

flexibilityworks>

Beyond Hybrid

Why all kinds of flexible working matter in 2023

With many thanks to our sponsor Quorum for making this research possible, and for always being a flex champion





Flexible working fit for 2023

It's time to reset the conversation about flexible working.

We know more people are working flexibly as a result of the pandemic, and that's good news. But are too many employers – and employees and policy makers – too focused on home and hybrid working? Have we lost sight of the bigger picture?

This short whitepaper sets out of our latest research with 662 Scottish workers, and shows how critical flexible working is – in all its forms - for many people to enter work, stay in work and progress at work.

We also provide our top ten practical recommendations to help employers renew and regroup efforts around flexible working in 2023.



Key findings

Our key findings show how essential flexible working is for Scottish workers.

2 in 5

need flexible working, or they just can't work at all

1 in 3

would like to change jobs but aren't because they're worried they won't get flex elsewhere, and almost half will only apply for a new role if it specifically mentions flexible working

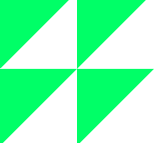
1 in 5

are considering giving up work because of a lack of flexibility

These figures represent significant portions of our national workforce. And they are a timely reminder of how fundamental flexible working is for so many people. If we use flexible working well, we can improve personal and family incomes and reduce poverty, help businesses tackle crippling skills shortages, as well as increasing our labour force and boosting our economy at large.

To make a real difference, we have to consider flexibility in all its forms. Our research shows Scottish workers want flex around **when** they work, such as flexitime and compressed hours and **how much** they work, such as part time hours, as well as flex around **where** they work. Many frontline workers just want to be able to swap shifts more easily.

All research was carried out by global research firm Panelbase between 22/12/22 and 9/1/23



About Flexibility Works

Flexibility Works is a boutique consultancy and training organisation founded by Lisa Gallagher and Nikki Slowey. We provide practical tools, support and resources to help employers create a successful flexible working culture.

Crucially, we're a social business born from our own personal experiences and belief that a lack of flexible working not only negatively impacts people, but also our economy and society.

As Scotland's leading experts in flexible working, we bring a depth of knowledge and years of practical experience to help businesses and individuals thrive.

And we work closely with the Scottish Government and policy makers to drive forward the flexible working agenda.

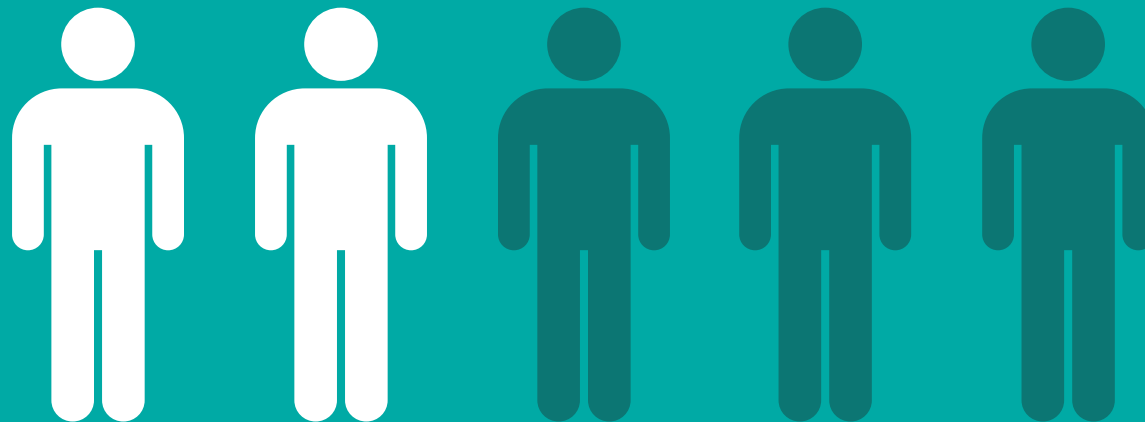
Sharing insight, such as our findings in this whitepaper, is an important element of our work.

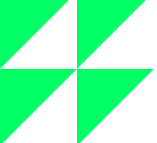


Lisa & Nikki



**Two in five Scottish workers need
flexible working, or they can't
work at all**





Flex often needed, not just 'nice to have'

Some people want flexible working. Others need it. Our poll shows two in every five (40%) Scottish workers say they need flexible working, or they simply can't work at all.

While previous research for our Flex for Life 2022 report shows six in ten (61%) Scottish workers say they already work flexibly, and a further 21% can't but would like to. This means eight in ten (82%) workers have, or would like, flexible working overall.

We still hear people talk about flexible working as a 'nice to have' for specific people, such as mothers. But these figures are a pertinent reminder of how widespread demand and expectations are for flexible working, and of how absolutely essential flexibility is for a whopping 40% of all workers. Without it, they'd be out of the workforce and much more likely to live in poverty and need welfare support. While employers can ill afford to lose two fifths of their workforce, especially those already struggling to recruit and retain staff.

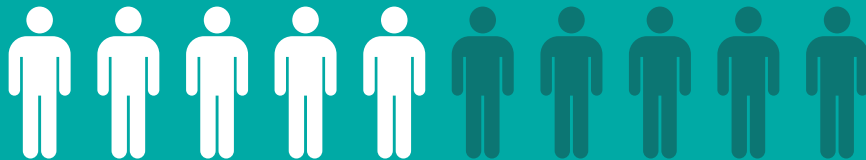
We mustn't lose sight of this fundamental fact - flexible working is vital for many people to work at all - and plenty of them aren't in desk-based roles where they can work from home.



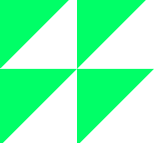
Many people are not changing jobs because they can't see flex elsewhere



31% not changing job over fears they won't get flex elsewhere



45% will only apply for a new role if it mentions flex



Flex and recruitment

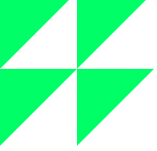
Nearly a third (31%) of Scottish workers told us they'd like to change jobs but are staying in their current role because they're worried they won't get the same flexibility elsewhere.

While almost half (45%) said they'd only apply for a new job if it specifically mentioned flexible working was available. This affected more women (49%) than men (41%).

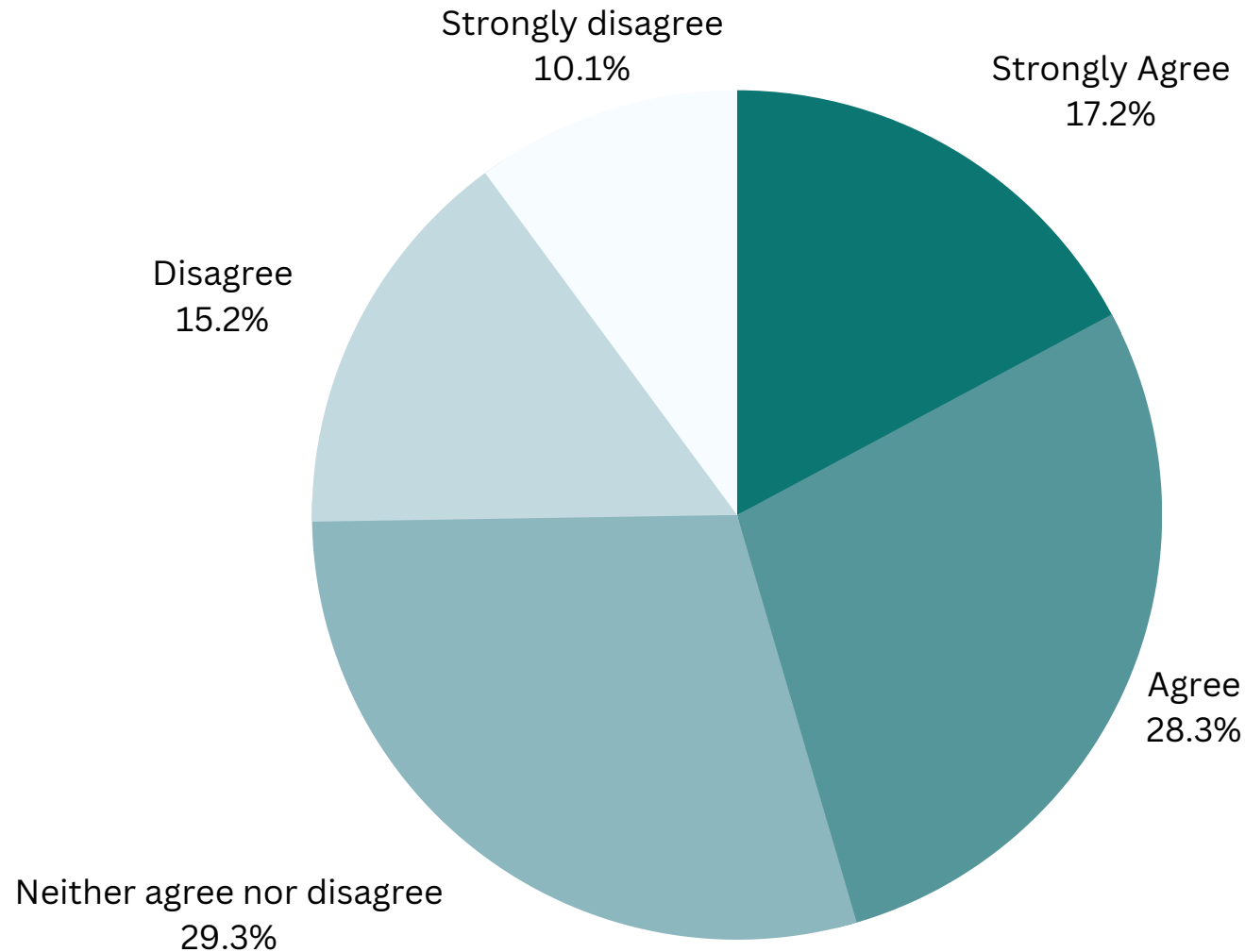
Yet, according to the Timewise Scottish Flexible Jobs Index, just 27% of job adverts in Scotland mention flexible working. This is a missed opportunity for many employers who offer good flexibility in practice but don't think to showcase it during recruitment. Those managing skills shortages have even more to gain from talking about flexible working upfront.

31% would like to change jobs but are staying put over fears they won't get the flex they need elsewhere

45% will only apply for a new job if it specifically mentions flexible working



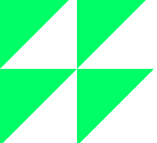
How strongly do Scottish workers agree that they'd only apply for a new role if it mentioned flexible working was available?





**A fifth of Scottish workers are
considering giving up work because of a
lack of flex**





Lack of flex and leaving employment

Almost one in five (19%) people told us they were considering giving up work altogether because of a lack of flexibility. Some people could afford this but others would be pushed into poverty. It should be an alarm bell for employers too, even those that offer some flexible options.

Our data sample wasn't large enough to look at what proportion already had some flexibility but we know from conversations with workers that sometimes people have part-time hours but can't take time off for appointments or school events. Or they can work from home occasionally but not enough.

Our research underscores the point that we need to refocus discussion about flexible working so that employers consider all forms of flexible working for all workers.

Older workers considering retirement are a case in point. Offering greater flex, such as part time hours, could create a better sense of work life harmony for older workers, and keep skills within an organisation and allow for better succession planning.

19% are considering giving up work
because of a lack of flex

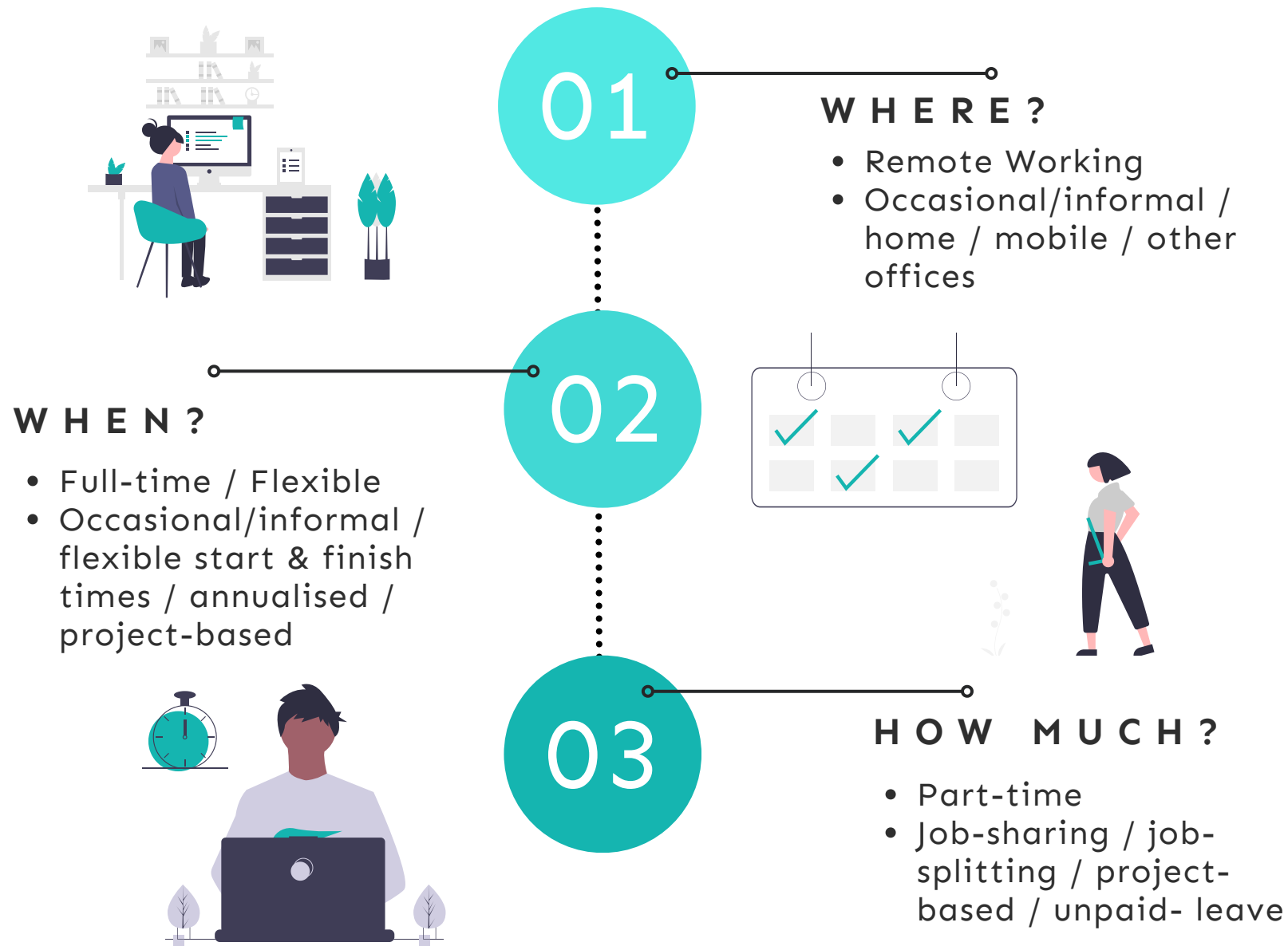


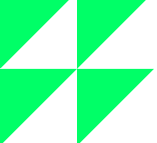
What flex Scottish workers want and why

TERM TIME COMPRESSED
PART TIME HYBRID
FLEXIBLE WORKING
FLEXIBLE HOURS JOB SHARE CHANGES TO
SHIFT SWAPS START &
REMOTE FINISH
TIMES

Many forms of flex

There are many forms of flexible working and work patterns can be completely unique. But flex is always linked to one (or more) of three areas: **where** people work, **when** people work and **how much** people work.





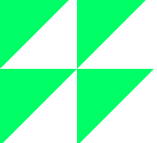
Flexibility on when and how much work is needed as well as hybrid and home working

Our poll shows that flexibility around where people work, such as home and hybrid working are popular choices with Scottish workers. But so is flexibility around when people work, such as flexitime, and compressed hours, as well as how much people work, such as part-time hours.

A total of 42% of office and knowledge-based workers said they'd like some working from home and 38% said they'd like hybrid working. Even among frontline and customer-facing workers, 35% said they'd like some working from home and 27% said they'd like hybrid working.

But flexitime, where people work their usual number of contracted hours but have a choice of start and finish times, was also a very popular option. More than a third (35%) of non-frontline workers said they'd like to work flexitime, and so did one in three (29%) frontline employees.

About one in five Scottish workers said they'd like to work part time (19% of non-frontline workers and 21% of those in frontline roles).



Just under one in five said they'd like compressed hours, where they work their usual total hours but in fewer, longer days. A similar portion said they'd like a shorter working week for the same pay, as is currently being trialled in the UK four-day week pilot (and a Scottish pilot is expected later this year).

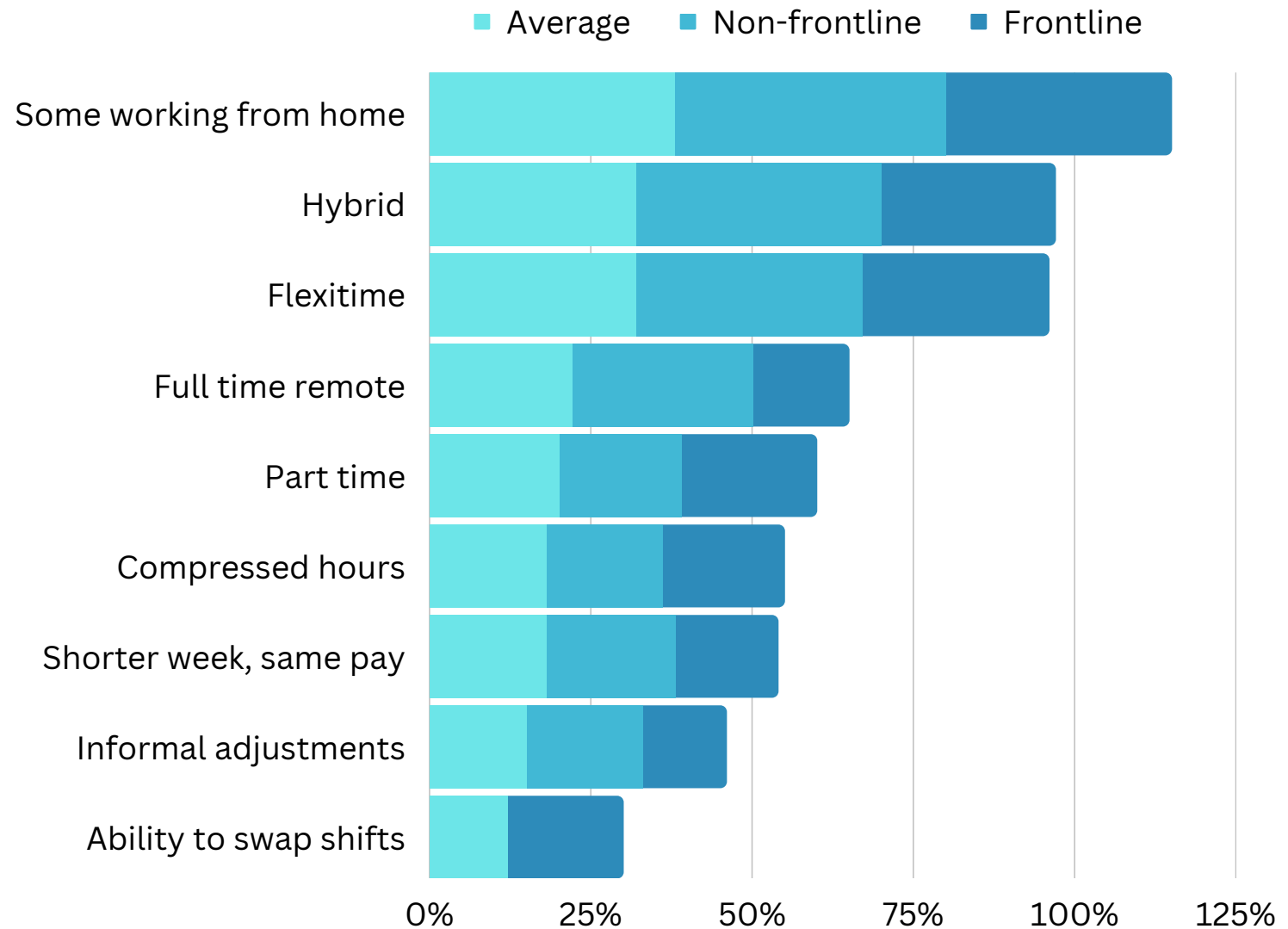
It's worth noting that among frontline workers, nearly one in five (18%) would like to be able to swap shifts more easily. Frontline employers can find it more challenging to increase flexibility for workers when location, and sometimes timings, can be very fixed. But our research shows even relatively small things, such as sharing rotas well in advance, and giving workers more say when rotas are put together, and well as being able to swap shifts easily can make a big difference.

We're encouraging employers to consider all forms of flexibility for all kinds of workers, and think about how changes could benefit workers and the organisation.



Types of flex Scottish workers want or need

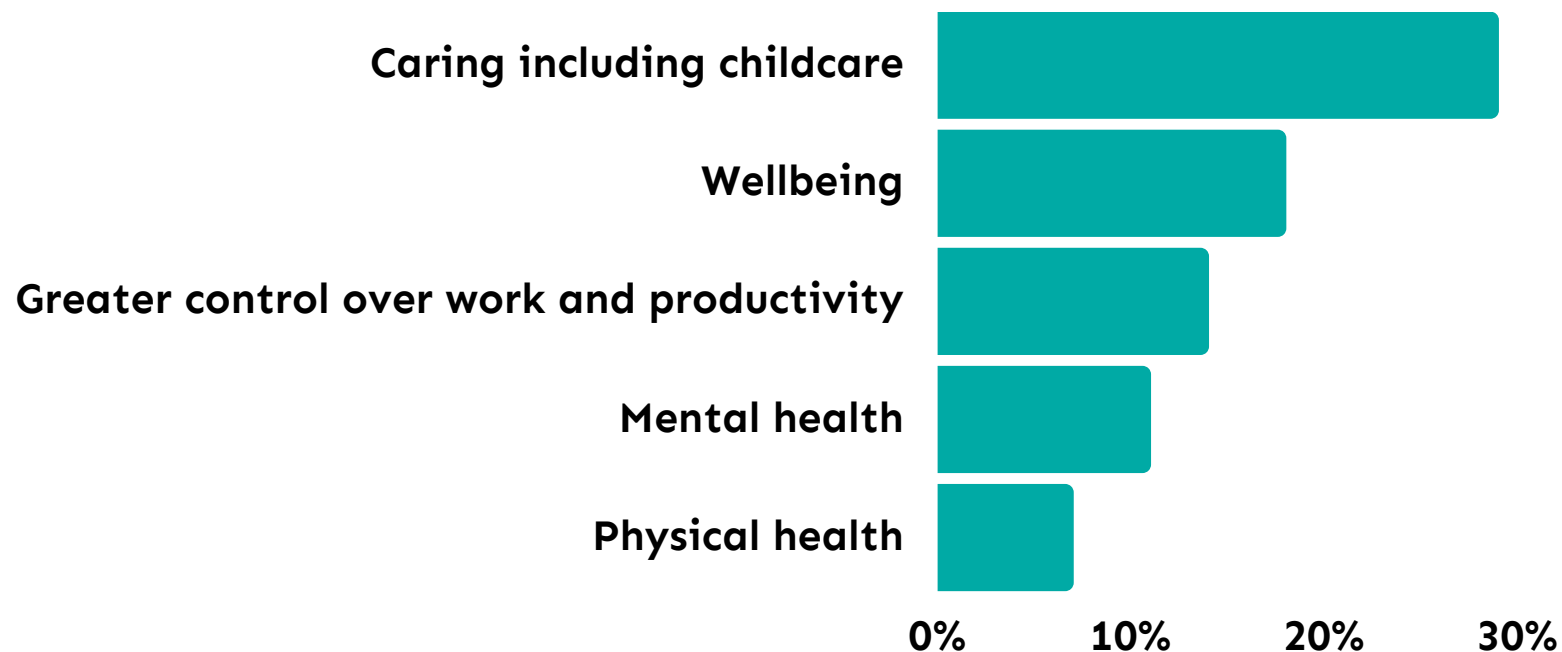
Hybrid working is popular with Scottish workers but so is flexibility on when and how much they work



Caring duties, health needs, improving wellbeing and productivity are main reasons for flex

We asked Scottish workers about their main reason for working, or wanting to work, flexibly. Nearly one in three said caring responsibilities including for children (29%). Nearly one in five (18%) said for wellbeing, while 14% said it was so they could have greater control over their work and productivity. More than one in ten (11%) cited their mental health.

It's worth noting that among workers with a disability, or long-term health condition, around a third (32%) said that managing their physical health was their main reason for wanting flexible working, far higher than the average of 7%.





10

ways to reset your approach
to flexible working



How to reset your approach to flexible working

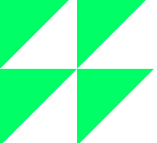
Our research shows all kinds of flexible working matter, not just hybrid. And flexible working is vital to ensure people can get into work, stay in work and progress at work, which benefits individuals and their families, as well as employers and us as a society. But if you've been swamped with hybrid planning, or you don't know where to start to create greater flex in your organisation, we've put together a handy top ten recommendations on how to create and showcase new and flexible ways of working.

1 Listen to your teams

People often want only small amounts of flexibility and come up with team solutions themselves, even in roles where flexible working is more challenging to implement. Workers know the needs of the business and they're generally realistic about the flex that's possible for their roles, teams and the wider organisation. Listen to your teams.

2 Flex can be fair, even if it's different

A plumber can't work from home, while a colleague in payroll can. But a plumber could flex their hours. So long as the process for considering flexible working is fair and consistent, workers generally don't mind if their flexible options are different to others. Don't let differences across teams hold you back.



3 Honest conversations boost wellbeing

You don't need fancy gym classes at lunchtime to improve wellbeing. Honest conversations, where people are encouraged to share what's happening in life outside work and discuss any ad-hoc or longer-term changes they may need to work patterns – without fear it will negatively impact them in future – are a simple but effective way to reduce employee stress levels and improve their focus and productivity at work.

5 Advertise flexibility

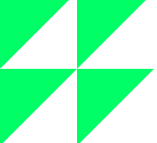
Many companies offer good flexible working but don't mention this in job adverts, or clearly on their website, and they miss out on quality applicants – often for roles where skills are scarce – because candidates don't realise flex is available. Shout about the flex you have for the best recruitment results.

4 Think about job design

Understand that some roles are dependent on location or time – or not. This can open up new ways of thinking about how best to provide choice and control for your employees. Look at both existing and new roles and work out what flexibility is possible. For frontline roles, this might include changing shift patterns, or making shift swaps easier, giving more notice of rotas and allowing staff more input to rotas.

6 Have a clear vision and model 'good' behaviour from the top down

Ensure you have a clear vision of what you want your flexible working culture to be, and create a framework so everyone is clear on what's available, or might not be possible. Normalise flexible working by getting senior managers on board and showcasing executive flexible work patterns in everyday conversations (make sure your leaders shout 'goodbye' loudly if they're leaving 'early') and via your internal communication channels.



7 Manage flexibly working teams with a team protocol

Involve the whole team in discussions about objectives/deliverables and how, when and where people are working and how to contact them. Be clear about who is available when and where. Use digital diaries and e-signatures as reminders. The team can agree how frequently everyone needs to meet face-to-face formally and informally, share the reasons why it's important to be together and set core hours/slots for this. The protocol can be reviewed regularly as circumstances change, and helps everyone feel included and informed.

9 Invest in training and support for line managers

Just because they've been doing it for the last few years, doesn't mean they feel comfortable. Training will ensure managers understand the benefits of hybrid and flexible working for people and the business, and how to handle challenges.

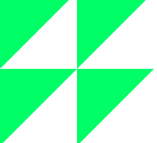
8 Avoid 'flex haves' and 'have nots'

Make sure your meetings are when everyone can attend (in person or virtual) and that out of sight does not mean out of mind. And think carefully about how you manage hybrid meetings - for example, is the chair including everyone both in the room and online, has the proper tech been set up and is there a suitable tool, such as a digital white board, that can make it clear for everyone what their actions are. This will help avoid a new divide between people who work flexibly and those who don't.

10 Increase opportunities for new clients and investment

Organisations with more ethical practices are winning more business. If you can demonstrate strong professional capabilities as well as a positive company culture where people feel happy and valued, you're more likely to attract new clients and investment.

If you still feel in a muddle, get in touch (our contact info is on the back page) and we'll be very happy to help.



Quorum's flexible approach

Our sponsor Quorum provides IT consultancy and managed services for a broad range of clients in Scotland and beyond. Flexible working has been built-in since the company's inception nearly 25 years ago. In particular, co-founders Andrew Watson (pictured) and Charles Scott have always talked about options such as part time hours or home working during recruitment, and this has helped them win key talent.

Andrew says: "Our people are our most important asset, and they drive our success. So it makes good business sense to allow them to work how, when and where suits them best. There are, of course, some limitations if people need to cover certain hours, or work at a client site. But if it doesn't impact the business, why wouldn't we let someone work the way they want, or need, to?"



Quorum's business development manager, Doug Frame, works part-time hours in a hybrid way so he can also spend time with his daughter after school. He says: "Lots of people say you can't do sales part-time. But I meet my targets, my clients are happy, and I have a much better quality of life. I'm trusted to get my job done the way I think best."

For more information about Quorum's services and working culture, visit qnrl.com



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