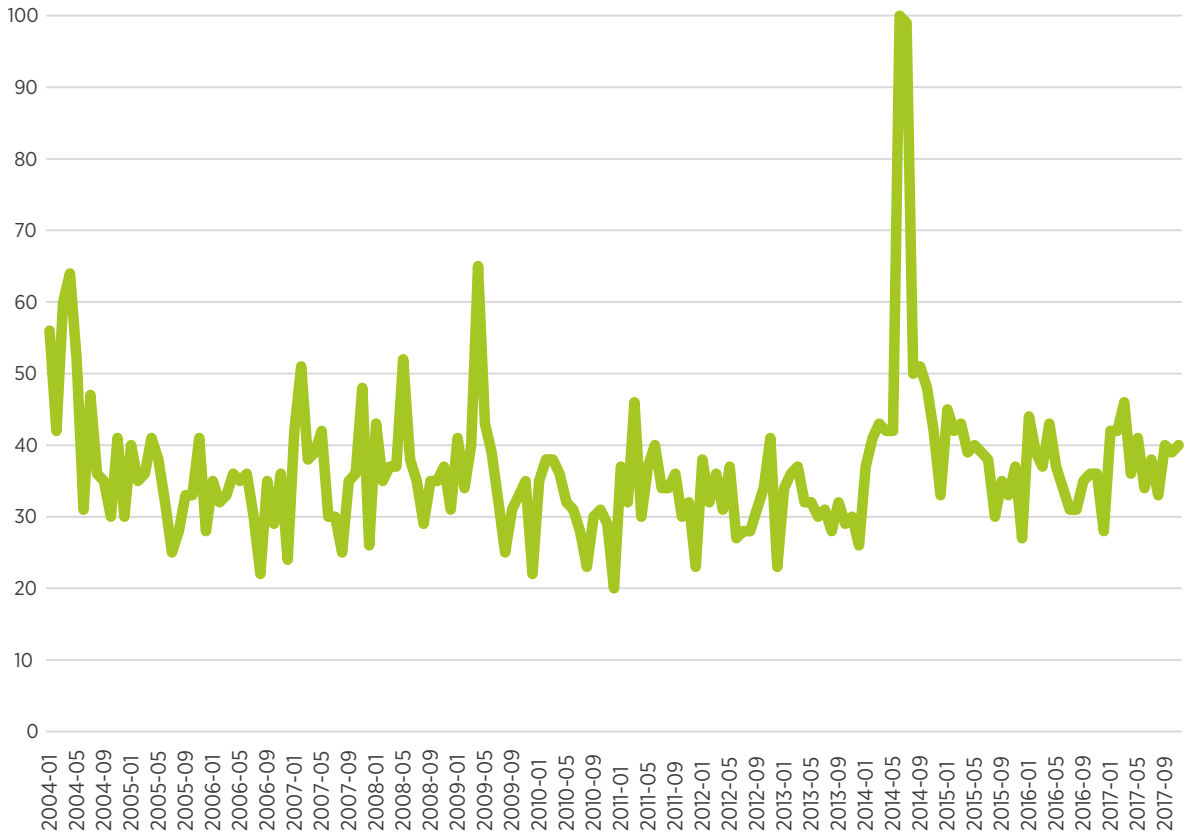
In 2012, only 4% of employers had encountered any problems in complying with the right to request legislation in the previous two years, with 85% having had no problems. Small employers were less likely to report problems than larger organisations (CIPD 2012).

The right to request approach has been regarded as one of the UK's most successful policy innovations and the approach has been transplanted to deal with other aspects of the employment relationship and emulated in other countries. Most European countries have introduced some form of legislation dealing with changes to schedules or working flexibly – a combination of entitlements and rights to request. However, these are sometimes available on a selective basis and few include mobile/teleworking (Vaganay et al 2016). But while *'the statutory framework matters … it is not a magic bullet for changing gender specific flexible working patterns'* (Hegewisch 2009).

Some form of request was most often the trigger for changing work arrangements. In 2014, in UK workplaces accounting for 62% of employment, managers with HR responsibility agreed that 'flexible working options are considered upon receiving a flexible working request'.[47]

Changes in the law also have an impact via their symbolic role. Interest in flexible working (measured by online searches) peaked in July 2014, when the right to request was last broadened (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Online searches for 'flexible working', 2004–17



UK searches, where 100 represents the month with most searches and all other months scaled by the number of searches in the month relative to this value.
Source: Google Trends

Unrelated policy changes can lead to anticipated or unanticipated effects on the availability or use of flexible working. The abolition of the default retirement age may have led to more flexible working by older employees. On the other hand, the effects of benefit rules for two-adult families may have exacerbated gendered role divisions (Rubery et al 2016, Hudson-Sharp et al 2018).

Fit with the flexibility that employees want or need

Static or slowly changing employee take-up of flexible working may be because of concern about the potential consequences of take-up, both direct (such as loss of earnings from working part-time) and indirect (such as fears about the effect on career prospects).

But there are at least two other possible explanations, one simply being that most employees don't think flexible working is that important when it comes to choosing jobs. A 2016 survey of nearly 200,000 adults across 24 countries asked them what was most important in choosing a job (Randstad 2016). Just 5% said that flexible working arrangements were the most important factor when looking for a job, while 29% included it in the five most important factors (top of the list were salary and benefits, long-term job security and a pleasant working atmosphere). However, flexible working arrangements were more highly rated by women than men.

Alternatively, employees may not be offered options that are attractive to them. A survey of working parents found 36% of them saying that the type of flexibility they wanted was not available (to them) in their current role (Working Families 2018). 'Flexible working' suggests vast possibilities – reconfiguring work to suit the individual and their employer. Yet many employees – and the managers responsible for that work – may unwittingly find their horizons much narrower, evaluating options and requests drawn from a limited 'menu' (in some cases, a simple choice between full-time and part-time hours).

According to a CIPD survey of employees in 2014, 32% of employees would like to change their current working arrangements (defined by such factors as their contract, their hours of work, and starting and finishing times). These employees were then asked what they would like to change (Figure 35).

Figure 35: Employee views on how they would change their working arrangements, 2014 (%
(UK, % of employees who would like to change their working arrangements)

Employees could choose more than one option.
Source: CIPD survey of employees (CIPD 2014b)

Changes that enhance the security or stability of work were commonly mentioned (not surprising given this study had a particular focus on 'atypical' work). But changes giving people more control of their working time – such as when to start or finish the working day or week – seemed valuable to more employees than changes to the length of the working week alone. Employers that offer, or are seen to offer, limited options – such as just the option of going down to part-time hours – may find they get few takers.

Survey measures such as these capture preferences – whether A is preferred to B – but they are less successful at measuring the strength of those preferences. A superior approach – at least to economists – is to ask workers how much reward they would be prepared to sacrifice in return for flexible working. An American study tested this by seeing whether job applicants would accept a lower wage in return for various flexible work options (Mas and Pallais 2017). It turned out that most of the job applicants were

not prepared to accept a lower wage in return for alternative working arrangements (to 9-to-5 hours) such as flexitime. However, a small proportion of individuals did value such flexibility more highly.[48] Options enabling homeworking, rather than at a central location, were most valued, with an average (mean) wage sacrifice of 8% of salary.

Alternatives to flexible working

Focusing on flexible working arrangements of the type set out in guidance, measured by the LFS, leading – possibly through the right to request – to a formal, contractual change in working patterns may be missing some important aspects of working life. Technology and the desire for flexibility and informality come together to mean that the needs of employees can be met without a flexible working arrangement in sight (see Box 3).

Box 3: Ways of dealing with a Wednesday afternoon

Suppose that John works full-time but wishes to leave work early on Wednesdays – 3pm say – to deal with a domestic need (such as taking his daughter to football practice or his son to ballet class or one of his parents to yoga). How can this be handled?

In some circumstances, this may be accommodated by existing policies and practices. An existing flexitime policy may give John enough leeway or workers may be trusted to regulate their own hours and be judged entirely on results.

Suppose, however, that operational requirements – such as customer or client interaction, or the chance of interaction – are involved. Cover may be required. The situation needs *managing*.

John could seek shorter hours – not working at all on Wednesdays, say – but a day's earnings are not easily given up and he might be concerned about the effect on his career.

Instead, John may seek an arrangement making use of technology to remain available to deal with phone calls and emails during the afternoon and making up the time later in the day (or evening).

John's manager may be content with this arrangement. They may also persuade John not to use the right to request. That could mean HR getting involved and extra bureaucracy. The manager's spirit of give-and-take may also have to go out of the window; after all, what if a meeting with a client *has* to take place on a Wednesday afternoon? John may be a valued employee, but his manager may want to avoid what they see as unnecessary limits on their discretion or being seen as a 'soft' manager.

John may be content to proceed informally, especially if the need is to leave early most Wednesdays, not *every* Wednesday. If it was the latter, John may seek more certainty and look into the legal option.

If John was employed on a zero-hours contract, keeping Wednesday afternoons free may be less of an issue *if* he is one of the workers employed on these contracts who can genuinely turn work down without penalty. But in practice the implications of doing so would depend on decisions taken by whoever is responsible for scheduling.

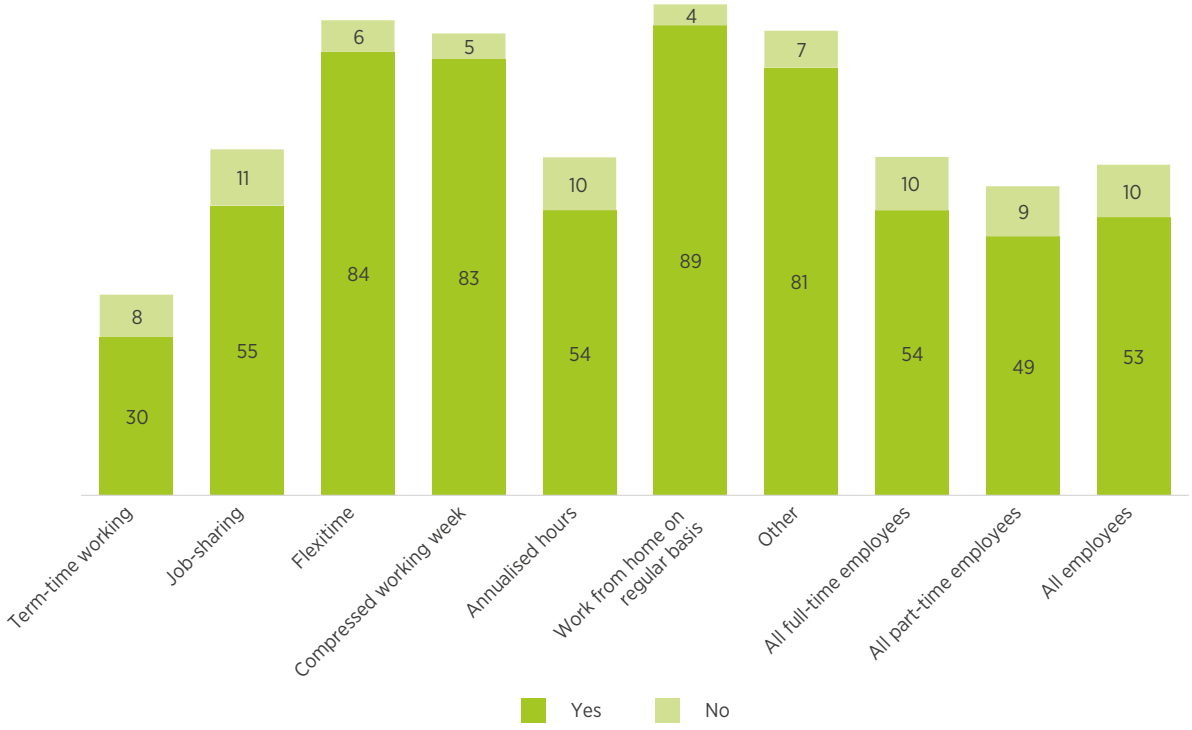
This example shows how the same need for flexible working can result in a number of different arrangements of differing formality.

Finally, would it make a difference if, instead of John, it was Jane looking to leave work early?

Informal arrangements

In 2012–13, 53% of employees said they used an informal working arrangement with a further 10% saying they used it sometimes (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Informal working arrangements, 2012/13 (%)
(GB, % of employees)



Source: Understanding Society, Wave 4

Employees were more likely to have an informal arrangement when they also made use of some of the 'conventional' working arrangements, such as flexitime, a compressed working week or working from home. It is not possible to tell what the content of these informal arrangements were. In some cases, they may have supplemented or added detail to these formal arrangements.[49] But in other cases, they may have been an alternative to another formal arrangement.

In 2014, organisations making up 39% of employment agreed that 'changes to working arrangements are agreed informally with the line manager'. Small firms prefer informal arrangements, perhaps initially on an experimental basis (Jordan et al 2014).

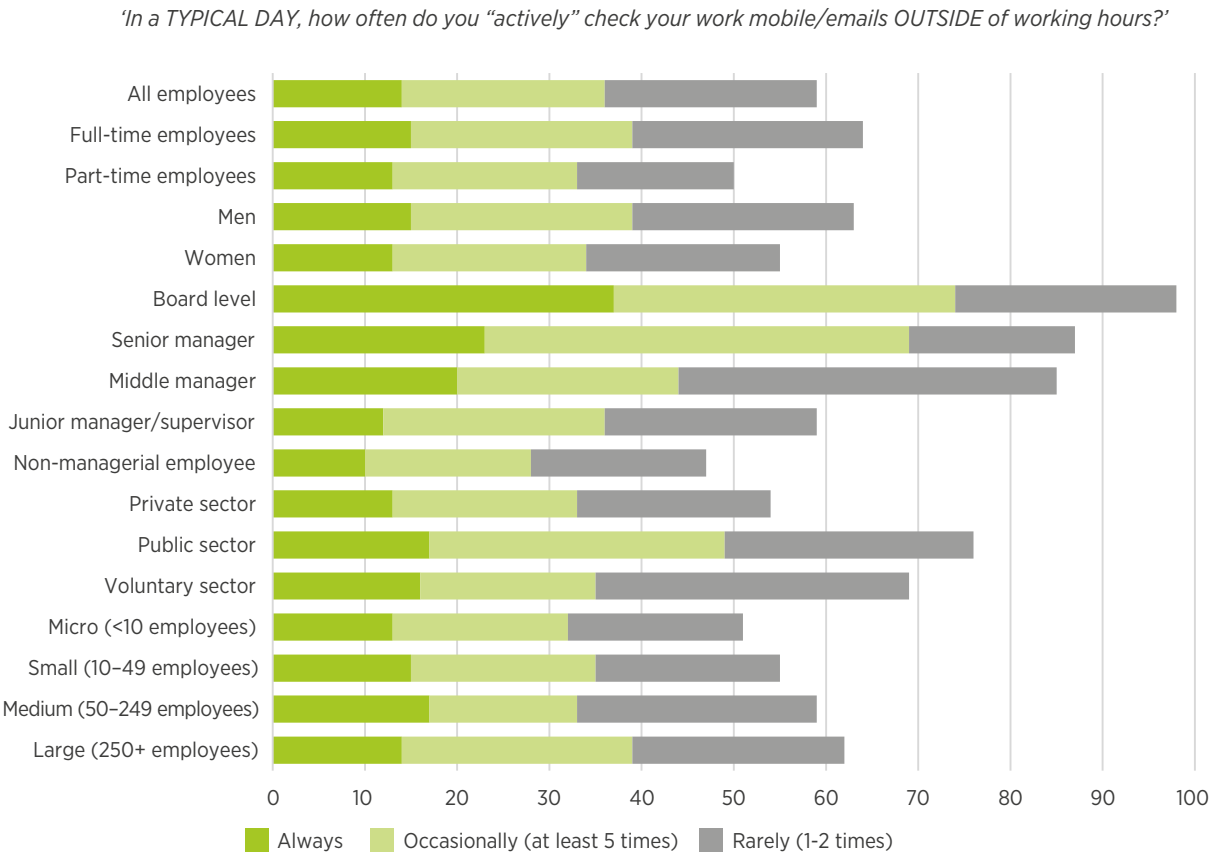
Employees can in these circumstances make their own individual arrangements (Rousseau et al 2016). Some employees may have anticipated a more favourable outcome (for them) from the informal route. In a 2014 CIPD survey of employees, 51% agreed that 'my line manager flexes the organisational rules for me within reason'.[51]

Remote access

The increase in occasional working from home or on the move has been allowed by technological developments that, for many employees, break or weaken the links between work and workplace and, in many cases, even when the work has to, or can, be done.

In 2017, 37% of employees said they always checked their work mobile or email whenever they received a message outside working hours or checked them five times or more a day (Figure 37).

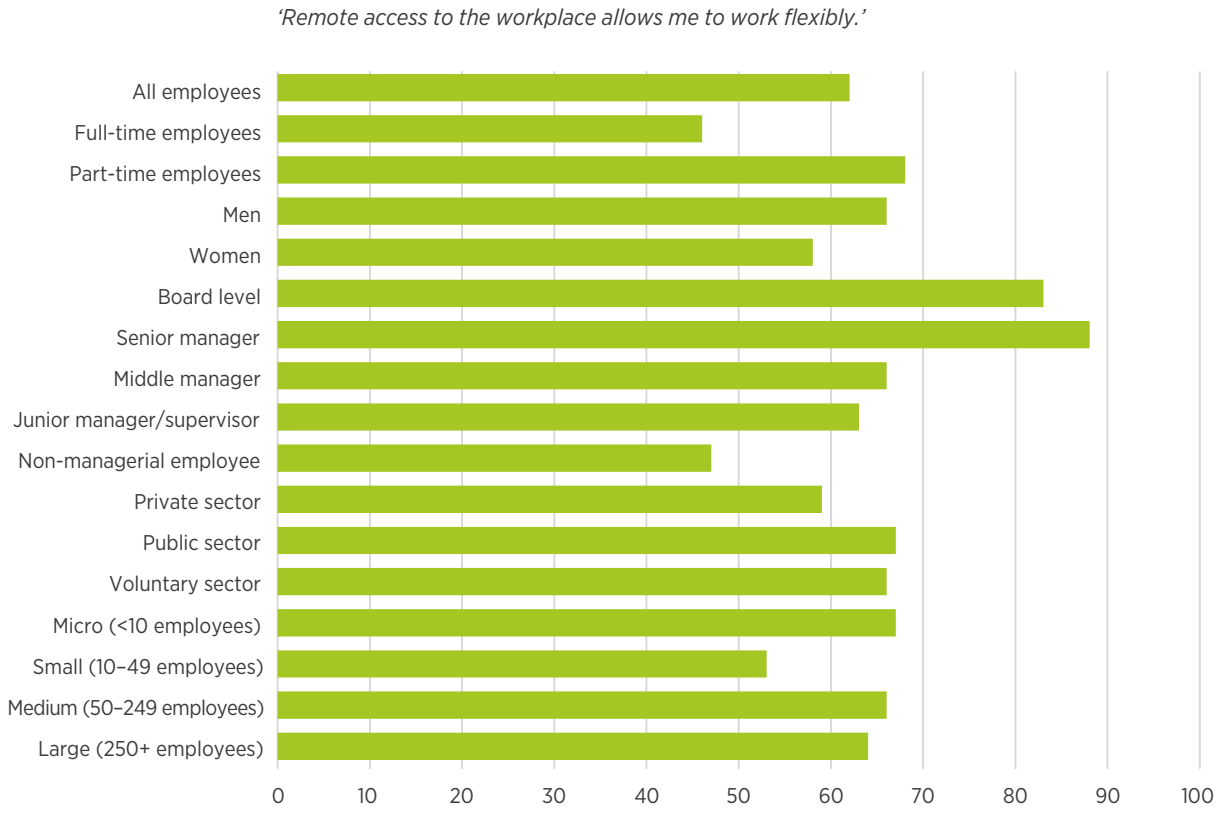
Figure 37: Extent of checking work devices during non-work time, 2017 (%)
(UK, % of employees, excluding owners/proprietors)



Never, don't know and not applicable responses not reported.
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* spring 2017

The majority of those employees using remote access the most thought that the technology helped them work more flexibly (Figure 38). This opinion was most widely held by those in senior positions (who were also the employees most likely to be using the technology).

Figure 38: Remote access and flexible working, 2017 (%)
(UK, % of employees, excluding owners/proprietors, who always check their work mobile/email when they receive a message outside working hours or do so occasionally (five times or more a day))



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* spring 2017

It is therefore possible that many employees think they are working more flexibly than they used to – and in ways benefiting both the employer and themselves – without them needing either to access a flexible working arrangement (if offered) or to request one.

6 Potential implications

Implications for the economy

Without flexible working, some people would drop out of the labour force and some would have to change jobs (with a possible loss of hours or earnings). With flexible working, these people are able to stay in work and maintain their hours or earnings.[52]

If flexible working aids employee retention and prevents occupational downgrading, this should increase the average human capital of those workers affected and thus increase their productivity. One study estimated the economic value to be gained in the UK by professional women realising their potential after a career break – in terms of less occupational downgrading and working more hours – at £1.7 billion (PwC 2016).

But does the act of working flexibly have any impact on average productivity? The aspect most frequently studied is the impact of different arrangements for home- or remote access working, not least because the impact of corporate decisions to restrict home-based working, such as that of Yahoo, has attracted attention (Timsal and Awais 2016). Although such decisions are rarely based on carefully designed experimental evidence, there is some evidence that interactions between workers affect their productivity (Battiston et al 2017, Cornellison 2016). The best available evidence is based on an experiment among call centre workers in China, which found that those who worked from home tended to work harder and more effectively (Bloom et al 2013). Similarly, a study of homeworking among Acas staff concluded that *'performance is slightly higher for partial homeworkers and mobile workers'* (Beauregard et al 2013). But three problems remain in trying to assess the evidence. Most importantly, workers do not pick jobs (or job arrangements or job locations) at random. They tend to fall into arrangements that suit them and those are often the ones that make them more productive.[53] Second, studies look at the impact on performance of current duties. It is much harder to test rigorously for the impact on employee creativity or innovation. Third, how these workers are managed is very important: a study of firms in four countries – France, Germany, USA and UK – found no association between various work–life balance practices and productivity once management quality was taken into account (Bloom et al 2011). And while most employees *think* technology makes them more productive, a much lower proportion thought technology had actually increased their productivity in the last three years (Work Foundation 2018).

As a result, the issue is likely to continue being the subject of debate and conjecture, but it is unlikely that the UK's productivity woes can be laid at the door of too much – or too little – flexible working.

Implications for individuals

Flexible working can involve a loss of earnings, both if it involves a reduction in paid working time and through the possible impact on career prospects. In the case of working part-time hours, this effect can persist even if individuals eventually seek a return to full-time hours (Connolly and Gregory 2007, CIPD/John Lewis 2014). A particular problem is the concentration of part-time jobs and jobs with some other flexible working patterns in low-paid jobs and industries. Equally, a lower proportion of those in more senior roles work flexibly (see Box 4).

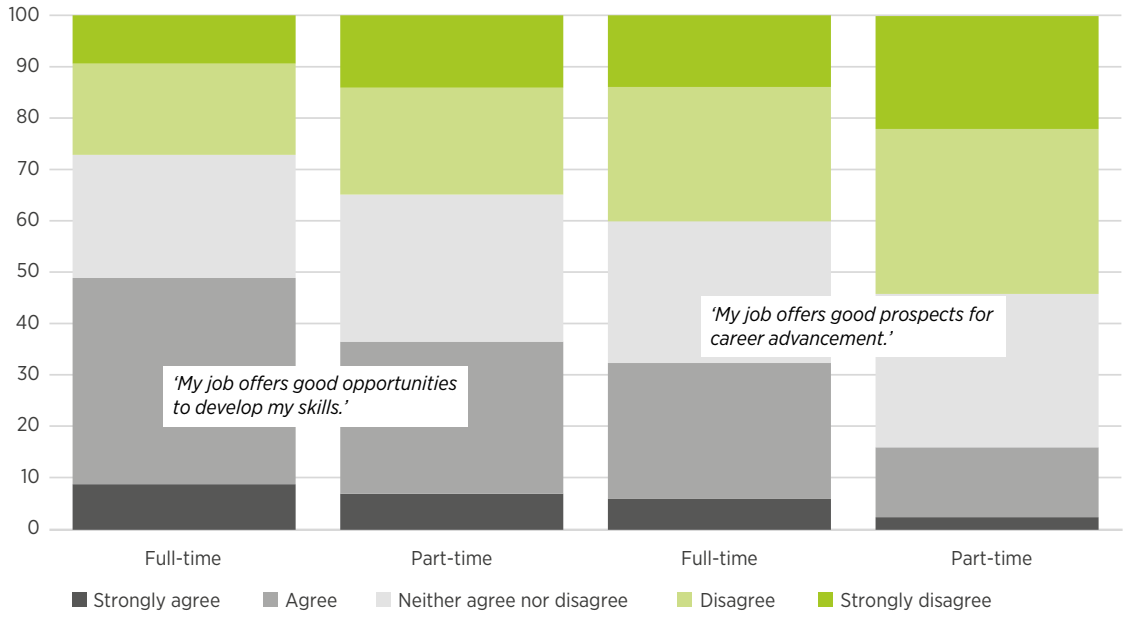
Box 4: What do part-time power lists tell us about flexible working at a senior level?

The TimeWise Power Part-Time List (rechristened the Power 50 in 2017) aims to show that it is possible to work part-time hours and hold a senior position by highlighting the experience of people already doing so. While the list does not aim to be representative in any statistical sense, entries being based on nominations by the individual and/or their employer, a comparison of the first list, for 2012, and the latest list, for 2017–18, offers insight into what's changed – and hasn't changed – about working part-time (and sometimes flexibly) at a senior level:

- More part-time jobs are being explicitly combined with other forms of flexible working. As well as jobs being less than full-time, more of the jobs highlighted in 2017 also included arrangements to accommodate, or manage, individual circumstances and work requirements. For example, the 2017 list contained six job-shares, whereas the 2012 list contained none.
- While the majority of senior business people working part-time identified by the list are still women, the proportion of men in senior positions working part-time has increased from less than 10% in 2012 to 16% in 2018.
- Half of the part-time roles featured in the list are for less than four days a week, suggesting that some senior business people in part-time roles are not simply compressing existing hours slightly but have engineered fundamental change to their working practices.

Part-time employees were less likely to think their job made use of their skills and experience or helped them to develop their career (Figure 39).[54] And whereas 26% of full-time employees thought they were overqualified in their current job, the proportion was 45% for part-time employees; similarly, 35% of full-time employees and 45% of part-time employees thought they had the skills to cope with more demanding duties.[55]

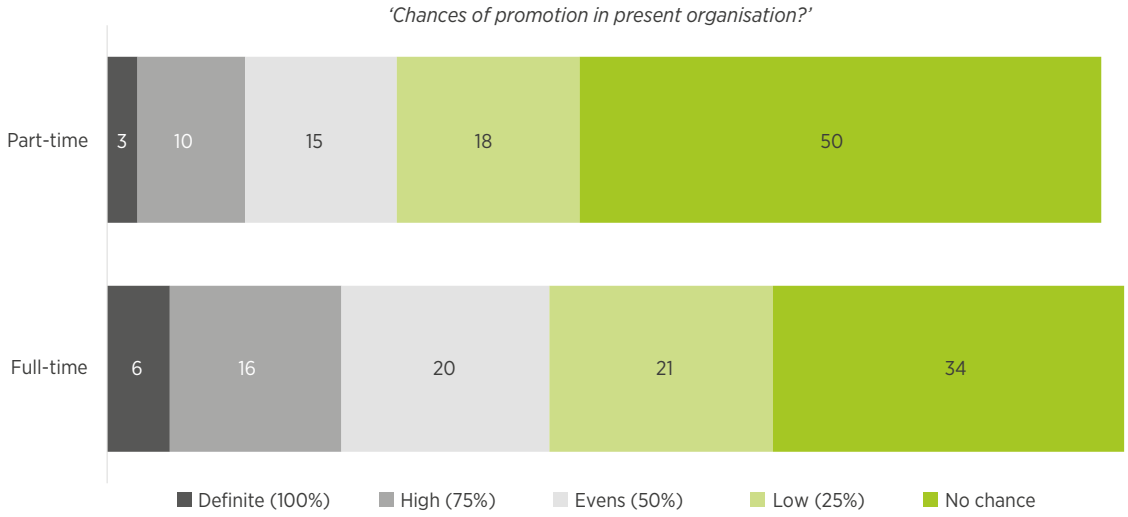
Figure 39: Skill and career development for full- and part-time employees, 2018 (%)
(UK, % of employees)



Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

This is consistent with 2012 data showing that part-time employees were also less optimistic about their promotion prospects (Figure 40). This pessimism reflected experience: just 19% of part-time employees said they had been promoted in the previous five years, compared with 38% of full-time employees. Only 40% of part-time employees said they even *aimed* to get promoted, compared with 54% of full-time employees.[56]

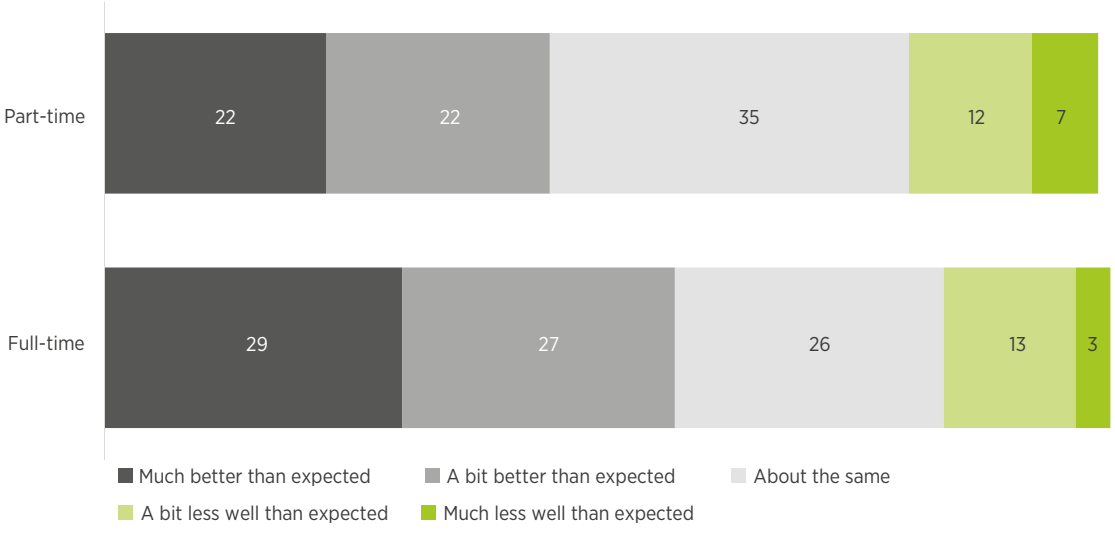
Figure 40: Perceived promotion chances for full- and part-time employees, 2012 (%)
(GB, % of employees)



Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

Part-time employees were perhaps as a result less likely to say their working life had exceeded their expectations (Figure 41).

Figure 41: How full-time and part-time employees have done so far in their working life compared with expectations, 2012 (%)
(GB, % of employees)

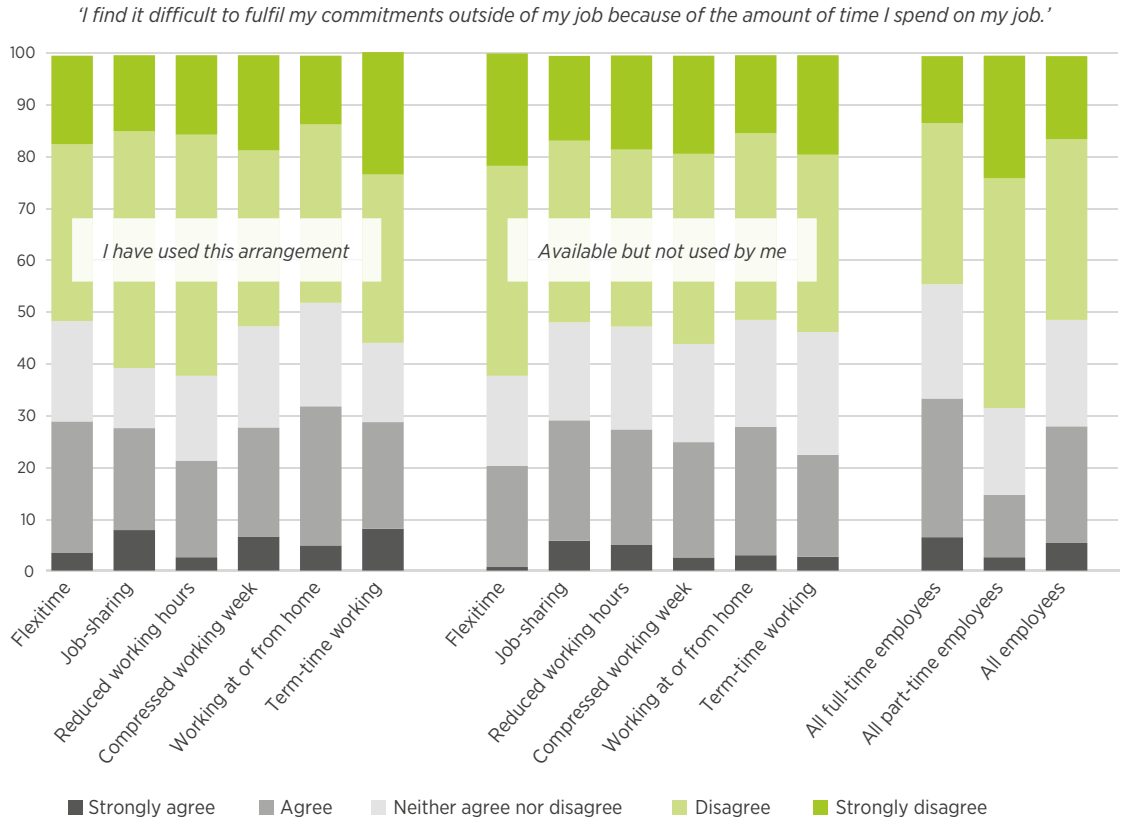


Source: *Skills and Employment Survey* 2012

Part-time working may be an important factor contributing to the gender pay gap, because women, of course, are more likely to work part-time (Coste Dias et al 2018). However, part-time employment can damage the future employment prospects of men at least as much as it does those of women (Pedulla 2016).

The advantage for employees of working part-time hours, though, as with other forms of flexible working, is that they think they are less likely to experience work–life conflict (Figure 42).

Figure 42: Extent of work–life conflict, by flexible working, 2018 (%)
(UK, employees with at least 12 months' tenure)



Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

These spillovers can spiral out of control (Sanz-Vergel et al 2015). They are also associated with poor health outcomes (Burgard and Lin 2013).

Working part-time hours, however, seems not to have improved working parents' perceptions of their relationship with their children. In 2015, 69% of part-time employees in the UK who were parents disagreed, or strongly disagreed, that 'I get on better with my children because I have a job' (the comparable percentage for full-time employees was 71%).[57]

Part-time employees and users of other flexible working arrangements that involve loss of time and money, such as job-sharing and reduced working hours, report lower levels of excessive workload and pressure (Table 6). In contrast, employees who had worked at or from home were more likely to feel workload pressure than full-time employees as a whole. Options that essentially re-order the same amount of working time, such as flexitime, don't seem to have much of an effect on work pressures.

Table 6: Measures of excess workload and pressure, by use of flexible working, 2018 (%)
(UK, employees with at least 12 months' tenure)

	'In a normal week, is the workload in your job...?' (% far too much/ too much)	*'I usually have enough time to get my work done within my allocated hours.'* (% disagree/ strongly disagree)	*'How often, if at all, does your manager or employer expect you to work outside your contractual working hours?'* (% always/ often)	*'At my work I feel under excessive pressure.'* (% always/ often)
I have used the arrangement:				
Flexitime	*33*	*24*	*22*	*23*
Job-sharing	*25*	*18*	*28*	*24*
Reduced working hours	*24*	*18*	*19*	*21*
Compressed working week	*24*	*26*	*23*	*26*
Working at or from home	*37*	*31*	*28*	*24*
Term-time working	*32*	*30*	*35*	*26*
All part-time employees	19	18	18	15
All full-time employees	41	28	29	28
All employees	34	25	26	24

Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

The higher proportion of full-time employees who say their workload is too heavy and they feel excessive pressure could be read superficially as evidence of a backlash from employees not allowed to work flexibly. This is something that employers in the UK have been worried about (Jordan et al 2014). However, the employees working full-time without flexible working aren't necessarily working alongside colleagues with flexible working; they are more likely to be working where there is a shortage of any flexible working options (except, perhaps, part-time work), and where management, culture and the nature of work combine in ways that create a pressurised environment for all workers.

According to employees, the benefits of flexible working come through a better work–life balance, the reduction in stress and pressure, and that it helps them stay in a job or with an employer (CIPD 2016).

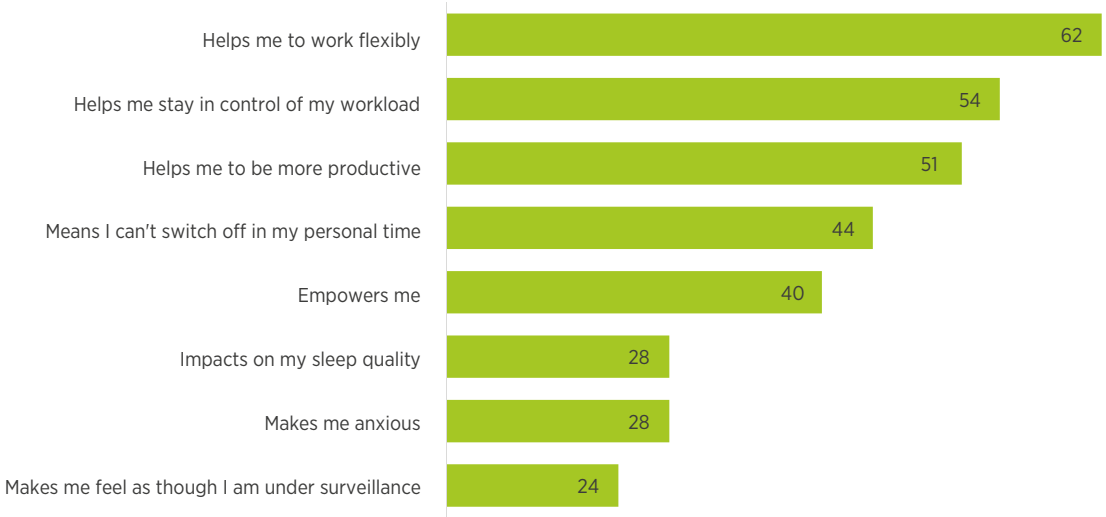
An American study found that 'teleworkers' spent fewer hours on work-related activities than 'commuters' and that they were able to spend more of their time during the main working hours on non-work activities (Gimenez-Nadal et al 2018).[58]

Flexitime has enabled couples to co-ordinate their working hours to spend more time as a couple with their family (Bryan and Sevilla 2017). Certain forms of flexible working are associated with employees spending longer on informal care for the elderly or disabled (Bryan 2012).[59]

Most employees prefer boundaries between work and the rest of their life: a CIPD survey of employees found that 87% of employees would prefer a clear boundary between work and home to taking work home.[60] So remote access creates challenges for those affected by it.

Among those employees who took advantage of remote access the most, it was seen to bring positive and negative effects (Figure 43). But even those who saw the upside of remote access working often saw a downside too, especially the risk of being unable to switch off.[61]

Figure 43: Advantages and disadvantages of remote access working, 2017 (%)
(UK, % of employees, excluding owner/proprietors, who strongly agree/agree with these statements and who check their work mobile/emails always or occasionally)



Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* spring 2017

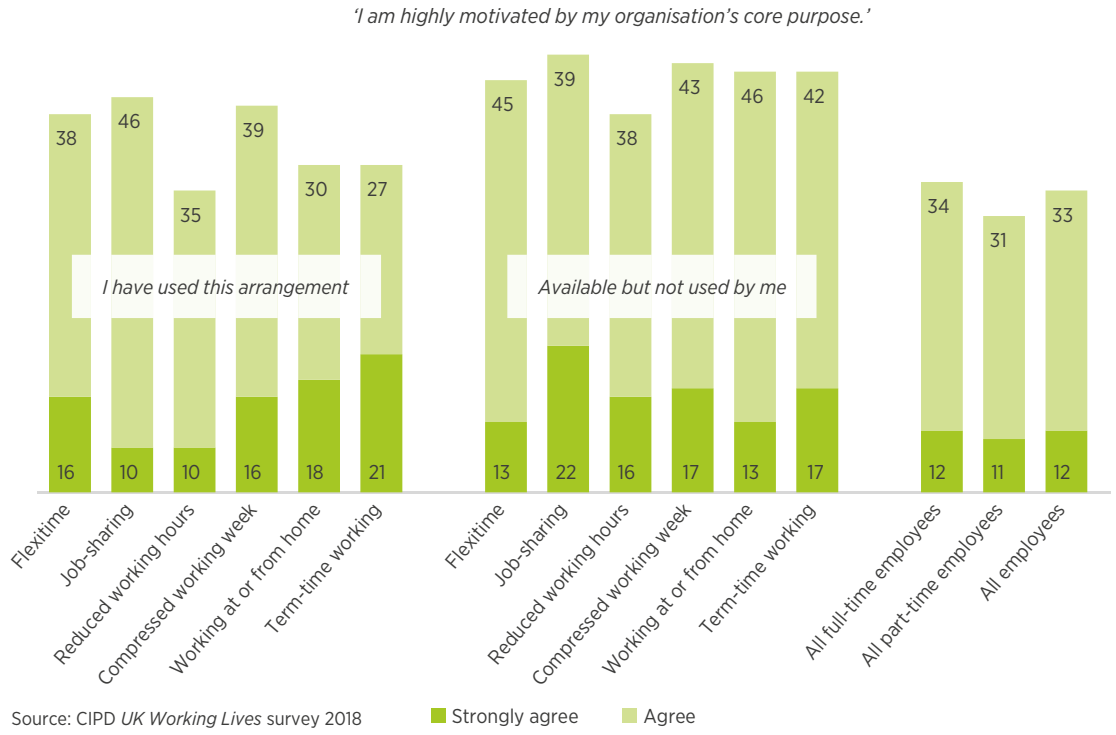
Some employees react by attempting to recreate barriers through the ways that they use technology and manage their work and personal lives. But arguably technology isn't the villain; it just makes it easier to extend work into non-working time – something that might have happened anyway (Mullan and Wajcman 2017). Indeed, *'voluntary ICT use [of work-related ICT during non-work time] is not inherently "good" or "bad", but a complex matter, as it is highly interwoven with the organizational context, person characteristics and work–life management'* (Schlachter et al 2017).

Implications for employers

Employers who've introduced flexible working think it is beneficial (CIPD 2012, BIS 2014). For example, of those workplaces with five or more employees that made at least one flexible working practice available in 2013, 56% thought the overall effect of flexible working was positive and 9% thought the overall effect was negative (BIS 2014). The more flexible working practices available, the more likely a positive assessment. However, it is impossible to tell from these one-off surveys which came first, the positive attitude or the practices.

The most commonly mentioned benefit of flexible working by employers was its positive effect on employee motivation (BIS 2014). And employees with access to flexible working arrangements are indeed more likely to show a high degree of commitment to their employer (Figure 44).

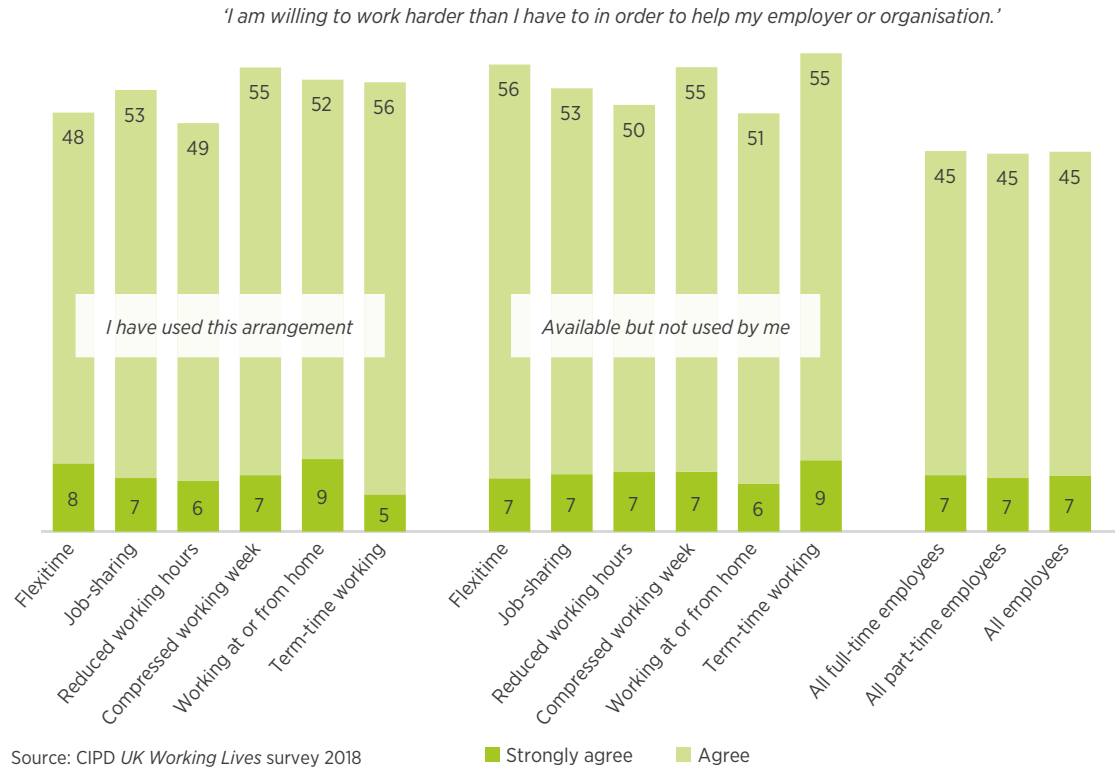
Figure 44: Organisational commitment, by access to flexible working arrangement, 2018 (%)
(UK, employees with at least 12 months' tenure)



Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

This is likely to lead to a greater willingness to release discretionary effort, also known as 'going the extra mile' (Figure 45).[62]

Figure 45: Willingness to release discretionary effort, by access to flexible working arrangement, 2018 (%)
(UK, employees with at least 12 months' tenure)



Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018

Systematic reviews of the evidence, however, reach more equivocal conclusions, either finding no evidence to support a business case or concluding that some aspects of it are more strongly supported than others (Beauregard and Henry 2009, de Menezes and Kelliher 2011, Smeaton et al 2014, CEA 2014, Kato and Kodama 2017). This is partly because of weaknesses in the evidence, such as imprecision in what is being measured and a lack of the before-and-after studies and experimental trials required to test whether the effects do in fact happen and whether flexible working is the cause. But, in addition, many of these studies find that the pathways through which flexible working can affect business outcomes (or not) are more subtle and complicated than initially supposed. And the effect of flexible working on a business depends on many other factors, such as the organisation's culture, and the skills and attitudes of its managers (Cahusac and Kanji 2013).

Recruitment and selection (of individuals for jobs, promotions and the like) is one of the few points when employers can influence the composition and flexibility of their workforce. However, there is a danger that employers seek to replace 'like with like', for example, deciding that a job can only be done on a full-time basis because it has always been done by a full-time employee (Grant et al 2005). Employers of all sizes can therefore benefit from assistance with designing, describing and advertising jobs as well as help in promoting flexible working to current employees (DWP 2017b).

It is important that managers and employees have similar perceptions of who is entitled to flexible working (Stavrou and Ierodiakonou 2015). Perceptions of the fairness with which options are implemented affect employees' reactions to them. This includes how information about flexible working options is made available to employees as well as decisions about who gets them and how they are managed (Beauregard 2014, Clarke and Holdsworth 2017).

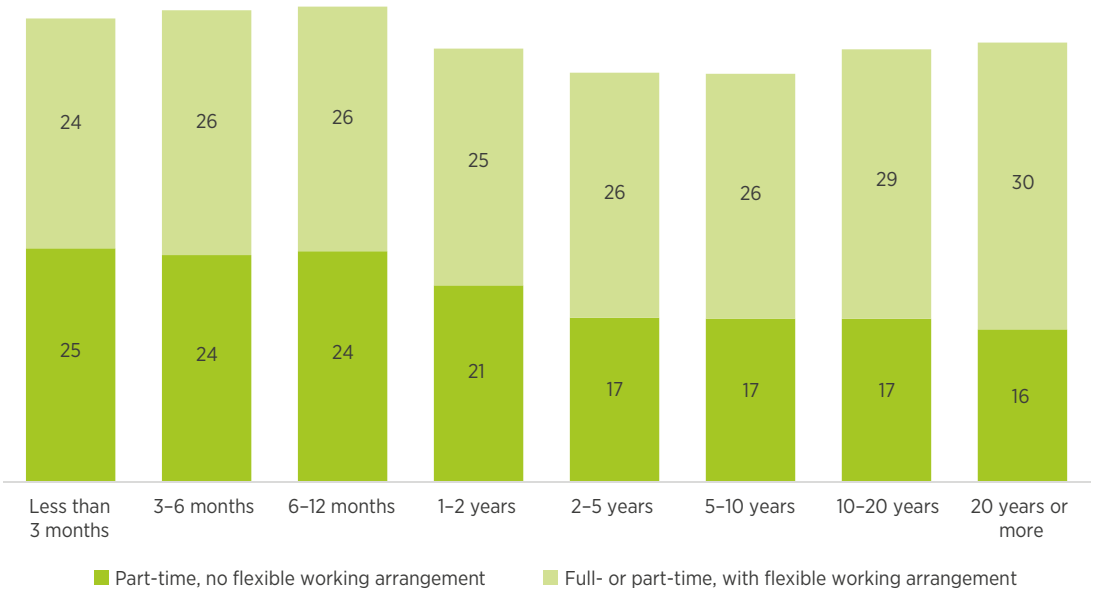
Implications for government policy

The state continues to have considerable influence as an employer. Public sector workplaces can be a testbed for different working arrangements and their experience can help other employers appreciate the advantages and disadvantages.

The 2014 extension of the right to request may not have been the game changer expected, but it may still be useful as a backstop, there to raise the issue with reluctant employers (or managers).

However, arguments for further extensions of the right to request may generate resistance from employers. As the right now applies to all employees with the requisite length of service, discussion has focused on the 26-week qualification period, and the potential impact of reducing (or eliminating) it. Employers think that a 'grace period' is necessary to establish whether someone is trustworthy, reliable or committed enough to the goals of the organisation. However, there is no straightforward relation between length of service and the likelihood of an employee having a flexible working arrangement as measured by the LFS (Figure 46). In particular, employees with more than six months' service did not appear much more likely to have a flexible working arrangement than employees who hadn't reached this threshold.[63]

Figure 46: Employees with flexible working arrangements, by length of service, 2017 (%)
(UK, not seasonally adjusted, % of employees)



Source: *Labour Force Survey,* April–June 2017

It is questionable if the roll-out of additional hours of free childcare will increase the demand for flexible working. It may allow some of those who currently care for young children to spend more hours in paid work, but it is unlikely to persuade many people back into work (sooner) (DfE 2017, Brewer et al 2016).

The availability of flexible working and other aspects of support for working parents may affect the impact of unrelated policy changes, such as the implementation of Universal Credit (DWP 2017a).

It is argued that the long-term costs to employers of flexible working legislation are borne by employees through lower employment rates and/or lower earnings – especially of those who stand to benefit the most, such as working mothers (Shackleton 2017). Most employers, before the last extension, thought the benefits of the legislation outweighed its costs, although few thought the right to request was cost-free. Nevertheless, it does beg the question of what costs there are to pass on in any case.

The CIPD's *Manifesto for Work*, released for the 2017 general election, concluded that *'government action is needed to catalyse employer action, particularly in promoting more innovative working approaches which can cater for specific individual circumstances'* (CIPD 2017a). This could include demonstration projects to spread examples of how to maximise the benefits of flexible working and projects designed to increase management confidence and capability, especially in smaller firms.

What about the future?

The latest economic forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility anticipates the labour market remaining tight, with unemployment set to remain below 5% until at least 2022 (OBR 2018). This incorporates some expected reduction in net in-migration following the UK's exit from the European Union. If this comes to pass, will employee-focused forms of flexible working become more important to employers wanting to attract and retain people?

On the basis of population projections and an extrapolation of recent employment trends, the share of total employment accounted for by those aged over 50 is set to increase from 29% in 2012 to 35% in 2022 and 36% by 2032, by which time a tenth of the workforce could be aged over 65 (CIPD 2014a). This is likely to increase the (relative) demand for flexible working patterns suited to the needs of older age groups, which may be different from that of younger people, such as the parents of young children.

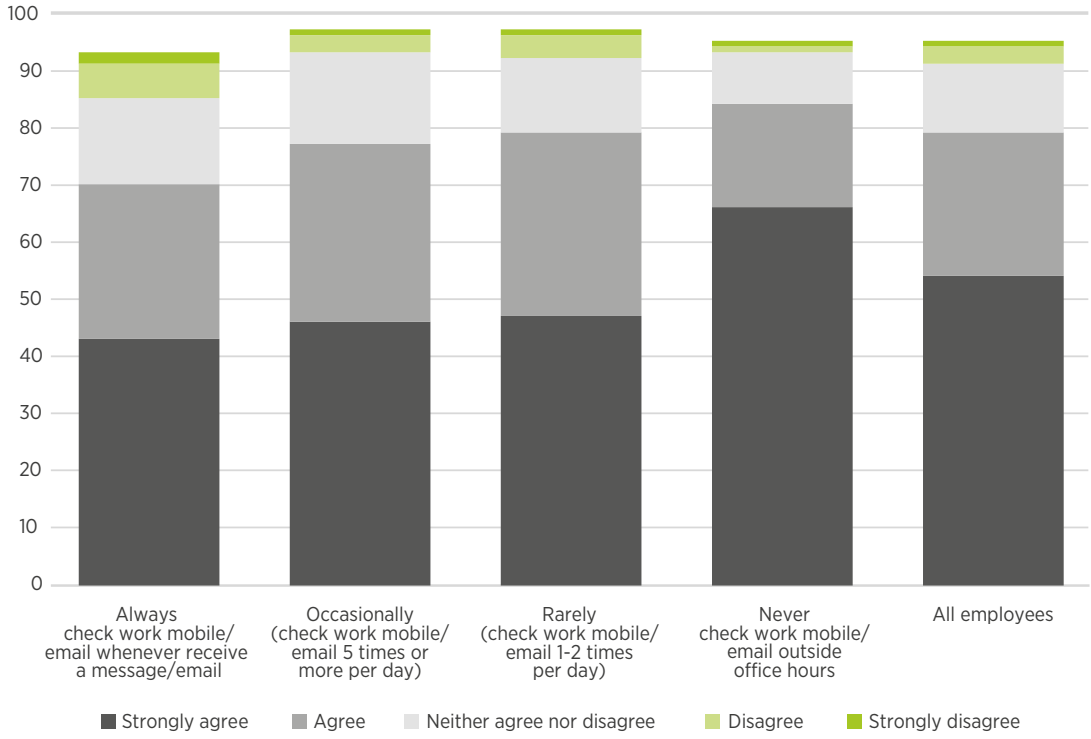
Work in the so-called 'gig economy' appears to offer individuals much greater freedom over when to schedule work. However, it still accounts for a small proportion of employment in the UK, probably less than 5% (CIPD 2017b, Lepanjuuri et al 2018). Furthermore, the scheduling freedom it offers can in practice be limited, especially if the need to make a living requires frequent availability. And the absence of traditional work pressures and routines, such as the 9-to-5 or the workplace, can itself be a problem for some individuals (Lehdonvirta 2018).

Mobile working is expected to reach 70% by 2020 (Work Foundation 2016). The demand for more long-standing flexible working arrangements may therefore wane but remote access and always-on working could become the new arena for debate (and, perhaps, conflict).

Most employees want boundaries between paid employment and other aspects of their lives. But it is unclear how such boundaries are set and maintained and what are, and should be, the respective responsibilities of employer and employee. Employee support for some externally imposed limits seems strong with over half of employees strongly agreeing there should be a 'right to disconnect' (Figure 47).[64]

Figure 47: Employee support for 'right to disconnect', by frequency of checking work mobile/email outside office hours, 2017 (%)

(UK, % of employees, excluding owner/proprietors)



Totals do not add to 100% because 'don't know' responses are not reported.
Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* spring 2017

However, the finding that support for such a right seems strongest among those who say they never check their work-related messages outside working hours – and so would appear to have the least need for a 'right to disconnect' as they never 'connect' in the first place – hints at the ambiguities involved and the potential difficulties if either employers or the state try to set hard-and-fast rules.

7 References

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8 Endnotes

1 www.gov.uk/flexible-working

2 www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/factsheet

3 It is not clear if the author is referring to the percentage of people in work having a part-time job or the percentage of the entire population (and, if so, whether all adults or those of working age) with a part-time job.

4 There is no legal definition of part-time work. The Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 refer to part-time hours being any hours worked less than usual hours. The ONS defines part-time work as usual hours of 30 or fewer each week but with exceptions for classroom teachers.

5 Very similar results were found for workplaces with ten or more employees in the 1998, 2004 and 2011 surveys.

[6] www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/labourforcesurveyuserguidance#2017-update

[7] In 2010 'on-call working' was added to the list of working arrangements.

[8] The question used to calculate the above estimates is as follows: '[In your main job] do you work mainly... 1 in your own home, 2 in the same grounds or buildings as your home, 3 in different places using home as a base, 4 or somewhere quite separate from home?' Those providing a response in the categories 1 to 3 are classified as a homeworker.

[9] The trend shown in Figure 5 appears similar to that for other measures of remote working (Felstead and Henseke 2017, Figure 1).

[10] This is an oversimplification. Certain working arrangements (such as zero-hours contracts) may be presented to (potential) employees on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, there being no non-take-up option apart from looking for another job offer. Other forms of arrangement may be made available (or more available) to some groups (of employees), but not to others.

[11] Further details of the survey are given in CIPD (2014b). The data are nationally representative but employment-weighted, so percentages refer to the percentage of employment in organisations with one or more employees.

[12] The flexible working questions in the *UK Working Lives* survey 2018 were designed to produce comparable data with WERS 2011. In this they were partially successful. The WERS self-completion questions are identical to the (online) questions asked in the *UK Working Lives* survey 2018 (details of the latter can be found in CIPD (2018b)). However, the *UK Working Lives* survey 2018 only collected data from employers on the number of employees in their organisation, not the number of employees in the workplace. Hence the *UK Working Lives* survey data in Table 2 will include an unknown number of employees whose workplace has fewer than five employees. In addition, the *UK Working Lives* survey 2018 had far higher proportions of employees choosing 'not applicable' responses.

[13] The LFS homeworking question implies the employee spends all or most of their time working at, or from, home ('mainly'). The WERS/UK Working Lives survey question implies a less frequent presence at home (asking employees if they had used the arrangement in the previous 12 months).

[14] WERS 2011 collected data for Great Britain only and excluded establishments in agriculture and mining and quarrying, so the *UK Working Lives* survey analysis also excluded these employees. The flexible working questions in both surveys asked employees if they had used the practice in the last 12 months. To ensure that the flexible working arrangement was used in their current job, employees with less than 12 months' service were therefore excluded from the analysis.

[15] In 2014, 29% of employees worked in organisations where managers said that flexible working options were open to all but where they also said that flexible working options were considered upon receiving a flexible working request (source: CIPD 2014b). Since the flexible working request process is personal and private, these employers may have made flexible working available without it being recognised as such by other employees.

[16] The survey only collected data on the number of dependent children under 18 living in the same household as the employee, so parental responsibility cannot be assumed.

[17] The high rate of term-time working reported in the public sector and in public administration, education and health may include some employees only contracted to work when schools, colleges and so on are open (such as catering staff) in addition to employees whose contracts allow them not to work during school holidays.

[18] Source: Labour Force Survey, April–June 2017.

[19] The categories of management responsibility are explained fully in CIPD (2014c), Box 2.

[20] By 2017, virtually all employers with 250 or more employees (99%) made some type of flexible work available to at least some of their employees (Murray et al 2017).

[21] The proportion of employees agreeing (or strongly agreeing) with the statement 'Considering my responsibilities and achievements in my job, I feel I get paid appropriately' was 43% among full-time employees and 45% among part-time employees (source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018).

[22] The strengths and weaknesses of different sources of official data on earnings are discussed at www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/methodologies/aguidetosourcesofdataonearningsandincome

[23] Booth and van Ours (2008) found that women employed part-time had higher job satisfaction, whereas this did not apply for men. Bridges and Owens (2017) suggest that the part-time premium on job satisfaction for women is reduced for younger women, better educated women and women who were previously working full-time.

[24] In fact, job satisfaction was slightly higher among those who had not used the arrangement but said it was available than among those who had used the arrangement! This could reflect the experience of using these arrangements not quite living up to expectations – them proving not to be a panacea. Alternatively, this could be the result of employee selection, with those who enjoy their jobs most highly choosing not to exercise the option of flexible working (or feeling pressure most strongly not to use these arrangements). Of course, it could also be because of an unrelated confounding factor.

[25] Definitions of part-time work vary between countries. The OECD's 'common definition' uses a threshold of 30 hours per week (van Bastelar et al 1997).

[26] The Netherlands has been described as having a 'one-and-a-half earner' model (Visser 2002).

[27] The correlation coefficient in 2016 across these countries between the percentage of employment working part-time and the female employment rate was 0.38.

[28] Many of these countries were in recession in 2010. In some countries, time banking or working time accounts were used to help manage what would otherwise have been excess labour supply (Kümmerling and Lehndorff 2014). The 'reconciling work and family life' and 'work organisation and working time arrangements' ad hoc modules of the LFS are being rerun in 2018 and 2019 respectively (UNECE 2015).

[29] When asked to choose a reason for not using their employers' practices, most respondents said they did this 'for other reasons'. Relatively few respondents chose to identify concerns about the effect on their salary or (even less frequently) concern about the effect on their career.

[30] To make a comparison, on days they worked, 22% of Americans spent some of their time working from home in 2016 – up from 19% in 2003 (BLS 2017).

[31] For example, 81% of UK employees who did not mention their employer as having flexible working described themselves as fairly or very satisfied with their work–life balance; the corresponding figure for employees who said their employer had flexible working, and they had used or intended to use it, was 96%.

[32] The questions are reproduced verbatim in Figure 33. Presumably 'family' can be shorthand for any aspect of life outside the workplace.

[33] The 2015 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) asked similar questions on work–family time conflicts to people in a broader range of countries. Among people in employment, both work–family conflicts and family–work conflicts were most commonly experienced in India.

[34] There is no relation, or a weak negative relation, between flexible working practices and fear of job loss (source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018). In other words, employees who thought it 'very likely' or 'likely' they would lose their job were less likely to use flexible working arrangements. However, where the relationship existed, it was primarily due to employees fearful of losing their job being less likely to say flexible working arrangements were available, which suggests the direction of causality may work the other way: adverse economic conditions or poor firm performance – reflected in fear of job loss – mean that firms cannot afford to make flexible working options available.

[35] The median number of flexible working arrangements offered by private sector employers was two, whereas it was six for public sector employers.

[36] A comparison of the LFS for 2011 and 2017 showed that the percentage of employees with a flexible working arrangement in the public sector hardly changed (60% in 2011, 59% in 2017). The percentage for employees in the private sector increased slightly (38% in 2011, 40% in 2017). However, the percentage of employees working in the public sector had fallen by a tenth (30% in 2011, 27% in 2017). Note these estimates of public sector employment, derived from the LFS, differ considerably from ONS estimates of public and private sector employment.

[37] This view is to some extent supported by working parents: 61% of them thought they were responsible for a good work–life balance (the alternatives being their employer or the Government) (Working Families 2018). But this may simply be the result of working parents being reluctant to concede agency. It does not imply that parents think the alternative actors have no responsibility to shape the conditions or options available to working parents.

[38] Managers who thought the recession had adversely affected their workplace 'a great deal' were most likely to take this view, whereas managers who thought the recession had no effect on their workplace were least likely to take this view.

[39] It is unclear how much weight should be attached to these results. Details provided of the survey methodology and fieldwork outcomes are sketchy.

[40] Source: CIPD *Employee Outlook* (CIPD 2016).

[41] For example, guilt in working mothers or a feeling of inadequacy in stay-at-home fathers.

[42] The correlation coefficient across these countries (excluding Ukraine and Cyprus) between the percentage of the adult population expressing this view and the female employment rate in 2010 was –0.64.

[43] Source: Understanding Society Wave 4.

[44] Source: Workplace Employment Relations Survey 2011.

[45] Interestingly, the proportion was higher for parents of dependent children than it was for non-parents. However, employees who had other caring responsibilities (such as for ill or disabled or older people) did not agree with this statement more often than employees without these caring responsibilities. This is consistent with evidence from a qualitative study of employers, which found that managers' attitudes towards flexible working did depend on the reason an employee had for requesting it and whether it was in some sense 'legitimate' (Jordan et al 2014). This is despite the legislation not requiring any justification and being available to all eligible employees (though this study took place before the change in the law). It could be the case that employees who were parents were given – or thought they were given – a more sympathetic hearing than employees with less visible needs.

[46] Even before these regulations came into force, the concentration of part-time employment amongst women left employers open to challenge under sex discrimination legislation.

[47] It is uncertain whether agreement with this statement implies flexible working is considered only when a request is made and whether a 'request' necessarily is one that complies with the law.

[48] The median willingness to pay was zero, whereas the mean willingness to pay was positive.

[49] For example, all the employees in an office may be covered by an identical flexitime policy. However, each employee may in addition have reached an informal understanding with their manager (and, perhaps, co-workers) on their usual starting and finishing times in order to manage continuity or availability of service.

[50] Source: CIPD survey of employers (CIPD 2014b).

[51] Source: CIPD survey of employees (CIPD 2014b).

[52] The economic cost of lower participation and lower future earnings is reduced most by flexitime and, to a lesser extent, homeworking (Chung and van der Horst 2017).

[53] One reason why the China study is quoted so frequently is that volunteers for homeworking – at least initially – were assigned to office- or home-based work at random (Bloom et al 2013).

[54] The irony is that, according to the April–June 2017 LFS, employees with flexible working arrangements working full-time or part-time were *more* likely to have received job-related training during the preceding three months than were employees without flexible working arrangements. This, though, is due to the role of the public sector, whose employees were both more likely to work flexibly and more likely to have received training recently.

[55] Source: CIPD *UK Working Lives* survey 2018.

[56] This does not reflect lower levels of commitment to work. Both the Skills and Employment Survey 2012 and the *UK Working Lives* survey 2018 showed that employees working part-time hours were just as likely, or more likely, to agree that work was more than just a means of earning money or that they would continue working even if they did not need the money.

[57] Source: European Working Conditions Survey 2015. Of course, those employees who chose part-time hours may have held more negative views about the consequences for parent–child relationships of parents working *at all* than those parents who chose full-time hours.

[58] The study did not measure telework – or working at or from home – directly. 'Teleworkers' were simply taken to be those employees who did not spend any time commuting.

[59] Bryan (2012) cautions against presuming that greater availability of flexible working would lead to an increase in the labour supply, because the people who would be more likely to supply informal care are more likely to work in organisations or in industries that already offer flexible working.

[60] Source: CIPD survey of employees (CIPD 2014b).

[61] For example, 46% of employees who thought remote access made them more productive also recognised that it made it more difficult to switch off in their personal time.

[62] Regression analysis (ordered logit) of both these variables using a range of personal and workplace controls (gender, presence of children, industry, public/private/charity status, managerial level, full-time/part-time status, organisation size) confirmed the existence of positive associations between the *availability* of most of these forms of flexible working and the outcome variables. These associations were stronger (numerically larger) for

commitment to the employer than they were for willingness to release discretionary effort. When release of discretionary effort was made conditional on organisational commitment (by including organisational commitment as an additional dependent variable), the coefficients for the availability of each of the six forms of flexible working were no longer significant at conventional levels. In other words, the availability of flexible working exerts its effect on employees by making them more committed to the organisation's goals.

63 Employees with long service (ten years or more) were more likely to have a flexible working arrangement (if we exclude part-time employment). This was because these employees were more likely to work flexitime than employees with shorter service. This could be flexible working used as a 'reward' for long service. More plausible, though, is a simple compositional explanation: the public sector uses flexitime more than the private sector and a higher proportion of public sector employees than private sector employees have a long length of service.

64 The question asked was, *'From January 1st 2017, French companies are required to guarantee their employees a "right to disconnect" from technology. Organisations with more than 50 employees will be obliged to draw up a charter of good conduct, setting out the hours when staff are not supposed to send or answer emails. The aim is to reduce burnout and stress by redrawing a clearer line between work and home. To what extent do you agree or disagree that employees should have the "right to disconnect" from work by not having to respond to work emails out of hours?'*

CIPD

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
151 The Broadway London SW19 1JQ United Kingdom
T +44 (0)20 8612 6200 **F** +44 (0)20 8612 6201
E cipd@cipd.co.uk **W** cipd.co.uk

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