

Embedding Flexible Working Practices to Improve Gender Equality and Wellbeing in the Workplace

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GABI programme mission

- **create new evidence for what works**
- **drive behaviour change towards greater gender equality**
- **focus on the UK labour market**



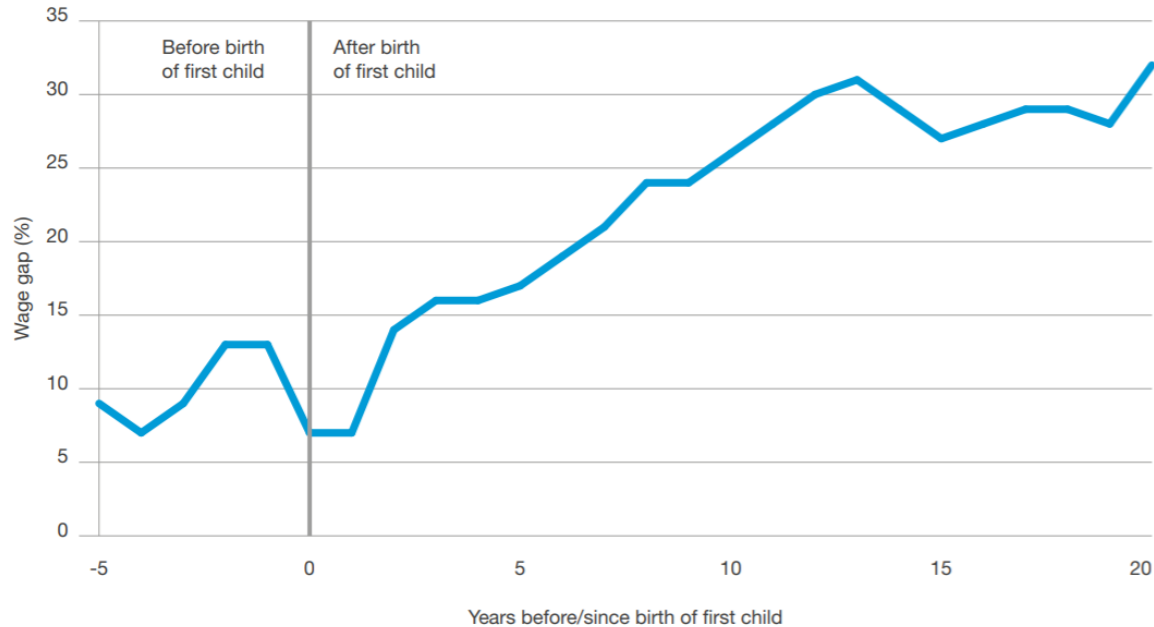
THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS
TEAM



Government
Equalities Office

Parental leave, part-time working, and gendered divisions of care are a primary driver of the gender pay gap

Gender wage gap by time to/since birth of first child



Source: Costa Dias et al. (2018) analysis of BHPS 1991–2008 and Understanding Society 2009–15.



We worked with Zurich Insurance and John Lewis to test a part-time default

What's the problem?

A large driver of the gender gap is due to part-time employees having low or no progression or pay rises compared to full-time colleagues.

Part-time workers are much more likely to be women



We worked with Zurich Insurance to test advertising all positions as flexible by default



Pricing Actuarial Analyst: (P/T, job-share or F/T)



Zurich Insurance Company Ltd
London

Apply on LinkedIn

1 day ago

Pricing Actuarial Analyst: (P/T, job-share or F/T)

Location: London

The Opportunity

An exciting opportunity has arisen for a Pricing Actuarial Analyst working within Energy & Construction Pricing.

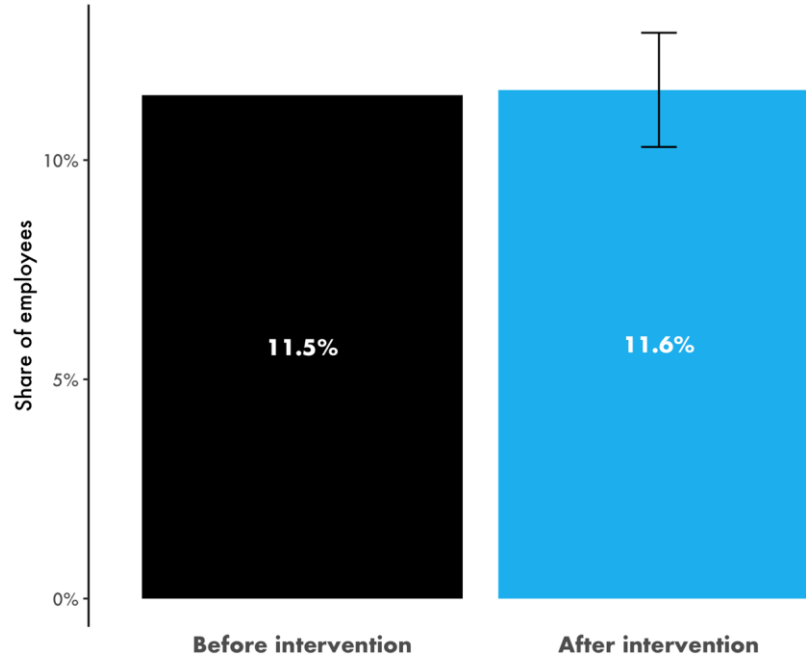
This role is available part-time, job-share or full time. This is because we want the best people for our roles, and we recognise that sometimes those people aren't available full-time.

Part-time option highlighted in title and at top of job posting.

Inclusive language added to job posting.



We found no overall increase in part-time workers



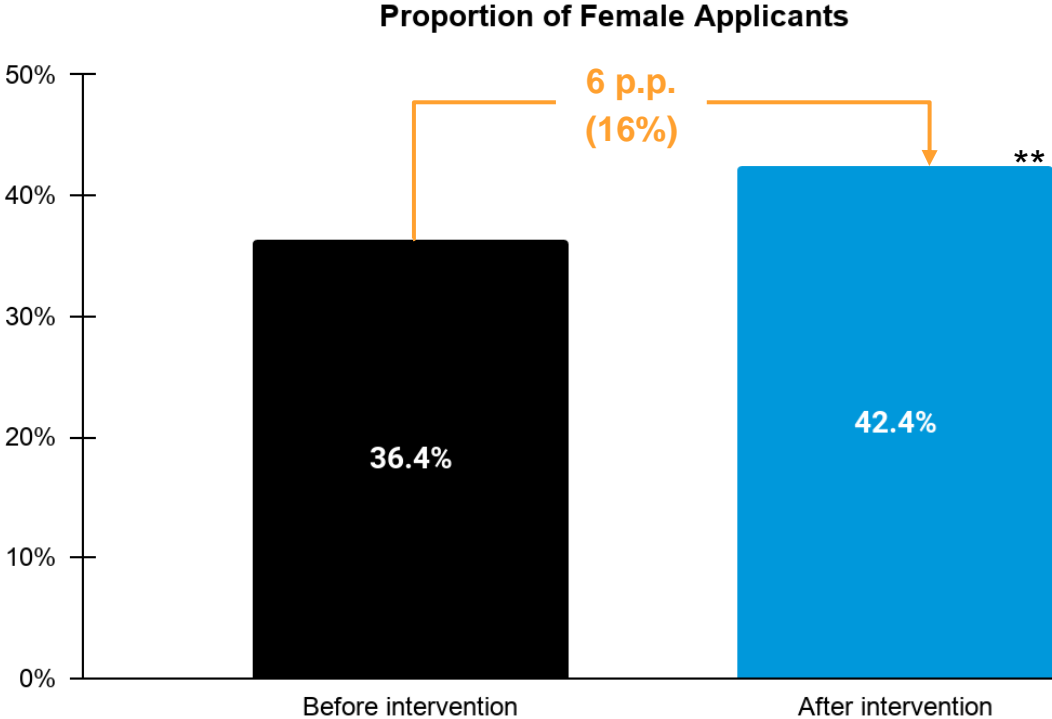
Primary outcome, not adjusted for covariates

N1 = 4922,
N2 = 4646

** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

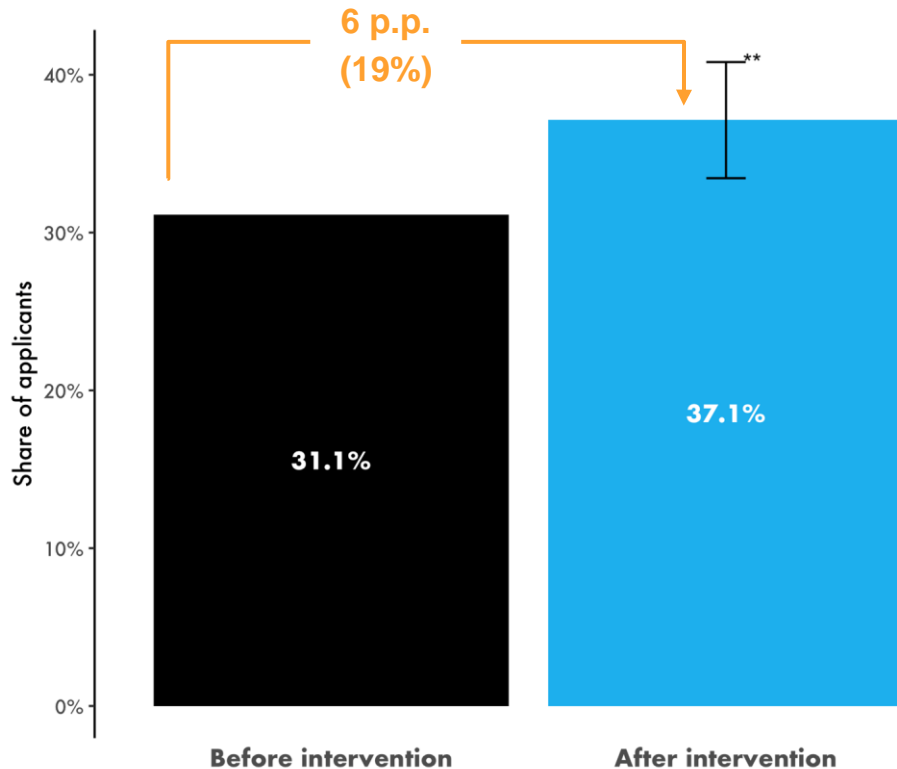


But we found that advertising as flexible by default increased the proportion of female applicants by 16%



Total N=1429 vacancies
** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

And advertising as flexible by default increased the proportion of female applicants to senior roles by 19%



Total N=654 vacancies
** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1



We worked with Santander and a second bank to increase men's intentions to take parental leave

What's the problem?

Since the introduction of SPL in 2015, estimates for uptake vary from 0.5% to 8% among eligible fathers

Men taking up parental leave has benefits for men, children, and women.

- New mothers face less stigma at work when taking time out of work is normalised, and they may return to work faster if they wish.
- Early involvement with a child sets long-term patterns for men's contributions to childcare and housework.
- Early paternal participation has a positive impact on a child's IQ, mental and physical health, career success, and happiness.



Even when policies encourage more equal care - behavioural barriers can prevent this

- In Santander UK, eligible secondary carers are entitled to take four weeks of paid paternity leave, and up to 16 weeks of paid Shared Parental Leave*.
- However, **53.8% men take less than four weeks of leave** (and 23.1% of men take exactly 4 weeks of leave)**.
- This suggests that **men may limit the amount of leave they take - even when they can financially afford to take the leave.**
- Similarly, Santander encourages flexible working among staff - but this is not taken up by all.

* in addition to the legal entitlement to share up to 50 weeks of Shared Parental Leave

** based on period Mar - Sept '19

We hypothesised that ‘pluralistic ignorance’ might be one factor at play

A situation where most people hold the same opinion, while mistakenly believing the majority holds a different opinion

- Men may think that their peers do not support dads taking long parental leave.
- This might mean they take shorter leave, even if they would prefer to take more.
- Pluralistic ignorance often occurs when norms are evolving rapidly

Schroeder, C. M., and Prentice, D. A. (1998). Exposing pluralistic ignorance to reduce alcohol use among college students. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.* 28, 2150–2180. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1998.tb01365.x

First we had to find out what men thought....and what they thought other men believed

We conducted an online **baseline survey**. This tested:

- Participants' **personal opinions** about men who take long leave and work flexibly
- Participants' **perceptions about their colleagues' beliefs** about men who take long leave and work flexibly
- Participants' knowledge of Santander policies
- Demographic data

Sample: 1,045 men at Santander UK

Response rate: 46%

Timing: Jan-Feb 2020

What did this look like in practice?

We asked a series of questions about men's personal opinions, and then later in the survey asked them to respond to the same questions, but from the perception of what they thought other male colleagues would answer.

How many weeks of parental leave would you encourage a male colleague to take?

How many weeks of parental leave would men in your workplace encourage a male colleague to take?

Response options were limited to categorical options e.g. 'up to 2 weeks', '2-4 weeks', '4-8 weeks', '8-16 weeks' and 'more than 16 weeks'

Results from the survey showed pluralistic ignorance occurred for both parental leave and flexible working

Parental leave

On average, participants would encourage men to take **8** weeks of leave, but thought that others would encourage only **6** weeks.

Flexible working

On average, participants thought that **65%** of their colleagues would encourage other male colleague to work flexibly to balance their work and non-work responsibilities, while in reality **99%** would do so.

Little evidence of negative stereotypes

We set out to test whether providing feedback on men's actual beliefs would change behavioural norms

We conducted a second online survey - this time a **Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT)**

We randomised participants into a treatment and control version of the survey

Participants in the 'treatment' condition received the following feedback...

Sample: 2,330 men at Santander UK

Response rate: 50.6%

Timing: June-July 2020

Family Leave - What some Santander colleagues have already told us.

We have already asked some male colleagues in Santander their views on family leave. Their responses revealed that:

The majority of male respondents would encourage their male colleagues to take 5 or more weeks of family leave.

We are now interested in your views.

Flexible Working - What some Santander colleagues have already told us.

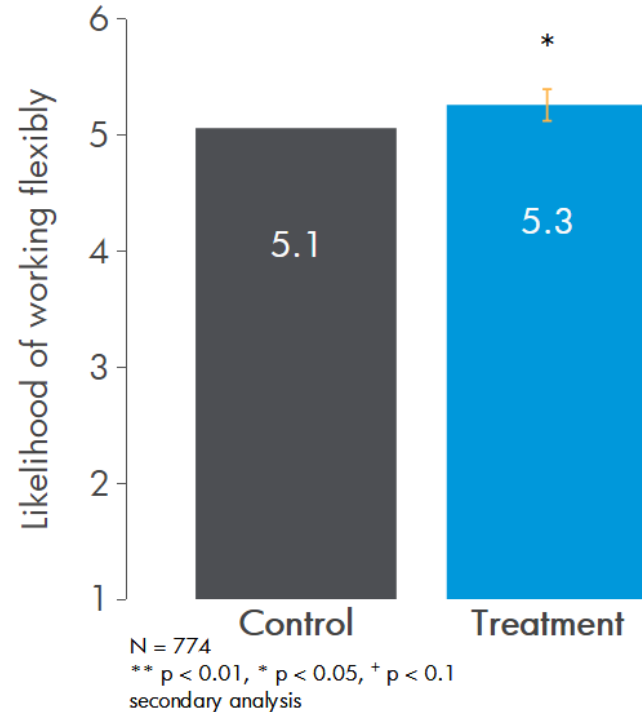
We have already asked some male colleagues in Santander their views on flexible working. Their responses revealed that:

Almost 100% of male respondents would encourage their male colleagues to work flexibly in order to balance their work and non-work responsibilities.

We are now interested in your views.

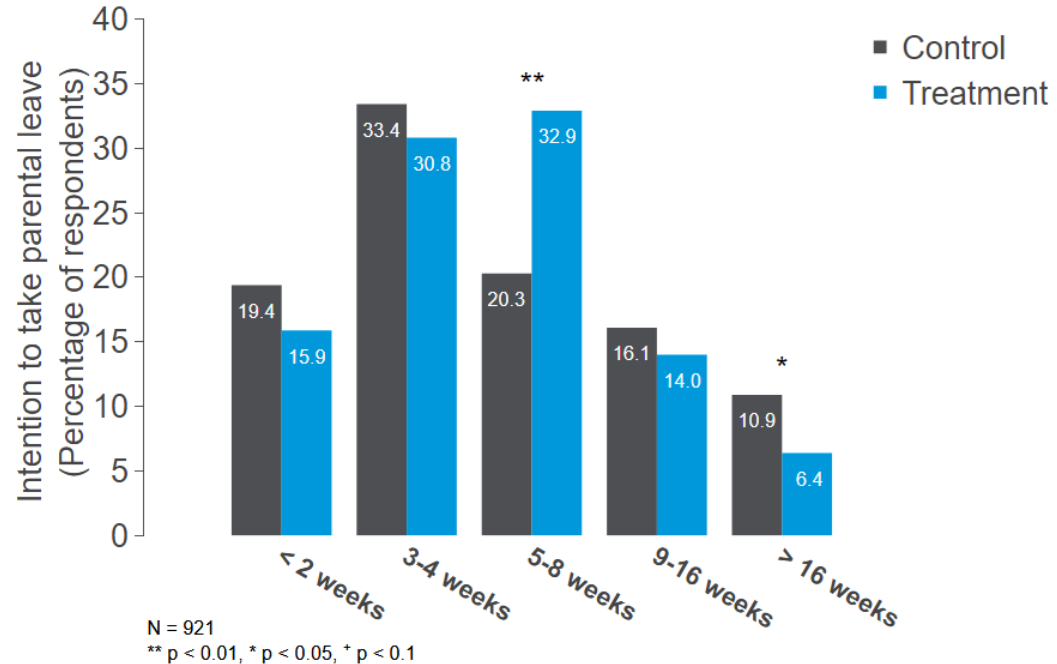
At Santander UK, men who received feedback were significantly more likely to plan to work flexibly in the future

The likelihood that participants would work flexibly in the future significantly increased by 4%.



Men who received feedback were significantly more likely to plan to take between 5-8 weeks of parental leave

- We **significantly increased the number of men intending to take between 5-8 weeks** of leave by 12.6pp (increase of 62% in comparison to control).
- At the same time we unintentionally **significantly decreased the number of men intending to take more than 16 weeks** by 4.5pp (decrease of 59% in comparison to control).

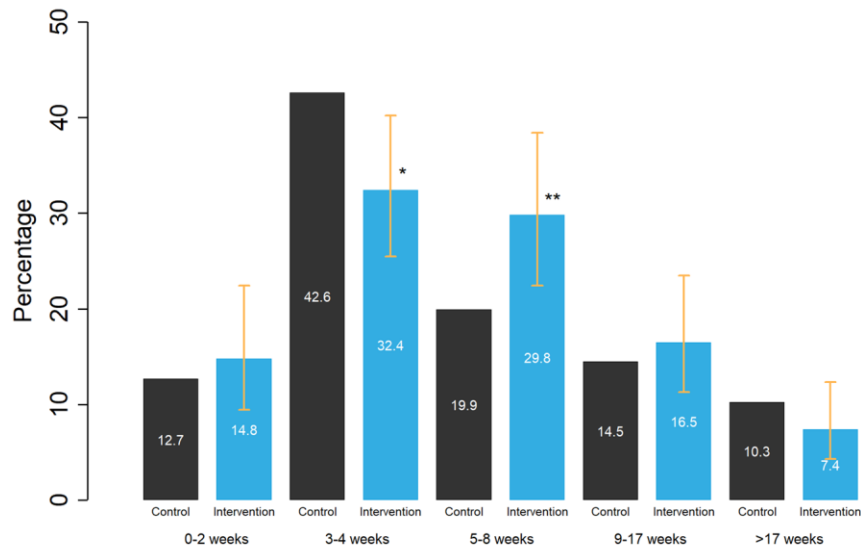


We replicated the trial with another bank - rephrasing the feedback - and managed to avoid reducing leave at 17+ weeks

We **significantly increased the number of men intending to take between 5-8 weeks** of leave by 9.9pp (increase of 49.7% in comparison to control).

Feedback:

“We invited 1,100 men at [this bank] in the UK to tell us their thoughts on men taking parental leave. Of the respondents: 7 in 10 managers told us that they would be supportive of men they manage taking at least 6 weeks’ parental leave. Of those managers, 74% were supportive of men they manage taking at least 12 weeks parental leave.”



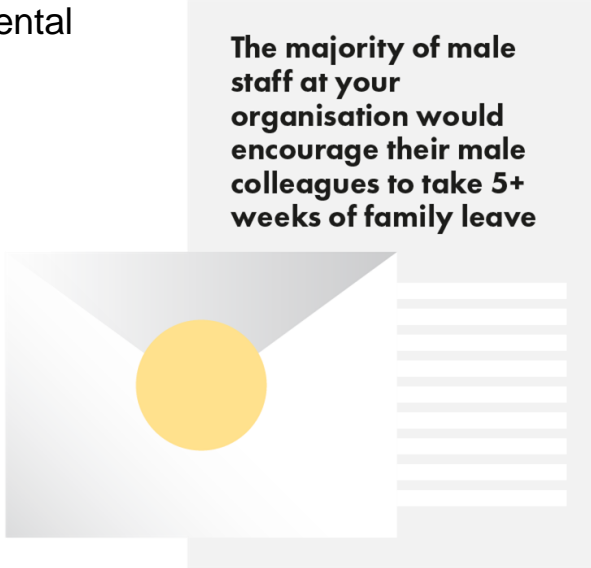
N=649

Exploratory analysis

** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Key take aways

- Even when the right structural incentives are in place - behaviours can prevent men from working flexibly and taking parental leave
- Social norms are very influential, but can be dangerous if we misinterpret group norms
- Providing feedback on actual beliefs can correct *pluralistic ignorance*:
 - it encourages men to plan to work flexibly and take longer parental leave in the future
 - it increases men's support for other men to do the same
 - and it reduces the gap between actual and perceived norms
- If you're looking to this, make sure to:
 - measure existing attitudes
 - share feedback through different channels
 - avoid anchoring men to take less leave by combining info on norms with info on policy entitlements



The majority of male staff at your organisation would encourage their male colleagues to take 5+ weeks of family leave



We ran a trial on how to communicate remote working policies

What's the problem?

After several Covid-19 lockdowns where the default became “work from home if you can”, employers were not sure of the best way to communicate future remote working policies in ways that would preserve flexibility, choice and uptake.





We tested 3 ways of communicating remote working expectations in a survey at a large employer

	Variation	Message
1	Neutral (Control)	Your responses will help us to plan reopening the offices.
2	Default norm	We expect employees to continue to primarily work from home.
3	Low anchor	We expect employees to work from home on average 2 days per week.

Trial took place from 7 to 14 September 2020



We measured intentions and preferences

{Message variation}. Please provide your preferences for working from home below.

1. How many days do you typically work in a week?

0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 3.5 4 4.5 5

2. How many days will you work from home when the office opens to more staff?

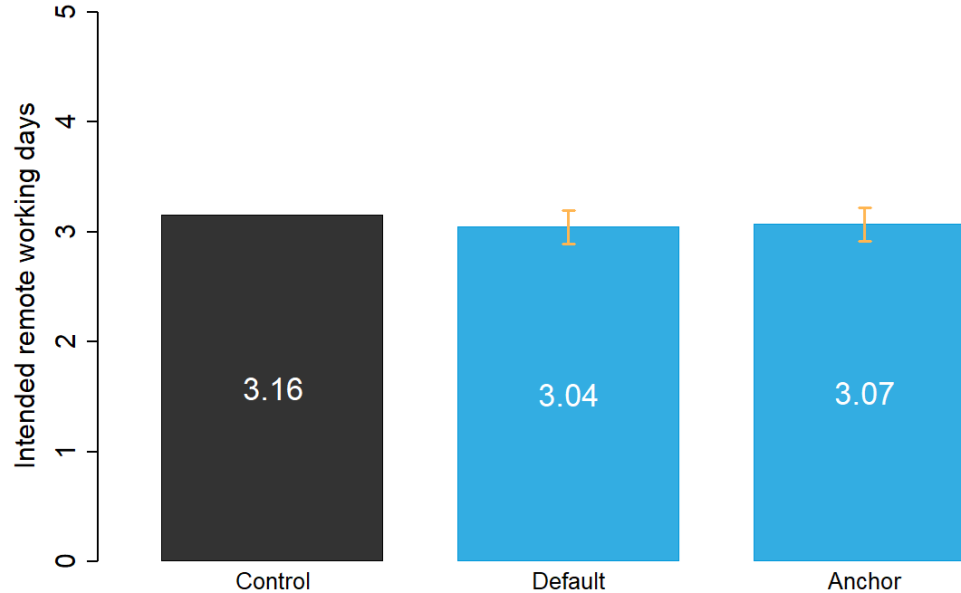
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 3.5 4 4.5 5

3. How many days would you like to work from home when the office opens to more staff?

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 3.5 4 4.5 5



We found that overall, the default and anchor statements made no difference to intentions to work remotely



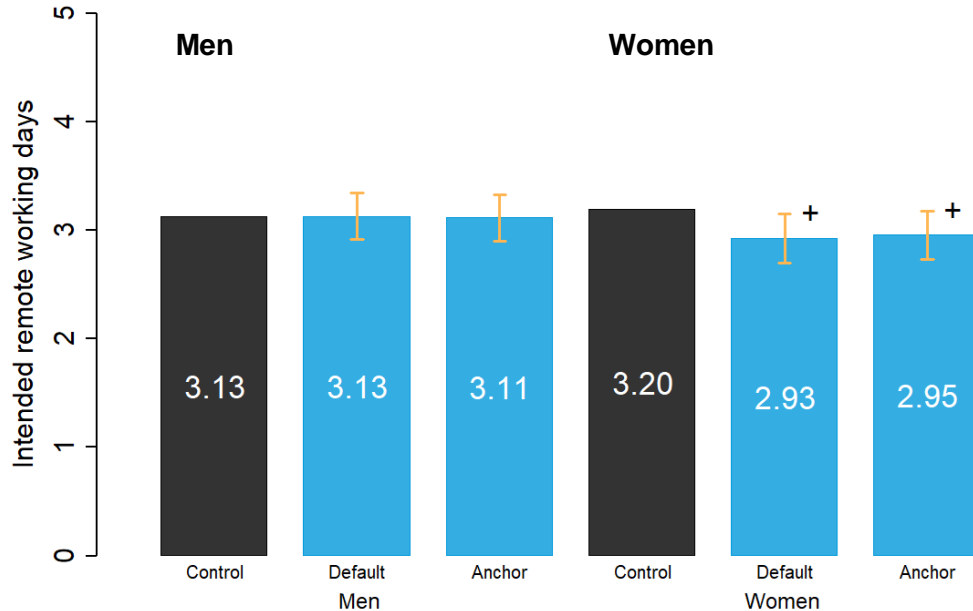
N=3,829

Primary analysis

** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1



But women adjusted their intended remote working days down in response to the anchor and default where men did not.



This implies that suggesting a specific number or proportion of remote working could result in gender unequal uptake

N = 2,172 men, 1,407 women

Exploratory analysis

** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

The employer communicated that they were a hybrid-remote organisation



Thanks to the results of this trial, DE&S changed how they communicated their remote working policy to their 12,000 employees from a 2:3 day split to:

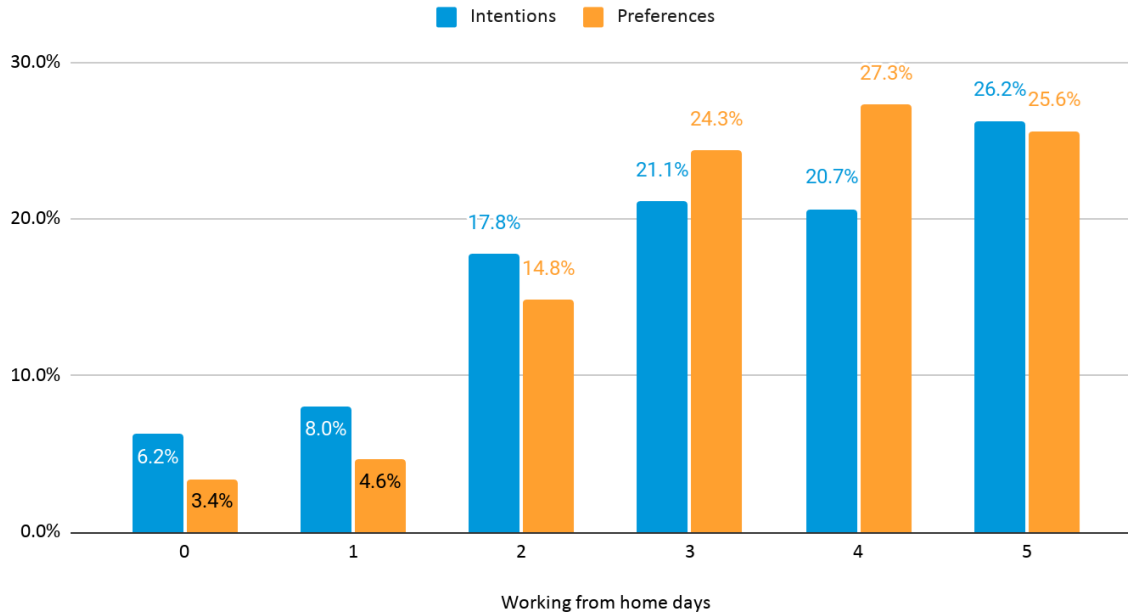
*“**A hybrid-remote organisation.** A general principle that, post-COVID restrictions, our office-based people will typically work from home/remotely more than they ever have done before – moving DE&S to a hybrid-remote organisation. We want to empower our people to make the right decisions for them and the organisation, **without imposing quotas** about time spent in office versus time spent working remotely.”*





People want to wfh more than they think they will

Overall intentions vs. preferences



High appetite for remote working at DE&S with three-quarters (77%) wanting to wfh 3 days or more per week

This is 9pp more than the proportion (68%) who think they will wfh 3 days or more

Combined control and treatments, n=3,830. Part-time employee responses were scaled to a 5-day week.

Three research trials with relevant lessons: summary of findings

- Part-time defaults **increased applications from women to senior roles by 19%** at Zurich and **35%** at John Lewis
- Informing men that their peers were almost universally supportive of flexible working **increased men's intentions to work flexibly by 4%**
- Informing men about their peers' attitudes **increased intention to take 5-8 weeks of parental leave by 62%** at Santander **and 50%** at a second bank
- **Providing expectations around a set number of days to work from the office had a negative effect for women** and no effect for men

Helpful resources from the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)

You can find blogs and detailed reports for each of the trials discussed on our [website](#), along with helpful infographic and animation videos

Questions? Get in touch:

Shoshana.Davidson@bi.team

What works to improve gender equality in the workplace? ... Normalise flexible working



What is the problem?

A key driver of the gender pay gap is that women are **twice as likely** to work flexibly and **3 times as likely** to work part-time after having a child than men.

Part-time workers get fewer pay rises, promotions or other rewards compared to full-time workers.

But 9 out of 10 of all jobseekers, including men, want increased flexibility.¹

What is the solution?

Use simple prompts
Prompt employers to advertise new jobs as flexible when they are posting a new role - and create 174,000 flexible new jobs in the UK a year.

Set a flexible default
Change the default in new job ads from full-time to part-time, jobshare and flexible working - and increase applications from women to senior roles by 19-50%. Flexibility appeals to men and women equally.

Offer hybrid flexibility
Avoid telling staff to work a fixed number of remote or workplace-based days a week (e.g. "work 2 days a week in the office"). This has a negative effect for women and no effect for men.

Share positive social norms
When there is widespread support for new flexible working patterns, share these widely.

we expect employees to work from home on average 2 days per week.

99% of your colleagues support flexible working.

Find out more at: www.LINKHERE.co.uk

Logos: indeed, ZURICH, de&s, Santander, LINK HERE

This work was funded by the Government Equalities Office as part of the [Gender & Behavioural Insights Programme](#)

Also check out our [evidence summary](#)



Area of focus	Effective actions	Promising actions	Mixed evidence
Leadership and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set internal targets for gender representation and equality Appoint diversity leads and/or diversity taskforces 		
Hiring and selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer flexible working by default in job adverts Use structured interviews for recruitment and promotions Use skill-based assessment tasks in recruitment Make expectations around salaries and negotiation clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use targeted referrals Remove biased language from job adverts Recruit returners Anonymise CVs Make it possible to list experience in terms of years not dates in CVs Include more women in shortlists for recruitment and promotions Make decisions about applicants in batches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity statements Diverse selection panels
Talent management, learning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase transparency to promotion, pay and reward processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request 'advice' for actionable ways to improve instead of 'feedback' on past performance Offer mentoring and sponsorship Offer networking programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance self-assessments Unconscious bias training Diversity training Leadership development training
Workplace flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share local support for parental leave and flexible working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve workplace flexibility for men and women Encourage the uptake of Shared Parental Leave 	



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