

THE TIMEWISE SCOTTISH FLEXIBLE JOBS INDEX 2022

An annual index of the proportion of jobs in Scotland
that are advertised with flexible working options

Research partner:



Commissioned by:





INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Scottish Flexible Jobs Index 2022, which examines the proportion of job vacancies across Scotland that offer flexible working options. Our analysis has found that 28% of Scottish job adverts now offer flexibility, up marginally from 27% in the previous year. The availability of good flexible work continues to lag far behind workforce demand, creating barriers to career progression and job mobility, and preventing some who are out of work from moving into jobs. At a time when the economy is

crying out for growth, the case for more good flexible jobs has never been stronger.

It has been a hard year for many people; as the cost of living has soared and real wages have fallen, families have seen their spending power drop dramatically and household budgets have tightened. Businesses have also felt the pain as rising costs have coincided with falling demand, and growth has slowed.

But despite challenging times, employers continue to experience significant labour shortages. At the same time, there are many people out of work who would prefer to be working, if only they could find jobs with the flexibility they need. Some of these are people (including many older workers) who left the jobs market during and since the pandemic and will only consider returning to good quality part-time jobs. Others find the costs of child or social care too prohibitive to take a full-time job, but with flexibility might be able to balance work with their wider lives. And, of course, there are people who already work flexibly who will only move to better paid jobs if they can match their working patterns.

A better supply of quality flexible jobs could therefore help boost both living standards and business performance. But the pace of change in flexible hiring remains far too slow, despite all the change the pandemic brought to many workplaces.

Moreover, the topline rate of 28% hides some further underlying concerns. Firstly, home-working (including hybrid patterns) is the only form of flexibility that is increasing. The focus on hybrid risks displacing attention from a more holistic approach to flexibility, looking more broadly at when and how much people work, and then designing jobs to support the needs of both businesses and their workforces. There are also wide variations between which types of flexibility are available at different salary levels, and between access to flexible jobs by occupation and by Scottish region. These variations create and exacerbate inequalities between workers, and need urgent attention.

At Timewise, we believe there is so much potential to make better use of everyone's skills and experience, and to help more people return to and progress in work. Scottish policy makers already understand how important this is. In recent years they have supported a range of initiatives, including the Timewise change agent programme that ran from 2020 to 2022, helping to raise employer awareness across Scotland of the benefits of unlocking jobs to flexibility.

National legislation on day one rights to request flexible working should encourage more employers to be ambitious about how they design jobs. The legislation could be in place within the next year and, although we are sure it could go further (not least by requiring employers to state in their job adverts whether or not the role is open to flexibility), it could help trigger an important increase in flexible hiring.

The year ahead has potential to deliver significant gains in high quality flexible jobs – providing an important part of the solution to both improving living standards and supporting higher productivity growth. We must all work together to make it happen.



Nicola Smith

Interim CEO, Timewise

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CONTEXT

The 2022 Scottish Flexible Jobs Index is being published during a time of economic weakness, with many businesses facing declining demand for their products and services. At the same time, a chronic cost of living crisis means that many people who have left the jobs market are feeling the need to return to it to boost their household income.

Yet in spite of this backdrop, employers are still struggling to recruit staff. One of the reasons is a lack of good quality flexible jobs at the point of hire, as many people can only work if they can find flexible arrangements that help them meet their caring commitments, or cope with health issues, or keep a lid on their childcare costs.

Good flexible working is a proven tool to attract all candidates (young as well as old, men as well as women), and this is particularly the case when cost pressures prevent inflation-matched pay rises. And to add to the ‘pull’ from candidates, there will soon be the ‘push’ from legislation giving people the right to request flexible working from day one.

It should therefore be a priority for employers to offer flexible working at the point of hire wherever they can. Disappointingly, this report highlights just how little progress is being made on this front and how much room there is for improvement.

TOPLINE AVAILABILITY OF FLEXIBLE JOBS

- The overall proportion of Scottish job adverts that offer some form of flexible working has nudged to 28% in 2022, from 27% in the previous year.
- This low supply of flexible jobs continues to lag far behind demand from candidates, and also behind workplace practice. Wider research studies show that 8 in 10 Scottish people want to work flexibly, and that 6 in 10 already do so.
- Candidates who can only work flexibly are faced with a jobs market where 7 in 10 vacancies are off limits for them. This situation damages their career progression and is a barrier to them raising their standard of living. Certain groups are disproportionately disadvantaged – including parents (especially mothers), some people with health conditions and older workers.
- By not offering flexible working at the point of hire, employers are missing out on a portion of the candidate market. Flexibility is powerful talent attraction tool – as important as salary to an increasing number of workers, and a must-have for certain groups of people.



MOST COMMON FORMS OF FLEXIBILITY

- 10% of Scottish job adverts now offer home-working (including hybrid arrangements), but this is the only form of flexibility to have seen an increase over the previous year.
- Other forms of flexibility are stagnant – part-time (which has historically been the main form of flex) is still offered in only 12% of job adverts, while flexible hours of work and flexible shifts are offered in only 3% of them.
- The catch-all phrase ‘flexible working’ is used in 10% of job adverts (again, no change from the previous year). This practice often denotes a full-time job where the employer is open to flexible options by negotiation, and is not particularly helpful to candidates who feel uncertain about what is on offer. It is better for employers to be clear about the types of flexibility that are possible for the role – specifying openness to considering part-time, home-working or flexible hours of work.
- It is important to note that the focus on hybrid working, while welcome in some ways, also brings difficulties as it has displaced attention from other forms of flex which are needed just as much (if not more so) by many people. Most Scottish workers will not benefit from hybrid patterns as they are generally incompatible with frontline roles. And even those who are able to work from home may actually be in greater need of a part-time arrangement. The growth of hybrid, at the same time as no-growth in other forms of flex, risks the emergence of a ‘two-tier’ workforce.

DIFFERENCES IN FLEXIBILITY BY SALARY

- Overall, the availability of flexible options at the point of hire is relatively flat across the salary bands. However, significant disparities emerge in the types of flex on offer: part-time arrangements are nearly three times more common in jobs paid below £20k FTE, than those paid more than £35k FTE; conversely, home-working (or hybrid working) is least available in jobs paid below £20k.
- The continued association of part-time with low pay is a key driver for low living standards, under-employment and the gender pay gap. This is because it traps certain groups of people in their current roles, unable to progress further. And for those who are out of work, the choice is often to take a low paid part-time job or not to work at all.
- Meanwhile, the recent shift towards hybrid working primarily benefits office workers, particularly those in higher-paid professional roles.
- Employers need to be aware of these differences and strive to create parity as far as possible. For most roles, including well-paid managerial ones, there are job design solutions to allow part-time and/or flexible hours of work. And while there are limitations on home-working for most frontline roles, it can be possible for some tasks.

DIFFERENCES BY ROLE CATEGORY

- Access to flexible working is much lower in some roles compared to others, creating considerable inequality amongst workers. Since the pandemic and the growth of home-working, office based roles now generally have the highest rates of job adverts offering flexibility – led by HR, finance and marketing. Some public sector roles (health and social services) also have higher than average rates. But other role categories such as construction and manufacturing lag far behind, with rates still in the teens.
- The disparities may be rooted in operational issues – for example construction requiring cover for site operating hours, or office roles being more adaptable to hybrid working. However, there may also be underlying reasons such as gender bias, with greater resistance to flexibility in male dominated role categories. Good job design can overcome many ‘institutional’ barriers to flexibility.
- Specifically, low rates of part-time jobs in professional role categories such as marketing, finance and HR points to the challenge to career progression for those who need to work part-time at certain times of their lives.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

- The availability of flexible jobs varies between Scottish regions, with the variations likely to reflect different traits in the local jobs market, rather than a greater local acceptance of flexible working.

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS DO?

- Employers can attract more candidates by advertising job vacancies with options to work flexibly from day one. Care should be taken to state clearly in the job advert which forms of flex are possible (eg part-time, partial or full home-working, flexible shift patterns, or flexible start and finish times of work).
- It's important to think through the full range of flexibility available across the organisation, to avoid growing tensions between workers who can easily access flex and those who currently can't. In particular, remember that hybrid is only one form of flexibility, and not necessarily the one that suits workers best. Part-time arrangements, for example, are key for attracting returning talent and for closing the gender pay gap.

WHAT SHOULD POLICY MAKERS DO

- Scottish policy makers can support employers by providing guidance on how best to prepare for day one flexibility.
- They can also support employers with guidance on the best practice approach to implementing hybrid patterns, remembering that this needs to sit alongside access to wider flexible working options.
- Wider training for intermediaries (particularly employability professionals) should be rolled out, with funding for activities that will enable employer engagement on flexible hiring.



AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

AIMS OF THE INDEX

- To fill a knowledge gap in job market statistics in Scotland, by reporting on advertised vacancies where flexible working is offered as a positive benefit to candidates. By updating the index annually, we are tracking progress in flexible recruitment.
- To use this insight to build a business and social case for employers in Scotland, to encourage change in recruitment practices. The index enables employers to benchmark their recruitment practice around flexible working against the averages for Scotland – by salary, role type, region and types of flexibility offered.
- To provide new data that can be used by Scottish labour market intermediaries, such as recruitment agencies, local authorities and business enterprise agencies, to influence employer action on flexible working and hiring.

METHODOLOGY

The Timewise Scottish Flexible Jobs Index 2022 is based on analysis of over 700k jobs in Scotland, advertised on job boards between 1st January and 30th November 2022. The data source is Lightcast, and jobs were filtered using 19 keywords relating to different forms of flexible working.

As our aim is to track employer behaviour in offering flexible working in quality jobs (rather than in insecure jobs where flexibility is common and pay is often below national living wage), the following types of contracts are excluded from the analysis where it has been possible to identify them: self-employed, freelance, zero hours, commission only and temporary posts. We have also excluded all jobs paid less than £18,500 per annum – a proxy for the national living wage rate in 2022, of £9.50 per hour.

This is the first year that Lightcast has provided the data for the Timewise Scottish Flexible Jobs Index. Benchmark testing has indicated that the data is very similar to that produced in previous years by the Gartner Talent Neuron tool, with an average discrepancy of only -1%.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A 'FLEXIBLE JOB'?

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

DEFINITIONS OF TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

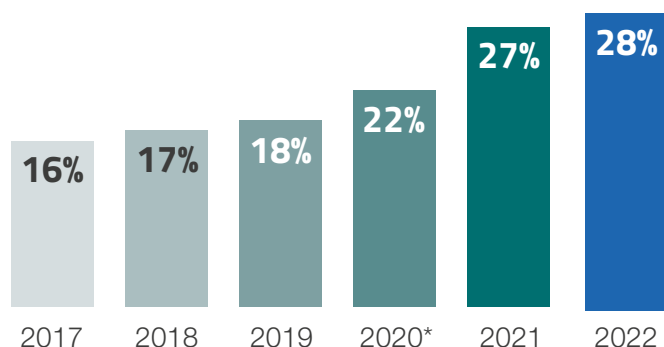
- **Part-time**, including job-share
- **Home-working or remote working**, whether this is 100% or a partial arrangement. This includes hybrid working patterns.
- **Flexible hours or shifts** The term 'flexible hours' is usually used in job adverts to mean variable start and finish times to the working day. To be included in the analysis, shift patterns need to be described as 'flexible', involving an element of employee choice.
- **The catch-all term 'flexible working'** is also included in the analysis, together with the term 'agile working' preferred by some employers. These tend to be full-time jobs where the employer is open to flexible working patterns by arrangement with the candidate.

A NOTE ON SALARIES

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

YEAR ON YEAR GROWTH

PROPORTION OF SCOTTISH JOBS ADVERTISED WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING



*The Scottish Flexible Jobs Index 2020 reported data in three separate periods: pre-pandemic (19%), during lockdown (25%), and finally as restrictions eased (24%). The average rate across the year was 22%.

KEY FINDINGS

- The proportion of Scottish job adverts that offer some form of flexible working has increased marginally to 28% in 2022.
- The rate of increase has flatlined again, following the two years of pandemic when it increased by more than four percentage points per year. The emergence of hybrid working (a blend of office and home-based work) has not led to a more long-term shift in greater openness to flexibility.



TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

- **There are still too few flexible jobs** Many people cannot work if they can't find a flexible job. The current availability of 28% means that 7 in 10 jobs are off limits for these people, damaging their job mobility and career progression.
- **Barrier to raising living standards** Parents (particularly mothers), some people with health conditions and older workers all have a particularly high need for flexible work. Many need to step away from work for a while and, without good quality flexible jobs to return to, they are more likely to face unemployment or be forced to take a flexible job below their skill level. This impacts their long-term earning potential.
- **Employers are slow to adapt** In spite of all the talk of a boom in flexible working, and small recent improvements in the rate of increases in the workplace, the proportion of flexible jobs remains too low at the point of hire. Moreover, recent progress is largely due to increased home-working for office workers, as later analysis in this report will show. Availability has barely moved for other forms of flexibility such as part-time and flexible hours of work, which are key forms of flex for those in frontline sectors.

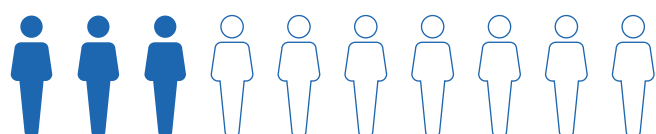
SUPPLY LAGS BEHIND DEMAND



8 in 10 people want flex



6 in 10 people work flex



3 in 10 jobs offer flex

Research in 2022 by Flexibility Works¹ reports that 84% of Scottish workers either work flexibly already or want to; and that 60% had access to flexible working over the previous six months. The same research study found that 27% of Scots who have changed jobs since the pandemic said they moved for more flexibility and a better work life balance. Other surveys² confirm that flexible working is becoming an expectation rather than a wish, and that many people now seek it at the point of hire.

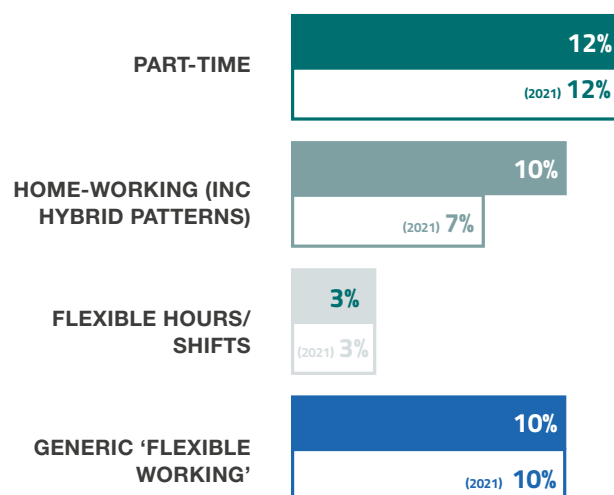
Against this high demand to work flexibly, only 3 in 10 jobs in Scotland are being advertised with options to do so. Supply of flexible jobs lags far behind the level of demand.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

- All types of people need and want to work flexibly:** Flexible working is more than a ‘working mums issue’. Certain groups of people need flexibility more than others, including parents, people with wider caring responsibilities and people with some health conditions. But there are also many other people who now want to work flexibly, including growing numbers of men and younger workers. And in the current jobs market, it’s clear that many older people who left the workforce during and since the pandemic will only consider returning to paid work if good quality flexible jobs are on offer³.
- Employers can use flex as a recruitment tool:** Flex has become a powerful talent attraction tool – as important as salary according to several research studies⁴. And the candidate market remains tough in spite of the recession – a 2022 report by the CIPD found that 76% of Scottish businesses with vacancies find some of them hard to fill⁵. Faced with these two facts, it is puzzling that more employers are not adapting to different forms of flex from the point of hire to optimise their recruitment efforts.
- The offer of flex needs to be stated explicitly in job adverts** By not clearly offering flexible working at the point of hire, employers are missing out on a portion of the candidate market. Employers should not assume that people will apply and then ask for flex at interview – research by Timewise has shown that many candidates who need flexibility will bypass job adverts that do not mention it⁶. It is also important to be clear about which types of flexibility are on offer – looking at options for flexibility in how much and when people work, as well as where the work takes place.

WHICH TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARE MOST COMMON?

PROPORTION OF SCOTTISH JOB ADVERTS OFFERING SPECIFIC TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING



KEY FINDINGS

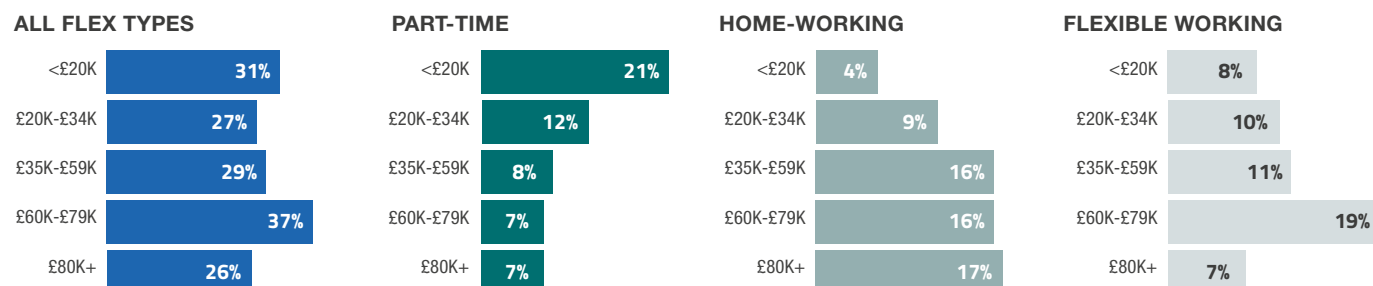
- There is similar availability for two main types of flexibility: in 2022 part-time arrangements were offered in 12% of job adverts, and home-working (including hybrid arrangements) in 10% of them.
- The catch-all phrase 'flexible working' was also used in 10% of job adverts in 2022 – this often denotes a full-time job where the employer is open to flexible options by negotiation.
- Flexible times of work were offered less frequently, in only 3% of job adverts.
- Compared to the previous year, the only change was to the prevalence of home-working which rose from 7% in 2021 to 10% in 2022. The availability of all other forms of flexibility remain unchanged.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

- **Home-working creates 'flexible inequality'**
While the increase in home-working is a welcome development, it's important to remember that hybrid patterns are mainly restricted to office workers. Most Scottish workers won't benefit from this trend, and there has been no increase to part-time or flexible hours arrangements which are more compatible with frontline work. This risks the emergence of a 'two-tier' workforce, creating internal tensions between workers.
- **Hybrid working is not always the type of flex that employees need**
While hybrid patterns bring benefits to those who are offered it, these employees do not necessarily also have options to work part-time or have flexibility over when they do their work. The focus on hybrid arrangements has displaced attention from other forms of flexibility, which can be more important to some workers.
- **The term 'flexible working' lacks clarity to candidates**
Employers need to take care when using the term 'flexible working', as it leaves candidates feeling uncertain about what is on offer. It is better to be specific about the types of flexibility that are possible for a role – specifying openness to considering part-time, home-working or flexible hours of work. This is the case for all sorts of roles, across different sectors.

FLEXIBLE JOBS BY SALARY

PROPORTION OF SCOTTISH JOBS ADVERTISED WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING, BY SALARY



KEY FINDINGS

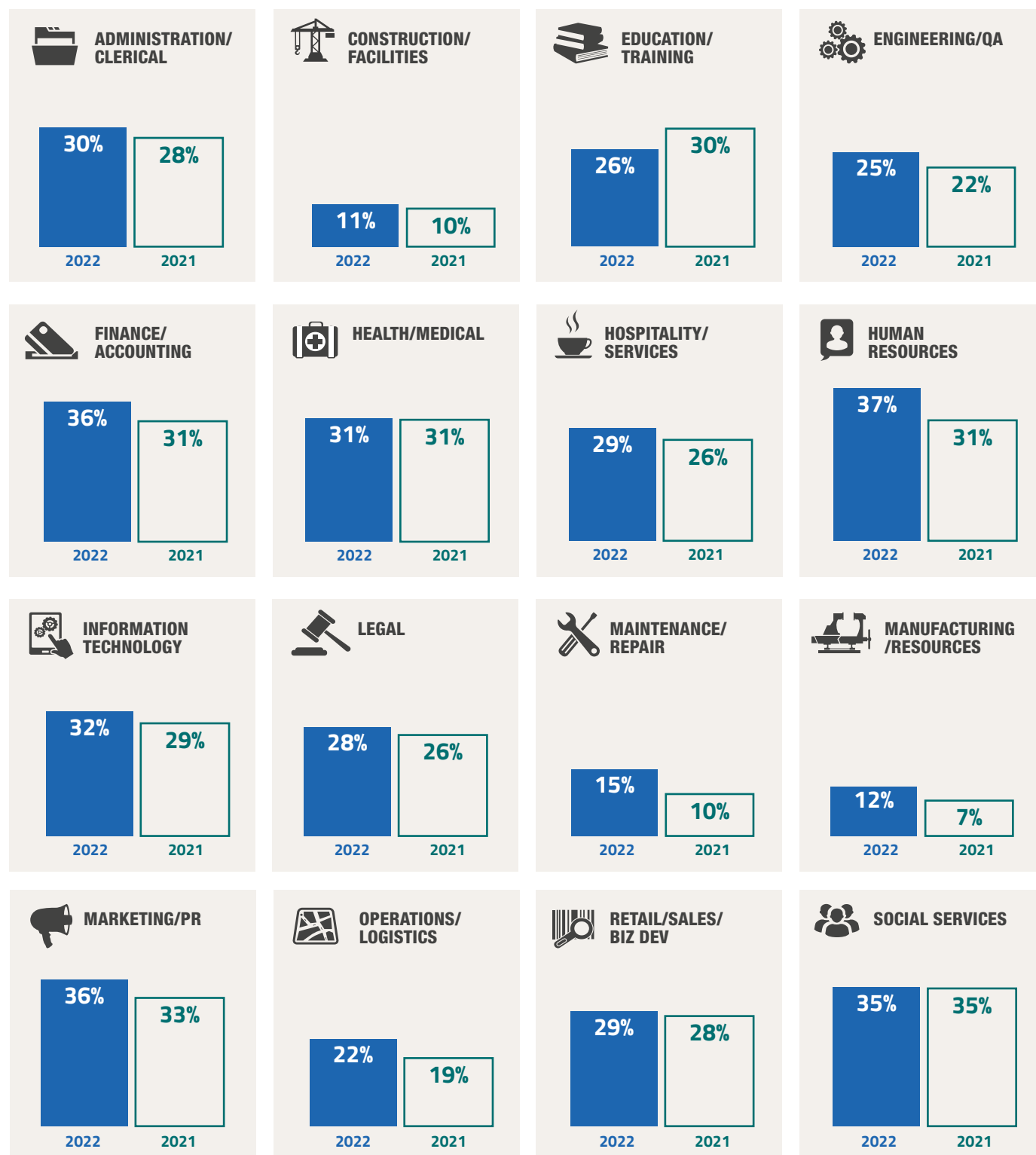
- Overall, the availability of flexible options at the point of hire is relatively flat across the salary bands. At 31%, it is a few percentage points higher than average for jobs paid less than £20k (the average is 28%); and it tails off to 26% above £80k. The high point of 37% for jobs paid £60k-£79k may prove to be a short-term blip – in 2022, 17% of all flexible jobs at this salary level were posted by just one large staffing organisation.
- Looking at the different patterns for the most commonly offered types of flexibility, greater disparities emerge across the salary levels:
 - Part-time arrangements are nearly three times more common in jobs paid below £20k FTE, than those paid more than £35k FTE
 - Conversely, home-working (or hybrid working) is least available in jobs paid below £20k
 - Adverts using the non-specific term ‘flexible working’ vary less across the salary levels – apart from the blip of 19% for jobs paid £60k-£79k which, again, is due to jobs posted by one organisation.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

- The part-time trap** Certain groups of people need to work part-time at particular times in their lives. The continued lack of part-time jobs at higher salaries can trap workers in their current roles, so they become under-employed over time. And for those who are out of work, their choice is often to take a low paid part-time job or not to work at all. The lack of part-time jobs is therefore a key driver for low pay, under-employment and the gender pay gap.
- Home-working for the higher-paid** Meanwhile, the recent growth of hybrid working primarily benefits office workers, particularly those in higher-paid professional roles. However, there will be many middle and lower paid roles where an element of home-working is possible – for example some social workers are now doing parts of their work from home, such as phone call check-ups and paperwork.
- Greater parity is possible** While the overall availability of flex is reasonably equal across salary levels, the underlying differences by types of flexibility can create inequalities and barriers to career progression. Yet there are often job design solutions at any salary level that can facilitate part-time arrangements, flexible working hours or partial home-working. Employers can look more closely at what is possible, and offer it at the point of hire.

FLEXIBILITY VARIES WIDELY BY TYPE OF ROLE

PROPORTION OF SCOTTISH JOBS ADVERTISED WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING, BY ROLE CATEGORY



FLEXIBILITY VARIES WIDELY BY TYPE OF ROLE

KEY FINDINGS

- As a result of hybrid working, many office role categories now have the highest rates of flexible working at the point of hire – led by HR, finance and marketing (which all have rates in the high 30s).
- Health (31%) and social services (35%) also have above average rates, but with no growth at all since the previous year. Meanwhile the other large public sector category, education, has actually seen a decrease in the rate of flexible job adverts from 30% in 2021 to 26% in 2022. This may be because more education roles offered an element of home-working during the pandemic in 2021.
- Several other role categories still lag far behind, with rates still in the teens – construction (11%), manufacturing (12%), and maintenance/repair (15%).
- However, some of the role categories with low availability of flexible jobs have shown the fastest growth rates – maintenance and manufacturing have increased by almost 50% on the previous year.

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

- **Huge disparities by role type** Access to flexible working is much lower in some roles compared to others, creating considerable inequality amongst workers. However, when looking at comparative figures, it is important to remember that the availability of flexible jobs is low for ALL occupations – trailing well behind Scottish workers' desire for flex of 84%⁷.
- **Reasons for the disparities** Some differences between role categories are rooted in operational issues – for example construction requiring cover for site operating hours, or office roles being more adaptable to hybrid working. However, there are other underlying reasons, such as female dominated roles (eg health, social services) having above average rates of flex, while male dominated roles (eg construction, engineering) have historically had fewer requests for flexible working, which contributes to flex not being an accepted part of the system in those sectors. Good job design can overcome many 'institutional' barriers to flex.

DIFFERENCES IN TYPES OF FLEX BY ROLE CATEGORY

	PART-TIME	HOME-WORKING	FLEX HOURS	FLEX WORKING
ADMINISTRATION	14%	11%	2%	9%
EDUCATION/TRAINING	17%	4%	1%	9%
CONSTRUCTION/FACILITIES	5%	3%	1%	4%
ENGINEERING/QA	4%	13%	1%	12%
FINANCE/ACCOUNTING	6%	22%	2%	15%
HEALTH/MEDICAL	19%	4%	7%	11%
HOSPITALITY/SERVICES	19%	1%	5%	8%
HUMAN RESOURCES	8%	25%	2%	12%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	3%	22%	2%	12%
LEGAL	5%	16%	1%	12%
MAINTENANCE/REPAIR	5%	5%	3%	5%
MANUFACTURING/RESOURCES	6%	3%	2%	4%
MARKETING/PR	5%	24%	2%	15%
OPERATIONS/LOGISTICS	7%	9%	2%	8%
RETAIL/SALES/BIZ DEVELOPMENT	14%	9%	3%	8%
SOCIAL SERVICES	21%	6%	6%	14%

Relatively low rates Relatively high rates

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

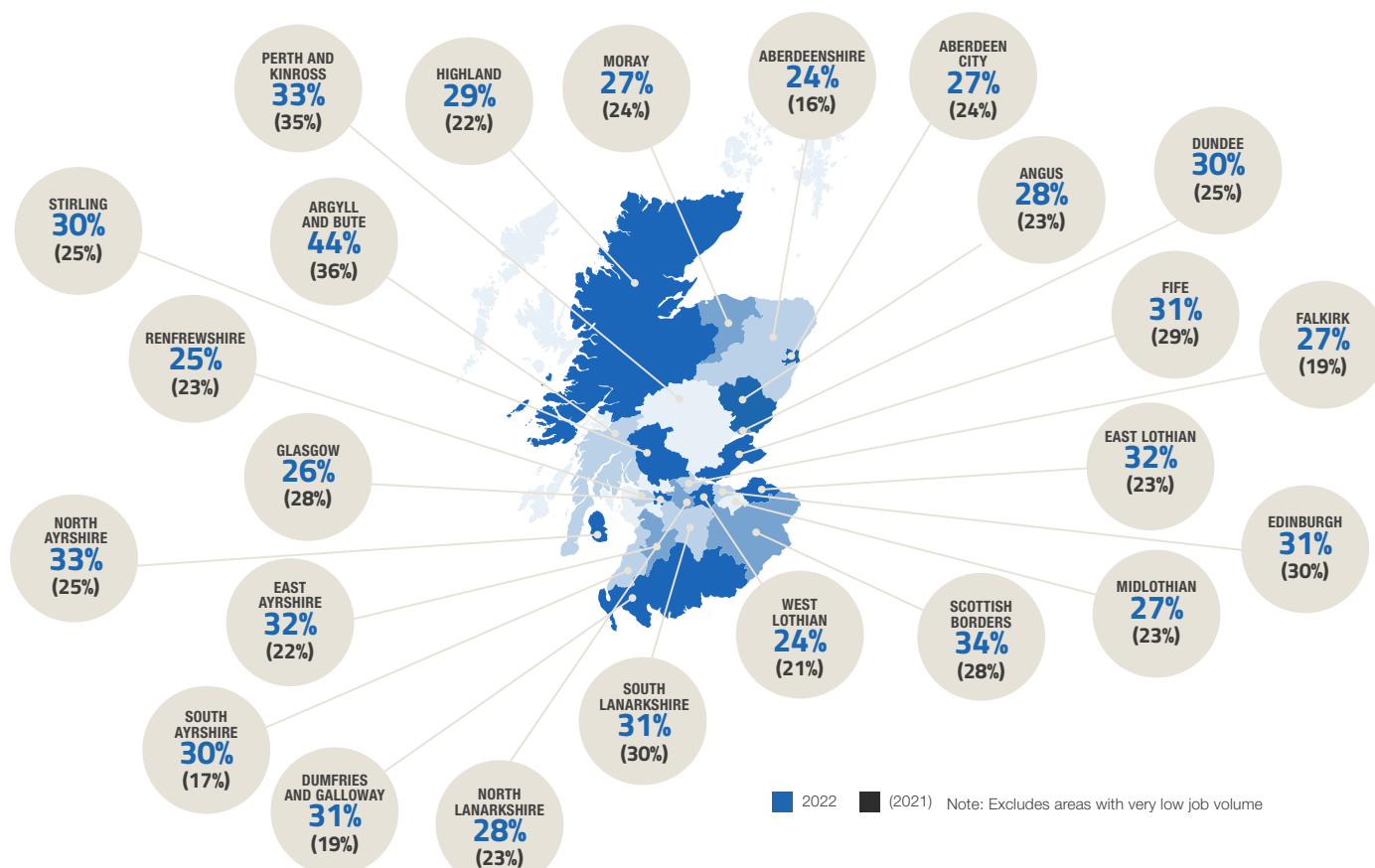
- Too much focus on hybrid working?** To support greater parity in occupations where hybrid/home-working is not possible, in the context where this is the only form of flex that is on the increase, employers should look carefully at whether they can open jobs up to part-time or flexible hours arrangements. The low availability of flexible hours is particularly surprising, as this is usually a relatively easy change to accommodate for most roles.
- Part-time: the forgotten form of flex?** Part-time has historically been the most sought-after flexible arrangement, by mothers in particular. Yet there is a notable lack of part-time opportunities in professional office roles where women are well represented, such as HR and marketing. This points to the challenge to career progression for those who need to work part-time at certain times of their lives.

KEY FINDINGS

- Part time** Above average rates of part-time jobs (the average is 12%) can be found in sectors characterised by female-dominated roles – education (17%), health (19%), social care (21%) and hospitality (19%). Low rates are found in almost all other role categories.
- Home-working** Highs and lows (against the average rate of 10%) generally relate to office versus non-office roles.
- Flexible hours** There are very low rates across all occupations. The rate doesn't rise above 7% (compared to the average 3%), even for role types where flexible hours and shifts are common in the workplace (hospitality, health and social care).
- 'Flexible working'** There is a little variance in the use of the catch-all term 'flexible working', for which the average rate is 10%. Finance, marketing and social services have relatively high rates, while the categories with the lowest rates are construction, maintenance and manufacturing.

REGIONAL VARIANCES

PROPORTION OF JOB ADVERTS THAT OFFER FLEX, BY REGION



KEY FINDINGS

- With one exception, the availability of flexible jobs varies between the different areas of Scotland from 34% in the Scottish Borders to 24% in Aberdeenshire and West Lothian. The exception is Argyll and Bute, an outlier with a rate of 44%.
- All regions have seen an increase in their flexible jobs rate since the previous year, with two exceptions - Perth and Kinross (where the rate reduced from 35% to 33%) and Glasgow (down from 28% to 26%). Four regions saw substantial increases over the previous year: Dumfries and Galloway (up from 19% to 31%), East Lothian (23% to 32%), South Ayrshire (17% to 30%) and East Ayrshire (22% to 32%).

TIMEWISE INSIGHTS

- The regional variations are likely to reflect different traits in the local jobs market, rather than a greater local acceptance of flexible working.
- Policy makers and business groups should look for pockets where there is healthy projected growth but low rates of flexible jobs. In these areas they could try to raise awareness of the importance of flexibility to a fair jobs market, and encourage or incentivise employers to unlock more roles to flex.



WHAT THE FINDINGS MEAN FOR THE SCOTTISH JOBS MARKET

The findings of this report highlight minimal growth in the Scottish flexible jobs market, and also reveal uneven progress between the various forms of flexibility and across different salaries, role categories and Scottish regions. The imperatives of boosting household living standards and growing our workforce, alongside forthcoming legislation on rights to day one flexibility, mean that it is now a matter of urgency for employers to consider whether and how they can offer flexible working options at the point of hire.

A key finding from this analysis is the need to think beyond hybrid working, which has become too much of a focus in the last two years while part-time work and other forms of flexibility have been sidelined. For flexible working to attract the maximum possible candidates, the starting point needs to be an exploration of what kind of flex workers want, and how that can best be met within business operating constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Employers can attract more candidates by advertising job vacancies with options to work flexibly from day one. Care should be taken to state clearly in the job advert which forms of flex are possible (eg part-time, partial or full home-working, flexible shift patterns, or flexible start and finish times of work).
- Change is urgent, as legislation for day one flexibility is coming soon. Employers need to prepare now and make sure that they are ready both to advertise which types of flexibility are available, and to recruit people into flexible jobs. Acting now will mean that employers can get ahead of the curve, and will be best placed to attract and retain candidates who expect and need good flexible roles.
- It's important to think through the full range of flexibility available across the organisation, to avoid growing tensions between workers who can easily access flex and those who currently can't. Not all roles can offer all forms of flexibility, but some flex is usually possible in at least one aspect of where, how or when a job is done.
- Remember that hybrid is only one form of flexibility, and not necessarily the one that suits workers best. Be particularly ambitious with part-time arrangements, which are key for attracting returning talent in higher paid roles and for closing the gender pay gap.
- A four-day-week is another option that employers can consider – defined by the [Four Day Week Campaign](#) as typically 32 hours worked over four days with no drop in pay from full-time. However, four-day-weeks are complicated to implement and the impact on all workers needs to be thought through carefully – they might not be the right answer for all workplaces. In particular, employers will need to think about how part-time and home-working arrangements fit with a four-day week.

WHAT SHOULD POLICY MAKERS DO?

- Policy makers can support employers by providing guidance on how best to prepare for day one flexibility, in order to positively impact the Scottish jobs market by leveraging an increase in good quality flexible jobs across different sectors and roles. The Scottish Government already requests this as part of its Fair Work First Criteria for contractors and partners⁸.
- Support employers with guidance on the best practice approach to implementing hybrid patterns, remembering that this needs to sit alongside access to wider flexible working options.
- Fund and roll out wider training for organisations contracted to deliver parental employment programmes in Scotland, bearing in mind that lone parents in particular face significant challenges in finding better quality flexible and part-time work. This training could support employability advisers and employer engagement teams to boost the supply of quality flexible jobs and deliver improved employment outcomes. Policy makers should also make it a requirement for intermediaries to report on the interventions they take with employers, and their impacts on supporting lone parents into good flexible work.
- Recognise that only employees will benefit from new day one rights to request flexible working. Those who are on zero-hours or other insecure contracts will not benefit from these changes. Policy makers need to recognise that reducing this type of insecurity at work is also essential to creating more good flexible jobs.

1. <https://www.flexibilityworks.org/flexible-working-research/flex-for-life-report-2022/>
2. See, for example, <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1793959/majority-under-25s-quit-forced-back-office-full-time-poll-finds> and <https://www.totaljobs.com/media-centre/one-in-four-uk-employees-would-change-jobs-for-remote-working-options>
3. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/reasonsforworkersagedover50yearsleavingemploymentsincethestartofthecoronaviruspandemic/wave2>
4. For example: <https://www.randstad.co.uk/about-us/reports/work-life-balance-more-important-salary-two-thirds/> and <https://employeebenefits.co.uk/77-think-flexible-working-is-most-important-benefit/>
5. https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/gaps-and-opportunities-employer-views-on-skills-policy-in-scotland-1_tcm18-109265.pdf
6. <https://timewise.co.uk/article/gaining-an-edge-in-the-fight-for-talent>
7. <https://www.flexibilityworks.org/flexible-working-research/flex-for-life-report-2022/>
8. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance/pages/9/>



Timewise is a social enterprise with commercial expertise and a clear goal: to make flexible working work for everyone.

Through our work with employers, candidates, policymakers, labour market influencers and funders, we're creating stronger, more inclusive workplaces, powered by flexible working.

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