



timewise  
TALENT THROUGH FLEXIBILITY

# THE TIMEWISE FLEXIBLE JOBS INDEX 2019

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

RESEARCH PARTNER:

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# FOREWORD



**Emma Stewart**  
CEO, Timewise

Let's start with the good news. This year's Flexible Jobs Index shows a rise in the number of roles that are advertised as being open to flexibility. And at just over 15%, it feels like a landmark of sorts has been reached (though there's still a long way to go before it matches the demand for flex, from 87% of employees).

What's more, there's a definite opening up at the higher end of the pay scale. For the first time this year, the availability of flexible jobs paying more than £60k FTE is greater than for jobs paying £20k-£59k FTE. This is something our Power 50 awards have long championed, so we're delighted to see this positive trend unfolding.

But if you dig into the detail behind the statistics, there's cause for concern on a number of levels. Firstly, these senior level

roles don't tend to be classified as part-time, but under the broader description of 'flexible'. So it's unclear whether the flexibility on offer is what people actually want; senior level part-time roles still seem to be elusive.

Secondly, and linked to the above, is that the only band in which part-time is readily available is for jobs paying less than £20k FTE. So part-time work continues to be associated with poorer quality roles at the lower end of the market.

And thirdly, this also means there's a real cliff edge between the lowest salary band and the next. 23% of jobs paying less than £20k FTE are advertised as part-time or flexible, but this falls to 14% for jobs paying £20k-£34k FTE. So the potential for low-paid flexible workers to take their arrangement into a better job remains poor.

So how can we reshape the flexible jobs market so it works for all? One thing is clear: one-size-fits all flexibility is certainly not the answer. We have honed in on five different sectors as part of this research, and the variance between the availability and growth of flexible roles shows that bespoke, sector-specific solutions are needed. As ever, we're here to support this work; in our experience no sector, however challenging, is un-flex-able.

If, collectively, we take up the challenge, we will succeed in creating an inclusive flexible jobs market. One which supports key groups to return to and stay in the workplace, by delivering the part-time and flexible roles they want and need. Are you with us?

## OBJECTIVES OF THE INDEX

- To help fill a knowledge gap in job market statistics by reporting on flexible vacancies (where flexible working is offered as a positive benefit to candidates)
- to track progress in flexible hiring by updating the index annually
- to enable employers to measure how well their recruitment practice keeps pace with the index, or better it.

## METHODOLOGY

The Timewise Flexible Jobs Index 2019 is based on analysis of nearly 5 million job adverts from over 450 UK job boards in the period January to April 2019. The data source is Gartner, and jobs were filtered using a variety of keywords relating to different forms of flexible working. The following job types were excluded from the analysis: temporary jobs, self-employed, commission only, freelance. Additional data adjustments have been made to discount job adverts where flexible working is mentioned, but not as an employee benefit.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A 'FLEXIBLE JOB'?

Different organisations use different language for 'flexible working' – agile working or smart working for example. But we're all talking about the same thing: working patterns that are different from a rigid 9 to 5 at the employer's premises.

In this report, 'flexible job' means any advertised vacancy that is either part-time or, if full-time, clearly states that the job is open to flexible working. Different forms of flexible working include: part-time, working from home, flexible start and finish times, remote working, term-time, job-share, annualised or compressed hours.

# SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

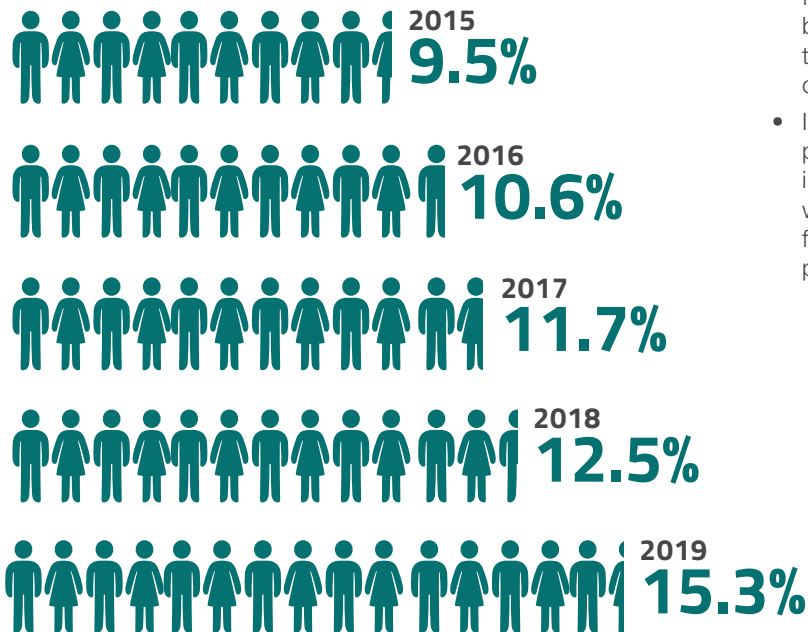
- The proportion of job adverts which offer flexible working options is now 15.3%. This proportion has increased slowly over the five years that Timewise has produced this Index (from 9.5% in 2015), and the rate of increase has stepped up slightly in 2019.
- However, the pace of growth remains too slow. The proportion of flexible jobs still falls well short of the extremely high demand - an estimated 87% of employees want to work flexibly.
- The problem is particularly acute for workers trying to move up from very low paid jobs. Flexible working is offered in 23% of job adverts where the salary is less than £20k FTE; but at the next salary band (£20k-£34K FTE), the availability of flexible jobs drops to only 14%.
- However, the rate of growth in flexible jobs has actually been fastest amongst higher paid roles. In adverts for jobs paid over £60k FTE, the availability of flexible working has trebled over the last 4 years from 5% in 2016 to 15% now. This perhaps suggests that employers find it easier to offer flexible working in roles with a greater degree of autonomy; or perhaps that they need to offer the benefit of flexible working to attract candidates into roles where the jobs market is more competitive.
- Availability of flexible jobs varies by role category. The pattern is similar to previous years, with medical/health roles, social services and security well ahead of other role categories. Meanwhile male dominated roles such as construction, engineering and maintenance lag behind. Legal roles have shown no growth this year – a notable exception amongst professional roles.
- Availability of advertised flexible jobs is low across all UK regions. Scotland, the South West and Wales are slightly ahead (17%-18%), and London slightly behind (14%).
- Almost half of all advertised flexible jobs are part-time or job-share (a form of part-time work). Meanwhile, over a quarter of flexible jobs offer unspecified options for 'flexible working' – these tend to be full-time jobs where the employer is open to flexibility by negotiation with the candidate.



**ONLY 15%  
OF JOB ADVERTS  
OFFER FLEXIBLE  
WORKING**

# 2019 SEES INCREASE IN YEAR ON YEAR GROWTH

## PROPORTION OF JOBS<sup>1</sup> ADVERTISED AS BEING OPEN TO FLEXIBLE WORKING



## KEY FINDINGS

- The proportion of jobs offering flexible working as an employee benefit has increased slowly over the last 5 years, and is now just over 15%.
- In 2019 the rate of increase has picked up – there has been an increase of 4 percentage points, which represents a 23% increase from 2018 (double the rate of any previous year).

## TIMESWISE VIEW

- Although increasing, the proportion of flexible jobs remains low. 9 in 10 people want to work flexibly<sup>2</sup> so, at 15% of advertised jobs, supply falls well short of candidate demand.
- The shortage of advertised flexible jobs causes blocks in the talent market – people who need to work flexibly are faced with severely limited opportunity when they want to move jobs. As a result, many people become trapped in their current flexible job, halting their career progression. In turn, this contributes to the economic problem of poor skills utilisation, and to equality issues such as the gender pay gap.
- We hope that this year's step-up in the annual rate of increase marks the start of significant change, as employers become increasingly aware of the business benefits of offering flexible working from the point of hire.

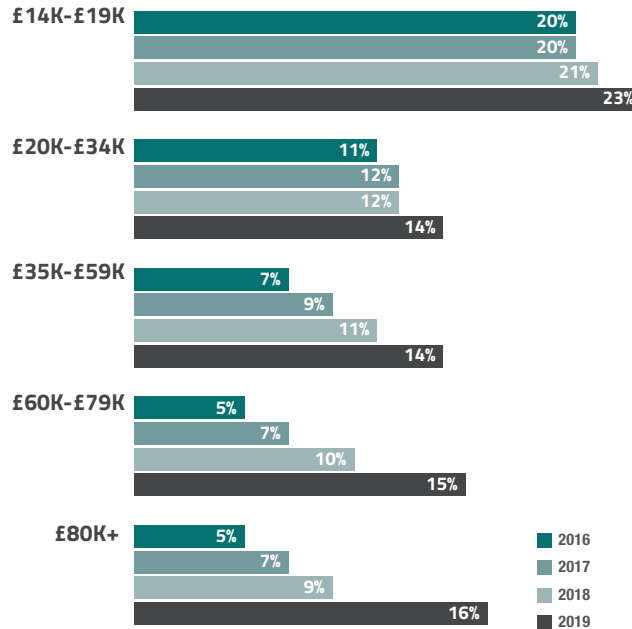
1. In previous years' reports, the Timewise Flexible Jobs Index has focused on jobs paid over £20,000 FTE. This year we are reporting on jobs at all salary levels. The reasons for the change are explained in the appendix.  
 2. Flexible Working: A Talent Imperative, Timewise, 2017

# FLEXIBILITY BY SALARY: HIGHER PAID ROLES ARE CATCHING UP

## KEY FINDINGS

- As in all previous years, the most significant finding is that candidate access to flexible working is significantly higher amongst low paid jobs (23% in 2019), compared to all salary bands above £20,000 FTE (14%-16%). Even at 23%, however, it's important to remember that this falls well short of candidate demand for flexible working (9 in 10 people want it).
- Across the 4 years, the trend has been for the higher salary bands to slowly catch up with the lower ones, flattening the graph. This year, for the first time, the top two salary bands have overtaken the middle bands of £20k-£34k and £35k-£59k. And the £35k-£59k band has caught up with jobs paid £20k-£34k.
- Looking at that a different way, the rate of increase has been slowest for the two lowest salary bands, where the availability of flexible jobs has increased by only a few percentage points over the 4 year period.

## PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED AS BEING OPEN TO FLEXIBILITY, BY SALARY LEVEL



## TIMewise VIEW

When we first launched this annual index, our view was that employers needed to look particularly at the higher salary brackets, where the availability of flexible options at the point of recruitment was as low as 5%. This had huge implications for the career progression of flexible workers.

This year, the alarm bells are now ringing for jobs in the lower salary brackets, where the year on year rate of increase is low. Of greatest concern is the £20k-£34k salary range, for three reasons:

- they account for over one third of all advertised jobs
- people in this salary range often struggle most with the extra costs associated with needing flexible work (caring costs, for example) and the loss of in-work benefits
- the huge drop in the availability of flexible jobs from the salary band below (23% dropping to 14%), makes progression very difficult for flexible workers earning less than £20k FTE.

# FLEXIBILITY VARIES WIDELY BY TYPE OF ROLE

## PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED AS BEING OPEN TO FLEXIBILITY, BY ROLE TYPE

 **MEDICAL/HEALTH**  
**31%**

 **SOCIAL SERVICES**  
**27%**

 **SECURITY**  
**20%**

 **HOSPITALITY**  
**17%**

 **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**  
**15%**

 **ADMINISTRATION/CLERICAL**  
**15%**

 **EDUCATION/TRAINING**  
**15%**

 **SCIENCE/R&D**  
**14%**

 **HUMAN RESOURCES**  
**14%**

 **FINANCE/ACCOUNTING**  
**14%**

 **SALES/BIZ DEVELOPMENT**  
**13%**

 **MARKETING/PR**  
**12%**

 **CREATIVE/TALENT**  
**11%**

 **EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT**  
**11%**

 **FACILITIES/CONSTRUCTION**  
**10%**

 **LEGAL**  
**9%**

 **OPERATIONS/LOGISTICS**  
**9%**

 **ENGINEERING/QA**  
**9%**

 **MANUFACTURING/RESOURCES**  
**8%**

 **MAINTENANCE/REPAIR**  
**6%**

## KEY FINDINGS

- Health and social services are significantly ahead of all other categories, reflecting the shift-work patterns of nurses and care workers, and possibly the fact that these are largely 'feminised' roles.
- Low rates of flexibility in areas such as maintenance, engineering, manufacturing and construction may also stem from gender issues.
- Compared to previous years, all role types are showing an increase, with the exception of hospitality (which has dropped slightly) and legal (which has stayed the same).

## TIMewise VIEW

On the next page, we comment on flexible hiring practice in five noteworthy role-types.

# FOCUS ON FIVE NOTEWORTHY ROLE TYPES



## MEDICAL/HEALTH

Proportion of jobs advertised with flexibility:

**2018 29%**   **2019 31%**

Since we started our index five years ago, the health industry has always topped the role categories for offering flexible jobs. This is largely because of the prevalence of 'flexible shift' patterns in professions such as nursing. However, while 'flexible shifts' are presented as an employee benefit in job adverts, the reality is that they are often unpredictable and at difficult times to fit with personal commitments such as family. Timewise is currently working with a number of NHS trusts to look at job design in the nursing profession, and how to deliver a better work-life balance.



## HOSPITALITY

Proportion of jobs advertised with flexibility:

**2018 19%**   **2019 17%**

Two things of note here. Firstly, this is the only role category where the proportion of flexible jobs has dropped since last year. And secondly, it is a role category where 49% of all jobs are paid less than £20,000 FTE - disproportionately high compared to the average 13% paid <£20k across all role categories. There is significant potential for creating social impact for low-paid workers in the hospitality sector, by improving the availability of good flexible work.



## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Proportion of jobs advertised with flexibility:

**2018 10%**   **2019 15%**

1 in 8 roles in the advertised jobs market is an IT role – it is bigger than any other category. IT is also one of the fastest growing role categories for flexible jobs, which have increased by 50% on last year (from 10% in 2018 to 15% now). This is probably a reflection of two factors:

- Many IT jobs can easily be done from home or remotely – 35% of IT jobs offer remote working (vs 16% average for all role categories).
- IT is a skills challenged area (undoubtedly a reason why it represents such a high share of the jobs market), and offering the benefit of flexible working is one way to attract a wider talent pool.



## FACILITIES/CONSTRUCTION

Proportion of jobs advertised with flexibility:

**2018 4%**   **2019 10%**

While the availability of flexible jobs has more than doubled for all role types in 'construction & facilities', the trend belies the true picture for frontline construction trade roles, where only 2% of advertised jobs offer flexible working. Gender stereotyping may underlie the low availability of flex in the building trade. But whatever the reason, with skills shortages and Brexit looming, the industry needs to take action to attract more workers.



## LEGAL

Proportion of jobs advertised with flexibility:

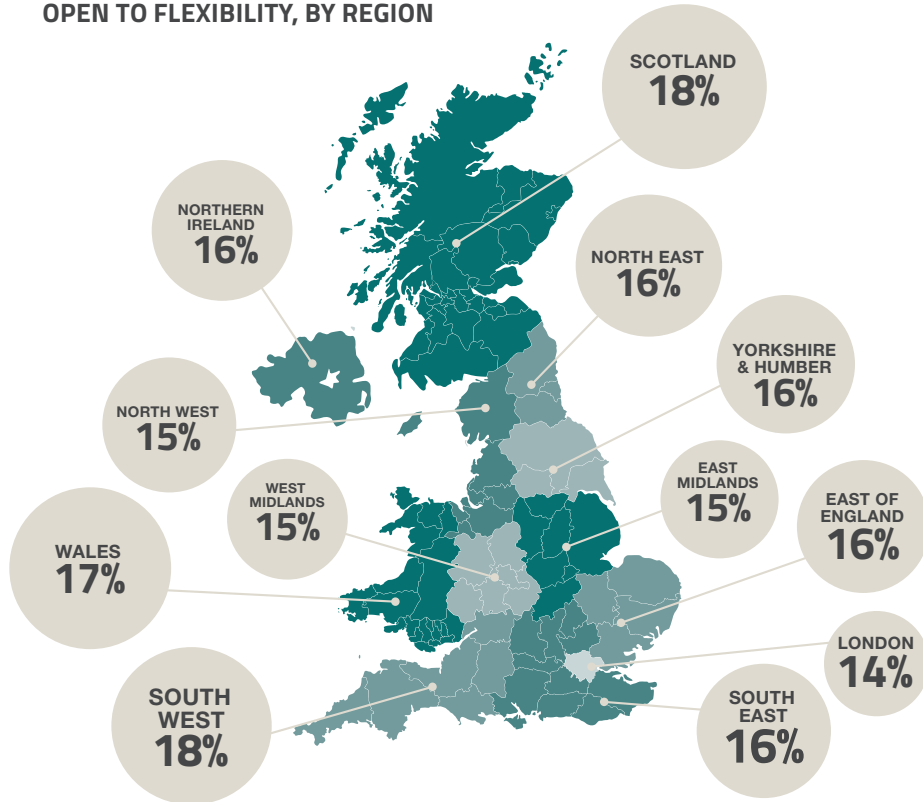
**2018 9%**   **2019 9%**

Roles in law, notorious for its long hours' culture, do not appear to be opening up to flexible working. With no change from last year, legal roles are the exception amongst professional roles (for example, the share of flexible jobs in finance, marketing and HR have all increased by around 40% in 2019 compared to 2018). With young people increasingly looking for careers where flexible working is on offer, the legal sector would perhaps do well to reconsider its stance.



# A COUNTRYWIDE PROBLEM

## PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED AS BEING OPEN TO FLEXIBILITY, BY REGION



## KEY FINDINGS

- The availability of flexible jobs is broadly similar across the UK, with Scotland and the South West slightly ahead of the game (at 18%), and London bringing up the rear (at 14%).
- The regional distribution is similar to previous years. Although it appears that London, which has always lagged behind the rest of the country, is closing the gap a little.

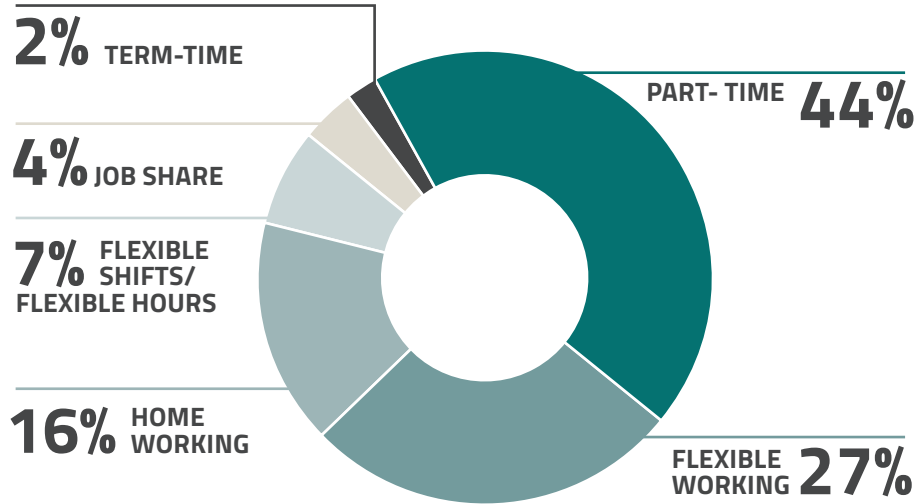
## TIMewise VIEW

- The relatively high proportion of flexible jobs in Scotland and the South West is probably mainly because these regions have a high share of jobs paid less than £20k FTE (nearly 1 in 5 advertised jobs, compared to 1 in 7 for the UK as a whole). As seen earlier, the availability of flexible working is highest for advertised jobs paid less than £20k FTE, so this skews the overall average rate in these regions.
- The reason why London has nearly caught up with most of the UK partly reflects its higher proportion of advertised jobs in professional services such as IT, finance and marketing, which are all fast growing categories for flexible jobs. Timewise has certainly noticed a growth in employer interest in flexible working in the capital, and growing knowledge around the use of flex as a talent attraction strategy.
- However, the most important point to remember is that the proportion of flexible jobs remains low in all parts of the UK – rapid growth is sorely needed to meet employee demand everywhere.

# WHICH TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORKING ARE MOST COMMON?

## TYPES OF FLEXIBILITY OFFERED IN JOB ADVERTS

Proportion of all flexible jobs, by type of flexibility



## KEY FINDINGS

- Including job share (which is a form of part-time work), nearly half of all flexible jobs are part-time.
- Homeworking represents 16% of all flexible jobs, but there is a low incidence of other specific forms of flexibility.
- Over a quarter of all jobs offer unspecified options for 'flexible working'. Most jobs in this category are full-time jobs where the employer is open to flexible working by negotiation with the candidate. It's the fastest growing category (27% now, up from 19% in 2017).

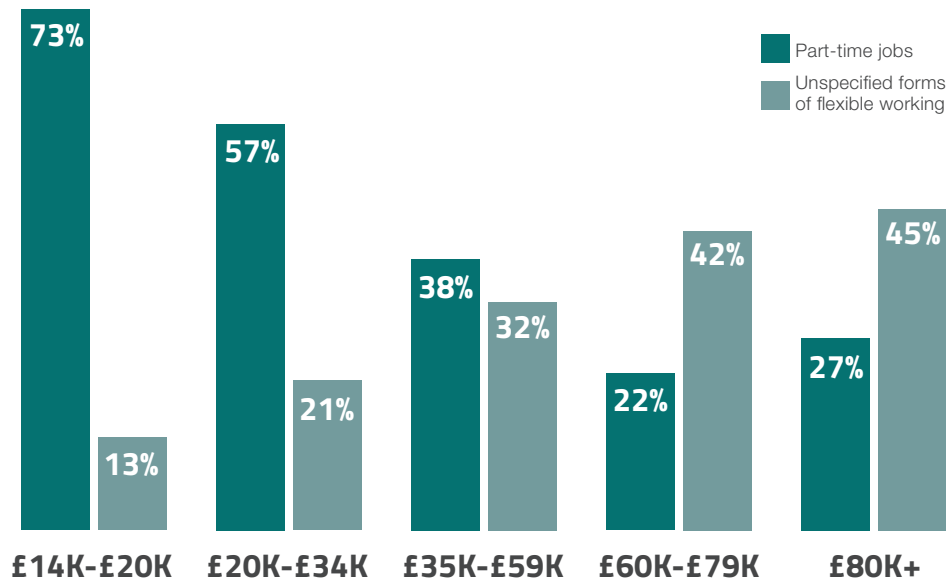
## TIMEWISE VIEW

The greatest potential for future growth of flexible jobs lies with more employers opening up their full-time jobs to flexibility, on request from the candidate. However, this practice leaves many candidates feeling unsure about applying, as they lack confidence over whether the employer will be able to accommodate their specific request. Timewise recommends employers to look carefully at job design before advertising, and to clearly specify the types of flexible working that may be possible within the role.

# THE FLEXIBILITY TRAP: PART-TIME = LOW PAY

## VARIANCES BY SALARY: PART-TIME VS 'FLEXIBLE WORKING'

Proportion of all flexible jobs, by salary



## KEY FINDINGS

- Looking at the types of flexibility by salary band, a startling picture emerges. Part-time dominates for low paid jobs (73% of all flexible jobs), but the availability decreases sharply as salary rises (with a slight exception once pay reaches £80k FTE). The reverse trend is seen for flexible jobs where the type of flex is not specified.

### TIMEWISE VIEW

The differences, according to salary level, in the types of available flexibility suggest that the flexible jobs market is fractured. For low paid jobs, part-time arrangements are relatively common, but it seems that employers are not opening up many jobs to negotiation around other forms of flex. Meanwhile, for well-paid jobs, employers seem to be willing to have a discussion with candidates about flexible working, but are much less likely to offer formal part-time arrangements.

It seems that the alignment of part-time with low-pay persists, and this situation continues to pose blocks to career progression for part-time workers. Better job design is needed, to create more consistent availability of part-time and flexible arrangements across all salary levels, so that career progression is more fluid for all flexible workers.

# WHAT THE FINDINGS MEAN FOR THE UK JOBS MARKET

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FLEXIBLE WORKERS

- People who work flexibly, particularly part-time, often get 'stuck' in their current roles, because there isn't a flexible jobs market for them to go to. Even at their current employer, it's hard for flexible workers to progress, as roles they might move up to are not openly advertised as flexible. As a result, it's common practice for flexible workers to trade down to get the flexibility they need, or even abandon their careers entirely.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Skills drain:** The tendency of flexible workers to trade salary for flexibility, or even abandon their careers, results in a significant loss of skills to business and the economy.
- **Missing out on candidates:** The gap between the proportion of people who want to work flexibly (87%<sup>3</sup>) and the availability of flexible opportunities at the point of hire (15%) is causing a talent bottleneck. Employers are cutting themselves off from a proportion of the candidate market, by not stating their openness to flexibility in their recruitment advertising. These 'lost' candidates include some of the very best available talent.
- **Exacerbating the gender pay gap:** Although many groups of people want to work flexibly (including older workers, millennials, carers and people with health concerns), mothers remain disproportionately disadvantaged by the scarcity of flexible jobs. To progress women through the middle stages of their careers, and address gender equality issues, employers need to openly promote the availability of flexible working (particularly part-time) in senior roles.

## SO, WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

- **Understand job design:** Employers who take a more proactive approach to job design, understanding when, where and in how much time a job can be done, will be better placed to attract and progress the best and widest possible talent.
- **Build flexible career pathways:** Having adapted to flexible job design, employers can motivate and support their flexible workers to progress their careers, by internally promoting roles as being open to flexibility. Neglecting this issue causes a failure in the talent pipeline.
- **Adapt to flexible hiring:** The final step is to adapt to hiring people on a flexible basis. Employers simply have to ask themselves: 'Can this role be worked flexibly in any way?' Then, if the answer is 'yes', say so clearly in their recruitment advertising. This doesn't commit an employer to making the role flexible, it just means being open to discussion for the right candidate.

# APPENDIX

## WHY THIS INDEX NOW MEASURES JOBS AT ALL SALARY LEVELS, RATHER THAN 'QUALITY JOBS PAID £20K+ FTE'

Up until last year, the annual Timewise Flexible Jobs Index reported on 'quality' jobs, defined as those paying more than £20,000 FTE. £20,000 was the threshold for meeting minimum income standards for parents, older people and disabled people, as established in a Timewise report commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (How Flexible Hiring Could Improve Business Performance and Living Standards, 2016).

In 2019, Timewise has decided to drop this 'quality' measure and instead monitor jobs at all salary levels. As we have retained much raw data from earlier years, all year-on-year comparisons made in this 2019 report are correct.

The reasons for the change are twofold:

- The quality measure is out of date – the threshold would now be higher for meeting minimum income standards for parents, older people and disabled people.
- Because of wage inflation, the proportion of jobs paid less than £20,000 FTE is falling. As a result, the difference is now fairly insignificant, when comparing the share of flexible jobs at £20k+ versus for all jobs (see infographic).

### PROPORTION OF JOBS ADVERTISED AS BEING OPEN TO FLEXIBILITY, 2019





**timewise**  
TALENT THROUGH FLEXIBILITY

Timewise works to unlock the flexible jobs market in the UK. We share market insights on flexible working and flexible hiring, deliver training and consultancy to help businesses attract and develop the best talent, and conduct research such as this annual Flexible Jobs Index. We also run Timewise Jobs, a jobs board for roles that are part-time or open to flexibility.

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