

More men working part-time shows a shift in lifestyle choice

Recent data suggests that increasing numbers of men are choosing to work part time. Patrick Foley, chief economist at Lloyds Banking Group, recalls the meeting where he said he would like to work part-time. "It was received extraordinarily well. My reaction after was: gosh, I should have raised this before."

5 Foley is one of a growing number of men choosing to work less than a full week. The most recent data from the Office for National Statistics showed the number of men working part-time because they "did not want a full-time job" reached 952,000 between March and May 2014, an 11% increase on the same period last year. Although still far short of the 4.5m women who choose to work part time.

10 Foley chose to start working three days a week at the end of March so he can dedicate time to writing a book, take up non-executive directorships, and train for triathlons. He feels the change has made him more productive. "You're not so stressed out, you've got some reflective time to think about work when you're not there. It makes you more focused when you are in work."

15 New technology like smartphones that allow people to stay in touch and scan through emails and blogs remotely has made it much easier for people to work part-time.

Foley's wife however was concerned he would end up working full-time but being paid for part-time. Foley says this hasn't happened, but admits it may not have been possible to do his job part-time at the height of the financial crisis.

20 The reaction to Foley's decision to work part-time has been overwhelmingly positive. "A number of people are surprised to hear that I am part-time. Maybe that says something about how productive I was when I was full-time," he jokes.

25 Despite the typically long-hours culture in banking, Foley's sense is that many of his colleagues would like to do the same and a number of people, right up to the senior levels at the bank, have contacted him for advice on cutting their hours since he went part-time.

"It's definitely catching on," he says. "People seem to feel it's a much more natural thing to do than they would have done a few years ago." Foley is 60 but doesn't consider this a staged retirement and says he knows a number of younger men choosing to work part-time "as a way of sharing things more evenly between husband and wife."

30 For men who have gone part-time at a later stage in their career, in a sense there is an acceptance that it is a lifestyle choice. Yet some people in their 30s and 40s may be more nervous about being openly part-time. They are worried they will be passed over for promotion.

Josephine Moulds, adapted from *The Guardian*, 13 August 2014

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