

## NEW REGULATIONS OF PART-TIME WORK

Since the early 1990s, most OECD countries have introduced new laws aimed at encouraging high-quality part-time work opportunities and reducing involuntary part-time work, by requiring part-time workers to receive comparable wages and working conditions to full-time workers; by allowing full-time workers to reduce their hours in certain circumstances, or by giving existing part-timers preferential treatment when hiring full-time.

The Table outlines the statutory rights for part-time work and part-time workers in OECD countries and the accession countries. In most countries, part-timers are entitled to receive the same contractual pay and working conditions as equivalent fulltime workers, on a pro rata basis. Around half of OECD countries require employers to notify part-time employees who want to work longer hours of full-time vacancies when they arise. Some also require employers to give existing underemployed part-time workers preferential treatment when filling full-time vacancies.

Rights for full-time workers to request part-time work are also widespread. In eight countries, parents can request part-time work, either by taking parental leave as a period of part-time work or requesting a reduction in working hours. In most cases, employers can only refuse requests for part-time work from parents on serious business or operational grounds, if at all, and the period of part-time work must be taken before their child reaches school age. Rights to work part-time for non-parents are less common. Several countries have provisions that allow workers to request part-time work for any reason, although employers can generally refuse requests on any grounds. Other countries give specific rights to part-time work to carers of adults (Belgium, Czech Republic, Japan, United Kingdom), workers who are sick or disabled (Norway, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, United States), those pursuing education or training (France, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden) or older workers (Belgium, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia).

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### Reference

OECD (2010), *OECD Employment Outlook 2010: Moving Beyond the Job Crisis*, Paris, ch. 4.

**Table**

**Statutory rights for part-time work and part-time workers**

Country	Equal treatment for part-time workers since:	Rights to work part-time or request part-time work						Rights for existing part-time workers	
		Parents	Carers of adults	Sick or disabled workers	Educa-tion or training	Older workers	Automatic reversion to full-time hours	Notifica-tion of full-time vacancies	Preferential treat-ment for full-time vacancies
Australia	–	SB	–	–	–	–	No	No	No
Austria	1992	SB	–	–	–	–	Yes	No	No
Belgium	2002	N	SB	SB	SB	SB	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canada (QC)	1990	–	–	–	–	–	–	No	No
Canada (SK)	1995	–	–	–	–	–	–	No	No
Czech Republic	–	SB	SB	–	–	–	No	Yes	Yes
Denmark	–	AG	–	–	–	–	..	..	..
Estonia	1992	AG	AG	AG	AG	AG	No	Yes	No
Finland	2001	SB	AG	AG	..	AG	Yes	No	Yes
France	1982	N	SB	SB	N	SB	Yes	..	..
Germany	2001	SB	SB	SB	SB	AG	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greece	1998	N, SB	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hungary	2003	N, SB	AG	AG	AG	AG	No	Yes	No
Ireland	2001	AG	–	–	–	–	Yes	..	..
Italy	2000	AG	AG	AG	AG	AG	..	..	..
Japan	2007	N	N	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Korea	2007	AG	AG	AG	AG	AG	No	No	Yes
Luxembourg	1993	AG	–	–	–	AG	Yes	..	..
Mexico	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	No	No
Netherlands	1996	N	SB	SB	SB	SB	Yes	No	No
New Zealand	–	SB	SB	–	–	–	No	No	No
Norway	2006	SB	SB	SB	SB	SB	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table (continued)

Country	Equal treatment for part-time workers since:	Rights to work part-time or request part-time work						Rights for existing part-time workers	
		Parents	Carers of adults	Sick or disabled workers	Educational or training	Older workers	Automatic reversion to full-time hours	Notification of full-time vacancies	Preferential treatment for full-time vacancies
Poland	2004	N	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	No
Portugal	1971	SB	–	–	–	–	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovak Republic	2002	SB	SB	SB	..	..	No	No	No
Slovenia	1990	N	–	N	–	N	Yes	Yes	No
Spain	2001	N	N	AG	AG	AG	No	Yes	Yes
Sweden	2002	SB	–	–	SB	–	Yes	No	Yes
Switzerland	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	No	No
Turkey	2003	AG	AG	AG	AG	AG	No	Yes	No
United Kingdom	2000	SB	SB	–	–	–	No	No	No
United States	–	AG	N	N, SB	–	–	No	No	No

Notes: Acceptable grounds for refusing requests: N = none; SB = serious business grounds; AG = any grounds; “–” indicates that the policy does not apply; “..” indicates that information is not available. Many countries have additional eligibility criteria for requesting part-time work (e.g., length of service, size of firm). Acceptable grounds for rejecting requests assume that the employee has met these criteria.

Australia: While there is no specific statutory requirement for equal treatment, all permanent employees have the same safety net of minimum entitlements for wages, leave, dismissal protection, etc. Casual employees are not always entitled to paid leave (but receive a loading on their hourly rate in lieu of this) and are entitled to unfair dismissal protection in certain circumstances.

Belgium: Equal treatment rules have applied since 2000 in collective agreements.

Canada (Québec): Right to equal treatment applies to wages if employees earn less than twice the minimum wage. Saskatchewan: Right to equal treatment applies to pro-rated non-statutory health and life insurance benefits after qualifying period, only applies to employers with 10+ full-time equivalent employees.

Denmark: Right to equal treatment applied through collective agreements since 2001.

France: Employers cannot refuse requests for parental leave to be taken as part-time work, but can choose the number of hours worked (16–32 hours/week). Employers cannot refuse requests for part-time work for educational purposes, but can postpone the period of part-time work.

Germany: Older workers do not have an automatic right to revert to full-time hours.

Greece: There are no grounds for refusing requests for a one-hour per day reduction in working time. Requests for other arrangements must be agreed to by the employer.

Hungary: Requests from employees in the public sector cannot be refused and they have automatic reversion to full-time work.

Japan: The employer must accommodate requests for part-time work or allow another flexible work arrangement as a substitute.

Korea: The right to equal treatment was introduced progressively by company size since 2007 and applies to companies with fewer than 100 employees from 2009.

Portugal: There is no statutory right to preferential treatment for part-time workers when filling full-time vacancies but employers are obliged to consider requests for full-time work from part-time employees.

Slovenia: Right to revert to full-time hours does not apply to older workers.

United States: Workers with serious health conditions can work a reduced schedule without their employer's agreement. Workers with a disability can work part-time unless it causes undue hardship. If this is the case, the employer must reassign the employee, providing a suitable vacant position is available.

Source: Responses to OECD Part-time Work Questionnaire; ILO Working Time Database; ILO Maternity Protection Database.