



Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

Attitudes towards Equality

Findings from the YouGov Survey

June 2014

Section 1: Introduction

This report gives a first snapshot of public opinion on equality in the workplace. Research was commissioned to examine attitudes to gender equality at work and different working patterns. Results provide a baseline from which to track progress and help feed into the Government's work programme to tackle the barriers and challenges faced by women at work.

Data were collected via an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc GB panel. Questions on equality were asked to a representative sample of 2,352 members. The sample was aged 18+ living in Great Britain. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14-17 March 2014.

The first part of the report looks at the difference between men and women's opinions and experiences of at work. This includes their attitudes towards flexible and part-time workers as well as their experiences of discrimination on the basis of gender. The report then looks at differences according to other demographic factors such as age and social grade.

When differences are stated, statistical significance tests have been run at the 95% level. All differences and changes reported are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level unless otherwise stated. This means the probability that any given difference happened by chance is low (at most 1 in 20).

In order to put these statistics in context it is worth noting that across Great Britain, part-time workers make up 25 per cent of the total workforce. Of those who work part-time, three quarters (76%) are women, meaning that any negative attitudes towards part-time work will affect women disproportionately more than men.¹ Due to a range of factors, including the different occupational levels and skills required to do part-time jobs in the current labour market, part-time staff are paid around a third (36%) less per hour than full-time staff.²

¹ <https://www.nomis.co.uk> - Nomis was used to analyse UK Labour Market Statistics for Great Britain

² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2013-provisional-results/index.html>

Section 2: Findings

Gender differences in opinions and experiences at work

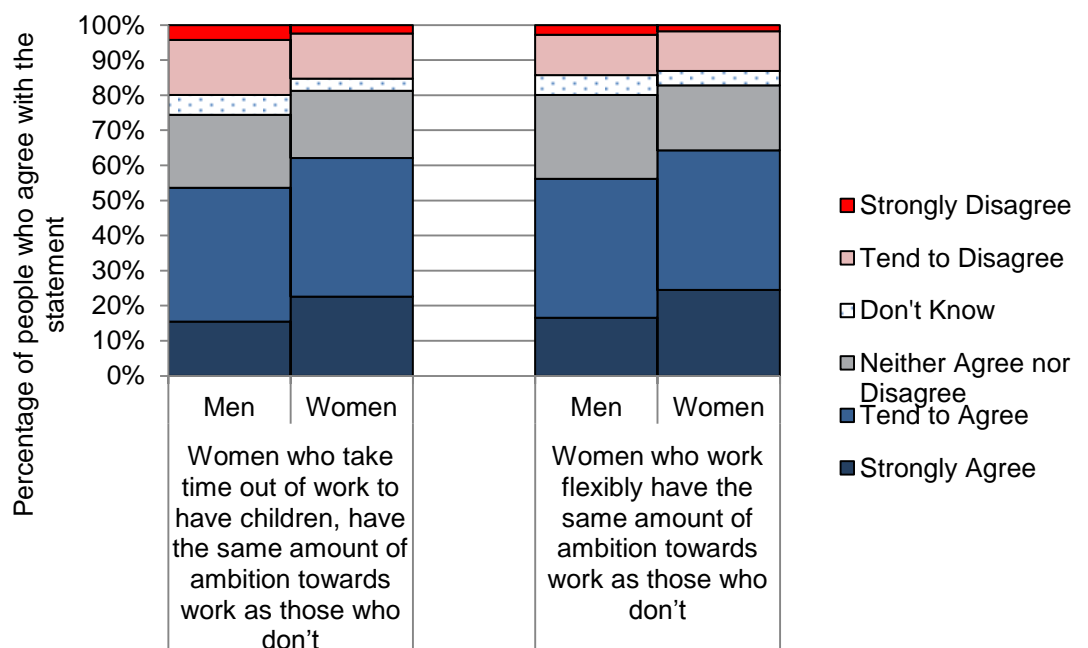
Ambition of women in work

Respondents to the survey were asked if they agreed that men and women had the same amount of ambition in their working careers. Three in five (63%) adults agreed, compared with 15 per cent who disagreed.

Three in five (60%) adults agreed that women who work flexibly have the same ambition as women who work a traditional pattern. Significantly fewer (56%) people thought the same of men who work flexibly. Women held more positive views of flexible workers, regardless of the worker's gender. Three-fifths of women (59%) agreed that flexible working did not affect a man's ambition and two-thirds (64%) agreed the same was true of women working flexibly. Corresponding opinions amongst men were around half (53% and 56% respectively)

Men were less likely to think that women who take time out of work to have children are as ambitious towards work as women who don't. Similarly, men were also less likely to think that women who work flexibly have the same amount of ambition towards work as those who don't.

Figure 1: attitudes to different working patterns for women, by gender



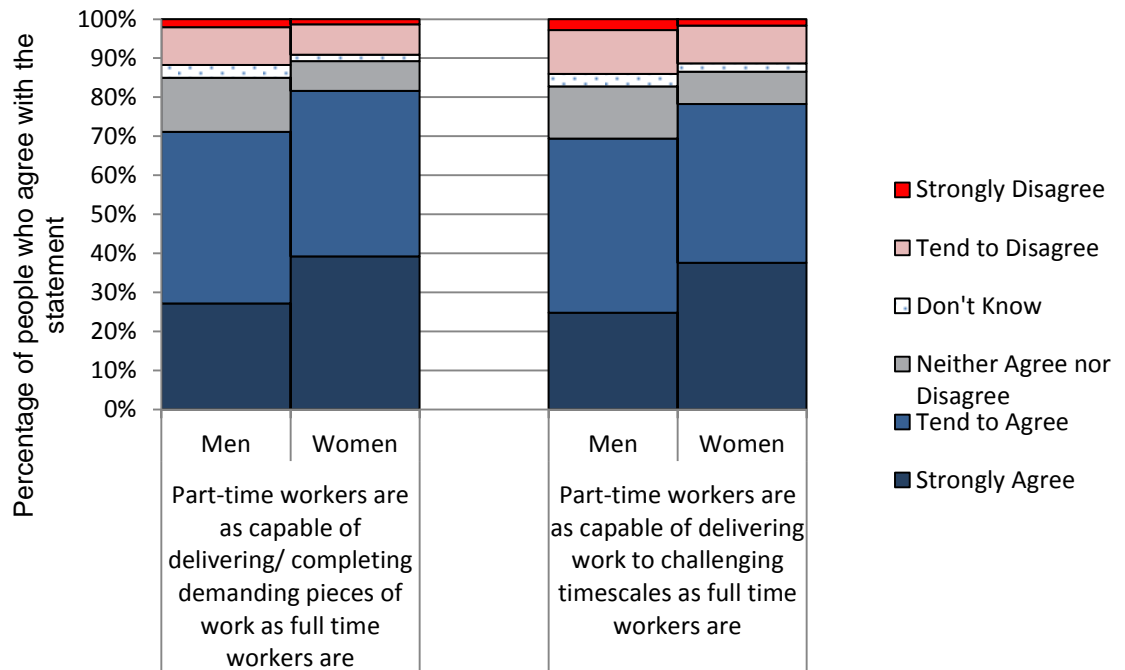
Flexible and part-time working

As discussed above, around one in seven adults believed that those who work flexibly have less ambition than colleagues with a traditional work pattern. Opinion is more divided about whether people in flexible working arrangements have the same opportunities for career progression as those who don't. Around three in ten (29%) people agreed they do; whilst over four out of ten (43%) thought they didn't.

A quarter (24%) of respondents thought that people who take a career break and return to work have the same opportunities as those who work continuously. Women were more likely to disagree that the same opportunities exist than men (57% compared with 48%).³

Women held more positive opinions of part-time workers. They were more likely to agree that part-time workers were as capable of delivering demanding pieces of work as full-time workers and that part-time workers were as capable of delivering to challenging timescales as full-time workers.

Figure 2: Attitudes to part-time working, by gender



Gender discrimination at work

Two-thirds (65%) of adults agreed that sexism is still a problem in many workplaces. Women were significantly more likely to think this than men

³ All findings highlighted in this report are statistically significant at the 95% level.

(74% compared with 56%). One in five (18%) adults reported that sexism is a problem in their current or previous workplace. This shows that although sexism is perceived as a problem in the workplace in general fewer people think that it is a problem in their own workplace.

Around one in eight (13%) adults reported that they had personally been the victim of sexism at work from a current/previous boss, while one in seven (15%) reported they had experienced it from current/previous colleagues. Again, rates were higher for women compared to men (16% compared with 10% citing a boss and 18% compared with 12% citing colleagues).

Three in five (57%) working adults agreed that their current employer is supportive of working parents. However, one in five (21%) adults reported that they or someone they know has been told by their manager that a family-friendly work pattern reduces the chance of promotion and around one-quarter (26%) of adults agreed that while flexible working can be requested in their current workplace it is rarely authorised.

Variations by personal characteristics

Having children

Having children in the household had little impact on opinions⁴.

Those with at least one child in the household were more likely to agree that women and men had the same level of ambition in their career compared to childless households (70% compared with 62%). They were also more likely to agree that women who take time out of work to have children are as ambitious as women with continuous service (63% versus 57%).

All other results were similar, except views on the impact of a career break on career progression with three in ten households with children agreeing the same opportunities were available compared to just over one in five of those living in a household without children.

Social grade⁵

Social grade had little impact on opinions except those from lower social grades (C2DE) were less likely than those from higher (ABC1), to agree that their current employer is supportive of working parents (47% compared to 64%).

⁴ This includes any child living in the house regardless of relationship to the respondent.

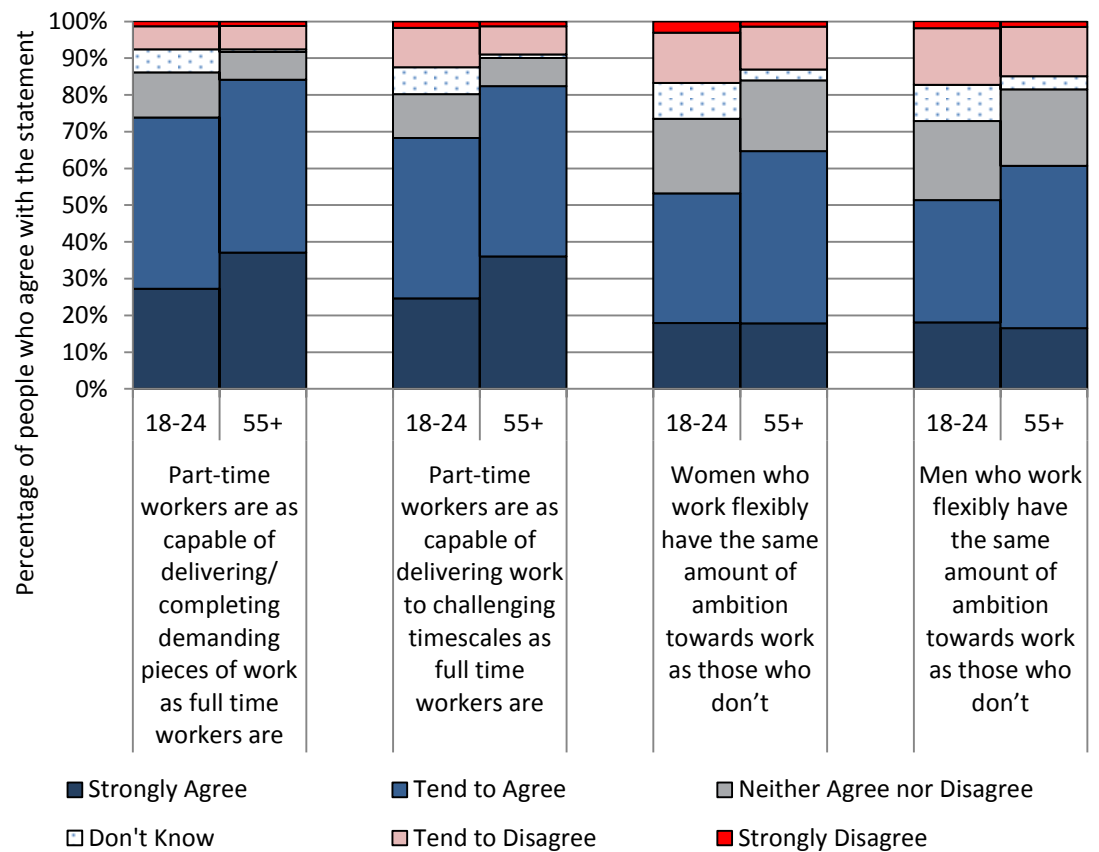
⁵ Social grade is based on the NRS classification ABC1 (higher) and C2DE (lower).

Those from ABC1 social grades were more likely to report that sexism is a problem in their current/previous workplace (20% compared with 15%) as well as agree that they had been the victim of sexism from colleagues (17% compared with 13%).

Age

Comparing those in the earlier stage of their career (age 18-24) with those later on (age 55+) there are a few differences to note. Younger people were more likely to agree that men and women have equal ambition throughout their career (68% compared with 60%). However, younger people were less positive about part-time and flexible workers.

Figure 3: Attitudes to part-time work and flexible working, by age



Working status

Opinions varied depending on number of hours worked, although as stated in the introduction, it is worth noting the gender bias in working status. Part-time workers were more likely than full-time workers to agree that working flexibly does not affect ambition (69% compared with 59%) and that working part-time does not affect capability.

Part-time workers were less likely to agree that their current employer is supportive of working parents (47% compared with 60%). Further, part-time workers were more likely to agree that sexism is still a problem in most workplaces (72% compared with 61%).

Annex: Background note

1. Data were collected as part of the YouGov Plc GB panel. Data are weighted, using Census or other industry accepted data, to the profile of all adults aged 18+ (including people without internet access) in Great Britain. The survey was carried out online.
2. Powerpoint slides giving a full breakdown of responses to each question have been published alongside this report.
3. This report has been produced by Rebecca Aust, Kaite Emmerson and Douglas Cameron. Acknowledgment goes to staff at YouGov for their assistance with quality assurance.

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