

Negative views of flexible working prevalent, especially among men

December 4 2018, by Dan Worth

Flexible working often leads to negative views from other employees, with 1/3 of all UK workers believing those who work flexibly create more work for others, while a similar proportion believe their career will suffer if they use flexible working arrangements, according to new research.

This is the main finding from Dr. Heejung Chung from the University of Kent who set out to analyse data from the 2011 Work-Life Balance Survey conducted by the government. Specifically she wanted to examine whether stigma against flexible workers exists, who is most likely to hold such beliefs and who is most likely to suffer from it.

The research also found that the majority of respondents that held negative views against flexible workers were male, while women and especially mothers were the ones who were most likely to suffer from such stereotypes.

Furthermore, one out of five workers (18%) said they had experienced direct negative career consequence as a result of working flexibly. This perhaps accounts for the very low uptake of the right to request flexible working since it was made law in 2003 and expanded to cover all workers as of 2014.

It was women, especially mothers who worked part-time and on reduced hours, rather than full-time workers who work flexibly—i.e. teleworking or on flexitime—that reported that their careers were negatively

impacted by working flexibly. On the other hand, men, especially fathers (almost half of respondents), were likely to have reported that their own jobs was negatively impacted due to others working flexibly.

Commentating on the research Dr. Chung, from the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research at Kent, said: "It is clear there are still many people who view flexible working as a negative and for different reasons. This has major implications for how employers introduce and offer flexible working arrangements in their organisation, especially as the government looks to increase the rights of workers to request flexible working."

"A simple introduction and expansion of the right to request flexible working will not be enough. We need to challenge our prevalent organisational cultures which privileges [work](#) above everything else, with long hours considered to be synonymous with productivity and commitment. Such change is crucial especially if flexible working is to help reduce the gender wage gap."

More information: Heejung Chung, Gender, Flexibility Stigma and the Perceived Negative Consequences of Flexible Working in the UK, *Social Indicators Research* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s11205-018-2036-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-2036-7)

Provided by University of Kent

Citation: Negative views of flexible working prevalent, especially among men (2018, December 4) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-12-negative-views-flexible-prevalent-men.html>

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