

Zero hour contracts: Due for a major overhaul?

By [Laura Henrique](#), Deputy Business Editor (2015/16)

Tuesday 4 October 2016



Sports Direct were heavily criticised for its use of zero hours contracts. Image. Billy McCrorie

Zero hour contracts have been a source of great controversy. Following the massive increase in zero-hour contracts over the last year, critics have suggested that this may be indicative of an exploitative job market whereby employers gain maximum benefit while being able to offer fewer rights. This is simply the result of a difference in title. Although there is no accurate definition of what constitutes a 'zero hour contract', a common feature seems to be the uncertainty.

Unbeknown to many, a working individual may be given either a 'worker' status or an 'employee status', both of which offer a difference in employment rights, including but not limited to: protection against unfair dismissal, time off for emergencies and statutory sick pay.

According to the most recent report by the Labour Force Survey, 903,000 UK workers work under zero hour contracts – a 2.4 per cent increase since this time in 2015. Those who are in a zero hour contract are predominantly young, or working part-time. While there are those who undoubtedly prefer these contracts for the flexibility offered, it seems that there may be some truth to TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady's comment which said that such contracts are merely "an easy way for bosses to employ staff on the cheap". TUC analysis shows that those on zero-hour contracts earn £3.80 less per hour than the average worker while receiving no holiday or sick pay.

Sports Direct seem to be the biggest perpetrator of "potentially oppressive practices" and have given into

the pressure of offering shop staff the option of a fixed minimum number of work hours per week in an attempt to restore consumer and worker confidence.

If Theresa May is to live up to her promise to give working class families greater job security, then she must tackle zero hour contracts which fail to deliver as staff are unable to sufficiently plan due to the unpredictable income and variable hours offered by employers.



Most Read Discussed

1. [The York floods 2015: What's the damage?](#)
2. [What does Theresa May's new Brexit plan mean?](#)
3. [A workplace revolution: a four-day week?](#)
4. [An update on the US-China trade war](#)
5. [The University as your landlord: friend or foe?](#)
6. [Managing your finances at university](#)

Write for Nouse Business

[Get in touch with the editors](#)

[Join the Facebook group](#)

More in Business

- [What does Theresa May's new Brexit plan mean?](#)
- [The University as your landlord: friend or foe?](#)
- [An update on the US-China trade war](#)
- [A workplace revolution: a four-day week?](#)
- [Managing your finances at university](#)
- [Tesco launches new discount store chain Jack's](#)

[About Nouse](#)
[Who's Nouse](#)
[Website Credits](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Archives](#)
[Student Discounts](#)
[Print Editions](#)
[Mini-Sites](#)

[Nouse on Twitter](#)
[Nouse on Facebook](#)
[Nouse on Google+](#)

© 1964-2018 Nouse

[Policies](#) |

