



careers advice pack

## 16. Part time or full time?



### Choosing between part time and full time work

More people in Britain are working part time than ever before; 1 in 4 employees now work 30 or fewer hours a week. But what's the right choice for you, full time or part time work? Your decision will impact on you, on your family and on your career.

There's no right or wrong - it's a matter of deciding what will work best for you and for your family. Thinking through your answers to the following questions will help you decide:

#### **Can you afford to work part time?**

If you decide to work part time you need to make sure that your income won't be swallowed up by the costs of childcare and commuting. List your monthly outgoings and make sure you can still balance your family budget if you decide to do fewer hours. Draw up a budget based on 3 months or so of your actual living expenses – don't just guess what your outgoings are. Don't forget the impact on your future pension and your ability to save if you work part time rather than full time.

#### **Are part time roles easily available for the type of work you do?**

There are differences in the availability of part time jobs between different sectors, role types and salary levels. If you're trying to find a new job part time, rather than negotiating part time hours with your existing employer, then you need to find out if it's easy to find part time vacancies for your type of work. Look at our advice packs on **Finding Job Opportunities** for ideas on how to search for part time jobs. But be prepared for the fact that, if you work in an area that's resistant to part time, you will find your jobsearch challenging.

#### **Is working part time job more important to you than career progression?**

Recent research by the Timewise Foundation found that a significant proportion of mothers choose to 'downshift' their careers while their children are young. They trade salary and status for flexibility and less stress. Some women make this choice gladly. For others it's a compromise when they can't find part time work at the level they want, and prefer to



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downshift rather than work full time. There's no shame in choosing to downshift – it's what's right for you and your family that matters. You do need to go into it with your eyes open, however. Once you've downshifted, it can be hard to climb back up several years later.

### **... Or are your career goals your priority?**

If you're very ambitious, and choose to work part time, take care to explore your employer's track record on career progression for part time workers. According to another research report from the Timewise Foundation, 73% of part time workers claim not to have been promoted once since working fewer hours. However, we believe that it's perfectly possible for a committed, talented employee to get ahead whilst working part time. It's a matter of focusing on your achievements, and making sure your colleagues notice them too. Read these useful **tips on how to get promoted when you work part time**, from Karen Mattison, on the Timewise Jobs site. Timewise's **Power Part Time List** can also be a source of inspiration – read the stories of 50 men and women who are working part time in leadership roles.

### **How much support will you have at home?**

A full time role can make it difficult to handle family obligations.

If you have a partner, will they be prepared to take on their share of childcare and household chores and administration? If you're a single parent, have you got relatives or friends who can help out in times of illness, or if your childcare arrangements fall through?

### **How flexible is your employer?**

Some employers are more family friendly than others. Will your employer allow you time off when your baby or baby sitter is sick? If you decide to work full time can you come in late or leave early on occasions, if you need to? How much time does your job really require? Some full time jobs can be 50 hours a week rather than 35. Can you work from home?

### **Will there be enough 'me time'?**

'Me time' isn't just for celebrities – we all need to look after ourselves both physically and emotionally. Many women say they feel pulled in different directions by their family and their career and this can lead to feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Try drawing up a time budget: note down how you spend your time right now and work out what changes you will need to



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make depending how many hours you decide to work. What do you need to make you feel good? Whether it's time for you to exercise, see friends, pursue a hobby or watch your favourite television programme - make sure you factor in that time.

### **What are your priorities right now?**

Remember that no decision is final and your priorities may change over time. You might decide you want to work part time for a few years while your children are young and then return to full time hours later on. Or you could work full time for a while and then, when your employer knows and trusts you, see if you can negotiate a reduction in your hours or have the flexibility to work from home one day a week.