

An estimated 4 million UK employees have changed careers due to a lack of flexibility at work

2 years ago



New research from the CIPD finds that an estimated 4 million* people have changed careers due to a lack of flexibility at work, while an estimated 2 million* have left a job in the last year for the same reason. In response, the CIPD has warned that businesses may face a talent exodus if they fail to offer flexible working options.

The CIPD's [latest report](#), which explores employee and employer perspectives towards flexible and hybrid working practices, highlights that offering flexible working is key to retaining and attracting staff, addressing the current skills shortage and fostering inclusive workplaces.

Following the pandemic, flexible working has become much more embedded in the world of work. The CIPD's latest research shows that a growing number of organisations offer flexible working from day one of employment (39% in 2023 vs 36% in 2021) and 14% of those without this in place intend to do so before Government legislation, [announced in December 2022](#), takes effect. However, almost half (49%) of employers still aren't aware of the pending legislation, which will make flexible working requests a day one right, highlighting the need for more education and action amongst employers.

The research with more than 4,000 senior decision-makers and employees by the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, also found:

- Employees with a disability or long-term health condition are significantly more likely to say they have left a job in the last year (21%) or changed their career/profession (32%) due to a lack of

flexible working.

- 71% of workers view a flexible working pattern as important to them when considering a new role, while 69% say the ability to work remotely is important.
- Two-fifths (40%) of employers have seen an increase in flexible working requests and a growing number of employers (66% vs 56% in 2021) believe it's important to offer flexible working as an option when advertising roles.
- 65% of employers provide some kind of flexibility to their front-line workers. However, there's significant unmet demand from workers for more flexible hours arrangements, such as flexitime (17% currently use vs 29% would use if offered and possible in their role), term-time working (2% vs 8%), compressed hours (4% vs 18%), job-sharing (1% vs 4%) and annualised hours (3% vs 11%).

Flexible working could help employers tackle skills shortages, says Claire McCartney, Senior Resourcing and Inclusion Adviser at the CIPD: "Many organisations are facing the dual challenges of skills shortages and talent retention issues, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, education, and hospitality. Our latest research reinforces that offering flexible working can go a long way towards tackling these problems, even in roles that are traditionally seen as non-flexible.

"There's a variety of flexible working practices organisations can offer for most roles, including flexitime, compressed hours, hybrid working, job-sharing and term-time working. By outlining flexible working options in job advertisements, employers can also open up recruitment to wider talent pools and create fairer and more inclusive workplaces. This transparency supports workers to ask for flexibility and helps to normalise the conversation for all groups.

Employers needn't wait for legislation to start making flexible working a day-one right, Claire McCartney adds: "More needs to be done to educate and prepare organisations for pending legislation to make flexible working requests a day one right. However, employers don't need to wait to make a change to their flexible working policies and should offer the right to request flexible working from day one of employment, wherever possible."

The CIPD report outlines recommendations for employers to adopt flexible and hybrid working, including:

- Implement internal policies that allow employees to request flexible working from day one of employment and, wherever possible, stipulate in job adverts that jobs can be done flexibly.
- Raise awareness of different forms of flexible working and explore how they can be effective in roles that have traditionally been seen as non-flexible.
- Provide training and support to managers on how to manage flexible and hybrid teams effectively.
- Develop an action plan to ensure that hybrid working supports inclusion and embed inclusion in every aspect of hybrid working.
- Consult and collaborate with employees when designing hybrid working practices.

[Read the latest report](#)

[News directly from CIPD](#)