

Over 8 in 10 zero-hours contract workers want regular hours – TUC poll reveals

1 year ago



The vast majority of workers on zero-hours contracts want regular hours, according to a new [TUC](#) poll published last week.

The poll of zero-hours contract workers reveals that over 8 in 10 (84%) want regular hours of work – compared to just 1 in 7 (14%) who don't.

Financial pressures

The poll reveals that many zero-hours workers are struggling financially due to being underemployed.

Three-quarters (75%) of those polled say they have experienced difficulty meeting living expenses due to not being offered enough hours.

This is backed up by other findings from the poll which show that:

- Two-thirds of (66%) of people employed on zero-hours contracts are seeking extra work.
- Well over half (58%) of zero-hours workers' requests for more hours are being refused by employers.

One-way flexibility

The TUC says the poll also shows the one-sided nature of zero-hours contracts:

- Over half of zero-hours contract workers (52%) have had shifts cancelled at less than 24 hours'

notice.

- Two-thirds (66%) of zero-hours contract workers say they received no compensation for cancelled shifts – with just 1 in 20 (5%) fully compensated.
- Over three-quarters (76%) say they felt they had to work despite feeling unwell.

Work-life balance

The poll also reveals how many zero-hours contract workers have struggled to balance caring responsibilities and family commitments with their work:

- Half (50%) say they have experienced difficulty managing childcare with their work. And this number rises to two-thirds (67%) for mothers on zero-hours contracts.
- Three-quarters (76%) say they have missed out on a planned family or social event due to needing to work.

The poll shows that mums (35%) and carers (38%) on ZHCs are more likely than those not on ZHCs (22% and 20% respectively) to often find it hard to manage care alongside their work – putting paid to the idea that ZHCs are the best way to help working parents and carers balance paid work and unpaid caring commitments.

The majority (80%) of students on zero-hours contracts also reported that they had experienced difficulties managing studying and education alongside their work.

The poll further reveals that even amongst the minority of zero-hours contract workers who report working in this way because of their need for flexibility (for care or for study) – 6 in 10 (61%) – would prefer a contract with guaranteed shifts (compared to less than a quarter, 23% of this group for whom this arrangement would not be preferable)

Making work pay

The TUC says the findings highlight the importance of the government's forthcoming Employment Rights Bill that will ban the use of zero-hours contracts and other exploitative practices.

Analysis published by the union body in June revealed that 4.1 million people in the UK were currently employed in low-paid and insecure work – including around 1 million workers on zero-hours contracts.

Separate TUC [polling](#) published in July revealed that the vast majority (67%) of voters in Britain – across the political spectrum – support banning zero-hours contracts by offering all workers a contract that reflects their normal hours of work and compensation for cancelled shifts.

TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak said: “Most people on zero-hours contracts would much rather have the security of guaranteed hours and to be able to plan their lives properly.

“The so-called ‘flexibility’ these contracts offer is hugely one-sided with shifts regularly cancelled at the last minute – often without any compensation.

“I would challenge anyone to try and survive on a zero-hours contract not knowing from week to week how

much work they will have.

“It’s time to drive up employment standards in this country and to make work pay for everyone.

“The government’s forthcoming employment rights bill will help create a level playing field – and stop good employers from being undercut by the bad.”

Mubin Haq – Chief Executive of the abrdn Financial Fairness Trust – said: “The major problem with zero-hours contracts is the insecurity they cause and the knock-on effects on people’s daily lives.

“From participating in family and social events, to balancing caring responsibilities, those on zero-hours contracts report greater challenges.

“Moreover, the financial penalties are significant with just a third receiving any compensation for loss of income. Addressing problems such as this are essential to delivering greater financial security.”

Julian Richer – Founder and Managing Director of Richer Sounds, and Founder of the Zero-Hours Justice campaign – said: “Most people work for good employers who pay decent wages and provide secure conditions.

“Working people need basic security, to know when they will be working and how much they will earn. But a minority of employers exploit the ability to hire people on zero-hours contracts.

“It is time to rid the economy of these contracts so that every worker who wants a secure contract can have one.

“Driving up employment standards is in everyone’s interests. A ban on exploitative zero-hours contracts is well overdue.”