

A flexible future for Britain?

Flexible working is now an everyday part of life in Britain. 8 million people work part time¹ (30 hours a week or less) and around 4 million usually work from home². For the first time, Timewise can reveal that an estimated additional **8.7 million UK-based full time workers want to work flexibly right now** (whether part time or more remotely).

But what hope do those searching for new jobs have of securing flexible work, right at this moment in time? How fluid and accessible is the market for work if you **cannot** work traditional hours or purely from the office?

Previous research conducted by Timewise found that two in five people who need flexibility **'worry about when to ask'** about alternative working structures in the recruitment process (42 per cent), with more than half feeling **'nervous or very nervous'** about doing so (52 per cent)⁴.

This year, Timewise has conducted **brand new research amongst employers**, to clarify how receptive they are to job applications from candidates who need flexibility.

In May 2014 **500 UK-based managers were interviewed**, all responsible for the key hiring decisions made within their teams⁵.

The research found that while the vast majority (9 in 10) say they welcome questions about flexible working – candidates still face **significant barriers** when it comes to finding a brand new flexible job...

Flexible working – definition

Any pattern of work, other than going into an office for 5 full days a week. Including: part time hours, job shares, job splits, nine day fortnights and working from home, whether for some or all of the time

...read on to find out more

Who currently works flexibly in the UK?

8.2m people work part time



accounting for 1 in 4 UK workers

4m people

are estimated to usually work from home

Women account for 6m part time workers and 1.4m home workers.



Men account for 2.2m part time workers and 2.6m home workers

Managers & the missed opportunity

In May 2014 **500 UK-based managers** were interviewed from a range of industries and business sizes, from all across the UK. All held either significant or ultimate decision-making powers for their teams, and hired an average of 14 members of staff in the past 12 months.



Key findings

↘ **7 in 10 managers** believe would-be flexible workers are 'underused as a pool of talent'

↘ The vast majority, 91 per cent say they are **open to discussing flexible working options** within the recruitment process itself

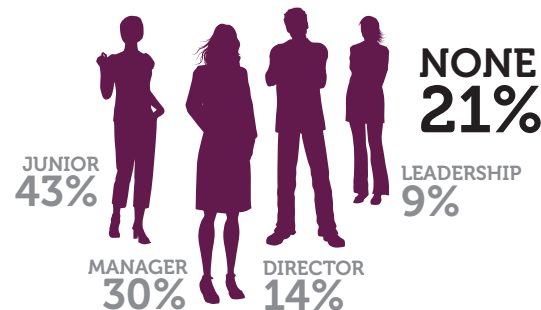
↘ Most (**57 per cent**) say that when conversations about flexible working do occur, they tend to happen **mid-process**, at interview stage

↘ Though most managers feel confident in how to deal with queries about flexible working in the recruitment process, **three quarters** (75 per cent) say they had 'never have had any training' on how to handle such enquiries

↘ When candidates call to enquire about flexible working options for vacancies advertised as 'full time only' – most managers say they feel 'pleased' to hear from them, though just under a third (30 per cent) feel 'annoyed' and 1 in 10 feel their time is being wasted

↘ Managers indicated that at their workplaces, the **higher** your level of skill and experience, the **harder** it becomes for a prospective candidate to find a flexible job. Less than a third (30 per cent) of respondents said that their organisation was 'open' to the idea of offering flexible working possibilities in **managerial-level** job vacancies, just **14 per cent** said the same for **director-level** roles and 9 per cent for leadership roles (see graphic)

What kind of roles are your company open to advertising with flexible working options?



↘ Managers only stated if flexible working options were a possibility up front within **1 in 4** of the roles they advertised in the past 12 months... yet said they believed nearly half of the roles they recruited (48 per cent) 'could have been filled by a talented flexible worker'

↘ While managers believe that flexible workers are often skilled and experienced, more than two thirds (69 per cent) believe flexible workers are '**less ambitious**' than full time workers

↘ When asked what deciding factors prevents a role from being offered with flexible working possibilities, the most common answer was "flexible working does not tend to be offered for roles with **key responsibilities** within my organisation" (chosen by 25 per cent)

1 in 5 respondents said: "No roles are open to flexibility within my organisation, at the point of advertising."

I feel that if a job is advertised as 'full time' then that is what it is and the candidate shouldn't even have the audacity to ask at interview stage for flexible hours.

58-YEAR-OLD FEMALE MANAGER, WORKING FOR A MANUFACTURING FIRM

I think the owners of my company need to realise that flexible working would be beneficial to them rather than holding people back from asking for it and turning down job offers to people who request it.

29-YEAR-OLD FEMALE MANAGER AT A PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY

Conclusions

- ↘ 8.7 million more people want to find a more flexible way to work. But knowing 'when's best' to ask for flexibility once in the recruitment process, is confusing for candidates
- ↘ While 9 in 10 employers are open to the idea of hiring a talented flexible worker, managers do not communicate this **strongly enough, soon enough** and in particular **miss a key opportunity** at the point when a role is advertised
- ↘ For candidates, the market for such jobs feels 'hidden'. Recruiters can add to the confusion in the process
Many managers still assume that flexible workers cannot be ambitious or hold posts with key responsibilities
- ↘ Timewise recommends that:
 - 1) **A more transparent process** is needed in recruitment, particularly at the point of advertising new vacancies, so they better reflect the possibilities of how a role can be worked.
 - 2) Successful examples of flexible working in practice should be made **more visible**