NEWS LESSON

Could a Better Job Be About Time, Not Money?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. When you think about a good job, what do you mention first?
2. Which parts of your working week take up time without being paid?
3. Do you think younger and older workers want different things from a job?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**attractive**	☐	A	pleasing and likely to make you want it
2	**commuting**	☐	B	having a natural ability to do something well
3	**carers**	☐	C	from a different place, not from the office
4	**remotely**	☐	D	hard to know or plan before it happens
5	**wages**	☐	E	the facts of a person's life, such as money or family
6	**circumstances**	☐	F	people who look after a sick, old or young family member
7	**talented**	☐	G	the money paid to workers for their work
8	**unpredictable**	☐	H	travelling to and from work each day

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A global survey of 40,500 workers found that work-life balance has overtaken salary as the main reason people would consider leaving a job. What does that tell us about how people want to live?

1 Imagine receiving two attractive job offers. The first comes with a generous salary, but you would have to travel to an office every day and follow a strict timetable. The second pays a little less, yet allows you to choose when and where you work. It might once have seemed obvious which offer was better. Now, a global survey suggests that many employees are starting to measure a good job in something other than money.

2 The recruitment company Adecco published its latest Global Workforce of the Future research on 19 November 2026. It questioned 40,500 workers across 36 countries and 21 industries during June and July. For the first time in the seven years of its annual survey, work-life balance overtook salary as the leading reason employees said they would consider leaving their employer. That finding does not suggest that wages are suddenly unimportant. Rather, it indicates that people increasingly see control over their time as part of a job's overall value.

3 There are practical reasons behind this shift. Commuting can eat into several hours a week, while parents and carers often struggle to fit unpredictable responsibilities around fixed working hours. Being able to start early, finish later or work remotely on certain days can take the pressure off. It may also leave people with enough time for exercise, relationships and activities that make life enjoyable. Flexibility, in other words, is not necessarily a luxury; for some workers, it is what makes employment manageable.

4 Of course, the benefits are not equally available. A software developer may be able to work from home, while a nurse, cleaner or café worker must be physically present. Employers also have legitimate concerns about customer service, teamwork and covering busy periods. If one department gets more freedom than another, tensions can build up. Offering flexibility therefore requires more than simply allowing everyone to choose whatever hours suit them. Managers need sensible arrangements that reflect the demands of different roles.

5 The survey also raises a question about financial security. Someone on a comfortable income can probably afford to turn down a pay rise in exchange for a shorter commute. A worker struggling with rent, bills and food prices may not have that option. For them, higher wages can provide the peace of mind that flexible hours cannot. A headline about time becoming more valuable than money must be read alongside these very different circumstances.

6 Still, Adecco's findings suggest that employers should not assume a bigger salary is always enough to keep talented staff. People increasingly ask whether a job gives them room to live, rather than taking over their entire week. The most attractive workplace may be the one that pays fairly and respects personal time. Before accepting your next job, would you look first at the salary, or at the life you could have around it?

Sources: The Guardian, Flexibility more important to jobseekers than pay, global survey finds; The Adecco Group, The Adecco Group global study: AI delivers more value when people are involved in work redesign. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The report appeared several months after the workers were questioned. T F NG
2. The text says that every worker is free to give up pay for more free time. T F NG
3. The survey found that women want flexibility more than men do. T F NG
4. Giving one department more freedom than another can cause problems. T F NG
5. The text says flexible hours give struggling workers more peace of mind than higher wages. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

afford	industries	overtook	physically	promotions	responsibilities	salaries	tensions

1. The survey questioned 40,500 workers across 36 countries and 21 _____ .
2. For the first time in seven years, work-life balance _____ salary as the leading reason for leaving.
3. Parents and carers often struggle to fit unpredictable _____ around fixed working hours.
4. A nurse, cleaner or café worker must be _____ present.
5. Someone on a comfortable income can probably _____ to turn down a pay rise.
6. If one department gets more freedom than another, _____ can build up.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The results _____ on 19 November 2026. (PUBLISH)
2. By the time the report came out, the researchers _____ all the answers. (ANALYSE)
3. Employers should not _____ that a bigger salary is always enough. (ASSUME)
4. Commuting can _____ into several hours a week. (EAT)
5. Work-life balance _____ more important to many people in recent years. (BECOME)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Collocations are word pairs that sound natural together. Check the noun that comes after the gap and think of the verb or adjective partner.

customer	generous	mind	pressure	rise	strict	task

1. Working from home can take the _____ off busy parents.
2. Many people would turn down a pay _____ if the journey got longer.
3. Good _____ service helps a business keep its customers.
4. A shorter journey can give workers more peace of _____ .
5. A _____ salary can look attractive, but the hours may be strict.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would you accept a lower salary in exchange for flexible working hours?
2. Which jobs can reasonably offer flexibility, and which cannot?
3. Should your commuting time count as part of the working day?

9 Role-play: a better deal at work

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the manager

Your employee wants to change their working hours. The shop is busy in the evenings and you need enough staff. Ask at least two questions before you decide. You can say yes, no, or yes with a condition.

Student B · the employee

You would like to start earlier and finish earlier so you can be home for your family. You could accept a little less pay. Explain why this matters to you and how the work will still get done.

Useful phrases

I'd like to talk about my working hours.

I'd be happy to earn a bit less if I could finish earlier.

It'd make a big difference to my family.

How would the team cover the busy evenings?

I'm afraid we can't change everyone's hours.

Could we try it for a month and see how it goes?

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree a deal, and was it fair for the rest of the team?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 H · 3 F · 4 C · 5 G · 6 E · 7 B · 8 D

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 industries · 2 overtook · 3 responsibilities · 4 physically · 5 afford · 6 tensions

6 Verb forms

1 were published · 2 had analysed · 3 assume · 4 eat · 5 has become

7 Language focus

1 pressure · 2 rise · 3 customer · 4 mind · 5 generous

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