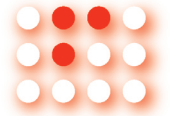
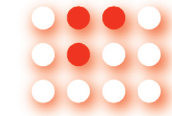


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## No change in ratio of people homeworking

The growth in homeworking has stalled, according to the TUC.

Its new analysis – published on 18 May to mark National Work from Home day – reveals that 1.6 million employees regularly worked from home last year.

The study shows that one in 16 (6.1% of the workforce) worked from home in 2017 – unchanged from the year before, but up from one in 20 (5.1%) in 2005.

The analysis reveals that four out of 10 homeworkers (41%) are women. The gap with male workers has reduced somewhat since 2005 when women made up 35% of homeworkers.

The proportions of homeworkers increases with age, with 16-19 years olds least likely to home work (2%) and the over 60s most likely (11%).

A regional breakdown shows that the South West has the highest percentage of employees working from home (9%), and Northern Ireland the lowest (2%).

In terms of industry, agriculture, with almost a quarter (23%), has the biggest share of employees

(23%), followed by the information and communication sector, where nearly one in five works from home (18%). Accommodation and food services has the lowest proportion with just 1% working from home.

Managers are most likely to work from home (12%) followed by “associate professionals” (9%) such as architects, engineers and designers. In contrast, the lowest rate of homeworking is “elementary occupations” (2%) taking in cleaners and unskilled manufacturing labourers.

The TUC believes that there is still greater opportunity for home working in most employment.

There are around four million more UK workers who say they would like to work from home for at least some of their working week but are not given the chance.

For employers, homeworking makes recruitment easier, can increase productivity, and reduce premises costs.

For workers, homeworking can save time and money on commutes, give more flexibility over working time, and make it easier for carers and parents doing the school run.

Homeworking is also an important way for some disabled people to access the labour market. Around 200,000 disabled people currently work

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from home regularly, and the TUC believes that homeworking could play an even larger role in helping to close the employment gap with non-disabled workers.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Lots of people would like to work from home but have not been given the chance by their boss. That's a shame, because it can benefit employers as well as workers.

"Homeworking can improve productivity and it can stop the loss of experienced staff when they need more flexibility for family responsibilities. It has wider benefits too, like less traffic and pollution, more accessible work for disabled people, and keeping premises costs down.

"Many bosses already recognise that homeworking can make staff happier and more effective. But other employers need to catch up. Trade unions can help negotiate home working policies that work positively for both employers and staff."

[www.tuc.org.uk/news/growth-homeworking-has-stalled](http://www.tuc.org.uk/news/growth-homeworking-has-stalled)

## Motability executive's pay 'unacceptable'

The £1.7 million salary paid to the chief executive of the firm which runs the Motability disabled car scheme is "totally unacceptable," say two influential committees of MPs.

The remuneration package of Mike Betts has grown by 78% from £954,000 in 2008.

Frank Field MP, chair of the Work and Pensions Committee, said that Betts' pay was over 10 times the salary of the Prime Minister.

"The levels of pay pocketed by its executives and the cash reserves it is hoarding are totally out of whack with reality of its position in the market," he added.

Nicky Morgan MP, chair of the Treasury Committee, said the "high levels of executive pay and significant financial reserves are difficult to square with the honourable objectives of the scheme".

"It seems that Motability may have lost its way," she said.

Motability said Bett's pay was based on a comparison with FTSE 250 firms.

Betts' pay, the firm said, was "reviewed against the market to ensure that it is both competitive over the long term and to make sure that any rewards are related to performance especially in relation to the quality of service provided".

The Treasury and Work and Pensions committees also found funds of £2.4 billion were also being needlessly hoarded. The National Audit Office would look into the issues raised, the government said.

"The Secretary of State has stated that Motability provides an extremely valuable service to disabled people but the levels of executive pay and financial reserves are concerning," a spokesperson for the Department for Work and Pensions added.

The Motability scheme arranges cars for disabled people in exchange for some of their state disability allowance – their Personal Independence Payment benefit.

Motability Operations – the firm which runs the scheme – is a monopoly which faces no competition.

The two Parliamentary committees say that the government needs to explain why state assistance for the firm – in the absence of competition – is an appropriate use of public money.

Motability Operations has denied having built up "spare" money and says it has provided 4.5 million vehicles to disabled people and their families since its 1977 launch.

[www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/motability-17-19/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/motability-17-19/)  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/847/847.pdf>

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-44188363](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-44188363)

## Dearer petrol pushes retail inflation higher

Retail price inflation has rebounded, while consumer inflation was down again, according to the Office for National Statistics.

In April 2018, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) stood at 279.7 and the annual rate of inflation on the measure favoured by union negotiators was up to 3.4% against a 3.3% increase the previous month.

Dearer petrol, alcohol and tobacco fuelled the inflationary pressures as did the introduction of a sugar tax on soft drinks.

In April, inflation under the new Consumer Prices Index Housing (CPIH) was down to 2.2% from 2.3%. Meanwhile, inflation under the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) was down to 2.4% from 2.5%.

	Price inflation			
	% increase on a year earlier			
	RPI <sup>1</sup>	RPI	RPIX <sup>2</sup>	CPIH
February 2017	268.4	3.2	3.5	2.3
March	269.3	3.1	3.4	2.3
April	270.6	3.5	3.8	2.6
May	271.7	3.7	3.9	2.7
June	272.3	3.5	3.8	2.6
July	272.9	3.6	3.9	2.6
August	274.7	3.9	4.1	2.7
September	275.1	3.9	4.1	2.8
October	275.3	4.0	4.2	2.8
November	275.8	3.9	4.0	2.8
December	278.1	4.1	4.2	2.7
January 2018	276.0	4.0	4.0	2.7
February	278.1	3.6	3.6	2.5
March	278.3	3.3	3.4	2.3
April	279.7	3.4	3.4	2.2

<sup>1</sup> January 1987=100 <sup>2</sup> RPI except mortgage interest payments

Seven of the 14 groups that make up the basket of goods used to calculate the RPI increased by more than 3.4% in April.

The 7.8% increase in the clothing and footwear group included a rise of 9.2% and 8.6% in women's and men's clothing respectively.

The fuel and light group posted an increase of 6.0%, but that included a 20.0% rise in the cost of domestic oil and an 8.6% rise in electricity bills.

Motoring costs were up, with an overall increase of 3.6%. Petrol and oil rose by 3.2% and vehicle tax and insurance by 6.3%.

The overall rise in the food group was 2.6% but included a 6.1% increase in soft drinks as the government's sugar tax kicked in.

The housing group's increase was up to 3.0% and included a 4.9% increase in council tax and rates.

The fares and other travel costs group moved into negative territory as the cost of flights were 4.5% lower. However, bus and coach fares were 4.6% higher.

More than 3.4%	%	Less than 3.4%	%
Clothing & footwear	7.8	Housing	3.0
Tobacco	6.1	Catering	2.7
Fuel & light	6.0	Food	2.6
Leisure services	4.6	Household services	2.5
Leisure goods	4.0	Alcoholic drink	2.4
Motoring expenditure	3.6	Personal goods & services	1.2
Household goods	3.5	Fares etc	-2.3

[www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/april2018](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/april2018)

## Two new people at the top of UNISON

Public services union UNISON has announced two new appointments to its senior management team.

Margaret Thomas and Emilie Oldknow are to become assistant general secretaries, alongside the existing team of Christina McAnea, Liz Snape and Roger McKenzie, and general secretary Dave Prentis.

Thomas' role has responsibility for UNISON's 12 regions, and Oldknow's remit covers staffing and other internal union matters.

Thomas is currently the union's Wales regional secretary, while Oldknow joins UNISON from the Labour Party.

[www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2018/05/two-new-senior-appointments-unison/](http://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2018/05/two-new-senior-appointments-unison/)

## Religious or belief discrimination

The employment service Acas has published updated guidance on religion or belief discrimination in the workplace.

As well as an explanation of the law, it contains practical guidance on a variety of issues including:

- food and fasting;
- talking about religion at work; and
- washing and changing rooms.

This guide primarily offers employers, managers, HR professionals, employees, employee/trade union representatives and job applicants a grounding in how to reduce the chance of religion or belief discrimination happening in the workplace, how

it might still occur and how it should be dealt with if it does happen.

While employers and employees can be liable for their own acts of discrimination, employers can also be liable for their employees' acts.

Acas has also published a factsheet on 10 myths about religious discrimination. They include:

**Myth:** A request for leave for a religious festival takes precedence over a request for a family holiday.

**Fact:** No, religious observance does not necessarily override any other good reason for leave.

**Myth:** An employee can refuse to do aspects of their job because of their religion or belief.

**Fact:** Not if there are good business reasons why they are part of the job, such as being essential duties, and the employer's decision is proportionate.

[www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/a/p/Religion-or-belief-discrimination-key-points-for-the-workplace.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/a/p/Religion-or-belief-discrimination-key-points-for-the-workplace.pdf)

[www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1886](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1886)

## Factory output slows

Manufacturing output growth slowed for the third consecutive month, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures.

In first quarter of the year, factory output increased by 0.2% compared with the final quarter of 2017. The increase was down on the 0.6% increase for three-months ending February.

Just five of the 13 subsectors posted increases but they included a 4.4% increase in computer and electronics equipment and a 4.1% increase in "machinery and equipment not elsewhere classified". On the down side, output of coke and refined petroleum products decreased by 6.5%.

Factory output was up 2.5% on the first quarter 2017.

The more volatile monthly figures show a 0.1% increase in manufacturing output in March 2018 compared with February 2018, while the increase on the same month a year ago was 2.9%.

The production industries (mining and utilities as well as manufacturing) saw output increase by 0.6% in the first quarter of 2018 compared with previous quarter and by 2.0% on the same period a year ago.

In March, the monthly increases for production were 0.1% on previous month and 2.9% on the same month 2017.

[www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/bulletins/indexofproduction/march2018](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/bulletins/indexofproduction/march2018)

## Gender pension gap is wider for older women

The UK has a 31% pension gender gap, with an average female pension pot of £16,083 compared to the average male pension savings of £23,416, according to research by PensionBee.

Its analysis of 5,098 individuals who save into PensionBee pensions also found that the gender gap in Northern Ireland is 76%, with women having average retirement savings of £4,031, compared to men's average pension pot of £16,485.

Female pension savers aged over 50 have an average pension of £31,254 and men over 50 have an average pension of £53,449. This equates to a pension gender gap of 42%.

[www.employeebenefits.co.uk/issues/may-2018/uk-pension-gender-gap/](http://www.employeebenefits.co.uk/issues/may-2018/uk-pension-gender-gap/)

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