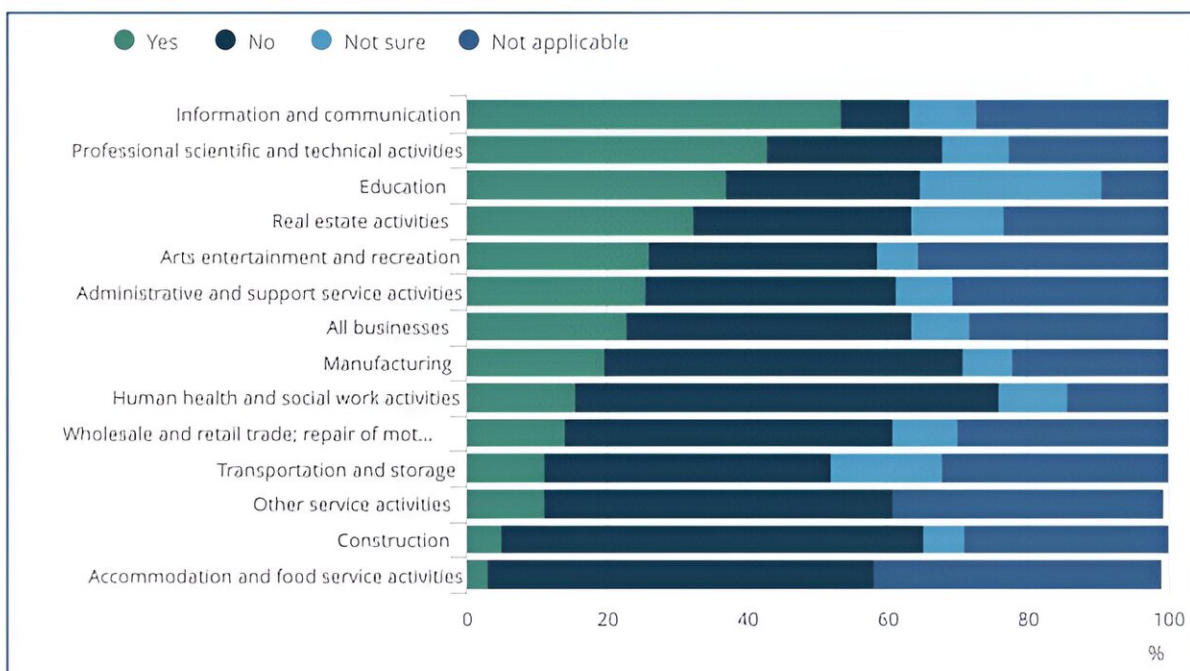


New approach to flexible working needed to prevent widening inequality, says report

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Percentage of businesses using or planning to use increased homeworking as a permanent business model, businesses not permanently stopped trading, broken down by industry, weighted by count, UK 4 to 17 April 2022. Source: Office for National Statistics – Businesses Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) . Credit: The future of flexible working. https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/rewege/news-archive/the_future_of_flexible_working_-_evidence_paper_20230830.pdf

Flexible working needs to be available for all to avoid widening

inequalities, a report from academics at Cardiff University concludes.

The findings, from work and [employment](#) group ReWAGE, which includes one of the co-authors Professor Alan Felstead of the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD), set out the current and potential problems with flexible working, as well as considering the benefits it can bring.

Their conclusions suggest that the right approach could contribute to a more sustainable, productive and inclusive society.

Flexible working could contribute to:

- developing sustainable forms of employment in light of major transitions such as AI and net zero;
- progressing towards a more gender equal society that is also compatible with more equal parenting and quality childcare;
- enabling a more inclusive approach to employment that attracts or retains more mothers, caregivers, disabled people or [older people](#);
- improving well-being;
- supporting the development of a productive and inclusive economy.

But for flexible working to really work for employers and employees, the report says there are still key issues that need to be addressed.

Professor Alan Felstead said, "The pandemic has brought about the biggest change to working practices in a generation. Remote working looks set to be a prominent feature for many employees and certainly in Wales, there is a commitment from Welsh Government to support remote working.

"But for flexible working to benefit all workers, including those that cannot work remotely, employers and employees need to have meaningful conversations about the future of working practices. If done well, it could mean an increase in employee productivity and well-being across the board, ensuring that no worker is disadvantaged by their [career choices](#) or personal circumstances."

Since Brexit, the EU has brought in several regulations on working time that the U.K. is excluded from such as the upgrading of contracted hours, payments for on-call work and preparations for implementing the "right to disconnect."

In the U.K., a new act which gives workers the right to request flexible working from day one of employment and allows workers to make a request twice in a year will become law next year. A bill has also been introduced into parliament which, if passed, will give [employees](#) the right to request more predictable hours after six months employment. Although academics say these are steps in the right direction, they emphasize these are still only rights to request.

Dr. Helen Blakely, one of the co-authors of the report and also based in the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD), said, "Many employers will be under pressure to implement [flexible working](#), but progress may be slow as changes are reliant on voluntary action due to low unionization and low collective bargaining. Whatever changes are implemented, a more inclusive approach needs to be taken to improve the working lives of all, including those who cannot work in hybrid or flexible ways."

More information: Report: [The future of flexible working](#)

Provided by Cardiff University

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