



Industrial Relations Unit (IRRU)

Seminar Speaker Series – Spring 2022 (2021/22 Term 2)

- Speaker:** Professor Heejung Chung, Professor of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Kent
- Title:** The Flexibility Paradox: Why flexible working leads to more work and what we can do about that
- Date:** Wednesday 23 February 2022
- Venue:** Zoom Meeting
- Time:** 14:00 – 15:30 (GMT)
- Abstract:** Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, flexible working has become the norm for many workers. However, does flexible working really provide a better work-life balance, enhance worker's well-being and gender equality?

Using data from across Europe and drawing from studies across the world, I will evidence how flexible working can lead to workers working longer and harder, with work encroaching on family life. I argue that this is largely due to our current work and work-life balance culture, where long hours work in the office is hailed as the ideal productive worker and where individuals are pushed to believe that they are the entrepreneurs of their own lives. This is compounded by the decline in workers' bargaining power and increased levels of insecurities with the decline of the welfare state. Similarly, norms around gender roles and intensive parenting cultures shape how the patterns of exploitation manifests differently for women and men. Women end up exploiting themselves at home by increasing time spent on childcare and housework, reinforcing traditional gender roles. This, and assumptions around women's flexible working can explain why women and mothers may especially be party to negative career consequences when working flexibly.

However, all is not lost. I argue that changes in the way we think about work, work life balance and gender roles can help shape the outcomes of flexible working.

- Registration:** Book now via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/irru-202122-speaker-series-with-professor-heejung-chung-tickets-224281470917>