

# More holidays and better pay would boost productivity

Giving workers more public holidays and raising their wages could boost the strength of the British economy, according to a report.

The New Economics Foundation said that driving up<sup>1</sup> the spending power of consumers would give firms a greater incentive to raise their productivity. As they could have greater confidence there would be demand for their products and services.

The claim that putting more money in workers' pockets and giving them more time to spend it comes as the UK struggles to improve the efficiency of the British economy as Brexit looms and after a decade of faltering gains<sup>2</sup>.

Productivity – economic output per hour of work – has failed to grow each year at the rates seen before the financial crisis. Boosting Britain's productivity is an important target for the government through its industrial strategy, as improving the efficiency of the economy can help companies raise workers' pay levels and drive up<sup>1</sup> living standards.

Britain improved its productivity by about 2% per year over the last four decades before the financial crisis. However, productivity growth has decreased to about 0.7% a year since then..

As part of efforts to improve Britain's productivity track record, the foundation said the government should drive up the minimum wage faster than already planned and increase spending on public services by as much as £32bn a year by the mid-2020s.

Workers should get a national weekly allowance<sup>3</sup> worth £2,500 a year instead of the tax-free personal allowance, while the government should create a new body to provide guidance on raising the number of UK public holidays.

British workers have among the fewest paid days off in Europe. The UK minimum is 28 days, while in the EU it ranges from 30 to 40 days.

12/08/2019

*Richard Partington, The Guardian*

1 drive up / driving up = improving, increasing

2 faltering gains = losses

3 allowance = an amount of money that you are given regularly

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# The 'shecession': why economic crisis is affecting women more than men

Denise Frederick hasn't stopped working since the pandemic began. But the nanny and home carer in New York City has also seen her pay cut in both jobs and she is uncertain about how long she will have either with the coronavirus outbreak far from under control.

Like many women, the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic has hit Frederick hard. For the first time in history, the US is in a "shecession" – an economic downturn where job and income losses are affecting women more than men.

In the Great Recession, men lost twice as many jobs as women. But from February to May, 11.5 million women lost their jobs compared with 9 million men because of business closures intended to stop the spread of Covid-19. By the end of April, women's job losses had erased a decade of employment gains.

The staggering figures have underlined the changing nature of the workforce and brought into focus the overlooked issues attached to that shift<sup>1</sup>. Women, especially women of color, are more vulnerable to sudden losses of income because of the gender pay gap and are more dependent on childcare and school to be able to work.

In this economic crisis, job losses have shot across industries where women, particularly Black and Latina women, held a disproportionate number of jobs, such as hospitality, leisure and education.

Frederick is one of many who have identified an opportunity in this crisis for women to seize more rights because problems made worse by the pandemic, such as low wages, have become impossible to ignore.

Congress in March passed the unusually generous Cares Act, a stimulus package which increased unemployment insurance by an extra \$600 a week. At \$15 an hour, that is equivalent to what unions have been fighting to become the federal minimum wage.

04/08/2020  
theguardian.com

1. a shift = a change in direction

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## Home working here to stay, study of businesses suggests

*More home working is likely to be a permanent fixture for a majority of businesses, according to a study.*

A survey of just under 1,000 firms by the Institute of Directors (IoD) shows that 74% plan on maintaining the increase in home working. More than half planned on reducing their long-term use of workplaces. A smaller survey of bosses whose firms had already cut workplace use suggested 44% of them thought working from home was proving "more effective".

"Remote working has been one of the most tangible impacts of coronavirus on the economy. For many, it could be here to stay," said Roger Barker, director of policy at the IoD.

"Working from home doesn't work for everyone, and directors must be alive to the downsides. Managing teams remotely can prove far from straightforward, and directors must make sure they are going out of their way to support employees' mental wellbeing."

Companies are not likely to switch fully to home working, he continued. "The benefits of the office haven't gone away. For many companies, bringing teams together in person proves more productive and enjoyable. Shared workspace often provides employees the opportunity for informal development and networking that is so crucial, particularly early on in a career."

The BBC questionnaire found that 24 firms did not have any plans in place to return workers to the office. However, 20 have opened their offices for staff unable to work from home.

Nine in 10 workers who have worked from home during lockdown would like to continue in some form, researchers found in an academic study. A report published in August by academics at Cardiff and Southampton universities suggests the majority of people working from home are as productive.

Thousands of people were surveyed three times between April and June.

05/10/2020

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-54413214>

298 words

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# Women over 50 paid £8,000 a year less than men for full-time work

Women over 50 in the UK are paid almost £8,000 a year less than men, according to research revealing that the collapse of retailers<sup>1</sup> during the pandemic has hit women much harder than men.

An analysis of official data found that the median annual salary of women working full-time in their 50s was 23% less than that of men in the same age group, according to a report by Rest Less, a company that offers help and advice to people over 50. Women in their 60s were paid 25% less.

Widespread job losses in the hospitality industry have also disproportionately affected women.

Stuart Lewis, the founder of Rest Less, said: "Women in their 50s and 60s face the double discrimination of age bias, combined with the widest gender pay gap of all ages, receiving a salary of £8,000 less per year than their male counterparts in full-time employment.

"Whilst the state pension age has now been equalised at 66 for both sexes, decades of a gender pay gap and the resulting wide gulf in private pension savings mean that the future retirement incomes of men and women remain far from equal," he added. "The fact that earnings peak in our 40s and decline as we head into our 50s and 60s has profound implications for all of us and our retirement savings plans."

Progress in tackling the gender pay gap has been painfully slow, and women who are in their mid-30s now will never know equal pay in their working lives if efforts to narrow the gap are not stepped up, according to separate recent analysis from Labour. It was published on 20 November to mark Equal Pay Day, the day that women in effect stop being paid because of the gender pay gap in the UK.

02/07/2020  
Julia Kollewe, *The Guardian*

1. **retailers** = sellers

BTS CG	Épreuve orale d'Anglais	
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# THE AUSTRALIAN COMPANY THAT BANNED WORK ON

## WEDNESDAYS

On Wednesdays, while most of her friends are at work, Tiffany Schrauwen is on the tennis court, practising her backhand. The Melbourne project manager has a lesson all to herself at 09:00, and it can't be bad for her game. Schrauwen isn't slacking off. For nearly a year, digital marketing agency Versa – where she works – has shut down on Wednesdays, giving staff a four-day week at five days' pay. Employees at the company do a standard-length day on Mondays and Tuesdays, then return for another two on Thursday and Friday. No meetings are scheduled for Wednesdays – however, if a client has urgent work that needs doing, workers will pick up the phone.

When Schrauwen first was told of the plan, she was excited, then wary – she was worried about how it would work; as project manager, she was the main contact for both staff and clients, so she stood to bear the brunt of<sup>[1]</sup> any missed deadlines, stress or broken lines of communication. But Versa staff reorganised their work patterns to become more efficient. Every two weeks the company also reviews what has worked and what hasn't. "Everyone wants it to work because we love having the flexibility," says Schrauwen. "If I want to keep that Wednesday off, I prep<sup>[2]</sup> my week better."

Professor Jarrod Haar isn't surprised that dropping Wednesday has proven so successful for Versa. As professor of human resource management at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand, as part of his own research Haar has interviewed employees on rotating four-day weeks, and found they most enjoyed the Wednesdays off [...]: "The Wednesday break means you return to Thursday fresh, and this is when people feel most productive."

29/04/2019

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190429-the-australian-company-that-banned-work-on-wednesdays>

1 to bear the brunt of : *faire les frais de*

2 prep (oral) = prepare

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# WHY THIS RECESSION DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS

## WOMEN

### We're in the thick of the 'shecession'.

The global economy is now in its worst downturn since the Great Depression. One of the unique aspects of the current recession is the way it's impacting women: though men are more likely to die of Covid-19, the pandemic's toll on employment is heavier for women. Unlike other modern recessions, the pandemic recession has led to more job losses among women than among men. While the 1970s marked the start of 'mancession' periods in industries like construction, the current 'shecession' is heavily affecting sectors like hospitality and retail.

These sectors employ many women and are also vulnerable to lockdown measures. Some effects are already visible. Globally, women's job losses due to Covid-19 are 1.8 times greater than men's. In the US, unemployment has intensified the most for the personal care and food service occupations, where women predominate.

It's not just about lay-offs, however. In a McKinsey and Lean In survey of North American female employees, one in four women said they were thinking about reducing or leaving paid work due to the pandemic, citing company inflexibility, caring responsibilities and stress. The survey included some comparative data that laid out the gender gap for parents; while 8% of surveyed mothers had thought about going from full- to part-time work, only 2% of fathers had. [...]

The pandemic recession is particularly challenging for women's employment globally for two reasons connected to the dangers of close contact: the restrictions on service jobs, and the closure of schools and daycare centres.

27/10/2020

By Christine Ro, [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)

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# COVID-19 COULD CAUSE PERMANENT SHIFT TOWARDS

## HOME WORKING

The sudden increase in working from home is presenting problems as well as opportunities: on the one hand, startups such as Slack and Zoom and established giants including Google and Microsoft are offering their tools for free, in the hope that people who start using them in a crisis may carry on once normality returns.

On the other hand, some systems are already creaking at the edges. Corporate networks, unused to having a majority of their connections coming in over virtual private networks (VPNs), are experiencing unusual quirks. [...]

"We understand this is an unprecedented step, but these are unprecedented times," Twitter's head of HR, Jennifer Christie, said in a message to staff. Christie promised to reimburse employees, including hourly workers, for the expenses required to set up home offices, covering the costs of buying things such as computer hardware, desks and ergonomic chairs. "Overall, working from home doesn't change your day-to-day work, it just means you'll be doing it from a different environment," Christie added.

Those sorts of investments have prompted many to wonder if companies that embrace remote working in a crisis may find it sticks around as normality returns. It is harder to say no to employee requests for working from home if HR has already bought them a new desk – and it is easier to view the investment as a sensible one if it pays off for years, rather than months, to come. [...]

Still, [...] working from home is not for everyone. "I've worked 100% remote before," said one tech industry worker who has been sent home, "and there comes a point where even an introvert would like to see another human."

13/03/2020

*By Alex Hern, The Guardian*

BTS CG	Épreuve orale d'Anglais	
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# Internships get canceled or go virtual because of pandemic

Yadeen Rashid was flying high in February. He'd just earned stellar grades in his latest semester at Virginia Tech university, where he's in his third year double majoring in economics and political science. And he'd just landed a summer internship at a data analysis company.

Then the pandemic hit, triggering lockdown restrictions and pushing the U.S. economy into recession. Many companies canceled their internships programs and rescinded job offers - including [...] where Rashid was set to intern.

"I was really upset, not just because finding an internship is hard, but because I actually was very excited to work with them very specifically," said Rashid, 21. He said he bears no ill-will to the company and is looking for other internship opportunities. "But, you know, as time goes on, it gets a little less optimistic."

Rashid's experience shows how the global coronavirus crisis, which has already thrown much of the business world into turmoil, is also disrupting summer internships, an important stepping stone to working life for many university students and recent graduates.

Half of all internship openings in the U.S. have been cut since the pandemic outbreak, and 64% of those in the U.K., according to research by Glassdoor, the career website. Hundreds of companies [...] have scrapped their summer programs [...].

Companies use summer internships as a pipeline for recruiting graduates while young people benefit from exposure to real working life. They can serve as a source of income or a graduation requirement.

More than one in every six young workers globally have stopped working during the pandemic, the International Labor Organization said last month. The U.N. labor agency added that the pandemic's long-term fallout could lead to a "lockdown generation" scarred throughout their working lives.

Some companies are making their internships virtual — mirroring the work-from-home trend that's swept office life during the pandemic [...].

16/06/2020  
*adapted from abcnews.go.com*

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## AI's Impact On Accounting And Finance

The boom in technology across numerous industries has meant opportunities for advancement in how professionals do business. Accounting is no exception. Many of the tedious tasks performed by accountants are now performed by artificial intelligence (AI). For example, robotic process automation (RPA) has reduced audit and processing times from several months to a few weeks.

Artificial intelligence extends a computer's normal programming. It allows computers to make predictions and adapt how they respond in certain situations. In professions that require routine tasks such as accounting and law, AI is replacing human eyes for the better.

Many traditional bookkeeping tasks are already being performed by AI. For accounts payable and receivable, AI handles much of the work of initiating payments and matching purchase orders. Although transaction approval should be largely left to humans, experts foresee payroll, auditing and tax remittance being performed by AI.

Entrepreneurs who want to use AI should see it as a tool for efficiency. For example, using an automated billing system increases the speed with which you can provide updated financial information to clients. An accountant's role as an advisor is important and leaving the numbers to the robots allows accountants to spend more time in business-management roles strengthening client relationships and human contacts.

Those who are ready for the future will find that their future is even brighter. The problem is that most accountants didn't learn about AI during professional training. For those who haven't yet embraced AI, it requires adjustments everywhere. One of the hardest jumps is leaving behind old traditions. Firms that stick to them will quickly find themselves trailing behind those that innovate with AI.

10/09/2019

*Jonathan Gass, adapted from Forbes.com*

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## Working from home has a troubled history. Coronavirus is exposing its flaws again.

In the early 1970s, futurologists began to reimagine the relationship between home and workplace. A new wave of technological innovation seemed to be pushing together the private and public worlds that the Industrial Revolution had rent apart.

Networked computers installed in an employee's home would revolutionise the modern corporation. Teleworking – as it became known – would free humanity from the grind of the daily commute, enabling an easier blend of work and family life.

Nearly 50 years on, elements of this vision have now become a reality for millions of us. According to the Office for National Statistics, only 5% of the UK labor force worked mainly from home in 2019, but well over a quarter had some experience of home-working. In recent weeks, that figure has dramatically increased as a result of the lockdown measures implemented to tackle the spread of Covid-19. With all but key workers confined to their homes, the virtual office is now the new norm – a development that could prove to have far-reaching consequences. Is telework an idea whose time has finally come?

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, there were plenty of reasons to be excited about the possibilities of telework. Some analysts hoped that less commuting would reduce western capitalism's dependence on fossil fuels. Others foresaw a revitalisation of local neighbourhoods, with dormitory suburbs transformed into thriving communities of home-workers. Teleworking seemed to hold the key to equality for women with young children, who could hold on to hard-won careers thanks to more flexible regimes of home-based employment.

Yet there were also reasons to be sceptical. Trade unionists feared that telework was just another ploy by employers to cut wage bills and erode workers' rights. Some firms recruited teleworkers as self-employed contractors, thus shirking<sup>1</sup> responsibility for pensions, sick pay and maternity leave, as well as neatly sidestepping health and safety laws.

12/04/2020  
*Helen McCarthy, The Guardian*

[1] To shirk = avoid

BTS CG	Épreuve orale d'Anglais	
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## Low wages, unsafe conditions and harassment: fashion must do more to protect female workers.

The garment sector is great at employing women. While approximately 80 % of the world's garment workers are women, the number of women heading the 15 largest mass-market apparel companies is zero.

Garment-related global supply chains provide critical jobs and capital that help women workers to raise their standard of living and provide for their families. However, these women are also vulnerable in global value chains. Low wages, unsafe working conditions and flexible contracts are prevalent. This is exacerbated by entrenched gender discrimination in everyday life. So what should fashion brands be doing to make sure women are protected?

For women's rights to be respected, their voices have to be heard, but this rarely happens in a meaningful way - particularly because owners and managers are overwhelmingly men. A recent International Labor Rights Forum report entitled *Our Voices, Our Safety* interviewed 70 workers in the Bangladesh garment industry. The report highlights threats against women workers who attempt to speak out about workplace abuses.

It urges the Bangladeshi government and apparel brands to foster environments in which workers can voice their safety concerns, and help to develop solutions, including the right to freedom of association.

Brands can play an important role speaking out when governments clamp down on workers who attempt to organise and protest for improved conditions, as Adidas, Columbia, Gap, H&M, Levi Strauss and Puma did in Cambodia in 2014.

All garment workers in Asia need a wage increase to be able to provide for their families' basic needs – including housing, food, education and healthcare. The majority of garment workers in Bangladesh earn little more than the minimum wage and far below what is considered a living wage minimum required to provide a family with shelter, food and education.

08/03/2016

*Harpreet Kaur, The Guardian*

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# UK youth employment prospects crumbling in coronavirus

## crisis

Some of the UK's biggest employers have cancelled or delayed recruitment schemes and internships, amid concerns that the coronavirus pandemic could hit the job prospects of young people the hardest.

Lloyds Banking Group, HSBC and the accountants PwC and BDO are among the large companies that have been forced to make changes to their recruitment plans because of the crisis.

Many of the largest graduate employers are services firms whose employees must work from home under the government's lockdown guidelines, making welcoming new trainees difficult. At the same time, many big employers have already reported a steep fall in work as the lockdown recession bites.

"Youth employment prospects are deteriorating," said Gerwyn Davies, senior labour market adviser at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. "We are already seeing evidence that recruitment has fallen sharply, which is not surprising given that the government's focus is on preserving [existing] jobs."

More than a quarter of companies said they anticipated hiring fewer graduates because of the pandemic. Non-graduate recruitment was also expected to be negatively affected for 23% of employers.

Economists have found a persistent "damaging" effect on the careers of people who enter the labour market during a crisis, with wages still lower on average as long as five years after starting work.

Deloitte, EY, KPMG and PwC – the so-called big four accounting firms which are also major graduate recruiters – have not disclosed any changes to their graduate recruitment schemes, despite cutting pay for their partners by between 20% and 25%.

However, PwC's new recruits will be trained online, and the summer work experience programme will be offered digitally to all 5,500 students who originally applied for the 600 places.

"It will affect all sectors and all skill levels," Davies said. "This looks set to be a fairly grim summer for those who haven't yet found jobs."

20/04/2020

*By Jasper Jolly, adapted from The Guardian.*

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# Workers without degrees hardest hit by Covid-19 crisis

Workers without a university degree will be hardest hit by the Covid-19 crisis, raising fears of increasing inequality across Europe, where up to 59m jobs are at risk.

Nearly 80% of workers facing job insecurity – including cuts to hours or pay, temporary furloughs<sup>1</sup>, or permanent layoffs – do not have a university degree, according to new research by the consultancy firm McKinsey.

People at risk include retail staff, cooks and actors, as well as construction workers and office support staff because they work in close proximity to others and have significant exposure to the public.

Low-insecurity occupations include workers who either do not need to work in close proximity to others, such as accountants, architects and journalists, or whose work provide essential services such as health, police, food production, education, public transport, or utilities.

The research raises concerns that the coronavirus outbreak could widen the gap between rich and poor across the EU and UK.

While many countries, including the UK, have rolled out massive stimulus programmes to help soften the economic blow of national lockdowns, McKinsey warned that Europe could still face increases in crime rates and social unrest as a result of rising unemployment.

“Moreover, unemployed people are twice as likely to experience mental illness,” McKinsey added.

But the foundation said that the UK’s coronavirus job retention scheme – in which the government will pay for 80% of a worker’s pay – has so far shielded<sup>2</sup> the UK from the worst-case economic shock.

The research also found that young employees between the ages of 15 and 24 are more likely to face job instability during the outbreak.

However, Sebastian Stern, a senior partner at McKinsey, said “If we get out of the lockdown measures as soon as you can justify it, and we invest into the right kind of sectors, I would not say this is a lost generation already.”

20/04/2020

*By Kalyneena Makortoff, adapted from The Guardian*

[1] Furlough = unpaid leave because there is not enough work to do

[2] Shield = protect

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# Robots on the rise as Americans experience record job

## losses amid pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has left millions of Americans unemployed – disproportionately those in the service industries where women and people of color make up the largest share of the labor force. In October, 11 million people were unemployed in the US, compared with about 6 million people who were without a job during the same time last year.

And as humans are experiencing record job losses and economic uncertainty, robots have become a hot commodity. Multiple technology manufacturers have reported increased demand for their bots over the course of the pandemic, from drone-like machines that can roam hallways to make deliveries and AI-powered customer service software to increased use of self-service checkouts at supermarkets.

A recent report from the World Economic Forum predicted that by 2025 the next wave of automation – turbocharged by the pandemic – will disrupt 85m jobs globally. [...]

The hospitality industry, which has been one of the hardest-hit by the pandemic, has seen a clear uptick in the adoption of new technology during the pandemic. Hotels are allowing guests to use kiosks to check themselves in, apps to control the television and light switches in their room and a few use delivery bots to send to guests' room when they want a refreshment.

While the idea of being serviced by a BB-8 lookalike in a hotel may seem strange, permanent job losses in the industry will be a reality as hotels adopt new technologies to try to save on labor costs. [...]

While an increase in automation can be good for educated workers and help to stimulate the economy, studies have also shown that new technology tends to leave low-wage workers behind. "Automation has been a major driver in the increase in inequality," said Daron Acemoglu, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

27/11/2020

Lauren Aratani, adapted from *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/nov/27/robots-replacing-jobs-automation-unemployment-us>

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# Sleeping on the job: how a quick nap makes us more

## efficient

While working from home have you had a cheeky nap? Don't feel guilty. Research shows a brief kip boosts productivity. But will it catch on in the office?

Naps need to hire a publicist. Not in China, where desk-side snoozes are a constitutional right; Japan, where *inemuri* ("sleeping while present") is a sign you've been working hard; or Spain, where siestas are woven into the social fabric. But in the UK, US, Australia and many other western countries – where capitalist rat races are fuelled by flat whites and billable hours – naps have a major image problem. They're linked with laziness and lethargy; with people who can't be bothered to get through the day.

Yet now is the perfect time to rebrand them as something we associate with a productive lifestyle. With a large proportion of people working from home, lots of us have more control than ever over what our working day looks like. [...]

There are signs people have already started slipping naps into their routines since working remotely. One survey of 2,000 Americans found 33% were napping daily, while another revealed 25% of Brits were doing the same. Yet the numbers would surely be far bigger if naps had a better reputation. It wasn't always like this. Salvador Dalí, Aristotle, Winston Churchill, Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Thatcher – all powerhouses from history, all great nappers. [...]

Nick Littlehales, an elite-sports sleep coach and author, speaks about naps as proactive, productive tools to ensure we remain in peak shape. He says we need to think about them from "a performance aspect: daytime sleep is a controlled recovery period."

Such talk chimes with Silicon Valley's tech titans, who in recent years have installed nap pods (Facebook) and "Shhh zones" (Google). Coming from multi-billion-dollar players obsessed with efficiency, it's significant.

06/12/2020

Jamie Waters, adapted from *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/dec/06/sleeping-on-the-job-how-a-quick-nap-makes-us-more-efficient>

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# The 'gig' economy, the new labour market trend in the UK

What does the "gig" economy mean? It is a labour market characterised by the prevalence of short-term contracts, as opposed to permanent jobs.

In the gig economy, instead of a regular wage, workers get paid for the "gigs" they do, such as a food delivery by Deliveroo or a car journey by Uber. In the UK, it's estimated that five million people are employed this way.

Proponents of the gig economy claim that people can benefit from flexible hours, with control over how much time they can work as they juggle other priorities in their lives. In addition, it often offers benefits to employers, as they only pay when the work is available, and don't incur<sup>[1]</sup> staff costs when the demand is not there.

Meanwhile, workers in the gig economy are classed as independent contractors, meaning they have no protection against unfair dismissal, no right to redundancy payments, national minimum wage, paid holiday or sickness pay.

One difference worth noting is that workers in the gig economy differ slightly from those on zero-hours contracts. Like workers in the gig economy, zero-hours contractors don't get guaranteed hours or much job security from their employers. However, they are considered as employees in some sense, as they are entitled to holiday pay. But, like those in the gig economy, they are not entitled to sick pay.

The status of gig economy workers is of importance to the British government, since they are evading<sup>[2]</sup> government's tax. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) estimated that in 2020-21 it will cost the Treasury £3.5bn. Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond said then he would look to find more effective ways to tax workers in the UK's current shifting<sup>[3]</sup> labour environment.

10/02/2019  
Bill Wilson, BBC News

1 incur : *encourir, subir*

2 evade = *échapper à*

3 shifting = *changing*

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## Gender pay gap at its widest for women in their 50s, study

reveals.

The gender pay gap is at its most extreme for women in their 50s, new research has revealed, with women's average salaries at that age being 28% – or £12,509 – lower than men's. Women's salaries drop by 8% in their 50s while men's drop by 4%, according to the analysis based on data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The discrepancy<sup>1</sup> falls very slightly over the next decade but continues at 27.6% to retirement age. The findings follow BBC presenter Samira Ahmed, 51, becoming the first prominent female presenter of the current wave of equal pay cases to take the broadcaster to an employment tribunal. She is due to appear at a central London employment tribunal on Monday morning. The analysis by Rest Less, a jobs, volunteering and advice site for the over-50s, reveals that both sexes reach their peak full-time salaries in their 40s: for women this is £34,665 and for men it is £46,213, a difference of £11,548 or 25%.

"Women in their 50s are facing a tough time in the workplace. Our latest research shows that women in their 50s are taking a double hit when it comes to their salaries, caused by both gender and age discrimination," Rest Less founder added.

The number of women working in their 50s and 60s has risen by 75% in the last 20 years, from 2.7 million in 1999 to 4.8 million today. The average age of retirement for women now is just a year below that of men. But the ONS data proves that the gender pay gap increases with age: between 18 and 21, the gap is 18%. This falls to 13% for those in their 20s, rises to 16% for those in their 30s and reaches 25% for women and men in their 40s.

28/10/2019

Amelia Hill, [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)

1. **discrepancy** = gap

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## Should robots pay taxes?

As machines and algorithms get smarter, they'll replace a widening share of the workforce. A robot tax could raise revenue to retrain those displaced workers, or supply them with a basic income. [...] The real threat posed by robots isn't that they will become evil and kill us all, it's that they will amplify economic disparities to such an extreme that life will become, quite literally, unlivable for the vast majority. A robot tax may or may not be a useful policy tool for averting this scenario. But it's a good starting point for an important conversation. Mass automation presents a serious political problem – one that demands a serious political solution.

So far, [automation] hasn't produced extreme unemployment. That's because automation can create jobs as well as destroy them. One recent example is bank tellers<sup>[1]</sup>: ATMs<sup>[2]</sup> began to appear in the 1970s, but the total number of tellers has actually grown since then. As ATMs made it cheaper to run a branch, banks opened more branches, leading to more tellers overall. The job description has changed – today's tellers spend more time selling financial services than dispensing cash – but the jobs are still there.

What's different this time is the possibility that technology will become so sophisticated that there won't be anything left for humans to do. What if your ATM could not only give you a hundred bucks, but sell you an adjustable-rate mortgage<sup>[3]</sup>? Instead of merely transforming work, technology might begin to eliminate it. Instead of making it possible to create more wealth with less labor, automation might make it possible to create more wealth *without* labor.

Ben Tarnoff, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/mar/02/robot-tax-job-elimination-livable-wage> 02/03/2017

[1] a **teller**: someone whose job is to receive and pay out money at the bank

[2] **ATMs** (Automated Teller Machines) = cash machines

[3] **mortgage** : financial loan to buy a house

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## New Zealand to trial four-day working week

The consumer goods company Unilever is poised to try out a four-day working week for all its New Zealand employees.

Unilever said all 81 staff members at its offices across New Zealand would be able to participate in the trial, starting next week and running for 12 months until December next year. The employees would be paid for five days while working just four.

The Unilever New Zealand managing director, Nick Bangs, said the aim was to change the way work was done, not increase the working hours on four days.

After 12 months Unilever will assess the outcome and look at how it could work for its 155,000 employees globally.

There is no manufacturing in New Zealand and all the staff are in sales, distribution and marketing.

A shorter working week has been debated for a while in New Zealand with estate planning firm Perpetual Guardian making headlines in 2019 for pioneering the idea with its 250 staff and declaring it had seen big productivity increases.

Perpetual Guardian's founder, Andrew Barnes, said it had been a success. "For us this is about our company getting improved productivity from greater workplace efficiencies ... there's no downside for us," he said. The idea gained momentum this year when the prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, encouraged firms to look at four-day weeks to offer flexibility to employees amid the coronavirus pandemic. She also said it may help boost domestic tourism while international borders remained shut.

"When the prime minister talked about it in the context of what the future of work would look like, that was encouragement for us," Bangs said.

The New Zealand government has not yet adopted the idea itself.

30/11/2020  
*The Guardian*

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# Once a Fringe Idea, the \$15 Minimum Wage Is Making Big

## Gains

The new year brings another round of increases, nearly a decade after workers started campaigning for higher pay.

It started in 2012 with a group of protesters outside a McDonald's demanding a \$15 minimum wage. In the years since, their fight has gained traction across the country, including in conservative states with low union membership and generally weak labor laws.

The movement's strength — a ballot measure to increase the minimum wage in Florida to \$15 by 2026 was passed in November — could put renewed pressure on Congress to increase the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour, where it has been since 2009. President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. has endorsed \$15 an hour at the federal level, like ending the practice of a lower minimum wage for workers like restaurant workers who receive tips.

The wage rates are increasing as workers struggle amid a recession caused by the coronavirus pandemic that has left millions unemployed.

Workers during the pandemic have been subject to pay cuts and decreased hours. Low-wage service workers have not had the option of working from home, and the customer-facing nature of their jobs puts them at greater risk for contracting the virus. Many retailers gave workers raises — or “hero pay” — at the beginning of the pandemic, even as the virus continued to surge in many states.

Some economists say lifting the minimum wage will benefit the economy and could be an important part of the recovery from the pandemic recession. That is partly because lower-income workers typically spend most of the money they earn, and that spending primarily takes place where they live and work.

“At a basic level, people think that this is an issue of fairness,” Mr. Dube said. “There’s broad-based support for the idea that people who are working should get a living wage.”

31/12/2020

Gillian Friedman, *The New York Times*

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## Unilever explores four day week

Consumer goods giant Unilever plans to test a four-day working week in New Zealand, giving staff a chance to slash their hours by 20% without hurting their pay.

The Dove soap, Marmite and Lipton tea owner said it was exploring what the results could mean for Unilever "on a broader scale in the future". The trial<sup>1</sup> comes as the pandemic has shaken up work practices. "The old ways of working are outdated," the firm's New Zealand boss said.

Nick Bangs, managing director of Unilever New Zealand, said the goal of the test was to "measure performance on output not time". Covid-19, which has led many of his 81 staff to work remotely, played a "catalytic role" in the decision to experiment, he added. "Essentially, this is about a holistic understanding of how work and life fit together, and improving mental and physical wellbeing," he said. "We look forward to sharing the lessons from this trial with other Kiwi businesses, in the hopes of influencing others to reflect on their own ways of working."

### Improved productivity?

Since the pandemic struck this year, many firms have introduced remote working and more flexible hours, arrangements they say are likely to linger even after concerns about the virus abate. But interest in a shorter working week pre-dates the virus. In 2019, Microsoft Japan reported a sales boost of 40% when it reduced the working week there. Unilever's trial<sup>1</sup> will run from December 2020 to December 2021.

Unilever, which employs more than 150,000 people globally, has been active in New Zealand for more than 100 years. Its operations on the island are focused on import and distribution. All 81 employees there are eligible to participate.

30/11/2020  
BBC news business

1. **trial** = essai

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## COVID: can my boss force me to go to work?

People in England and Scotland must now stay at home under new national lockdowns. Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered people to stay indoors other than for limited exceptions - such as food shopping, exercise or work that cannot be done at home.

But can bosses force employees to go in? Who's allowed to go into work?

People across the UK who can work effectively from home should do so. They should only travel to their workplace if they cannot do their job remotely. This includes healthcare professionals, teachers, childcare providers, transport workers, people who work in construction or manufacturing, funeral directors, and essential retail workers. More people are allowed to go to work during this third lockdown than in the first.

How must staff be kept safe?

For workplaces that remain open in England, employers must "carry out an appropriate Covid-19 risk assessment" to develop a "specific" strategy to stop the virus's spread. In England, the guidelines set out strict measures which employers must follow.

### Can my boss force me to go to work?

There is no one-size-fits-all answer. It will depend on a range of factors, including the individual and their circumstances, the type of work in question and the work environment.

The organisation's head of public policy Ben Willmott said: "Employers have a duty of care to all their staff and [must] treat people reasonably and fairly, so will need to consult with individuals and be as flexible as possible when dealing with any concerns people will have over attending the workplace." But bosses could be breaking the law if they demand you return to your workplace after you've told them you're shielding. If you decide not to go to work, you could ask your doctor for a fit note to say you can't work and claim sick pay from your employer, or check if you can get statutory sick pay.

05/01/2021  
BBC business

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# The bias<sup>1</sup> battle: how software can outsmart<sup>2</sup> recruitment

## prejudices

It's no surprise that decades ago, you were more likely to get a job if your name was Smith rather than Singh – as anti-racism campaigners found. In these more enlightened times, companies have strategies [to avoid prejudice ...].

“Current methods of countering bias – such as quotas, or training – are rudimentary and traditional,” says Riham Satti, a clinical neuroscientist turned entrepreneur who's created technology to make it easier for people to recruit staff more fairly, regardless of background, gender or ethnicity.

There are more than 140 cognitive biases, she says – unconscious bias is one – and while we can be aware of them, we can't remove them. [...] To counter this, there's been a broader move by companies in the last few years to recruit “blind” – assessing a candidate's skills anonymously. Rather than a traditional application, some companies, such as public sector startup Public, invite applicants to complete online tests, based on an aspect of the job advertised, to determine their skills. “So you can't tell what gender they are, or where they are from,” says Hanna Johnson, Public's chief operating officer. [...]

But many companies still require a traditional letter and CV for their hiring processes. That's why Satti's tech plugs in to more than 15 types of software (application tracking systems, also called ATS) that analyse CVs. [...] Her company, MeVitae, has created technology that uses computational linguistics to spot and remove a host of telltale details on a CV and cover letter, such as school, university, disability, gender, ethnicity, marital status, age and hobbies – all the stuff that says who you are and where you are from. [...] Next March the company [...] plans to launch an algorithm to help companies draw up detailed candidate shortlists.

23/12/2020

Helena Pozniak, <https://www.theguardian.com>

1: **bias** = prejudice

2: **outsmart** = be smarter than

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