



innovation
foundation

EMPOWERED BY
THE ADECCO GROUP

WOMEN RETURNING TO WORK IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Report 2:
Insights from those
most impacted



INTRODUCTION

As employers worldwide struggle to attract and retain talent post-Covid-19, the **Innovation Foundation** and **TASC Platform** are joining forces to identify opportunities to empower women returning to work. This collaborative research series explores the challenges faced by women returning to work after Covid-19 and asks whether flexibility at work is a universal solution for both employers and workers.

In our first research paper, **“Women Returning to Work in a Post-Pandemic World: Busting the Myths of Flexibility and Choice”**, we investigated the discourse and solutions proposed in response to the ‘Great Resignation’ and identified a market disconnect. While employers were struggling to gain and retain top talent, vulnerable groups including young people, low and medium-skilled workers in hard-hit industries, and parents and carers were struggling to find opportunities. Women are disproportionately represented across all these vulnerable groups and, despite labour shortages and new ways of working, still find themselves in sub-optimal working conditions, underemployed or struggling to re-enter the job market at all.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION

Also termed the Big Quit, the Great Reshuffle or the Great Reset, it refers to the millions of employees who have left their jobs, are looking for a new job, or plan to do so in the near future following the upheaval of the pandemic – and it has hit the risk-radar of employers across the globe.

We are seeking avenues to reconcile this challenge. How can we reconnect employers with this valuable workforce, and support these under-served women in reaping the benefits of the ‘Great Reset’?

POSITIVE FLEXIBILITY

Our early insights indicate that female workers need and aspire towards:

- Both secure and flexible work opportunities that do not come with an income and progress penalty
- A level playing field in terms of wages, skills and cultural treatment
- Improved support systems for family, home and financial burdens

Flexibility is being positioned as a new demand from workers around the world and a top solution for employers – but our first research paper identifies limits to the applicability of flexible work as it is currently conceived (primarily in terms of the ability to work remotely), particularly for low to mid-skilled workers, and many in service or shiftwork.

In this second paper, our research moves beyond the global level to test the applicability of our findings and potential solutions on the ground. We dig deeper into the benefits and challenges of flexibility for medium-skilled women in a diverse set of labour markets: India, Japan, South Africa, Sweden, and the UK. In addition, we focus on three industries that have been at the front-line during the pandemic: healthcare, hospitality and logistics.

The results will inform the Innovation Foundation’s design thinking process to create prototype social solutions that address employability barriers for this underserved population head-on.



Part 1

OVERLOOKED AND UNDERSERVED: IDENTIFYING A VULNERABLE DEMOGRAPHIC

The missing middle: Medium-skilled working women

In this paper, we focus on what we have uncovered as an under-served population who does not often have solutions tailored to their needs. We term them as mid-skilled workers, and define them as women with primary and secondary, but not tertiary education. This does not limit us to employees at a junior level or with low levels of responsibility. Our survey respondents include supervisors, directors, entrepreneurs, and business leaders.

This diverse group of women represent a missing middle in research and policy discussions, falling in between the highly skilled office workers and low skilled manual workers who are the protagonists of headlines related to labour shortages and the Great Resignation. They are not generally singled out as a population in research or statistic and, as our research indicates, are often overlooked for career progression opportunities in the professional context.

Hard-hit industries with workers on the 'frontline' of the pandemic

With the aim of bringing in a diversity of perspectives beyond office workers affected by remote work, and to bring to life the challenges of returning to work during the pandemic, we focus on three industries that have been hard-hit by the impacts and restrictions of Covid-19, and that, by their nature, involve work that must be performed in-person or on-site.

Hospitality: Following lockdowns, travel bans, quarantine measures and other government restrictions in reaction to Covid-19, operations across the global hospitality sector were limited or halted,

SOME EXAMPLES OF MID-SKILLED ROLES FROM OUR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE:

Healthcare: Nurse assistant, administrative assistant, pharmacy dispenser, support worker, lab assistant, home carer

Hospitality: Housekeeping supervisor, cook, hostess, customer service assistant, sales manager

Logistics: Inventory manager, quality controller, delivery worker, dispatch operative, logistics supervisor

disrupting the incomes and employment of millions of workers.

Healthcare: Workers faced unprecedented pressures affecting their physical, mental and social well-being. Suspension of services to contain the virus led to massive unemployment rates amongst non-emergency healthcare workers, and emergency measures triggered a rise in temporary contracts, shared staff and other forms of precarious working conditions.

Logistics: Companies involved in the movement, storage, and flow of goods have experienced severe disruptions to supply chains, both within and across international borders, with knock-on effects for job growth and employment in the industry.





Five diverse labour markets

To test the global applicability of our findings, we look at five labour markets which bring a diverse set of contexts and challenges for mid-skilled women.

India: Even before the pandemic, the Indian economy faced jobless growth¹, a huge informal workforce², and under-reporting of women's employment³. During the pandemic, female workforce participation decreased by 16.1%, one of the most severe declines worldwide⁴, while approximately 52% of women worked in high-risk jobs, making them both more vulnerable, and harder to encourage to return to work.⁵

Japan: The challenges of a shrinking population have led to a rapid rise in female labour force participation in recent years.^{6,7} However, most of this rise consists of non-regular and part-time positions⁸, and the burden of childcare and impacts of the pandemic have led to worsening gender inequality in the workplace.^{9,10}

South Africa: The unemployment rate is currently the highest the country has seen since 2008¹¹, and women face additional structural challenges in access to economic opportunity, limited types of employment and lower levels of compensation. Low-wage job losses

have been fourfold higher than that of high-wage workers¹², workers without tertiary education are 6% less likely to find employment¹³, and unemployment was 9% higher for women than men¹⁴.

Sweden: Women's employment suffered more than men's during the pandemic¹⁵, along with a rise in the number of short part-time contracts, short fixed-term contracts and many other forms of atypical contracts due to greater labour market insecurity.¹⁶ The pay gap has been reducing between men and women, but increasing between highly skilled women and women in low to medium skilled jobs.¹⁷

United Kingdom: British employers are facing a tight labour market with high vacancy rates and low unemployment.¹⁸ More women than men were furloughed through the pandemic, however economic activity decreased less (-2%, compared to -9.5% for men) and the number of women in full-time employment increased – perhaps due to increased options for flexibility, compensating for their partners earnings, or the rise in labour demands in female-heavy service sectors such as health and social work, retail and education.¹⁹

AT A GLANCE:

	India	Japan	South Africa	Sweden	UK
Labour Force Participation Rates ²⁰					
Women	26.2%	53.5%	49.6%	63.2%	58.5%
Men	75.8%	71.3%	62.4%	70.1%	68.2%
Unemployment Rates ²¹					
Women	4.4%*	2.5%	30.3%	9.1%	3.5%
Men	4.8%*	3.1%	27.5%	8.4%	3.9%
Part-time Employment Rates ²²					
Women	Data unavailable	39%	13.9%	15.6%	34.5%
Men	Data unavailable	15%	7.4%	9.5%	11.4%
Gender Wage Gap ²³					
	Data unavailable	22.11	Data unavailable	7.42*	14.35

All data is for 2021, unless otherwise stated
*data from 2020



Part 2

SURVEY FINDINGS: EXPERIENCES OF FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE

Within these diverse labour market contexts, we asked working women about their experiences through the pandemic, the challenges they face in their working lives, and their preferences and desires when it comes to flexibility, empowerment and support. We surveyed a small sample of 176 women with medium skillsets currently employed in the healthcare, hospitality and logistics industries across our five countries.

Our aim was to test three assertions that have arisen through the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to what has been termed respectively the Great Resignation, the Great Reshuffle and the Great Reset as our experiences and responses to the pandemic have evolved.

Survey Participants: Mid-skilled women in healthcare, hospitality and logistics across 5 countries



Myth 1: The Great Resignation – Workers are leaving their jobs in response to poor working conditions and employment insecurity through the pandemic

Myth 2: The Great Reshuffle – There are more and better work opportunities due to labour shortages and employers' desire to attract workers

Myth 3: The Great Reset – Remote work is here to stay as wellbeing and work-life balance become priorities for workers and employers

Our findings suggest that, for this demographic of women, these three assertions represent powerful myths rather than meaningful change.



Myth 1: The Great Resignation

Workers are leaving their jobs in response to poor working conditions and employment insecurity through the pandemic.

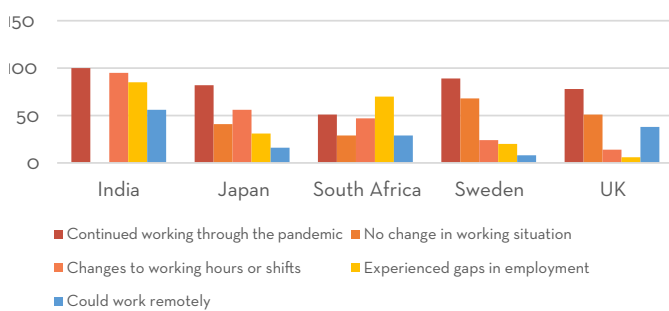
Our findings suggest that mid-skilled women in frontline industries have not had the luxury of choice when it comes to resigning from their jobs to seek better opportunities in response to the pandemic.

Of our sample, 81% continued working throughout the course of the pandemic restrictions and lockdowns. Their experiences were not ideal. Of these, only 25% were able to work remotely. 28% experienced no change in their working lives, 43% had changes to their working hours or shifts and 44% experienced gaps in their employment.

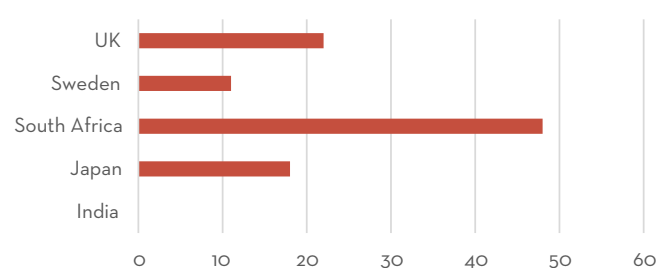
Of the 19% who did not work through the pandemic, only 2 women or 0.01% left their employment by choice. 99.99% were retrenched, made redundant, bankrupted, forced to take up caring responsibilities, furloughed, or faced unacceptable working conditions.

Financial responsibilities could be behind these figures. Mid-skilled women are disproportionately represented in lower-paid and part-time work and are often on the edge of financial precarity, but do not receive the support and benefits of lower income groups. 63% of our sample are the primary earners in their household, while 18% benefit from contributions of other household members, and only 0.05% receive income from other sources such as rent or government support.

Experiences of work through the pandemic



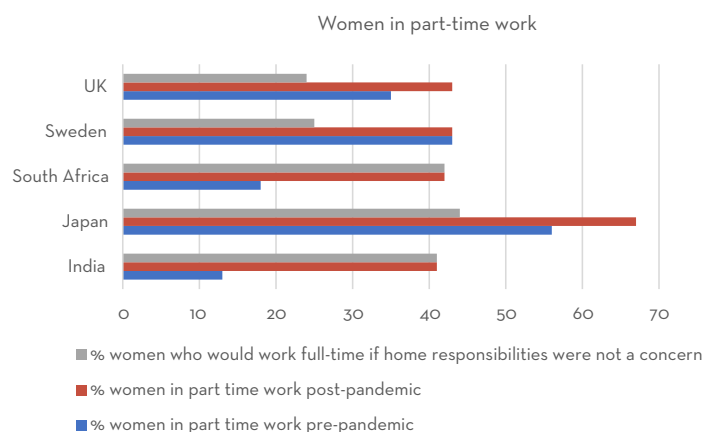
% of women who did not work throughout the pandemic



Myth 2: The Great Reshuffle

There are more and better work opportunities due to labour shortages and employers' desire to attract workers.

The war for talent amongst highly skilled and low skilled workers does not seem to have extended to mid-skill women workers. When asked about the challenges faced returning to work, women cited a lack of jobs in their industry (20%) and employers' preferences for more experienced or skilled workers (21.5%) as their top barriers.



	Japan	India	UK	Sweden	SA
Primary Challenges returning to work	Lack of jobs (21%)	Employers' preference for more experienced people (79.5%)	Lack of jobs (50%)	Lack of jobs (50%)	Lack of jobs (64%)

40% of our respondents received no support in returning to work after the pandemic. 28% received support from their employers, and 26% from the government. 39% benefited from more flexible hours, and just 7% benefited from more flexible working locations. Globally, 30% of our participants are currently receiving employment services such as job referrals or vocational training, and 56% of those who have not would like to have access to these services.

In addition to struggling to find work, many women remain involuntarily under-employed. Prior to the pandemic, 61% of these women were in full time employment. This dropped to 49% after the pandemic, with just 2% as new entrants to the workforce and 48% now working in part-time roles.

Domestic responsibilities is a huge contributor to this drop. 73% of our part-time workers would participate in full-time work if responsibilities at home were not a concern. 56% of our sample have dependents to care for at home - whether children, elderly, or people with disabilities, and only 0.04% have support from family members or professional carers.



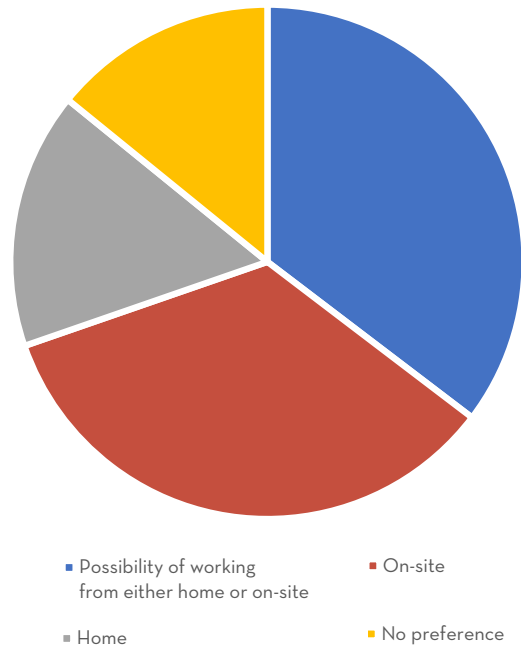
Myth 3: The Great Reset –

Remote work is here to stay as wellbeing and work-life balance become priorities for workers and employers.

For mid-skilled women in frontline industries, flexibility of time is more important than flexibility of location. Preferences amongst our demographic are for on-site work (34%) and having the option to work remotely (35%). Only 16% expressed a desire to work from home.

In contrast, there is a high demand for flexible schedules. 57% of our respondents prefer shift work and 64% would prefer working on alternate days.

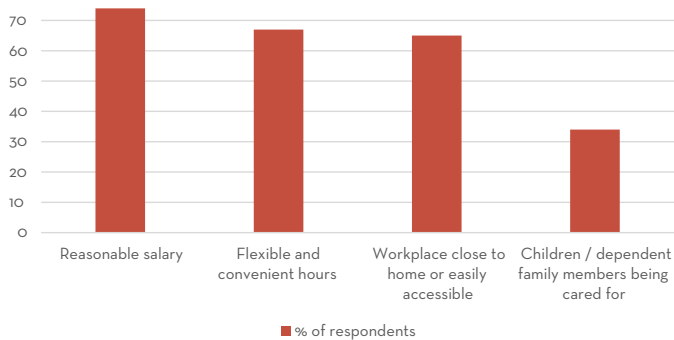
In fact, 77% of respondents were happy with their current work arrangements. For those who were unhappy, inadequate wages headline the sources of dissatisfaction (22%), followed by inflexible and arbitrary scheduling (10%) and employer attitudes (7%). Only 4% cited distance from the workplace as a challenge.



	Japan	India	UK	Sweden	SA
Happy with current working arrangements	69%	90%	89%	76%	58%
Primary causes of dissatisfaction	Inadequate wages (24%)	Arbitrary Scheduling (10%)	Inadequate wages (11%)	Inadequate wages (21%)	Inadequate wages (21%)
Location preferences	On-site (42%)	On-site (49%)	On-site (38%)	Flexible (39%)	Flexible (48%)
Schedule preferences	Shifts (71%)	Shifts (85%)	Regular hours (64%)	Regular hours (72%)	Shift (42%)
Preferred shift duration	7-10 hour shifts (34%)	4-6 hour shifts (62%)	4-6 hour shifts (62%)	4-6 hrs (50%) 7-10 hrs (50%)	7-10 hour shifts (53%)
Incentive for entering and staying in the workforce	Reasonable salary (90%)	Reasonable salary + flexible working (80%)	Reasonable salary + flexible working (73%)	Flexible and convenient work hours (54%)	Reasonable salary (70%)
Current access to vocational training	18%	79%	65%	64%	33%
Desire to receive vocational training	34%	100%	35%	39%	82%

These findings are strengthened by women's motivations for entering and staying in the workforce, where the demand for a reasonable income remains the dominant theme. There could be a combination of factors driving a disadvantage in income for mid-skilled women workers, compared to their peers. Firstly, women face a gender pay gap across the board, and secondly, a high number are part-time workers or contractors. In this situation, they are likely to receive lower wages, less benefits, less reliable contract terms, income, and hours, and to be under-employed in comparison to their desired working hours and income levels.

Women's motivations for entering and staying in the workforce



In addition to monetary recognition, we saw a clear theme emerging in response to the question of what employers can do to support working women. 19% of our respondents cited the desire for more respect or recognition in the workplace. This ranged from empathy and communication, to decent working conditions and opportunities for promotion and growth. There is a clear desire to be seen and treated as a valuable contributor to the workplace.

Do you have any specific expectations or needs from your employers?

Mental health support
 Appreciate us
 Chairs to sit on
 Work-life balance
 Job Promotion
 Respect
 Good behaviour
 Communication
 comfortable working environment
 Greater influence
 Better feedback



Part 3

POSITIVE FLEXIBILITY FOR THE MISSING MIDDLE: SOLUTIONS TO EXPLORE

Our research and survey have confirmed many of the challenges we anticipated were faced by mid-skilled women in the workforce, both as a result of the pandemic and in the wider context of returning to work from any career break. However, there are two key insights we have gained on critical factors for mid-skilled women working in frontline industries:

- **TIME:** Women in frontline roles value flexibility of time over flexibility of location
- **RECOGNITION:** Women in these roles want to be valued – firstly through reasonable remuneration, and secondly through respect, empathy and opportunities

In combination, catering to these two insights can help to provide the trust and openness needed to facilitate positive flexibility for these under-served women and realize the potential of this under-utilized segment of the workforce.

To build on this new understanding, we spoke to employers, experts and end users to gather ideas for solutions to these two challenges. The existing solutions identified below have been primarily developed for either low-skilled or high-skilled workers, but they provide areas for further investigation that have the potential to be adapted and tailored to meet the desires and improve the working lives of this important demographic.

IN OUR FIRST REPORT WE PROPOSED FIVE AVENUES OF EMPOWERMENT for low and mid-skilled women in the workforce. The solutions below also fall into these categories:

- pathways to work
- models of work
- career pathways and mobility
- employee voice
- support systems



TIME

Flexible schedules

Rigid scheduling systems and processes often don't offer much flexibility to front-line, mid-skilled female employees. For those working part-time, in shifts, or even full-time, having the option to manage their own schedules is a valuable form of flexibility. The right scheduling options will depend on the company, the sector or the particular role, but employers can rethink requirements of time and presenteeism to prioritise the best outcomes.



We started implementing flexible work practices globally in 2018, seeing this as an important lever for progress in the diversity and inclusion space. At the same time, we recognize the importance of building a bridge between flexibility and engagement, which requires a human-centered, not a “one model fit all” approach.”

HEIDI ROBERTSON

GROUP HEAD OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, ABB

Job-sharing: Sharing responsibilities of a role can help to extend the benefits of shift work or reduced schedules to women in leadership positions.



We have introduced split-shifts, and guaranteed shifts for parents aligned with school-hours on a part-time basis in the U.K. We have also experimented with part-time leadership in production sites, and job-sharing leadership roles. It sends the message of – if you can see it, you can be it”

CLAIRE GARRY

SENIOR MANAGER CORPORATE TALENT & PERFORMANCE & EDI, SWAROVSKI

Since the pandemic, both Marriott and 25 Hours Hotel have introduced the options of more personalized shift-schedules and 4-day work week models for interested employees.

Forms of flexible schedules could include:

Split shifts: 4-5 hours in the morning and 4-5 hours in the afternoon, with a flexible gap between them can help woman who stay closer to the workplace to fulfil caregiving responsibilities during the break, spend lunch with their families, or have a greater work-life balance. Equally, giving working parents the flexibility to align with school hours can alleviate the costs of additional extra-curricular childcare.



Most of our housekeeping happens between 10am and 16pm so there is a possibility to give mothers the flexibility to leave earlier or arrive later.”

FRANCISCA MARTINEZ

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA, MARRIOTT



“

Introducing the option of working on alternate days allowed us to retain more workers during the pandemic, while offering reliable and predictable part-time roles. It has to be a win-win for employers and employee.

NEHA AHUJA

DIRECTOR - AVIATION HOSPITALITY,
RED GINGER HOSPITALITY

“

We have been thinking about how we can approach the existing market after the pandemic, and how we can find a suitable workforce. Depending on needs, background and expectations, employees can now change their contracts as per their requirements.”

KATHRIN GOLLUBITS

VP OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE, 25 HOURS HOTEL

Shift marketplaces: employees can choose or swap shifts from their phones without needing the manager's approval or oversight, empowering women employees to manage and prioritize their personal commitments privately.

Compressed work hours or alternate days: working agreed hours over a few days, benefitting people interested in pursuing additional vocational training or professional development services on non-work days.



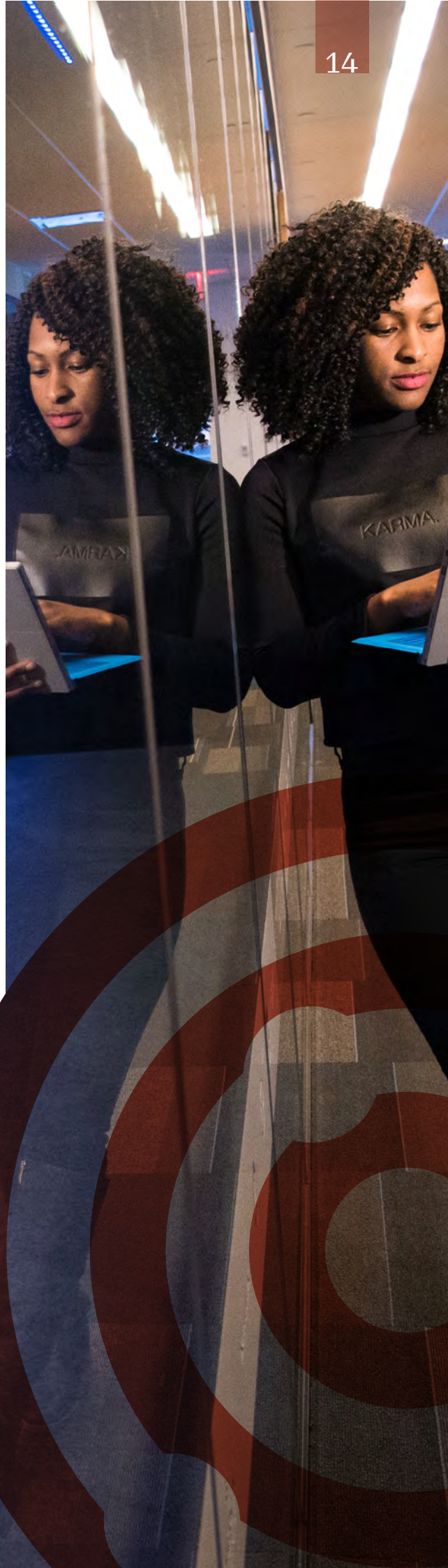
4-day work week: The concept of shortening the work week to four days has been debated and experimented with for some time. In Japan, when Microsoft tested it out in 2019, there was a 40% increase in productivity which was noticed. In Iceland too, it was considered an 'overwhelming success' when the experiment was run from 2015-2019. Workers were paid the same wages for 35-36 hours of work, instead of 40 hours.²⁴

Care for children and dependents

Care responsibilities are a significant barrier to flexibility for working women. Prior to the pandemic, a report published by ILO indicated that, as of 2018, women performed 76.2% of the unpaid care work across the world.²⁵ This worsened during the pandemic as women quit the workforce to fulfil their caregiving duties. Estimates indicate that between 2019 and 2021, the global workforce was short of 13 million women as employment rates for men signalled a quick recovery.²⁶

Our survey indicates that 73% of women in part-time work would return to full-time work if home responsibilities were taken care of, and a survey of 3,100 working parents revealed those who had access to on-site caregiving facilities were more likely to remain at their job and experienced greater concentration at work.²⁷

ABB and Swarovski have established childcare facilities close to their factories to support their blue-collar workers in Germany and Austria respectively. Swarovski has also introduced an Employee Assistance Programme providing financial and caregiving support to blue-collar workers in production sites in Thailand, Vietnam and Serbia.



While flexible work is often considered a valuable solution for women with care responsibilities, a study of Japanese workers has discovered that remote work resulted in both parents of children under 10 years old devoting more time to childcare²⁸.

Broadening the application of flexible work solutions, such as flexible schedules, working from home, and increasing the take up of parental leave by both men and women could help to drive culture change and more fairly distribute the allocation of work at home and in the workplace.

“

There has definitely been a shift in recent years. We have both men and women who have family commitments and their requirement is to work for example, 4 days a week. We need to try and ensure we are able to meet employee and employer needs and achieve a win-win in these cases

CLAUDIA BIDWELL

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, IMPLENIA

“

It's important to not frame this as a topic for women. It's equally beneficial for all workers. It's not a women's problem but it is a solution for everyone. It's important to focus on how we tell this story.”

CLAIRE GARRY

SENIOR MANAGER CORPORATE TALENT & PERFORMANCE & EDI, SWAROVSKI

“

Remote work reduced working hours across all workers, but the results were very different group-by-group. The results for parents of young children contrasted to those of single women, who allocate slightly more time to leisure, and single men who did not significantly change their behaviour patterns. The findings indicate remote work could be quite a useful tool, particularly for childcare”

TOSHIHIRO OKUBO

PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS,
KEIO UNIVERSITY



RECOGNITION

Monetary rewards

Our surveys revealed that reasonable salaries would encourage economic participation by 90% of the Japanese respondents and 80% of the Indian respondents. Public polls have indicated that over 30% of applicants would prioritise wages over factors such as enjoyment of work, job security or company reputation.²⁹ Monetary rewards need not be extravagant but serve as tokens of appreciation which also provide means to fulfil interests beyond work, such as gift cards, merchandise or even cash. They could also include long-term incentives such as profit-sharing plans and employee stock options.³⁰



We have connected our employees with providers of financial management support in factories in Vietnam and Thailand. This helps people avoid informal money lenders, educating them about financial well-being so they can protect themselves.”

CLAIRE GARRY

SENIOR MANAGER CORPORATE TALENT & PERFORMANCE & EDI, SWAROVSKI



In an industry of high turnover and limited growth opportunities, we have really seen the benefits of short-term rewards as a motivating factor for all employees. We have weekly target-based incentives for all employees, as well as yearly salary increments for employees who stay with us.”

NEHA AHUJA

DIRECTOR, AVIATION HOSPITALITY,
RED GINGER HOSPITALITY



Empathy and communication

Mental health and wellbeing:

In recognition of the mental toll that frontline work and home responsibilities can take on women and the additional anxiety created by the pandemic, many employers have taken initiatives to create support groups, drive culture change through peer and leadership initiatives, and introduce sabbatical programmes.

Swarovski has introduced a Wellbeing Corner in its factories, where professionals with experience assisting disadvantaged groups were connected to factory workers.³⁰ The workers could visit these professionals for guidance and advice regarding personal and professional challenges ranging from finance, health and gender equality. As of 2020, the Corner witnessed over 700 visits.³¹

“

We've started being more conscious with our people engagement – not just with targets and work to be done, but by creating more avenues to interact with peers and colleagues in a non-work agenda, to connect and talk about their commonalities and differences. This has really helped our retention and the feeling of having a team.”

GRACE DAVID

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, EDUKASYON.PH

“

The wide-spread integration of hybrid and flexible work puts more pressure on leadership, which is based on frequent communication, engagement and inspiration. In our learning and development practices, we place an emphasis on empathy-driven leadership.”

HEIDI ROBERTSON

GROUP HEAD OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, ABB

“

“We saw people leaving due to stress and mental pressure, making emotional decisions to leave, without any plans. We started promoting our sabbatical program more to address this.”

FRANCISCA MARTINEZ

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA, MARRIOTT



Social Dialogue: Formal or informal dialogue between the employers, employees (and/or employee representatives) and governments can help to highlight and overcome gaps in understanding and build the involvement and empowerment of workers.

Dialogue of this type has helped mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on employment by helping cushion the pandemic's effect on inequality.³³ It has helped negotiate paid sick leave, better healthcare benefits, and stronger worker protection. New agreements resulting from social dialogue on telework and hybrid work are transforming employment and paving the way for a future with decent digital work.

AFTER 4-DAY WEEK TRIALS IN ICELAND

were seen to be successful in improving retention and productivity, it was the trade unions and their confederations which secured permanent reductions in working hours, improving flexibility for tens of thousands of members throughout the country.³⁴

“

I do really believe in the two elements of communication and transparency. Whether as an employee or a leader, if you know what's going on, if you feel safe around the process, and you feel it's honest and open, you can handle so much more.”

HEIDI ROBERTSON

GROUP HEAD OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, ABB



Opportunities for empowerment and decision-making

Our conversations with employers aiming to retain talent highlighted that a higher rate of attrition is largely attributable to the scarcity of opportunities for recognition, growth and empowerment in the workplace. This has compelled employers to introduce on-the-job programmes that prioritise employee engagement, offer opportunities to upskill or create avenues for participation in decision-making. However, they are rarely targeted to mid-skill workers. Given the shortages of skilled workers in logistics, hospitality, healthcare and beyond, an important opportunity is being missed to resolve labour market gaps.

SOLUTIONS COULD INCLUDE:

Reverse mentoring: To dismantle top-down barriers, Swarovski launched reverse mentoring, connecting employees at different levels of the organization, allowing them to learn on the job and develop leadership skills, and facilitating an enhanced understanding of their diverse responsibilities.³³



We have been conducting a pilot on job design and cross-training called integrated jobs, which is now being launched in some markets. Like a model in smaller hotels, teams are cross-trained to do a little bit of everything from front-desk to restaurant services.”

FRANCISCA MARTINEZ

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA, MARRIOTT

Experiential learning programs: Programs that allow participation in decision-making processes encourage the establishment of trust and purpose and improve retention. HUL has introduced the Step into One Program to encourage their high-performing low and mid-skill staff to engage in an immersive learning experience as managers.³⁵ Those excelling in such training are thereafter promoted to Office Cadre positions and have the opportunity to build on their skills and learning, to compete for better opportunities.

Apprenticeships and Returnships: Countries facing a shortage of skilled workers have begun to introduce apprenticeships in skilled trades through partnerships with trade schools or by offering monetary rewards.³⁶ These are not restricted to young workers. In countries such as Denmark and Finland, adult apprentices account for 35% and 85% of all apprenticeships.³⁷

The model of dual training, combining academic education and apprenticeships is rapidly gaining popularity, particularly in western Europe, as it has demonstrated the potential to retain employees, destigmatize low and mid-skill work and mitigate downward pressure on wages for skilled trades.³⁸ Apprenticeship programmes tailored to women returning to work, termed ‘Returnships’ can help women to brush up their skills after a career break, learn more about the emerging technological trends that might’ve advanced when they were away from the workforce and ease their transition back into the workforce.



Returners face multiple barriers when returning to work, including a lack of flexible working opportunities and suitable jobs, and attitudes and discrimination from employers. These are compounded by personal barriers, including a lack of relevant or up to date skills and low confidence. We have also noticed that the longer women are out of the labour market, the more barriers they face when trying to get back.”

NINA LAWRENCE

UK GOVERNMENT EQUALITIES OFFICE



INNOVATIONS AHEAD

These early insights into the challenges and aspirations of mid-skilled women workers will fuel the next steps of the Innovation Foundation's Scan (research), Build, and Scale approach. Scan is the data-driven landscape scanning that includes deep dives, like this paper, into the needs of underserved populations. Build is comprised design thinking projects to create possible solutions. The needs and solution areas identified here will be used as focal points for ideation and prototyping in Build and the gaps identified will fuel further research and dialogue to build our understanding of the real, underlying needs of this important group of women. Scale will then transform our prototypes into products in our Accelerator. At every step, we will work with experts, employers, and end users around the world to design, develop and scale solutions to help fill employment gaps and improve livelihoods for this emerging population of under-served and highly valuable workers.

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PROJECT TEAM

This project was jointly conceived and delivered by the Innovation Foundation, empowered by the Adecco Group, and the Thinking Ahead on Societal Change (TASC) Platform at the Geneva Graduate Institute.

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ABOUT THE INNOVATION FOUNDATION, EMPOWERED BY THE ADECCO GROUP

The Innovation Foundation helps underserved populations increase their employability and access to labour markets to secure sustainable livelihoods. That is our mission. We see a future where everyone can access the world of work. That is our vision. Our mission and vision both come to life through the process of the Social Innovation Lab, with which we operate.

The first step is to identify the people who are falling out of the workforce and their unmet needs. We then develop solutions to meet those needs, working with experts and end-users. Finally, our prototypes are taken out into the world with the right partners on the ground - helping to make a world where everyone can access sustainable and fulfilling work.

As the world's leading talent advisory and solutions company, creating social value is in the DNA of the Adecco Group. We connect people and companies with opportunity and help them find their paths. But we also have a wider responsibility to society - to advocate and act for a better, fairer world of work. We do this through the Innovation Foundation, with the full support of the Group's leadership.

www.innovationfoundation.net



ABOUT THE TASC PLATFORM

The TASC Platform is an open forum where policymakers, businesses, researchers and civil society can come together to tackle some of the biggest universal challenges of the future. By providing a place for people to share perspectives, connect visions and develop new solutions, we can bring the unknowns of the future into focus and act on them today.

An independent body supported by the Government of Switzerland and embedded in the Centre for Trade and Economic Integration at the Geneva Graduate Institute, we leverage the latest thinking in the academic world to inform innovation, policy making, practical action and behaviour change, and embrace a culture of openness, critical thinking, and global cooperation.

www.tascplatform.org



ENDNOTES

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