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The Flexible Working Report

2023-2024



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Foreword from our CEO

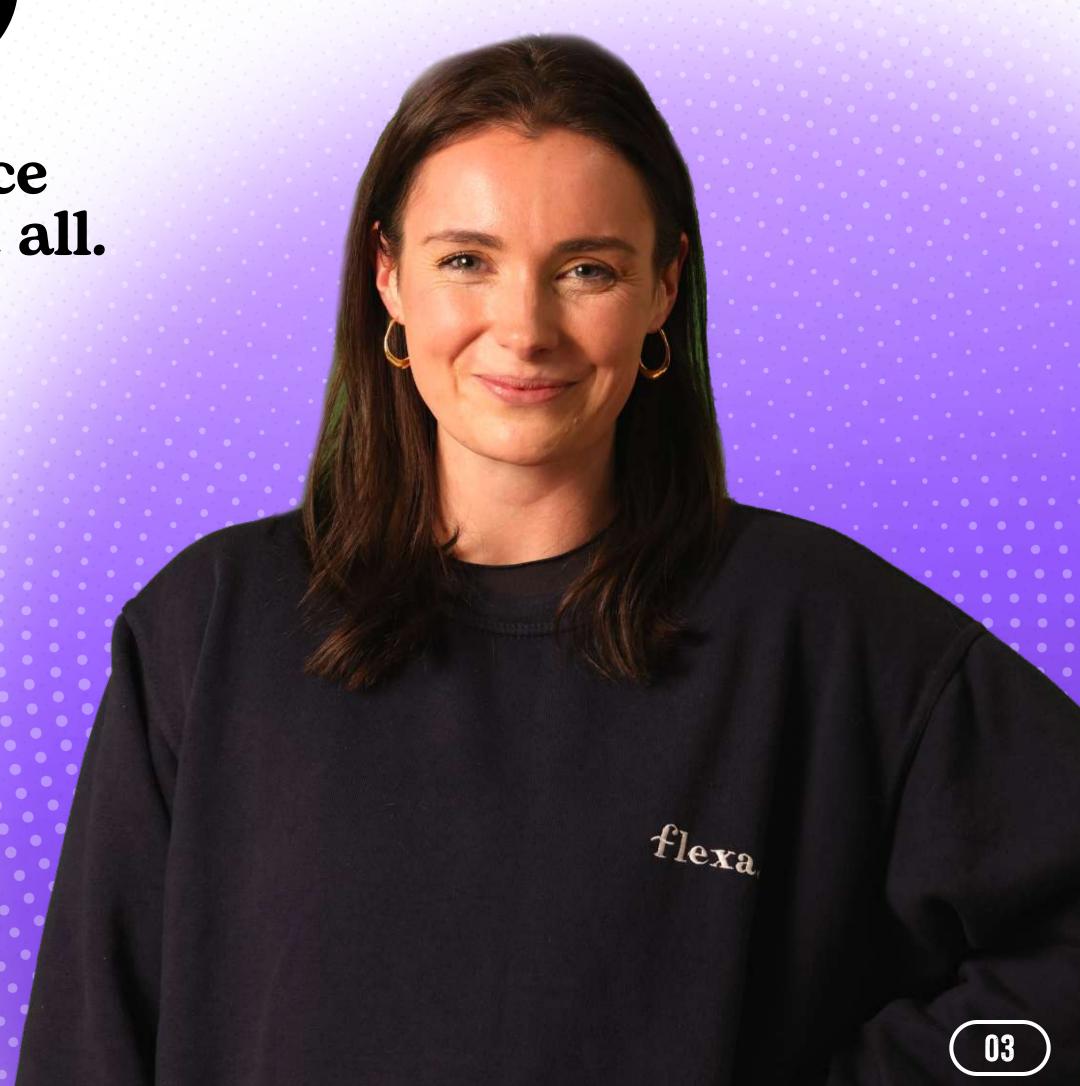
Hello there! I'm so pleased to be able to introduce Flexa's first ever Flexible Working Report to you all.

Whether you're after the core trends we've seen in the flexible working space in 2023, or you're wondering what's coming next in 2024 and beyond, we've got you covered.

We'll get into the nitty gritty of the data shortly, but before then, I wanted to share with you some of the big picture ideas around flexible working and the future of work that are on my mind right now. There are a few points of real challenge and opportunity that I've been thinking a lot about lately, and that I feel certain are going to impact the way society approaches work in the near future.

QUICK VIEW

- 1 Tension will brew between individualism and collectivity
- 2 Hiring will become more like marketing
- 3 Unintentional managers will have nowhere to hide
- 4 HR and People teams will continue to step up strategically
- 5 Flexibility will expand beyond knowledge workers, or it will struggle to survive



Tension will brew between individualism and collectivity

First off, there's the ever-present challenge of how companies will manage to balance the growing individualism of employees, while still maintaining the collective culture and working environment of their company.

What we're seeing in the data is an increasing variety of benefits and ways of working empowering employees to work in the way that suits them. **This means more individual choice than ever before**, and an unprecedented chance for many employees to customise how, when and where they work. But with this increased level of personalisation, the true challenge for employers will be maintaining a real sense of their unique company culture and values between employees who are working in disparate places, times and manners.

2 Hiring will become more like marketing

With the increased knowledge of the vast spectrum of flexible working on the candidate side, plus this now being seen as 'the new standard' for many: we're going to see hiring looking a lot more like marketing in the months and years to come.

Different types of people want different types of working environments. This is a great thing for companies, because ultimately it means that you can find talent that is more aligned with your way of working – and that means a happier, more productive workforce.

But, it also means a switch in tactic is needed in order to find this talent.

Companies will need to lead with their EVP (Employee Value Proposition) front and centre to ensure they appeal to the right talent for them, and the very best talent will become pickier about things broader than just salary and titles.

We've seen this begin to happen this year, and People teams have begun to learn more about the hiring funnel and how to use it to their advantage. This next year will be the year where companies who don't adapt will begin to get left behind.

Unintentional managers will have nowhere to hide

The office hides many sins. And disguises many poor managers.

It's long been said that people don't leave bad jobs, they leave poor managers: and the flexible working evolution has put this into a stark new light. It's easy to be a passable manager when you can look over someone's shoulder all day and rely on natural in-person interactions to build trust and confidence. But in remote, hybrid and flexible setups, this advantage no longer exists.

In 2024, we are going to see the need for intentional management coming to the forefront. And we can't only blame the managers themselves for the current shortcomings. It's incredible how few people ever receive training on how to be a successful manager, and it's that's going to need to change as we further adapt to the evolved world of work.

I expect to see training for managers that specifically tackles how to build relationships, have tough conversations, and evaluate performance in remote, hybrid and flexible environments. I expect to see new best practices amongst the most successful leaders. And above all, I expect for all of this to become part of the wider flexible working conversation.

4 HR and People teams will continue to step up strategically

The remit of HR and People teams is constantly changing.

In just a few short years, the People function within a business has seen the scope of their roles expand dramatically, with many now responsible not just for the typical 'hiring and firing' but for supporting employee mental health; representing their company externally by building an employer brand; managing the practicalities of a remote or partly-remote workforce; and many more responsibilities that are brand new for them.

I predict that we will see growing provision from L&D departments and challenger companies, accommodating People teams' need for support and training to empower them to take on a suite of new responsibilities and be seen in a more strategic light.



5 Flexibility will expand beyond knowledge workers, or it will struggle to survive •

While flexible working has expanded into a diverse array of industries and company styles over the past few years, it's undeniable that it's still a privilege denied to many who don't work in traditionally office-based roles.

And there's ultimately no reason for this: just because a job can't be done from home doesn't mean that it can't be enhanced with some level of flexibility, whether that means more choice around shift patterns, better wellbeing support from employers, or support with childcare costs. Continuing to challenge preconceptions about who flexibility is 'for' will be essential in order to empower as many workers as possible to choose how they balance work and life, and ultimately to ensure the future of flexible work for all.

Well, that's my two cents anyway! Perhaps you'll keep these bigger picture ideas in mind as you read through our data, along with some of the contributions from Flexified companies and partners sharing their thoughts and predictions. Enjoy...

Molly Johnson-Jones, CEO & Co-Founder of Flexa

Key takeaways



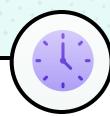
Traditionally 'seasonal' benefits like summer hours, sabbaticals and Work From Anywhere schemes have become less seasonal in 2023, with more evenly distributed peaks and troughs in candidate demand across the year.



The demand for mental health support in the workplace has never been stronger, with a +16% increase in November 2023 vs November 2022; and physical support in the form of WFH budgets has also become more popular this year.



Candidate interest in remote working has increased this year on Flexa, but the supply of remote jobs isn't high enough to meet the demand.



Flexible hours are less important to candidates than flexible location, but there is still demand for a small degree of time flexibility, more so than fully flexible hours.



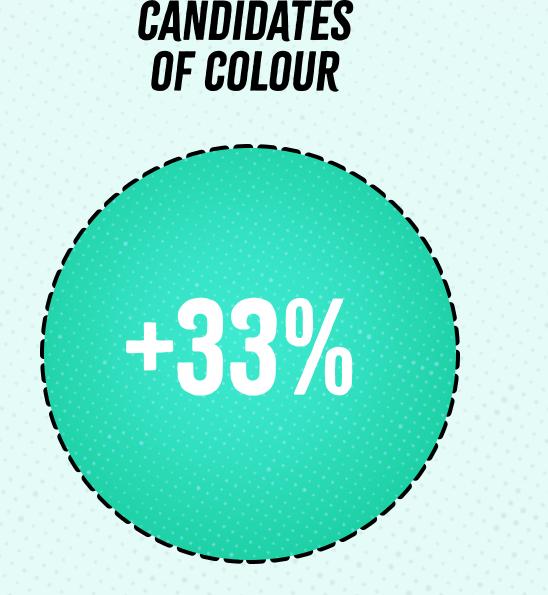
Alternative working patterns like part-time, compressed hours and job sharing are still in demand, but we've seen the real growth coming through the popularity of the 4-day week, with searches increasing +68% since this filter was introduced in February 2023.

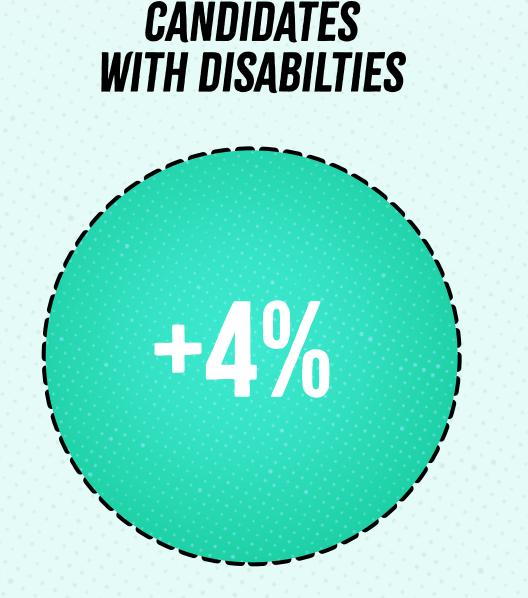


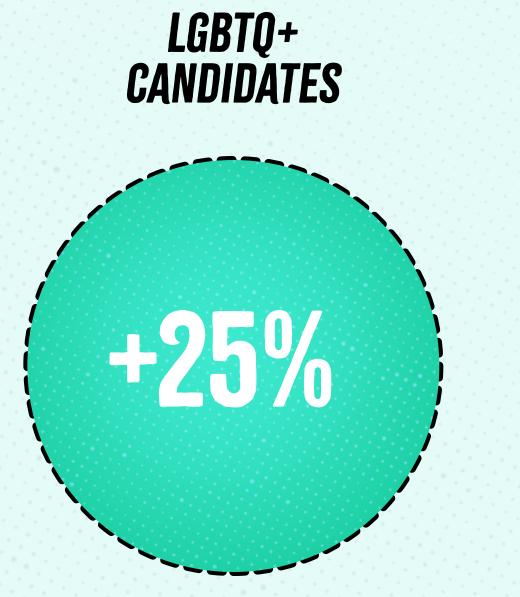
Fertility leave is a newer benefit but has been rising steadily in popularity this year. We expect to see more family-friendly benefits like workplace-supported tax-free childcare growing across 2024.

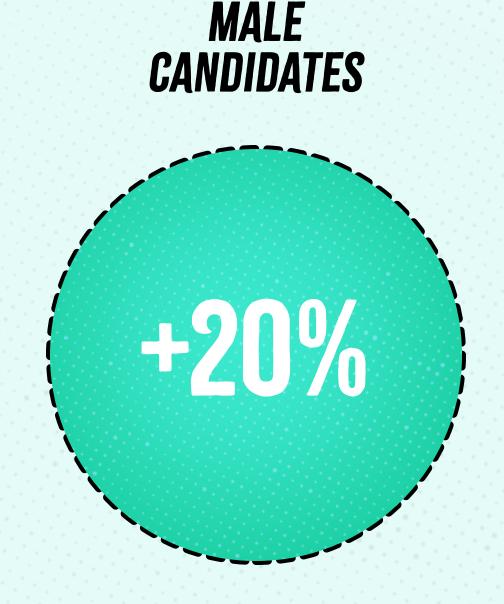
The appeal of flexible working is increasingly diverse

GROWTH IN 2023 ON FLEXA SHOWS THIS









Proving that flexibility is not just for women or just for mothers

Glossary of terms

A few of the flexible working terms you'll see throughout this report have different names and different meanings for different people.

So we've put together a handy guide to how we'll be using these terms, for you to refer back to as you read through.

FULLY REMOTE	Remote work only, with no office to use
REMOTE-FIRST	Work primarily from home, but there is an office (or co- working space) available to be used as employees choose
HYBRID	The typical working week includes a mixture of home and office working
WFA SCHEME	Work from anywhere around the world for a set number of days per year
SABBATICAL	Extended period of leave, with your job guaranteed when you return
FULLY FLEXIBLE HOURS	Employees choose when they work with total freedom
CORE HOURS	A set timeframe when employees need to be working, with freedom to complete work as you wish outside these hours
A LITTLE FLEX TIME	Some leeway to start and finish a little earlier or later to suit you

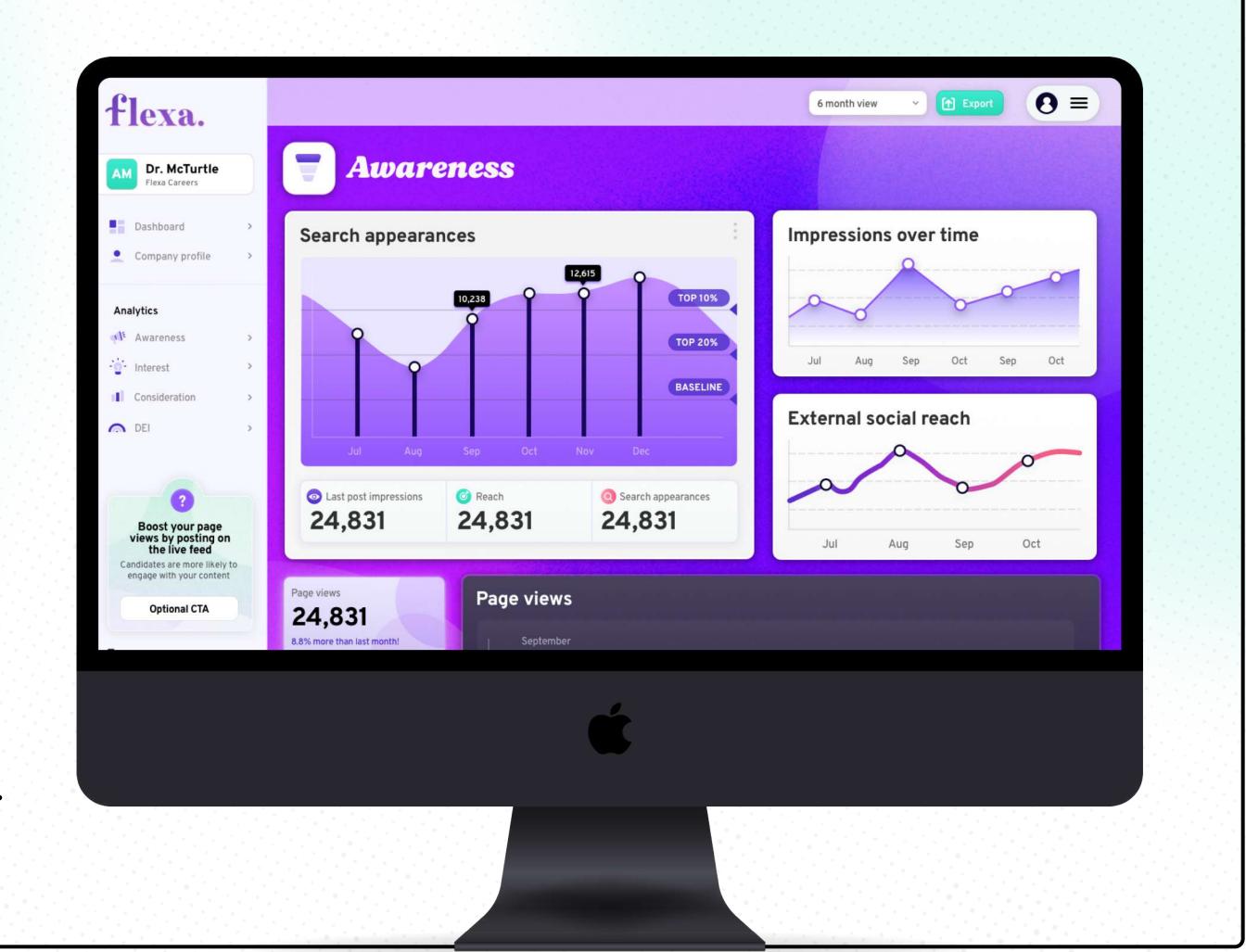
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Data Sources

We analysed a sample of...

- 3,097,665 JOB SEARCHES
- **7** 16,414 JOB ADVERTS

... between the start of January 2022 and the end of October 2023.





Candidates can add multiple filters when searching for roles at any one time (for example, the same candidate might search for both remote-first and fully remote at once).

Seasonal benefits become year-round standard

Typically 'seasonal' benefits are now popular all year round.

While many benefits of a flexible EVP can be felt by employees all year round, there are undeniably some which grow in popularity as spring turns to summer and thoughts turn to travel and time outside. As well as summer hours – where companies enable employees to finish early on a Friday afternoon, effectively running a 4.5 day week over the summer months – benefits like enhanced or unlimited annual leave and sabbaticals have seen their highest popularity with candidates during the summer months for the last 2 years.

But in 2023, as employees are increasingly expecting flexibility and companies are increasingly providing it, benefits like sabbaticals and taking unlimited annual leave are no longer restricted to one time of year.

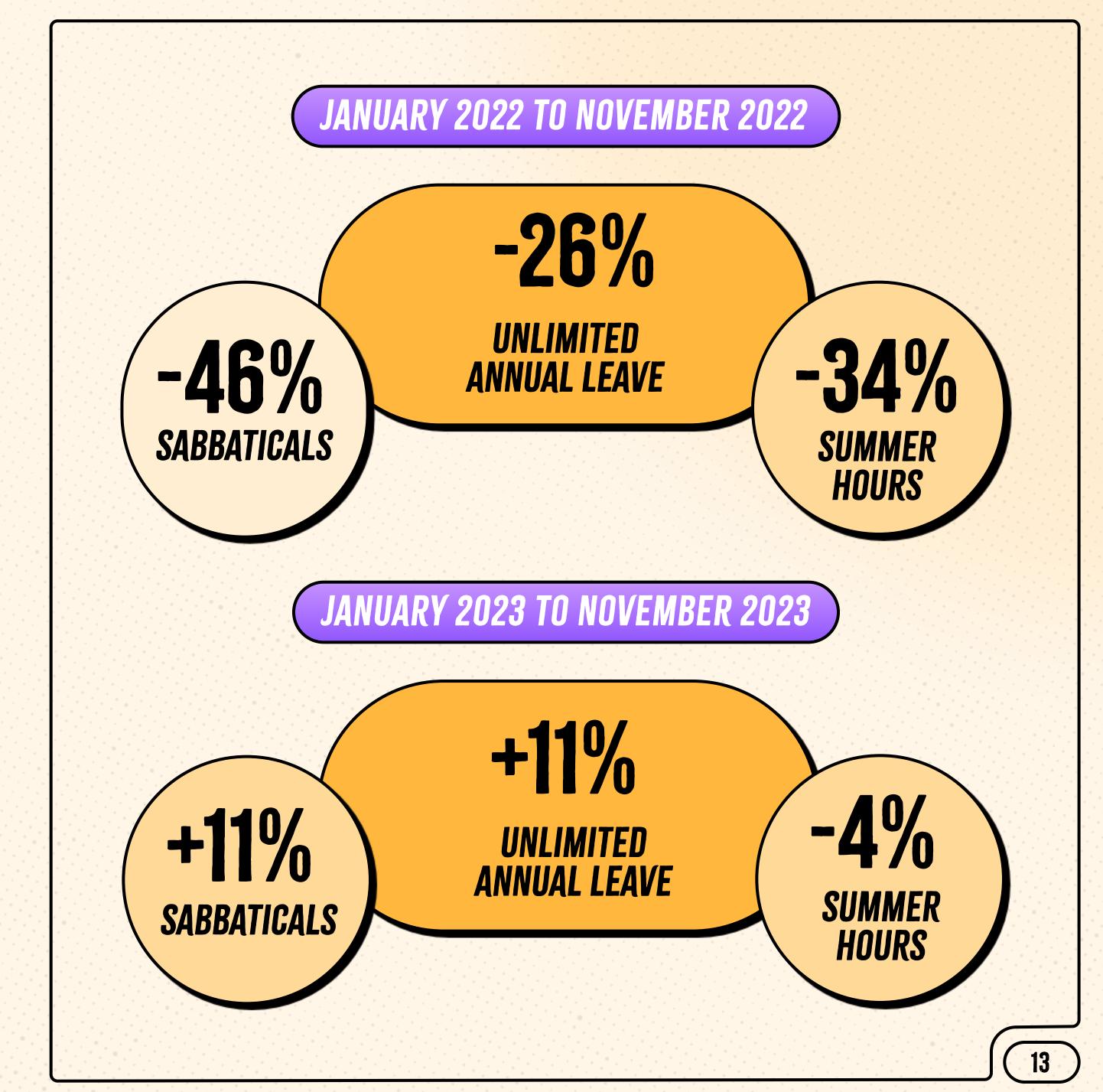
More and more, we see candidates expecting to be able to travel and develop themselves without having to leave full-time employment: and the companies who are offering these benefits are reaping the rewards of strengthened talent attraction. (flexa. THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REPORT '23-'24

Back in 2022, despite lifts over the summer, we saw the percentage of Flexa users specifying sabbaticals, summer hours and unlimited annual leave as key preferences drop significantly from the beginning to the end of the year.

While May, June and July saw small spikes in volumes, the overall trends dropped across the year, suggesting that other benefits soon became top of mind once summer was over.

In 2023, however, we've seen a departure from this pronounced seasonality. Our data shows far steadier volumes, with peaks and troughs more evenly spread across the year, and with overall percentages either growing from January 2023 to the later stages of the year, or dropping by significantly less than last year.

While there will have been a natural evening across data with the higher volumes of registered users this year vs last year (with nearly triple the volume of new users in 2023 vs 2022), even looking at the percentages for each year as a whole, overall popularity of each of these benefits has grown.



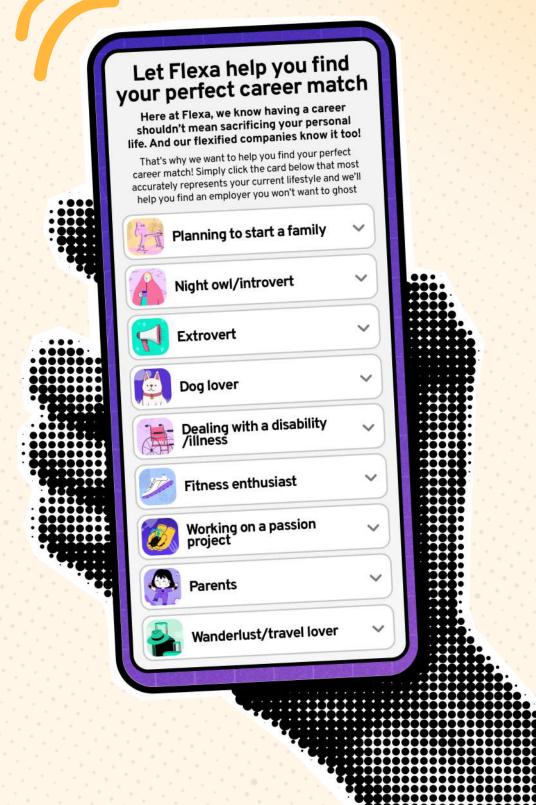
We expect to see even fewer pronounced seasonal bumps [Let Flex help you find your perfect career match as a series of the content of the co

IN 2024

As candidates continue to research and educate themselves about what benefits are available to them and match up with how they work best, they'll feel more and more empowered to state their preferences all year round.

What this means for companies is striking: flexibility and popular benefits are becoming considered the new standard.

That's why companies who offer these benefits but aren't putting them front and centre in their EVP should strongly consider shouting about them throughout the year, not just over the summer, to continue attracting top talent.



GD for jobs in property

On their approach to unlimited annual leave



At Collins Property Recruitment, we believe in fostering a work environment that not only attracts top talent, but also supports the unique passions and aspirations of our team members. Our commitment to offering unlimited annual leave has proven to be a game-changer: and here's a fantastic success story that exemplifies its advantages.

Earlier this year, we received a call from a talented recruiter who had come across Collins Property Recruitment on Flexa. Intrigued by our innovative approach to work-life balance, he expressed a keen interest in joining our team. At the time of the call, he was in Kathmandu, Nepal, enjoying a thrilling adventure with his girlfriend. Their shared love for travel made our company particularly appealing, providing the opportunity to explore the world without compromising their careers.

Excited about the prospect, this recruiter reached out to his previous employer to discuss the possibility of returning, provided they could support his passion for globetrotting. Unfortunately for them (and fortunately for us!) the answer was a regretful no. Seizing the opportunity, we welcomed him into our team, and little did we know that we were gaining one of the best recruiters our company had ever seen. Fast forward to last month, and our new team member was living his dream.

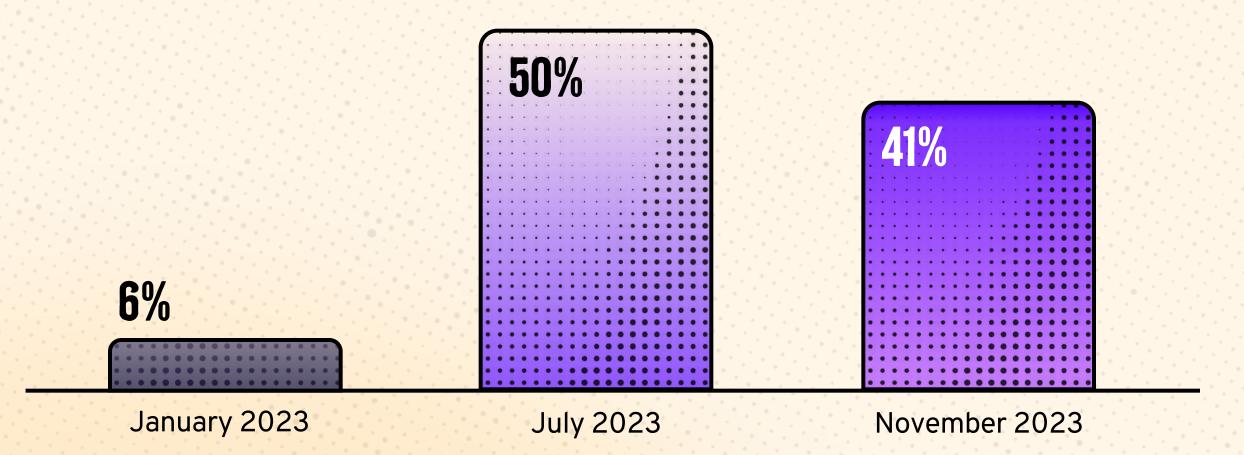
By embracing unlimited annual leave, we empower our team members to lead fulfilling lives both inside and outside the workplace.

He spent the entire month in Seville, seamlessly blending work and travel. Thanks to our unlimited annual leave policy, he was able to immerse himself in the vibrant culture of Seville while continuing to excel in his role as a recruiter. The flexibility offered by Collins Property Recruitment not only fulfilled his desire for adventure but also enhanced his productivity and job satisfaction. This success story underscores the positive impact of our forward-thinking approach to work.

WFA schemes show strong growth

One of the most popular and most talked about flexible benefits from 2023 is the Work From Anywhere scheme.

We've seen the popularity of this benefit skyrocket, from just 6% of searches on Flexa using this filter in January 2023, to 41% in November 2023 – that's nearly a 6x increase across the year. Despite a seasonal boost still existing for this benefit – hitting a high of 50% of searches in July 2023 – it's clear that the popularity of WFA is far from restricted to the summer months.



Its popularity shows no signs of slowing, either; and with demand and interest this high, 2024 looks set to be the biggest year yet for Work From Anywhere.

But despite the ever-present WFA content across LinkedIn and in the press, there's still a lack of understanding in the flexible working community about what 'Work From Anywhere' really means.

This stems from the fact that people tend to misunderstand the concept of 'remote'.

Here at Flexa, we make a clear distinction between fully remote companies – where employees can work from wherever they'd like within the country that they reside in – and companies which offer Work From Anywhere schemes, where employees are entitled to work from anywhere around the world for an allocated amount of days per year (usually dependent on tax implications).

Despite what social media might portray, it's not possible for an employee to jet around the world non-stop without any implications to their, or the company's, immigration and tax considerations.

We know that this can cause confusion, both for companies and candidates, and the last thing anybody wants is for lack of transparency or clarity to result in disappointed candidates feeling like they didn't get what they signed up for.

To help clear things up, here are some top tips from our partners at Deel about all things compliance and WFA: so you can head into 2024 feeling confident about how to implement this sought-after benefit, and put yourselves ahead of the pack.

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On the technicalities of WFA schemes



Work From Anywhere (WFA) schemes are brilliant, but they aren't as simple as grabbing your passport and laptop and booking a place to stay.

You and your team should consider important legal and tax implications and ensure everyone understands the company's expectations and boundaries before jetting off. Here are a few answers to some practical questions on how to do this seamlessly and effectively.

WHAT ARE THE IMMIGRATION & TAX REGULATIONS AROUND WFA?

These are too complex for us to cover comprehensively here, but we'll give you a start! Most jurisdictions have two regulations to watch out for when implementing WFA schemes:

- Immigration laws and their acceptance of work or remote work within the destination country
- Corporate and personal tax triggers

Generally, staying in a country for more than a specified number of days triggers residency. Residency typically means the worker is now considered a country resident and must pay taxes. Some countries specify tax liabilities from day 1 of being there, while others go up to 183 days.

WHEN DOES A BUSINESS TRIGGER CORPORATE TAXES?

Triggering tax residency may differ from an individual to a corporation, depending on many factors such as business size, industry, and market. For example, an individual living and working in the UK may trigger corporate tax liability for the business before they trigger their individual liability, e.g suppose the local tax authorities concluded that the company constituted a PE. In that case, the attributable income to the PE will be subject to corporate income tax in that country.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COMPLIANCE?

The compliance responsibility is shared between the company and the worker. Both parties have a role to play in ensuring that local and international laws and regulations are followed.

Since the company could suffer the greatest reputational and financial risk should local authorities identify PE and tax evasion, it is safer for the company to be as proactive as possible and ensure the right policies and procedures are in place.



What are some of the key compliance best practices?

It's important to note that any WFA arrangements must be temporary while affording workers flexibility. Most companies embracing WFA schemes allow their workers to work from abroad anywhere between 30 to 90 days per tax year. However, some companies are more flexible for certain locations if they have a legal entity in that jurisdiction.

At Deel, our WFA policy enables workers 45 working days (70 natural days) working from abroad per calendar year. This threshold serves as a measure to mitigate potential tax implications for the employer and the employee, as the policy does not impose restrictions on any specific country.

If the duration extends beyond 45 business days, we recommend conducting a comprehensive immigration and tax analysis of both personal and corporate aspects to assess potential impacts.

Remember that WFA schemes are only as complicated as you make them, and ultimately, if you create a supportive culture based on trust and accountability, it will all work out. Even better — you'll be ready to reap the rewards of top talent acquisition, retention, and have happy and productive teams.



TUI Group on their WFA scheme



At TUI, we understand that hybrid working is here to stay, and that the way we all work will continue to evolve. We're also aware that we're a huge global organisation with colleagues based all over the world. That's why we decided to offer colleagues the TUI WORKWIDE scheme. For colleagues that don't have to work from a fixed location, they can work from abroad for up to 30 days a year. We're a travel company, after all, so we do believe that our colleagues should experience the fun, excitement and adventure of travel too!

Our colleagues love having this scheme available. From Spain, Morocco and Thailand to South Africa and Australia, there have been numerous destinations visited, with our most popular destinations being the UK, Spain and Germany. TUI WORKWIDE is also used in many different ways: with colleagues extending time abroad after a holiday or business trip, visiting and supporting relatives, or just working from their favourite destinations.

We'd highly recommend it to other companies. We've found that offering this type of flexibility really opens up your talent pool, and allows you to offer a unique benefit that not all industries are able to offer. This means that we can recruit from more fields. We also know that when people are looking to change jobs, they're looking for flexibility, in time and in location: this scheme offers that at very low cost to employers, but at great benefit to colleagues.

There has been a 173% increase in colleagues requesting to go on a TUI WORKWIDE in 22/23 compared to the previous year; and there have been a massive 24,393 days used on TUI WORKWIDE up to the end of 2023, which just goes to show how much use colleagues get from this benefit.

Looking forward, we believe that flexible working is here to stay, and so schemes like TUI WORKWIDE will only grow in popularity.

Employees expecting more support from employers _____

Demand for mental health support in the workplace has never been stronger

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic began, awareness of the importance of mental health in general has been growing across the world. In the first year of the pandemic alone, the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by +25%, with isolation, grief and fear for the future all playing their part.¹

While life has returned to some semblance of normality for most people over the past couple of years, the lingering impacts of such a deeply unsettling period that we all lived through – not to mention long-term physical health impacts for many, as well as living with the loss of loved ones – can't be overstated. Combine this with the hardship many have faced through the cost of living crisis in the UK, the threat of impending recession across the world, and brutal and tragic global conflicts being front-page news for most of the year, and it's no surprise that mental health is a still-growing priority.

For Mental Health Day 2023, Ipsos commissioned a global survey which found that while 78% of respondents say their mental health is equally as important as their physical health, just 34% of them feel that their country's health system treats them the same.² And with British workers in particular feeling more pessimistic than ever before about living standards, and experiencing record-high levels of negative emotions caused by their workplace, the responsibility of businesses to protect their employees' mental health has never felt so crucial.³

Our data reflects this, too.

The proportion of candidates expressing a preference to work at a company which offers mental health support has risen +10% since January 2023; and comparing where we were at the end of November 2023 to this time a year ago, we've seen an even greater increase of +16%.

Looking ahead to 2024, we predict that we'll see a rising demand for training for employers, managers and HR teams in handling mental health issues. Managers and HR teams have been taking on a burden these past few years that is brand new, and many feel they don't have the access to training and support that is needed for them to fully be there for their employees.

While it's impossible to predict what macro factors will come into play in 2024, with multiple wars showing no signs of stopping, the possibility of a recession hitting by the end of the year, and both workplace and general happiness dropping to historic lows, we feel confident in saying that mental health benefits will be needed more than ever in the New Year.

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ON WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Not all companies provide mental health support to their employees, and of those that do, not all companies will provide a service that can truly make a difference.



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ON WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

There has been a rise in the number of mental health and wellbeing services available to companies, ranging from online self help materials with no mental health professional support to bespoke mental health services offering employees (and their friends and family) a range of evidence-based psychological interventions.

Of course, any service is better than no service at all, but some companies clearly want to think long and hard about providing the very best mental health care for their employees. These companies understand the return on investment for such a service. They don't want to provide something as a "we have ticked the mental health support box" offering.

These companies tend to stand out from the crowd as being employee-centric, going the extra mile to support employees not only with mental health and wellbeing but with flexible working, inclusivity, diversity, great policies and procedures, and training and professional development.

These companies do all of this in the service of their business, knowing that it will positively impact productivity, recruitment and retention. For companies considering rolling out this benefit but sitting on the fence, I would ask them to consider the impact that mental ill health and poor wellbeing has on their company.

CONSIDER:

- What does it cost the company in terms of productivity?
- How much time do managers or HR professionals spend supporting people with poor mental health?
- What is the impact on the business when someone is stressed, anxious, depressed, or burnt out?
- What might be the positive effects of ensuring that employees have rapid access to high quality mental health care just when they need it?
- How confident is the HR team on topics like fitness to work, managing mental health in the work-place, and promoting mental wellbeing?



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ON WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

There has been an increased awareness of mental health in the last 2 or 3 years, and with increased awareness comes increased need for access to high quality, effective psychological therapy.

PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY COMMON MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, SUCH AS DEPRESSION & ANXIETY

In 2023 alone, we saw an increased prevalence of common mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety, with the proportion of those affected changing from 1 in 4 people to 1 in 2. Many companies, from big corporations to small start ups, signed up to some sort of mental wellbeing benefit in the last 3 years (driven partly by the impact of Covid).

The vast majority signed up to cheaper options (such as online self help materials). I predict that in 2024 and beyond, these companies will start to question the efficacy of these products, and that gradually more companies will start looking for higher quality products and services. I believe that they will start to ask the right questions about the solutions they have in place.

- How fast can an employee access therapy?
- What sort of therapies do you offer? (One size doesn't fit all.)
- How would I know that I was getting a return on investment?
- How do you train your therapists?
- Do you have an experienced clinician on your senior leadership team?
- How do you match a therapist to an employee?
- What plans do you have to ensure that you continuously improve the quality of care so more employees get better quicker?

And physical, material support is increasingly valued, too



As we've seen more and more workers choose to seek out jobs where they can work from home full-time, and the macro rise of hybrid working, too, workers are increasingly asking for physical provisions to be made to help them work as effectively as possible from their home.

Whether that means companies providing laptops, desks, ergonomic chairs or more specific equipment, we've seen that candidate preference for a company offering a work from home allowance – an allocated budget to spend on their work from home setup – has remained fairly steady from 2022, with less than a -4% drop in percentage points (meaning an actual increase in number of candidates, due to much larger numbers of people using Flexa), and a +3% climb from January 2023 to the end of this year.

Again, it isn't surprising that demand remains high for this particular benefit. Purse strings were tightened for many at the onset of the pandemic, and they have only drawn tighter through the cost of living crisis with soaring energy bills and household costs making life harder. Employees might not be able to afford a splurge on a high quality office chair, a desk, or a computer monitor, but still want to be able to work as effectively from home as they can in an office.

As we move into 2024, offering a WFH allowance is one way that employers can show their employees they are valued in a tangible, meaningful way. Our friends at Flexified partner company Hofy, who specialise in device supply, have some tips about what to expect in 2024, and how companies can accommodate their employees.

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Some WFH equipment is essential – for example, every team member needs a laptop – and some roles require specific equipment like monitors (creative/engineering roles), headsets (customer-facing roles) and so on. Anything you choose to provide outside of the absolute essentials is an investment in your team members' productivity, wellbeing, and happiness, and therefore also an investment in the success of your business.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Your teams work from their desks 8+ hours a day. Providing them with a high-quality ergonomic chair is going to make them more comfortable, reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury, and show that you value their health and wellbeing. Every team member needs a laptop; you can't compromise on that. But if you're on the fence about investing in the tools you need to provide equipment globally, you will compromise on your onboarding experience and your IT/People team's time.

Say your system is that the employee purchases, and you then reimburse. They may spend weeks out-of-pocket, and may not have the savings to shoulder this. If a laptop arrives a few days late, or damaged, or never arrives at all, your new hire's onboarding experience is ruined. They could wait a week or two for a replacement, while you take on the cost of the laptop and the downtime. And your IT/People team is burdened with the admin.

If you're wondering whether to invest in a WFH equipment management tool like Hofy – built from the ground up to do this job seamlessly - think about your employee onboarding experience, and the productivity of your People and IT teams.

People who have experienced work from home are doing so less than they desire. On average, we find that people WFH 2 days a week, but they want to work 3. That means demand is currently 50% above the status quo: the pressure is on for employers to respond to the needs of the talent market.

Based on this, as we look to 2024 and beyond, we expect the number of days worked from home to grow, and therefore demand for WFH equipment to grow as companies invest more heavily in their teams' home working environments.

figures On what workplace transparency means to them



Can you tell us a bit about why you believe that transparency is so important?

For one thing, the upcoming EU Pay Transparency Directive means that transparency is no longer a nice-tohave. Companies in Europe will soon be legally required to open up some of their processes and policies around pay — and the smart ones are getting started now.

But even putting legal requirements aside, we at Figures believe that there are a number of reasons that transparency in general — and pay transparency in particular — is a good idea. For one thing, it's a great way to generate trust with employees and candidates. And in an era where issues like disengagement and attrition are very much front-of-mind for HR, that's never been more important.

There's also a very important business incentive for making sure candidates know what they're signing up for when they join your company. If a new hire arrives on their first day and finds out that the role, company, culture and salary are totally different from what they've been led to believe, no one wins.

From the employee's perspective, they might feel tricked and disrespected by their new employer before they've even started. And if that new hire quits, the company is back at square one and needs to start the hiring process all over again.

What would you say to a company that is considering adopting a more transparent culture, but doesn't know where to start?

First of all, adopting a transparent culture is a gradual process: you can't go from complete pay secrecy to 100% transparency overnight.

OUR ADVICE?

Start small. If you're struggling to know where to begin, look at areas where you'd be comfortable sharing your policies and processes with employees. What are you doing well?

For example, you might have a really robust system for determining salary ranges for new hires, even if you're not quite there in other areas. Once you've started to open up some of your internal processes, it's much easier to iterate from there.

Also, remember that your efforts to be transparent don't have to be 100% perfect from day one. Don't be afraid to be a little bit vulnerable: as long as everything you're doing is above board, authenticity and honesty about the areas where you're not as transparent as you'd like to be can get you a long way with candidates and employees.







Have you seen any changes across 2023 in the popularity and uptake of salary transparency across different businesses?

Definitely! We're hearing about more and more companies realising that transparency is the future and looking for ways to become more transparent.

And not just small start-ups — many of our large clients, with hundreds or thousands of employees, are planning to be transparent with their salary ranges next year in anticipation of the upcoming changes to legislation.

And finally, have you got any predictions about how transparency might develop and change in 2024?

Today, more and more companies are choosing to include salary ranges or exact salaries in their job descriptions. But something that people are talking about less is the need to be transparent about your compensation policy — and that's something we think we'll see a lot more of in the next few years.

Because here's the thing: a salary range on a job ad is all well and good, but what people really care about is whether they're being treated fairly. They want to know that the systems and processes their company uses are systematically fair and consistent — and a salary range doesn't necessarily tell you that.

In 2024, we'll see more companies not only including salary information on their job ads, but complementing that with a link to a compensation policy that tells potential candidates how they landed on that number.

For example, it might explain the market positioning the company is aiming for and whether they adjust salaries based on location. It should also describe the company's core beliefs when it comes to compensation (and why they hold those beliefs).

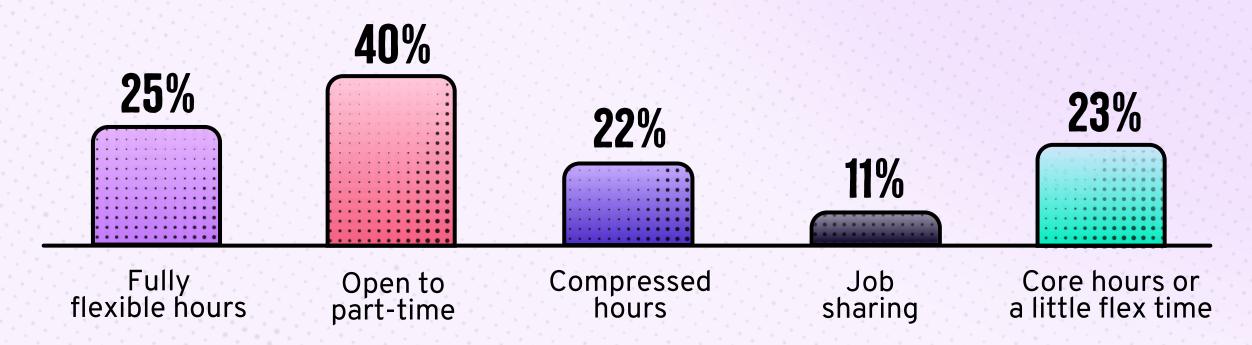
Doing things this way will help people to understand the principle behind the salary ranges they're seeing, and show them that there's a process behind the number.

Alternative working patterns continue to evolve

At Flexa, we're true advocates for the fact that flexibility is not one-size-fits-all. And while there are some elements of a flexible EVP which are particularly popular in the media – things like working from home, working from anywhere, and flexible hours – these are far from the only ways for companies to enable flexibility for their employees.

Alternative working patterns can be standardised or super-tailored, but some of the most popular setups include part-time work (working fewer hours than a full-time role), compressed hours (working the same hours but condensed into fewer, longer, days), and job-sharing (where two or more people split the hours and workload of a job between them).

Companies who are open to part-time roles are the most popular among our onboarding candidates.



The fact that a not insignificant proportion of active job-seekers in the market for flexible work are open to these alternative patterns of working is fascinating to us. There are so many people who can benefit from being able to work in a way that fits their lifestyle, from working parents, to those with passion projects they want to pursue, and encompassing just about anybody who wants to redress the balance between work and their personal life. The Guardian recently spoke to dozens of Britons aged 50 and over who have been switching to part-time work in recent years, and learned that health problems, caring responsibilities, and a desire for improved work-life balance are among some of the reasons that this working pattern continues to be popular.4

⁴ https://tinyurl.com/yur7tz7f

Mondelez, International

On compressed hours



At MDLZ we have an all year round Flexi Hours programme (compressed hours) for our UK office based colleagues. We offer a level of flexibility across working hours and days through our core hours policy to flex start and finish times, and our all-year-round flexi hours allowing employees to take some time back where additional hours are worked in agreement with their Line Manager.

To enhance our flexibility offer, we will enable colleagues to work the additional hours in a week and then take the afternoon or full day off (depending on the number of hours accrued) the following week on any day. This is available all year round, however we will limit it to 14 full days or 28 half days off per year to ensure we can deliver business continuity and manage unplanned needs. In addition, employees are eligible to request formal flexible working arrangements.

It is a really good scheme to consider, allowing employees to work compressed hours so that they can take either an afternoon or day off without using up any annual leave or having to take the time off as unpaid leave.

We have noticed an increase of people taking advantage of this flexi-hours policy in 2023, and it is especially popular in the summer and winter periods.





On being open to part-time employees in some roles



Over the past 12 months, we at **ProfitAbility** have been re-evaluating the policies and flexibility that we offer our team. It was important to us that these are offered as a complete package, which includes unlimited holiday, job shares and part-time hours, allowing our employees to work around any other commitments they might have.

Since these new policies have been implemented, we've been able to organise our working patterns in a way that allows us to come together as a team when needed, and provides a good work life balance for employees, while also supporting our clients.

A number of people work with us on a part-time basis, as they are unable to commit to full time hours. This means that we still get the benefit of their experience, in a way that suits them. We are seeing a lot of stories in the press at the moment about companies trying to force people back to the office.

Speak to a wide range of people within your organisation to see what kind of flexibility would make their lives easier and be sure to include a diverse mix of people within this group. Once you really understand what types of flexible working arrangements would work best, you can start to make a plan to implement.

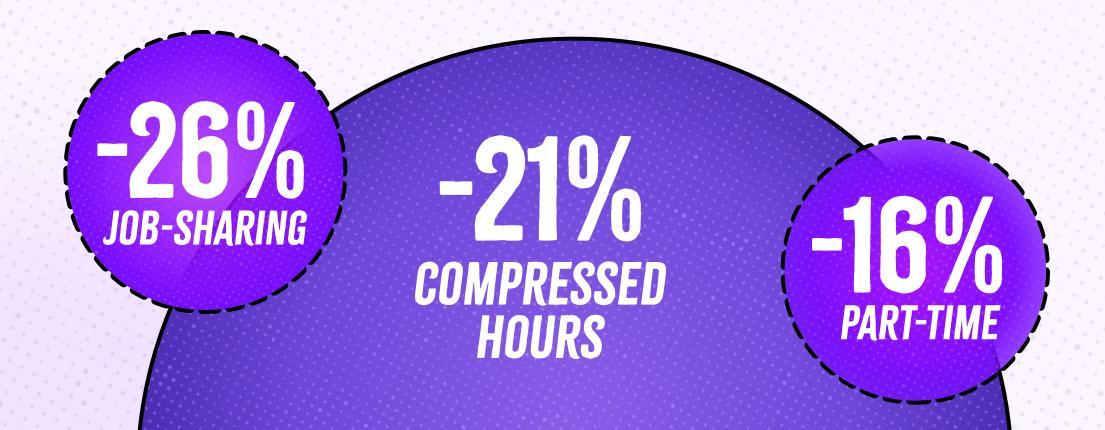




In 2024, we expect to see more of a backlash against this kind of request, and a push from employees to be allowed to work more flexibly than ever.

But the patterns themselves are changing

While these more established alternative working patterns are still in demand from a very high number of candidates, we've seen that the proportion of candidates expressing these preferences has actually dropped slightly in 2023 vs 2022.



But this doesn't mean that these working patterns have become less popular – the actual numbers of candidates expressing an interest in these ways of working have more than doubled vs 2022. Instead, the dropped proportion speaks to the rise in 2023 of a relatively new alternative: the 4-day week, and its cousins the 4.5-day week and the 9-day fortnight.

While these working patterns undoubtedly existed before this year, when the results of the largest 4-day week trial in UK history were shared back in February 2023, they made for very conclusive reading, with 92% of the companies involved in the trial opting to continue with the 4-day week moving forwards. The study found that the new setup resulted in a reduction in workplace stress and sick days, improved worker retention, and either a negligible impact or even a slight increase in company revenue in some cases.⁵

It's not hard to see why candidate preferences for a 4-day week, 4.5 day week and 9-day fortnight have increased so rapidly since we introduced the preference to the site late last year; and searches using our 4-day week filter have increased +68% since this filter was introduced in February 2023, in response to demand from users who were looking for these opportunities.

But the study also showed off the positive impact for businesses, who were able to give their employees this benefit without suffering on key business outcomes, and build trust and strong relationships with their workforce, making them more likely to stick around in the long run. We've not only seen the volume of users searching for opportunities with an alternative working week growing across 2023, but also the number of Flexified companies joining the platform who offer this, and we feel confident in saying that we will only see these numbers continue to rise into 2024 to meet candidate demand.

⁵ https://tinyurl.com/2vdr2n9v

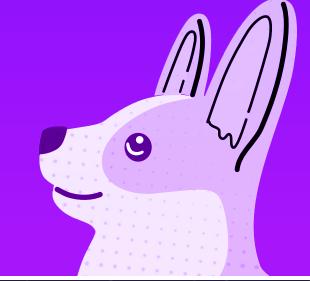
Le hownow

On their dog-friendly office policy



At HowNow, we are based in a shared office which is dog-friendly. We recognise that pets are part of people's families and we not only care about our team, but we care about what they care about too. A dog-friendly office is a great benefit to have. It's proven that the presence of dogs decreases stress, makes people generally happier, gives a great catalyst for interaction and conversation (who doesn't want to talk about how cute a dog is!), and therefore enhances camaraderie in the team and boosts motivation.

For those companies on the fence about rolling out a dog-friendly office: try it, what have you got to lose?



It also helps those with dogs not to have to face the guilt or financial burden of leaving their fur babies at home. Why not all benefit from a cuddle and group walk together while giving lots of love and attention to the pups? It's a win-win! As long as you communicate when the dogs are coming in for those who are allergic or don't like dogs, then we've found there are only positive factors associated with this benefit.

We predict that flexible working or the role employers take in creating a flexible workplace will increase. It should be acknowledged that this is 'how people work now'. People are motivated to do their best work by different things, at different times and in different environments. There are so many companies who pride themselves on welcoming difference, and acknowledging the benefits this brings to motivation, engagement and productivity in the workplace.

When it comes to flexibility, location trumps time

Remote working dominates candidate preferences

In November 2023, the most popular style of working location Flexa users were searching for was fully remote work, with 44% of searches using this filter – up from 32% 12 months before, and marking a shift from this time last year, when remote-first was the top search preference. Part of the reason for this change is a continued ambiguity around the naming of different remote-working terms.

Names like 'fully remote' and 'remote-first' are not as clear as they could be, leading to misunderstandings and blurred lines, and meaning we can't always predict exactly what people think they are getting when they search for one of these styles of work. In 2024 and beyond, as these working styles continue to cement themselves, we'd expect to see more uniformity of naming to help companies and employees alike be transparent.



The continued popularity of fully remote working makes sense given the world we are living in, with lots of reasons for workers making the choice: whether it's saving money on commutes or childcare, opening up a wider pool of potential jobs than the ones just in their own town, or simply that home working is more accessible to them for health or other reasons.

We also can't deny the impact of employees moving away from cities during the pandemic and choosing not to return: seeking more space and a change of lifestyle, and not having any wish to go back to any amount of time in an office.

And despite it continuing to be a divisive subject in the press, with op-eds every other week about whether remote working is destroying business as we know it, there's no denying the fact that it's a popular and life-enhancing choice for many.

 $({f flexa}.$ THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REPORT '23-'24)

B storyblok

On being a fully remote company



Being part of a company that works with a fully remote setup brings many other benefits to the entire team, not just working from home. Our remote setup allows the company to reach into a larger pool of global talent.

We've had the opportunity to develop a diverse team, bringing unique perspectives and skills from every part of the world. This not only enriches our culture, but also means that every time we have a meeting, we learn from different perspectives, cultures, and even different ways of communicating.

Working from anywhere you want is great for your mental health, as it allows team members to change their environment every once in a while. This increased wellbeing allows our members to have a stronger connection to their creativity, bringing more innovative ideas. Colleagues have the flexibility to travel, exploring new destinations and reconnecting with family members.

This added perk not only enhances their work-life balance, but also contributes to a more enriching and well-rounded lifestyle.

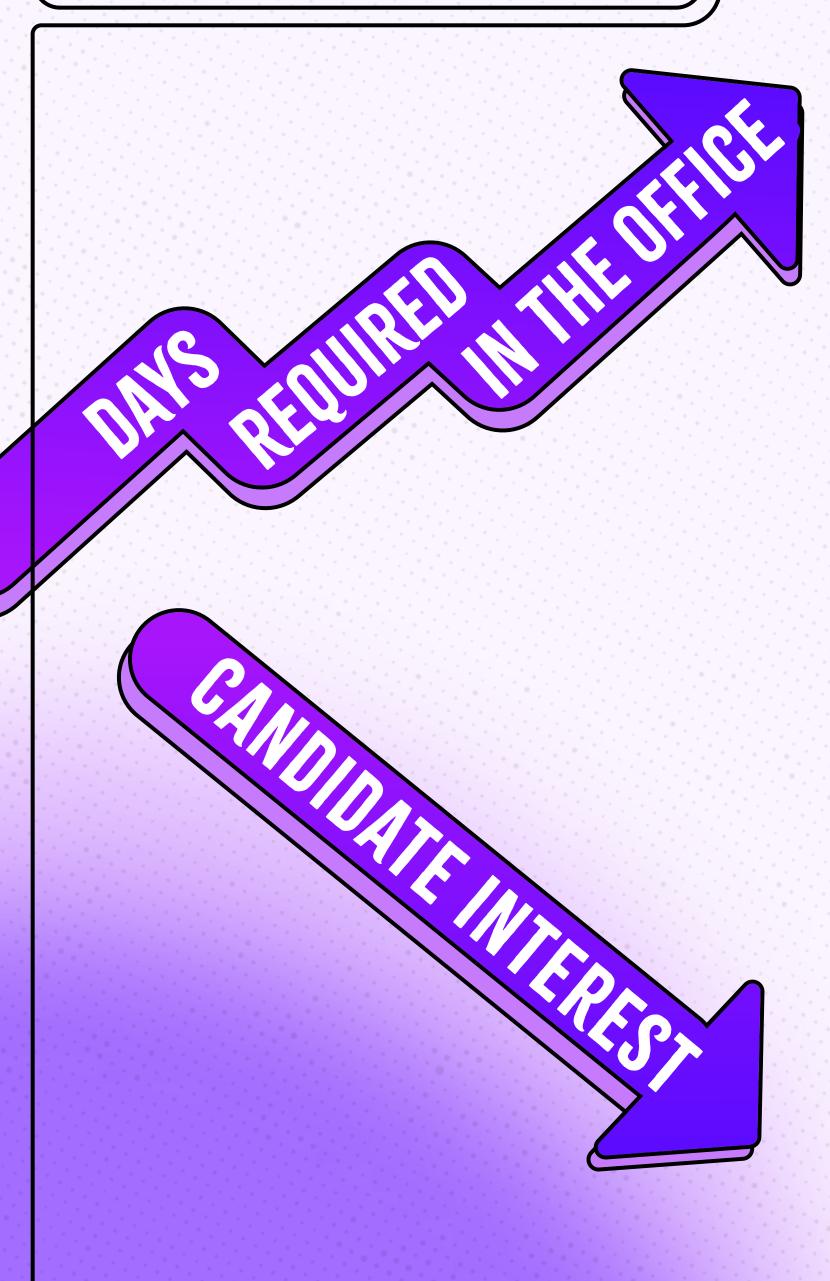
The remote work model at Storyblok has truly become a catalyst for positive change, fostering both professional success and personal fulfilment.

At Storyblok, we've invested in different platforms that support and facilitate interaction and information sharing.

This has allowed our team members to stay connected, engaged, and informed, increasing the sense of community despite the physical distance, making everyone's day-to-day job fun and exciting.

And for parents, the fully remote setup has allowed them to no longer be shackled by the worry of missing out on little ones' victories or the chance to share a post-school cuddle. Being around for those small, precious moments creates a beautiful tapestry of togetherness. The time once lost to commuting and inhaling city smog can now be a leisurely cup of tea by the window, accompanied by lively family chats. This abundance of family time has strengthened the connections with loved ones, whether through shared meals, attending swim lessons, or simply enjoying relaxed evenings. Moreover, the newfound flexibility to prioritise exercise during breaks has not only led to a healthier lifestyle, but also more focus for many.

Last but not least, the flexibility of our fully remote setup recognizes that our team members are humans before workers, allowing them to prioritise their diverse needs, whether they are dedicated parents, or people with unique routines that contribute to their wellbeing.



The supply of remote jobs isn't high enough to meet the demand

Despite the large volumes of candidates desiring remote work, more and more roles have been reverting to requiring more and more office attendance as 2023 has progressed.

According to our data, the general trend is that the more days a company requires its employees to come into the office, the less interested a candidate is, but the more jobs are available. For example, the number of jobs advertised by companies offering 1-2 days a week at home has remained stable across 2023, while the search demand from candidates for this kind of role has been declining; and the volume of searches for fully remote work remains high, but the number of jobs offering this has fallen across the year.

It's still essentially the case that the more days at home a company is able to offer its employees, the more candidates will be searching for jobs there. Whether it means fully remote or remote-first working, shouting about this part of a company's EVP is already crucial to a sustainable talent attraction strategy, and this is only going to continue to be the case as more companies impose more office time, setting companies with any level of remote offering apart from the crowd.

So, why aren't more companies offering remote work?

With remote work being so wildly popular, why aren't more companies leaping to change their policies and working environments to appeal to all these candidates?

Because remote work is widely misunderstood, it's new, and it can be intimidating to businesses and teams who have always worked in a different way. Many companies, and a large proportion of senior leaders, had never worked remotely before COVID-19 forced us all into this new world of work.

Not only that, but many companies have committed to long-term office leases, have working patterns that seem difficult to change, or struggle to understand the benefits and spectrum of flexible work.

Remember that the decision doesn't need to be 'fully remote' vs 'in the office full time'. There's a whole spectrum of flexible working arrangements that can suit even the biggest office fans.

CC

Remote work is an amazing option for companies who are willing to put the time and effort in to make it work. Having an entirely distributed team with no or very infrequent in-person connection requires trust, accountability, clear goals and feedback, and most importantly, strongly intentional management. It's not an easy option, and it must be carefully thought through; but, done well, it can be game-changing for both the company and its employees."

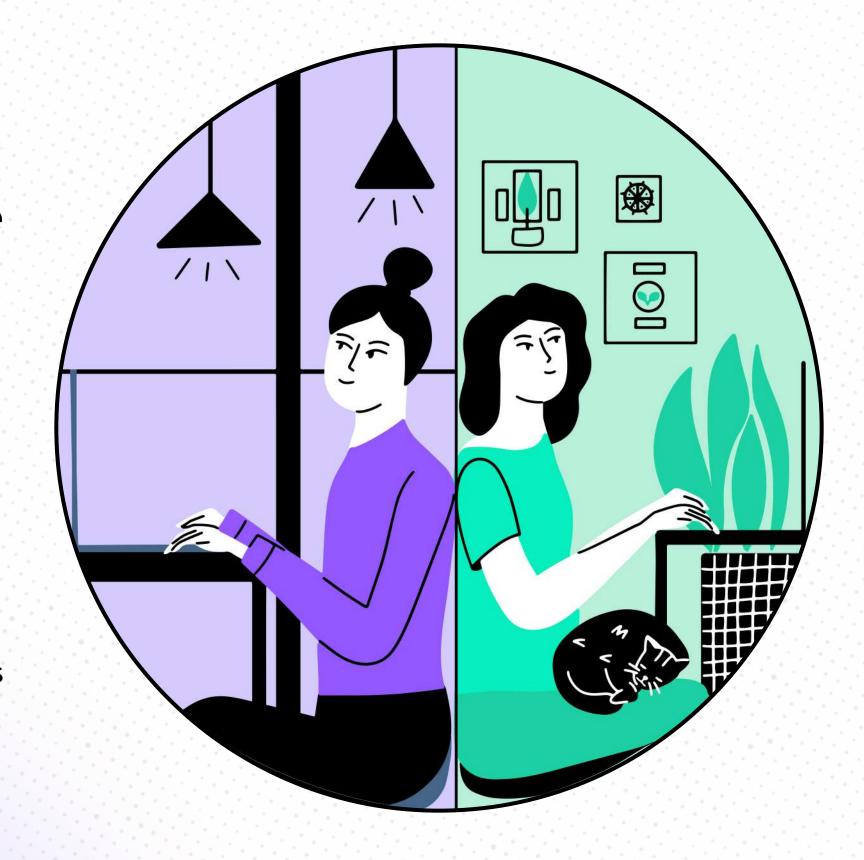
Beth Carter, Head of Growth at Flexa

For the majority of companies, we think hybrid working will dominate the future

Despite fully-remote jobs seeing the highest search volumes in November 2023, research from earlier this year suggests that some mix of remote and in-person working is likely to be beneficial for productivity and morale, with companies needing to find the 'sweet spot' for their business and ways of working.⁶

This lines up with our view at Flexa that in order to maximise flexibility, it's key to empower employees with the choice of whether they work from home or in an office or co-working space, and how they split their time between the two.

Whether that means in-person working once a week, once a month or even less frequently for team get-togethers, what's crucial is that the right balance is found for businesses and employees alike to drive productivity and, importantly, interpersonal connection.



So why isn't our candidate demand reflecting a greater interest in hybrid vs fully remote working? It's our hypothesis that this is inextricably linked to the macro factors we've already identified in this report. We are in the midst of a cost of living crisis in the UK. This affects every financial concern you can think of, from household bills, to costs of train travel and petrol, to childcare. And Zoopla's rental market report from earlier this year showed that average rental prices have increased +11% from 2022, with no signs of inflation slowing down, and with average earnings not increasing by anywhere near the same proportion.⁷

With higher rental costs disproportionately affecting cities, fewer employees than ever are able to afford to live within an easily commutable distance from most offices. Without these hugely impactful societal factors, we believe that the demand for hybrid working - and spending some time in person with colleagues - would be much higher.

⁶ https://tinyurl.com/yhn7nheb

On their ways of working policy



of the personal needs of our employees and the work they perform. We feel that our employees will give their best when they work their way and feel taken care of by the company.

At Blip, we have always had a flexible working hours policy, allowing for a better combination

a new employee enters the company, this is something that everyone gets to choose from day one. It's important to us that everyone has access to this policy.

Since Blip's Ways

of Working is set

up the moment

In 2021, we created our Ways of Working (WOW) policy, through which each employee can determine where they want to work from most of the time: at home, in the office, or a combination of both. Regardless of their chosen scenario, there are times when office visits are promoted in order to ensure coordination between the different teams and the celebration of relevant moments. In this way, we guarantee that each employee has the freedom to choose the scenario that best suits their work style, enhancing their balance between personal and professional life.

Regardless of the choice made and the chosen WOW, all employees receive €70 per month to support their monthly expenses, whether they are working remotely or coming to the office.

Whoever comes to the office has access to a free car park for their vehicles, and all employees also have €250 to be able to create their home office (and another €100 every 3 years to be able to renew some of their material).

(flexa. The flexible working report '23-'24)

F L U M E SALES TRAINING

On being a remote-first workplace



At Flume, our team is able to strike a good balance between work and home life, which leads to increased employee satisfaction. The time and money saved on a daily commute is significant for many, as is the ability to flex on personal and work life. This increases work productivity and leads to happier staff. We value the contribution from every team member, and the flexibility of remote work is respected by both sides.

When people are happy, trusted in their role, know their worth and are treated as an adult, it doesn't matter where they work.

As the team grows, the business benefits from being able to hire talent from a wider geographical pool, as we are not reliant on people having to commute into the office. Implementing remote-first working is undoubtedly a big decision for any business, but much depends on your start point. For many businesses, hybrid may be an easier answer at least initially, however, a remote-first business has many benefits.

There are savings on office costs for the business, and job satisfaction and productivity can both increase significantly. We've found that allowing our staff a greater work-life balance not only fosters a positive work environment, but also enhances our team's dedication and output.

Remote working remains the number one benefit in our business, but we also recognise the benefits of getting together in person too. We work hard to ensure that there is plenty of interaction between staff members while remote, but will also be looking for more opportunities to get our teams together in person.

Currently, there is a company-wide meet-up twice a year, but we aim to increase this to once a quarter. We will also be encouraging departmental team gatherings in person every two months. As our business scales, this balance ultimately allows the best of both worlds.

F L U M E SALES TRAINING



Remote working isn't for every business or individual, but it certainly works across Flume.

Through regular company Zoom meetings, tools like Slack, and regular check-ins with the team, communication and a company-wide team feel is strong at Flume. From a personal perspective, I am at home when my children are off school or unwell and still able to complete my work. Being remote also makes those times when we do all meet as a team in person much more precious."

Nadia Kingston, Client Success Manager at Flume

Flexible hours are less important than location for candidates, but the demand is still there

While we've seen slight fluctuations across 2023 in the percentage of candidates seeking companies with fully flexible hours, core hours, or a little flexibility in start and finish times, one thing that has remained steady throughout the year is just over 50% of users stating that they don't mind whether a company offers flexible hours or not.

This suggests that when other elements of flexibility are present, whether this be location flexibility or alternative working patterns, day-to-day hour flexibility isn't as high a priority. Instead, working days naturally become more flexible with the level of freedom already afforded, giving employees the opportunity to have more self-governance over their working day without specifically needing to ask for it. Companies are increasingly finding that overarching forms of flexibility – or "umbrella flexibility" – like remote and hybrid work, can cover a lot of different needs at once, meaning that individuals have less need for other flexible working benefits in addition.

With that said, one time-specific preference which we have seen increase across 2023 is for 'a little flex time' – in other words, companies which still broadly follow a 9-5 pattern, but which allow flexibility for their employees to start and finish a little earlier or later, for example, to accommodate things like school drop-offs and pick-ups. We saw 14% of candidates expressing a preference for this in November 2023, up +10% from the start of 2023, showing that while it might not be the top priority for searchers, having this flexibility is still really valuable, and companies who offer it should be making this known front and centre.

We've also seen that preferences for core hours and fully flexible hours, while dropping overall across 2023, have seen increases post-summer. This suggests to us that candidates who have enjoyed summer hours or a greater degree of flexibility and work-life balance over the summer months are now more likely to seek out jobs where this will be possible for them all year round.

The barriers between 100% flexibility and 100% rigidity continue to come down when it comes to flexible work and we expect to see more customisable working hours becoming the norm as we head into 2024. As society continues to unpick years of social conditioning when it comes to what working hours 'should be', we predict that more companies will trial things like asynchronous working and output-based cultures, where performance is measured not by hours worked but by outcomes achieved. We're still a little further behind here than when it comes to working locations, but it's only a matter of time.

O Ben

On how to choose which benefits to offer, and how to measure their success



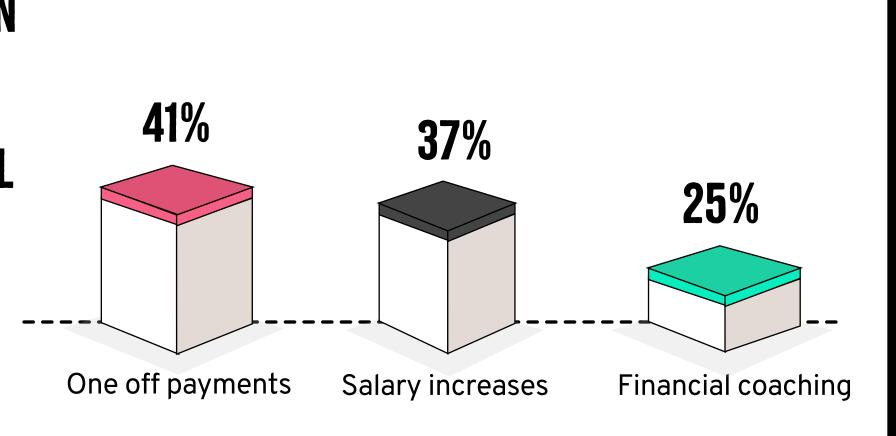
Gone are the days when work merely maintained livelihoods. Employers now have the ability to shape lives, and at Ben, we believe that employee benefits are the vehicle making this possible.

Employers can offer truly life shaping benefits, from life insurance and private medical care to yoga classes and wellness retreats. And employers are taking note of this — our benefits benchmarking survey for 2023 revealed that 44% of companies are planning to increase their benefits budget in 2024.

THE BENEFITS LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED IN 2023:

- The percentage of companies saying a goal of their benefits programme was to "remain competitive in the market" has increased from 63% in 2022 to 77% in 2023.
- The percentage of companies offering some form of medical benefit (e.g. private medical insurance) has increased from 48% in 2022 to 60% in 2023.
- The top 3 most popular benefits in 2023 were medical, remote working, and pensions (which all increased from 2022).
- 2023 also saw an uplift in the number of employers offering salary exchange benefits, increasing from 45% in 2022 to 53% in 2023. This suggests that the cost of living crisis is influencing employers' decisions to seek out cost-effective employee benefits.

2023 HAS ALSO SEEN A BIG INCREASE IN COMPANIES OFFERING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES TO ASSIST WITH THE COST OF LIVING



(flexa. THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REPORT '23-'24)





So, how do you choose which benefits to offer at your company?

Conducting some general research about what kind of benefits are out there. We recommend a combination of 'core insurance benefits' (e.g. private medical insurance, life insurance and pension) and 'flexible benefits' (e.g. flexible allowances, health and wellbeing budgets, mental health support, etc.) This provides a breadth of support, whilst remaining personalised to the employee.

The only way to truly know what your team wants is by asking them. Survey your team with an employee benefits survey

Are there benefits that they actually want and will use? If yes, go for it! If not, what would be a meaningful alternative to these benefits? Can you use this budget to upgrade another benefit in your offering?

Benchmarking against other companies of a similar size and/or industry to see what is considered competitive.



It might be that a particular benefit is something many companies are already offering, or it could be a chance for you to be bold and gain a competitive advantage in the talent market.

For example, one of our customers (Marshmallow) chose to expand their mental health support to their employees in Hungary. This is traditionally considered quite a taboo topic among employers there, but they have found it to be one of their most popular benefits – and one which has helped them address the challenge of cultural nuance with a global team.

SPEAK TO A CONSULTANT

Speaking with a benefits consultant to get relevant, up-to-date information and advice about which benefits are best for your team.

BUDGET

Agreeing on a budget: comparing different benefits against our cost calculator to understand the cost of different benefits and weighing up which are most important to your team.

THE ROI

Challenging yourself to think commercially about the ROI of these benefits. Oftentimes benefits are seen as an 'optional extra', but this is by no means the case.

Benefits can absolutely have a lasting impact on everything from your company culture, productivity levels, absenteeism, talent attraction and retention (and more!)



(flexa. THE FLEXIBLE WORKING REPORT '23-'24)





That sounds great; but how do you measure the success Denells offering?

USE BEN TO MEASURE

Measure employee engagement with your benefits (it's super easy to track this on Ben). This allows you to tweak your offering to best suit your employees' needs and usage.

GATHER EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Collect feedback through regular employee pulse surveys, or simply by speaking to your team directly.

MONITOR EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR

This is more difficult to track, but try to notice any increase in employee motivation and participation, as this is a great indicator that investing in your benefits is paying off.

TRACK HIRING PIPELINE

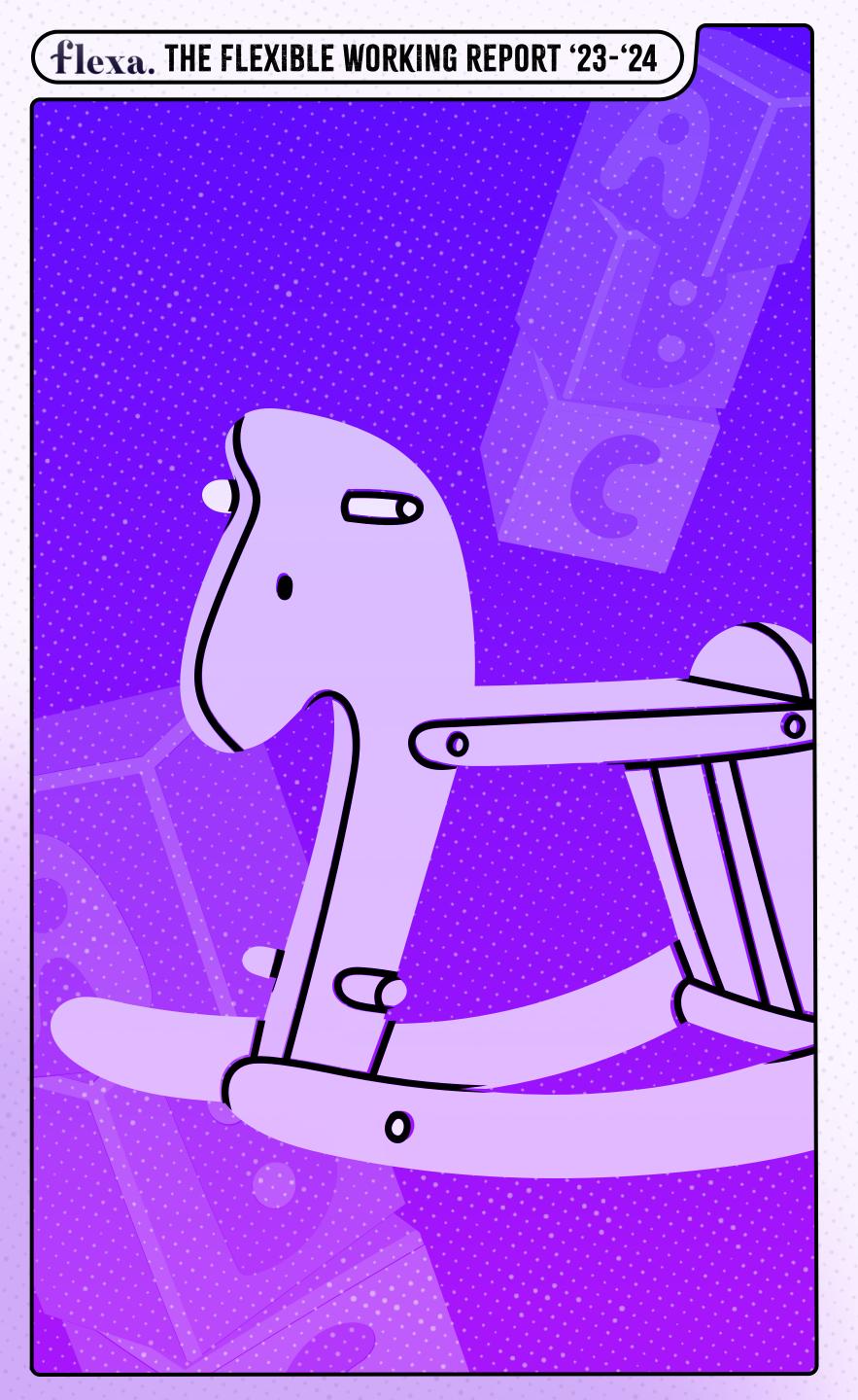
Monitor your hiring pipeline, to see if you are attracting more and higher quality candidates to roles.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Keep track of retention rates: increased employee retention can be a sign that your people are getting benefits that resonate with them on a personal and individual level.

And what about the world of workplace benefits in 2024?

- We predict that benefit spend will increase across all industries as per our data.
- In the latter half of 2023, there seems to be a trend of companies of over 500+ employees reducing their remote working hours and calling employees back to the office. However, we have seen that, among certain industries like software, this is not the case. It will be interesting to see if this will divide industries more obviously in 2024.
- We predict a greater emphasis on work-life integration as opposed to work-life balance from employers. This transition is characterised by employers moving to support employees holistically in all aspects of their lives, with less of a distinct separation between work and life, instead creating more of a harmony between the two.
- We will see employers offering a full spectrum of life shaping benefits, ranging from core benefits like life insurance, private medical insurance and pensions, to health and wellbeing benefits like mental health support, gym memberships, and fertility support. Work-life harmony will be bolstered by the ability to customise benefits to employees' personal circumstances, including adding family members and dependents to policies, and flexibility around types of support available to them.
- Given that medical benefits were the top benefit of 2023, we predict this trend to continue into 2024. However, we may see changes to the types of cover companies are offering. For example, the shift towards work-life integration may encourage employers to allow employees to add the likes of family members and partners to their policies or they may upgrade their level of cover to provide additional support.



Employees want to balance work and family life

Companies are starting to support all stages of the parenthood journey

One of the most frequently celebrated benefits of flexible working's rise in recent years has been the way it has enabled people to achieve a better balance between their work and personal lives. This has been a game-changer for many, but none more so than workers with families.

Aside from the obvious benefits of working from home and flexible hours for working parents, there are additional benefits that companies can offer which will level up their EVP in working parents' eyes. Across 2023, one of the fastest growing of these benefits has been fertility leave: leave offered to accommodate time off needed to attend appointments relating to fertility treatment. By making this a distinct offering, rather than rolling this time off up into standard sick leave or, worse, forcing employees to use annual leave to cover it, employers can demonstrate understanding and care for their workers at what is often a really stressful time. As well as an easy way to support all workers, it can also be of particular value to many LGBTQ+ employees – alongside things like adoption leave – and is a tangible and meaningful way for companies to improve their DEI efforts and move towards being a truly inclusive workplace.

Fertility leave has been a benefit fast-growing in popularity among candidates onboarding to Flexa in 2023, with preferences for this benefit up +15% for January-November 2023 vs the same time period in 2022. While volumes are still relatively low, due to the relative newness of this benefit, the increasing awareness of fertility leave means we expect to see it continue rising in popularity into 2024.

SILVERRAIL On their fertility leave policy



Embarking on the journey of starting a family is an exciting adventure. While we hope for parents-to-be to have a smooth path, we acknowledge that sometimes it can be challenging. This significant life change can have a profound impact, not only on your personal life but also on your professional life. At SilverRail, we recognise the importance of supporting our teams both inside and outside the workplace.

Our collaboration with Hertility is driven by the commitment to offer proactive support, an open, transparent environment, and knowledge sessions to our team on fertility, hormone balancing, and a comprehensive understanding of reproductive health. Our team has actively participated in workshops delivered by the experts at Hertility on Fertility Fluency, delving into how lifestyle choices can positively impact fertility. We've also focused on educating our employees about the underlying causes of male and female infertility.

In 2023, we proudly became the 4th reproductive-responsible employer in the world with Hertility. We set up pioneering leave policies aimed at providing our employees with the necessary space to navigate these major life events.

Recently, we received a workshop on Optimising Hormonal Health, shedding light on the pivotal role hormones play in regulating health, well-being, and professional life.

As part of our commitment, we provide our team with complimentary fertility and hormone testing, including a personalised consultation with a gynaecologist to discuss the results. Additionally, we understand the importance of flexibility during crucial appointments throughout the fertility, prenatal, or hormone journey, encompassing leave options for menstruation and menopause.

SILVERRAIL

Implementing comprehensive support for employees during significant life events, such as starting a family, is not just a gesture of goodwill; it's also a strategic investment in your company's success. Whether companies recognise it or not, these pivotal moments happen in the lives of their employees. By acknowledging and actively supporting these milestones, organisations can position themselves as more than just workplaces – they become communities that genuinely care for their people.

Offering tailored leave policies, educational workshops on fertility and hormonal health, and access to fertility testing demonstrates a commitment to the holistic well-being of the team. When employees feel supported during crucial life events, they are more likely to bring their best selves to work, knowing that their workplace stands by their side. This not only fosters a positive and inclusive work culture but also contributes to enhanced employee satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. In essence, by providing this support, companies become not just employers but integral partners in the personal and professional journeys of their team.

The popularity of family-centric benefits like fertility support and comprehensive leave policies has shown a consistent and steady demand throughout the years. Unlike some benefits that might see seasonal variations, the need for support during major life events is everpresent, so it's important to establish a continuous structure and support system. By ensuring that these resources are consistently available, companies can demonstrate a commitment to the well-being of their employees, offering unwavering support whenever the need arises in an individual's life journey. This approach fosters a workplace culture where support is not just a fleeting trend but a reliable and enduring resource for every team member whenever they might require it.

In 2024, the evolution of employee benefits is poised to centre around a holistic approach that recognises the connection of personal and professional lives. The pivotal shift lies in encouraging employees to bring their entire authentic selves to work, removing the artificial boundary between the personal and the professional and the need to choose one over the other. Companies that prioritise supporting their teams through crucial life events, both within and outside the workplace, are set to lead the way.

Recognising that individuals are multifaceted and have diverse needs, successful organisations will emphasise flexibility in work arrangements, allowing employees to deliver their best results in a way that works for them too.

This approach not only nurtures a more engaged, aligned, and driven team but also fosters a workplace culture where employees feel valued and supported in all aspects of their lives – acknowledging that the wellbeing of the employee extends far beyond the confines of the office.

Enhanced parental leave is still under-understood

Interestingly, we have seen the % of candidates expressing a preference for workplaces with enhanced parental leave diminish by -18% from January-November 2022 vs January-November 2023.

On the balance of the evidence and the general trends we are seeing, it seems unlikely that this is because workers simply don't want enhanced parental leave. On the contrary, it seems more likely that candidates either don't understand the benefits enhanced parental leave has above and beyond the legal minimum requirements, or that, in a world where an increasing number of companies are rolling it out (including global firms such as TUI Group and Clyde & Co), candidates simply expect it as part of the new more inclusive standard of work and don't feel the need to seek it out specifically.



There's also potentially a link to the rise in remote working, with some parents choosing not to take longer leave, but to go back to work with an increased level of flexibility allowing them to be at home with their new baby while returning to work.

This means that companies who do offer enhanced parental leave – like Motorway – have even more to gain from shouting loudly about it, and attracting the attention of workers who aren't even aware of what they are missing out on.

motorwa)

On their enhanced parental leave policy



We have reviewed our parental leave offering, and our benefits as a whole, every year since we were founded. As we grew and had more funding, we reviewed our package and what we were able to offer. We're pleased to say that in 2023, we increased our parental leave packages; and, specifically with our maternity package, we've increased our offering to six months of full pay. This really comes back to our business strategy of improving our gender diversity at Motorway.

Our people have always been one of our greatest assets and we know we have to invest in them. And every benefit we introduce and evolve at Motorway has a clear benefit for the business, too. So whether that is ensuring that our hiring is more inclusive, or supporting our employees during the important stages of their lives, it's an investment worth making.

The feedback from the team has been hugely positive since we launched our enhanced parental leave package. Not only are we supporting employees during those important moments in their lives, we're also driving a really inclusive culture at work.

We also publish information on this package on our website, to ensure that our hiring is more inclusive - women shouldn't have to be put in the awkward position of asking about maternity leave in a job interview. This information should be made public knowledge.

Workplace-supported childcare will come to the forefront

One benefit that we expect to see much more of in 2024 and beyond is workplace-supported childcare: companies bringing in policies to help support their employees with finding and/or paying for childcare. As childcare costs continue to rise and with the threat of a potential recession in 2024, companies who offer this kind of benefit to their employees can make a genuine difference in a concerning situation. While it's still relatively rare, it's a real way for companies to stand out above and beyond the majority, particularly as benefits like enhanced parental leave are becoming more expected.

BUBBLE 'Back-up childcare' as a benefit



Back-up care is an important part of a benefits package for any business focused on equality and inclusion. It's a benefit which is both very practical, enabling people to do their jobs, but also a statement about the type of employer that you are. Childcare is the biggest source of stress for working parents, and introducing the benefit is a great way to attract and retain great talent.

More businesses than ever are offering a 'care hours allowance', which lets employees book back-up childcare, eldercare and petcare. For just £20/hour, business leaders see a very clear return on investment as carers are able to do their work and feel confident that their family is well looked after.

Back-up care is a benefit that pays for itself, as you regain days for your employees that otherwise would be lost to childcare 'fails' (e.g. unexpected school / nursery closures, sickness, or a change of pattern in hybrid working). There is only upside: boosting productivity, wellbeing and retention.



2023 has been a big year in this space, and more and more diverse businesses are offering back-up care. We launched our partnership with Uber in the summer, and had a high-profile launch in the VC sector in Q3. What used to be a benefit that only the big banks offered is now hitting the mainstream.

We're seeing a huge focus on retaining senior female talent right now. Companies have been struggling to hold on to their senior female employees, which is a problem for a lot of reasons and means that gender pay gap progress is painfully slow. Menopause support and back-up care are the biggest impact benefits you can introduce right now, and looking to 2024 and beyond.

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Flexible working is more inclusive working: it's really that simple.

If you're familiar with Flexa, you'll probably have heard us saying this a lot – whether it's in one of Molly's newsletters, on a DEI workshop, or even in our advertising. It's a simple yet powerful sentence, for two reasons: it's important, and it's true.

Let's face it: every single one of us might need flexibility at different times in our lives, because life is unpredictable, and the benefits of this way of working certainly aren't limited to just a few groups of people.

But companies who aren't willing to budge on at least some of the elements of a flexible EVP are fundamentally cutting off strong talent from under-represented groups, as well as shooting themselves in the foot when it comes to their chances of hitting their DEI targets and goals. At Flexa, we honestly believe that it's impossible to have a truly inclusive culture without flexibility. That might sound like a hard line, but think about it.



If you're a neurodivergent person, and find that you're not able to work the typical 9-5 without your mental health and your quality of work suffering: how can you work in a company that doesn't enable you to flex your hours?



If you're someone with a disability or condition, and you find that commuting to an office is draining or physically impossible for you: how can you work in a company that doesn't allow you to work from home, some or all of the time?



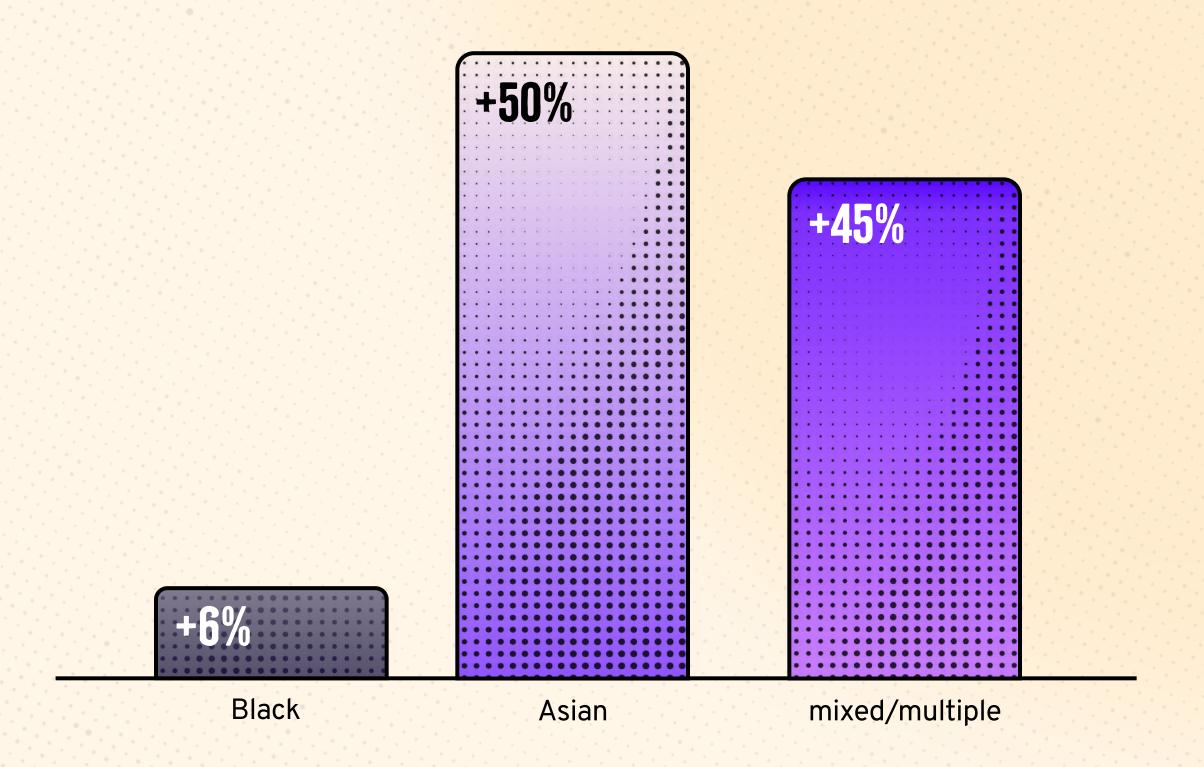
If you're a working parent, or you have additional caring responsibilities, and find yourself needing to juggle and adapt the days, hours and places you work: how can you hope to do this in a company that doesn't understand its importance?

Flexible working is a tangible way to tackle DEI challenges

One of the significant ways that we support our Flexified companies in tackling their DEI challenges, is quite simply to get their employer brand in front of our users, who make up an audience which is roughly 2.5x more diverse than the average tech company globally.

And when it comes to those Flexa users who have chosen to share their personal information with us, including their job preferences as well as some demographic details, 2023 has seen some positive changes in the diversity of our user base.

One of the biggest changes has been the reported ethnicity of our registered users. Of the users who shared this data with us by the end of November 2023, 68% were white, meaning that 32% fell into another ethnicity category. This marks an -11% drop in white users compared to the same time period in 2022, and a +33% increase in people of colour overall.



Part of the reason for this is our continued expansion of Flexa globally into new territories; notably, the number of Asian users has increased by almost +50% vs 2022, due largely to an increased number of Flexified companies looking to hire in India, and the user demand matching this.

But while the proportional increase in Asian users has been the most significant, we've seen steady growth everywhere, with Black users increasing by +6% and those identifying as from mixed or multiple ethnic groups increasing by +45%.

Continuing to diversify our audience is a crucial part of our mission to democratise flexibility, and to help companies to find top diverse talent who want to work in the same way that they do.

We've also seen steady changes when it comes to reported user sexuality.

While in 2022, 84% of our registered users self-reported as straight, in 2023 this is down to 80%, with 20% of our users this year categorising themselves as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, asexual, questioning their sexuality, or as another sexuality not specified. It's notoriously hard to assess the proportion of the global population who identify as something other than straight, but with most estimates sitting somewhere between 10-15% (the 2021 England and Wales census figure sat at 10.6%, for example), Flexa's user base is above-average on this metric. This doesn't surprise us: flexible working has long been popular amongst many of the LGBTQ+ community, with many workers feeling more comfortable to be themselves and less concerned about workplace discrimination when they are able to work remotely.9

One area where Flexa's user base doesn't on the surface reflect the wider population is when it comes to users with disabilities

While we've seen a positive increase in the proportion of our users with disabilities year on year – with an increase of +4% from 2022 – it's still just short of 13% of our user base who self-report as disabled, vs the 18% of the population of England and Wales who are disabled according to the 2023 census.¹⁰

However, this is likely due to the fact that the UK employment rate of those who self-report as disabled sits at 53.7% – meaning that nearly half of disabled people are not in employment. With that in mind, the representation we've seen on Flexa is really encouraging. As the number of Flexa users continues to grow, we want to offer disabled workers the opportunity to know in advance what kind of working arrangements they can expect from a workplace, empowering them to select jobs based on what will work for them, rather than feeling they have to adapt to the situation they find themselves in.

WHY DOES ANY OF THIS MATTER?

Because flexible working is for everyone. And because, from talking to hundreds of companies every year, we know that businesses are still struggling to make their hiring more inclusive, and to have their employee makeup reflect the wider world we're living in.

Getting the EVPs and verified working practices of truly flexible companies in front of a diverse potential workforce is a crucial step in bringing more balance within organisations – and at Flexa, we're really pleased to be seeing these numbers moving in the right direction, even if there's still a long way to go.

¹⁰ https://tinyurl.com/mwd7k9dk

¹¹ https://tinyurl.com/y5ywcwya



Flexible working is feminist: but it's not just for women

The perception of flexible working as 'for women' – in terms of who 'needs' it, wants it, and uses it – has been a hot-button issue for many years now, even before the mainstream explosion of flexible work back in 2020.

Back when flexible jobs were a niche offering from a minority of companies, one group that disproportionately made use of this way of working, and really felt the benefit of it, was working mothers. And let's be clear: flexibility has been and continues to be a valuable tool for this group. It has allowed so many mums around the world to juggle childcare, school pick-ups, school plays and sports matches with their work, meaning that if they choose to, they can continue in a career that they enjoy while still feeling able to be present when their children need them. That's huge! And the volume of mothers able to make the most of this has increased exponentially since the pandemic.

But it's crucial that, as well as celebrating the undeniable benefits which flexible working offers women, we recognise the importance of men being able to make the most of flexible working too. Only by making flexibility something that is truly ingrained in working culture for everybody, not just for one group, can we level the playing field for all employees.

If companies don't actively construct a flexible working environment as part of their EVP, relying instead on the bare minimum legal requirements (where employees, as of this year, have the legal right to request flexible working from day one of employment – although this request can still be rejected), they unintentionally send the message that flexible working is abnormal, rather than something to be embraced and encouraged. This risks isolating and stigmatising those who do request flexible working, with some economists and policymakers voicing concerns about home workers (disproportionately women) missing out on networking, progression and promotion opportunities in favour of workers who are in the office full-time.

The solution for this is not to force everyone back into the office

For many working mums, this simply isn't possible and will lead to them dropping out of the workforce entirely.

The solution is to normalise flexibility for the whole workforce, making it harder for discrimination to be made between 'office employees' and 'home employees'. This has the double benefit of enabling women to progress in their careers while maintaining flexibility to help them in their family life, while also making it possible for more working dads to have a more active role in their children's lives than was possible before.

Until flexibility is the norm for all genders, we risk the stunting of working mothers' earning power and career progression, and that's not OK.

The good news is that we are already beginning to see shifts in a positive direction when it comes to the gender split of Flexa users seeking flexible employment. Comparing 2023 to 2022, the percentage of users with she/her pronouns on Flexa has dropped -6%; and when we compare the figures from the end of November 2023 to January 2023, we've seen a -8% drop across this year alone. This reflects our efforts to shout about Flexa and flexible working to a wide and diverse audience, with our marketing not using any gender targeting, but we're only getting started here.

Flexible working is not just for women or mothers, and we're determined to continue demonstrating this.

In conclusion

We are seeing an evolution of the way we work.

How we blend or balance our personal lives and working lives will continue to be in flux as we work our way through 2024 and into the second half of the decade.

Companies, candidates, employees and managers are all having to adapt to new expectations, new language, new boundaries and reformed ideas about the role work plays in our lives.

What's clear is that this evolution has not finished.

We want to take this opportunity to say thank you

To all the people who have put their trust into us as their source of truth for verified flexible companies.

To the flexible companies building this evolved world of work.

To the pioneers of flexibility and workplace wellbeing.

Building the future of work is not a task anyone, or any one company, can do alone. We hope this report has shown the huge amount of collaboration, connection and community that continues to emerge around the future of flexible working.