

Regional Differences in Employee Expectations Regarding Flexible Work Arrangements in the Slovak IT Sector

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ABSTRACT

Flexible working arrangements have become an increasingly important aspect of employee expectations, particularly in the IT sector, where the digital nature of work enables greater temporal and spatial flexibility. This study examines whether employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours differ significantly across the four main geographical regions of Slovakia. The research was conducted among 301 employees working in the Slovak IT sector, distributed relatively evenly across Bratislava, Western Slovakia, Central Slovakia, and Eastern Slovakia. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring employees' expectations regarding working conditions and flexible working arrangements. Due to the ordinal nature of the data and the non-normal distribution of the continuous variable, non-parametric statistical methods were applied. Regional differences were assessed using the Kruskal–Wallis test, while the magnitude of the observed effect was evaluated using the epsilon-squared coefficient. The results showed no statistically significant regional differences in employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours ($H = 6.167$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.104$). The effect size was negligible ($\epsilon^2 = 0.02$), indicating that geographical affiliation has only a minimal practical effect on employees' expectations. Although minor descriptive differences were identified, particularly among respondents from Central Slovakia, these differences did not indicate a systematic regional pattern. The findings suggest that expectations regarding flexible working hours may be influenced more strongly by the characteristics of IT work, occupational requirements, organisational practices, and individual preferences than by geographical location. The study contributes to the understanding of flexible work expectations in the Slovak IT sector and highlights the increasing importance of sector-specific rather than region-specific factors in shaping employee expectations.

Keywords: flexible working arrangements; flexible working hours; employee expectations; IT sector; hybrid work; remote work; regional differences;

Introduction

The transformation of work organisation in the digital era has significantly increased the importance of flexible working arrangements. In particular, flexible working hours, remote work, and hybrid work have become important aspects of employees' expectations regarding working conditions. Previous research indicates that flexibility and autonomy in determining when and where work is performed are increasingly associated with work–life balance, job satisfaction, productivity, and employee well-being. These developments are particularly relevant to the IT sector, where the digital nature of many occupations enables a relatively high degree of temporal and spatial flexibility.

Recent empirical studies have shown that IT professionals and software developers generally value greater autonomy over their working arrangements, while their preferences do not necessarily correspond to fully remote work. Instead, employees increasingly tend to favour hybrid arrangements that provide flexibility while preserving opportunities for face-to-face interaction, communication, and collaboration. At the same time, differences between employee expectations and organisational policies, as well as between employee and managerial perceptions of flexible work, have been identified.

Although flexible working arrangements have been extensively examined at the international level, less attention has been paid to potential regional differences in employees' expectations within the Slovak IT sector. Slovakia is characterised by substantial regional differences in economic development, labour-market conditions, and the concentration of ICT employment. However, the increasing geographical independence of IT work and the expansion of remote and hybrid employment may contribute to a convergence of employee expectations across regions.

Against this background, the present study examines whether employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours differ significantly across four geographical regions of Slovakia: Bratislava, Western Slovakia, Central Slovakia, and Eastern Slovakia. The research focuses specifically on employees in the IT sector and seeks to determine whether geographical affiliation represents a significant factor influencing their expectations regarding working-time flexibility. The following research question was formulated: Is there a statistically significant

regional difference in employee expectations regarding flexible working hours in the IT sector? Accordingly, the research hypothesis assumes that statistically significant regional differences exist in employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours.

1. Employee Expectations Regarding Flexible Work Arrangements

In the international context, employee preferences and expectations regarding flexible working arrangements have been examined, for example, Hužovičová (2025, 2026); Bjärntoft et al. (2020) wrote of the relationship between working-time flexibility, employee autonomy, and work–life balance. Research conducted among 2,960 employees demonstrated a positive association between perceived flexibility and work–life balance. Ferdous, Ali & French (2021) study examines how flexible work practices provide employees with greater control over when and where they work, and investigates their relationship with employee outcomes and work–life balance. Smite et al. (2023) analyzed 22 internal employee preference surveys and 26 post-pandemic workplace policies across 17 companies and 12 countries. The study directly addresses employee and managerial expectations regarding where, when, and how work should be performed. Hybrid Work Model: An Approach to Work–Life Flexibility in a Changing Environment (Krajčík, Schmidt & Baráth, 2023) is particularly relevant to the Slovak context. The study reports that 86.9% of Slovak employees preferred some form of working from home, while 62.5% of respondents working from home preferred a flexible work arrangement allowing for breaks throughout the day. Slovak employees also expressed a strong preference for more flexible working hours and greater autonomy in choosing their workplace. Brega et al. (2023) analyze the availability and accessibility of flexible working arrangements and their significance for work–life balance in the Netherlands, Spain, and Slovenia. The ILO (2023) states that more flexible working arrangements can promote work–life balance, productivity, and employee autonomy, while also highlighting the risks associated with blurred boundaries between working and non-working time and the need for a right to disconnect. The study of Anika & Habib (2025) directly examines employee preferences towards flexible work arrangements, including preferences for flexible working hours (FWH). Based on a sample of 337 respondents, the research identified an association between preferences for working from home and preferences for flexible working hours. The Munnich et al. (2026) study examines employee preferences regarding different forms of hybrid work through an experiment involving 263 knowledge workers in the Netherlands. According to the 2024 report (Eurofound,

2024), at least one in five workers in the EU either engaged in telework or had autonomy over the organization of their working time. Overall, flexible work was associated with better working-time quality and improved work–life balance; however, it also entailed potential risks, including irregular working hours, high workloads, and work-related contact outside regular working hours. A systematic review (Çivilidağ & Durmaz, 2024) identified a positive relationship between flexible working arrangements and employee performance, while also highlighting their associations with productivity, job satisfaction, stress, work–family harmony, and organizational commitment.

2. Employee Expectations Regarding Flexible Work Arrangements in the IT Sector

Recent research has increasingly focused on employees' preferences and expectations regarding flexible working arrangements, particularly in relation to working-time autonomy, flexible working hours, hybrid work and work-life balance, e.g., Treľová & Hlásny (2023a, 2023b, 2024), Hlásny (2024a, 2024b, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). By Schall et al. (2023) employees in technology companies increasingly expect greater autonomy regarding where and when work is performed.

The study of Bielińska-Dusza et al. (2023) examined IT employees' satisfaction with remote working; the discrepancy between employee expectations and their experience of remote working; characteristics influencing employee preferences; and the requirements of IT employees when working remotely. The researchers employed a survey questionnaire, the Kano model, and the SERVQUAL approach. The findings indicated that the expectations of IT employees were not fully met, with the most notable unmet expectations relating to job stability, bonuses, allowances for remote-working costs, and workplace flexibility.

The researchers Zaidman & Van Dijk (2025) examined 651 software developers through a survey and conducted in-depth interviews with an additional 35 developers. The findings indicated that the majority of developers preferred to work from home on most working days; approximately 70% preferred to come to the office at least once a week; working from home was preferred due to the elimination of commuting, as well as greater concentration and productivity; and the office was preferred primarily for social interaction, communication with colleagues, and collaboration, then employee expectations are not necessarily synonymous with a preference for fully remote work.

The researchers conducted a cross-sectional online survey among 65 agile practitioners. The findings are particularly relevant to this topic that respondents generally preferred flexible office attendance policies; fully remote work was not the dominant preference; in larger teams, there was a stronger preference for agreed office attendance; in small and medium-sized teams, individual choice was more frequently preferred; social interaction was an important reason for attending the office; and face-to-face meetings were perceived as beneficial for social interaction and problem-solving (Broomandi, Christensen & Paasivaara 2026).

Navigating Hybrid Work: An Optimal Office–Remote Mix and the Manager–Employee Perception Gap in IT (Loncar et al., 2025) - the study included 1,003 employees and 252 managers from 46 countries. A particularly noteworthy finding was the identification of a hybrid “sweet spot” of 6–10 days in the office per month. Employees following this work arrangement reported higher perceived effectiveness. The study also identified a perception gap between employees and managers, with managers evaluating hybrid work and resource availability more positively than employees themselves.

Recent empirical research in the IT sector indicates that employees increasingly expect greater flexibility and autonomy regarding when and where work is performed. Studies involving IT professionals and software developers have identified preferences for hybrid and flexible work arrangements, while also highlighting substantial differences between employees’ preferred working models and organizational policies. In particular, employees tend to value autonomy, flexibility in workplace attendance, reduced commuting, work-life balance, and the ability to determine their preferred combination of remote and office-based work. Recent empirical evidence from the IT sector indicates that employees increasingly expect greater autonomy and flexibility regarding when and where work is performed. Although fully remote work is not necessarily the preferred option, employees generally value hybrid arrangements that allow them to determine an appropriate balance between remote and office-based work. Key expectations include flexible office attendance, reduced commuting, improved concentration and productivity, work-life balance, and opportunities for social interaction and collaboration. At the same time, the identified gap between employee expectations and organizational policies, as well as between employee and managerial perceptions, highlights the need for more employee-oriented and flexible approaches to work organization in the IT sector.

3. Regional Differences in Employee Expectations Regarding Flexible Working Hours in the Slovak IT Sector - Sample and Research Methodology

The research sample comprised two equal subsamples: 301 employees and 301 employers operating in the IT sector. The employee subsample consisted of 301 respondents, of whom 210 were men (69.8%) and 91 were women (30.2%). In terms of age, 190 respondents (63.1%) were aged 45 years or younger, while 111 respondents (36.9%) were aged 46 years or older.

With regard to the geographical location of their workplace, 76 respondents (25.2%) were employed in Bratislava and the surrounding area, 74 (24.6%) in western Slovakia, 77 (25.6%) in central Slovakia, and 74 (24.6%) in eastern Slovakia.

In terms of enterprise size, 97 respondents (32.2%) were employed by small enterprises (up to 10 employees), 113 respondents (37.5%) by medium-sized enterprises (up to 50 employees), and 91 respondents (30.2%) by larger enterprises.

The research instrument was a questionnaire (see Hlásny, 2025a for further details) designed to assess employees' work expectations of employers in the IT sector in the context of the digital era. The questionnaire was adapted from the instrument developed by Votroubková (2018). Initially, each dimension comprised 20 items. Following statistical assessment of the questionnaire's validity and reliability, the final dimensions retained the items demonstrating the strongest psychometric properties:

- Dimension 1: Work and Working Conditions – 15 questionnaire items;
- Dimension 2: Supervisors – 11 questionnaire items;
- Dimension 3: Remuneration – 4 questionnaire items;
- Dimension 4: Employee Benefits – 18 questionnaire items.

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 26, in combination with JASP. In accordance with the research objectives, a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures was employed.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the distribution of the continuous variable age was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The results indicated a statistically significant departure from normality ($p < .05$). As the assumption of normality was not met and all remaining variables were ordinal

in nature, having been measured using a five-point Likert scale, non-parametric statistical procedures were consistently applied in this part of the analysis.

Accordingly, descriptive statistics were based exclusively on non-parametric measures of central tendency and variability, namely the median (*Md*) and interquartile range (*IQR*). Unlike the arithmetic mean and standard deviation, these measures are less affected by distributional asymmetry and provide an appropriate representation of the central tendency and dispersion of responses obtained from ordinal scales.

All hypotheses were tested at a uniform significance level of $\alpha = .05$. A test result was considered statistically significant when the corresponding *p*-value was below the specified threshold ($p < .05$). Boxplots were used throughout the analysis to provide a graphical representation of the data distribution, medians, and interquartile ranges.

Research Question: Is there a statistically significant regional difference in employee expectations regarding flexible working hours in the IT sector?

Hypothesis: We hypothesize that there are statistically significant regional differences in employee expectations regarding the flexible working hours factor in the IT sector.

The Kruskal–Wallis test was selected to test the hypothesis because differences were compared across more than two independent groups (four geographical regions). In this test, the degrees of freedom are denoted as *df*, while the magnitude of the effect was assessed using the epsilon-squared coefficient (ϵ^2).

4. An Analysis of Regional Differences in Employee Expectations Regarding Flexible Working Hours in the Slovak IT Sector

The research hypothesis examines regional specificities within Slovakia's IT sector, focusing on whether differences exist in employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours. Since the analysis involves more than two independent groups of respondents categorized according to geographical affiliation (Bratislava, Western Slovakia, Central Slovakia, and Eastern Slovakia) and uses ordinal data obtained from a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 – minimum expectation to 5 – maximum expectation), the non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis test was selected as the primary statistical method.

	N	Md	IQR	H	Df	P	ϵ^2
Bratislava (CC)	76	3,00	2,00	6,167	3	0,104	0,02
Western Slovakia	74	3,00	2,00				
Central Slovakia	77	2,00	3,00				
Eastern Slovakia	74	3,00	2,00				

Note. *N* = number of observations; *Md* = median; *IQR* = interquartile range; *H* = Kruskal–Wallis test statistic; *df* = degrees of freedom; *p* = p-value; ϵ^2 = epsilon-squared coefficient as an estimate of effect size.

Table 1: Results of the Regional Comparison of Employee Expectations Regarding Flexible Working Hours

Source: Table 1 – own research.

From a descriptive statistical perspective, the subsamples from Bratislava ($N = 76$), Western Slovakia ($N = 74$), and Eastern Slovakia ($N = 74$) show complete consistency in both the central tendency of responses ($Md = 3.00$) and their variability ($IQR = 2.00$). A slight shift towards lower values is observed only in the sample from Central Slovakia ($N = 77$), where respondents assigned somewhat lower importance to flexibility ($Md = 2.00$), accompanied by a wider dispersion of responses ($IQR = 3.00$).

However, the results of the non-parametric analysis of variance indicate that these minor local deviations are not sufficiently pronounced to establish a statistically significant difference ($H = 6.167$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.104$). This conclusion is further supported by the calculated epsilon-squared coefficient ($\epsilon^2 = 0.02$), which indicates only a minimal, or negligible, effect size of the observed differences. The relatively consistent pattern of employees' expectations regarding flexibility across the country, together with the high degree of overlap in responses, is also illustrated by the visual representation of the data.

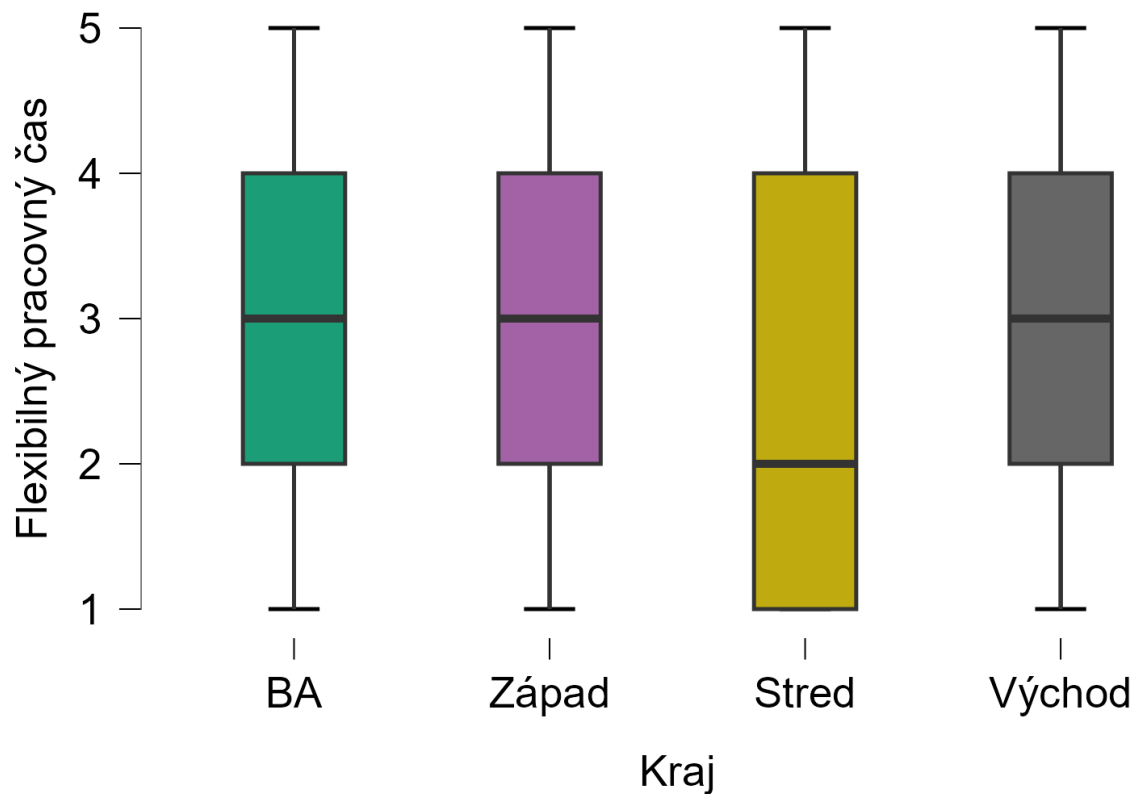


Figure 1: Comparison of Employee Expectations Regarding Flexible Working Hours by Region

Source: Figure 1 – own research.

Since the obtained p -value did not reach the predetermined significance threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$, we conclude that the observed regional differences are **not statistically significant**. Therefore, **the formulated research hypothesis is rejected**. Our findings indicate that the geographical location of an IT company across the regions of Slovakia does not represent, within our research sample, a factor that demonstrably determines or influences IT employees' expectations regarding the flexibility of their working hours.

Answer to the Research Question: the results indicate that **there is no statistically significant regional difference in employee expectations regarding flexible working hours in the IT sector in Slovakia** ($H = 6.167$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.104$; $\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$). Therefore, the research findings do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours differ significantly across the four analysed regions of Slovakia. The negligible effect size further suggests that regional affiliation has only a minimal practical effect on employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours.

Discussion of the Research Question and Hypothesis

The results of the analysis do not confirm the assumed existence of statistically significant regional differences in employee expectations regarding flexible working hours in the Slovak IT sector. Although some descriptive differences can be observed between the four analysed regions, these differences are relatively small and do not reach the conventional level of statistical significance ($H = 6.167$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.104$). Furthermore, the epsilon-squared coefficient ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$) indicates a negligible effect size, suggesting that regional affiliation accounts for only a very small proportion of the variability in employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours.

Consequently, the research hypothesis predicting statistically significant regional differences is not supported by the empirical findings. The answer to the research question is therefore that no statistically significant regional difference in employee expectations regarding flexible working hours was identified in the analysed sample of employees in the Slovak IT sector.

We also found possible explanations for the observed results. Several factors may explain why the expected regional differences were not statistically significant. First, the nature of the IT sector itself may reduce the importance of geographical location as a determinant of employees' expectations regarding working-time flexibility. Unlike occupations that require physical presence at a specific workplace, many IT occupations can be performed digitally and are therefore less dependent on the physical location of the employee or employer. This characteristic may contribute to the convergence of employee expectations across regions.

The Slovak IT labour market also has a relatively strong degree of geographical mobility. Sectoral data indicate that approximately 51% of IT and telecommunications employees work in the Bratislava Region, while a substantial proportion of employees commute across regional boundaries. In fact, 48% of employees in the sector commute to another region, particularly towards Bratislava and Košice (more for example at <https://www.sustavapovolani.sk/>). Such mobility may weaken the relationship between an employee's place of residence, the geographical location of the employer, and expectations regarding working conditions. Employees may increasingly compare employment opportunities at the national rather than exclusively at the regional level.

A second possible explanation is the standardisation of employment practices within the IT sector. IT companies frequently operate in national or international labour markets and compete for the same highly skilled employees regardless of their geographical location. Consequently, flexible working arrangements may increasingly constitute a general characteristic of employment in the sector rather than a benefit that varies substantially between Slovak regions. Evidence from the Slovak labour market also indicates that home-office opportunities are particularly common in IT and other knowledge-intensive occupations. (ISA, 2025)

The regional convergence observed in the present study may therefore reflect a broader transformation of the organisation of work in the IT sector. In this context, occupational characteristics may be more important than geographical location in shaping expectations regarding flexible working hours. An employee's specific occupation, seniority, job responsibilities, organisational culture, and degree of autonomy may have a stronger influence on expectations than the region in which the company is located.

This interpretation is also consistent with the structural characteristics of the Slovak IT labour market. Although regional disparities in the availability and concentration of ICT employment remain considerable, ICT labour shortages are present across the country. OECD data show that ICT labour-market tightness in Slovakia is substantially higher than that of the average occupation, with particularly high tightness in Eastern Slovakia. (OECD, 2024) In such a labour market, employers may have incentives to offer comparable working conditions, including flexible working arrangements, in order to attract and retain scarce IT talent.

Another possible explanation concerns the increasing geographical decoupling of work from the workplace. Regional differences in the Slovak labour market remain substantial; however, these differences do not necessarily translate into equivalent differences in the expectations of IT employees. Research and institutional analyses indicate that the potential for working from home is particularly high in knowledge-intensive occupations and in the Bratislava region. (ISA, 2025) At the same time, the expansion of remote and hybrid work enables companies located outside Bratislava to recruit employees from a broader geographical area. This may contribute to the gradual homogenisation of employee expectations concerning flexibility.

It is therefore plausible that flexibility has become a sector-specific expectation rather than a region-specific expectation. In other words, employees working in the IT sector may have similar expectations regarding working-time flexibility because they identify primarily with the

characteristics of their occupation and sector rather than with the regional labour market in which their employer is located.

Interpretation of the descriptive differences

The descriptive results nevertheless deserve attention. Bratislava, Western Slovakia, and Eastern Slovakia all recorded a median of $Md = 3.00$ and an interquartile range of $IQR = 2.00$. Central Slovakia differed slightly, with a lower median ($Md = 2.00$) and a wider interquartile range ($IQR = 3.00$).

This result suggests that respondents from Central Slovakia may have somewhat more heterogeneous expectations regarding flexible working hours. However, the difference should not be interpreted as evidence of a genuine regional effect because the overall Kruskal–Wallis test was not statistically significant. The observed deviation may reflect random sampling variation or differences in the composition of the respondents rather than a systematic characteristic of employees in Central Slovakia.

The distinction between statistical significance and practical significance is particularly important here. Even if a larger sample were to produce a statistically significant result for a small difference, the current effect-size estimate ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$) suggests that the regional factor has very limited explanatory power in the present data. Thus, region does not appear to be a particularly strong determinant of employee expectations regarding flexible working hours.

The hypothesis was formulated on the assumption that regional labour-market differences in Slovakia would translate into differences in employee expectations. Such an assumption is theoretically plausible because Slovakia exhibits considerable regional differences in economic development, employment opportunities, wages, infrastructure, and labour-market conditions. The Bratislava Region, for example, has a substantially stronger economic position and a high concentration of ICT-related employment, while significant labour-market disparities persist between Bratislava and other parts of Slovakia. (International Monetary Fund, 2024).

However, the results indicate that these broader regional inequalities do not necessarily translate into differences in expectations regarding flexible working hours among IT employees. This may be because flexibility is associated primarily with the characteristics of IT work itself. The digital nature of many IT occupations, the prevalence of remote and hybrid work, the

international orientation of many employers, and competition for skilled employees can all contribute to similar expectations across geographical areas.

Thus, the rejection of H should not be interpreted as evidence that regional differences in Slovakia are irrelevant to employment conditions in general. Rather, it suggests that regional affiliation alone is insufficient to explain differences in IT employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours.

The findings of the present study are broadly consistent with previous research conducted in Slovakia, although the studies differ in their research objectives, samples, and operationalisation of work flexibility. The most directly comparable study is that of Krajčík, Alshatti Schmidt, and Baráth (2023), who examined employees' preferences regarding working time and workplace flexibility in Slovakia. Their findings showed that employees valued time flexibility and that the hybrid work model represented a suitable arrangement corresponding to employees' preferences. Among Slovak respondents, 56.8% reported working flexibly with breaks during the working day, while 49.4% experienced a hybrid work arrangement during the pandemic. The authors also found that employees perceived certain advantages of working from home, particularly in terms of concentration and time management, while office-based work remained important for communication and cooperation.

These findings are broadly compatible with the results of the present study. In our sample, the median expectation regarding flexible working hours was $Md = 3.00$ in Bratislava, Western Slovakia, and Eastern Slovakia, while Central Slovakia recorded a slightly lower median of $Md = 2.00$. Although the level of expectations therefore appears to be relatively moderate and consistent across most regions, the Kruskal–Wallis test did not identify statistically significant regional differences ($H = 6.167$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.104$). The negligible effect size ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$) further indicates that geographical affiliation has very limited explanatory power. Thus, while Krajčík et al. (2023) demonstrate a generally strong interest in flexible working arrangements among Slovak employees, our results extend this finding by suggesting that such expectations may be relatively homogeneous across Slovak regions within the IT sector.

An important point of comparison is provided by Beňo, Hvorecký, and Cagánová (2023), who examined employees' attitudes towards the choice between office-based and home-based work in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Austria. Their research addressed not only employees' preferences for workplace flexibility but also their willingness to accept potential financial

consequences in exchange for greater flexibility. This supports the broader conclusion that flexibility has become an important component of employees' perceptions of contemporary working conditions. However, their study also illustrates that flexibility should not be interpreted as synonymous with permanent remote work. Rather, employees may value the possibility of choosing between different working arrangements depending on their individual and occupational circumstances.

The broader Slovak labour-market evidence also supports the interpretation of our findings. According to the Institute for Strategies and Analysis, home-based work has become particularly widespread in IT-related occupations in Slovakia. In 2023, approximately 12.7% of employed people in Slovakia worked from home, while IT professionals represented the occupational group with the highest prevalence of home working in the cited survey data. The same analysis indicates that home office and flexible working hours are among the most sought-after employee benefits in Slovakia, while employees increasingly prefer hybrid arrangements that combine home-based and office-based work.

At the same time, the results of the present study differ from research demonstrating pronounced regional differences in the Slovak IT labour market. Medeková and Mikulcová (2025), for example, identified substantial regional differences in the concentration of IT employment and vacancies, with Bratislava and other major cities having considerably higher levels of IT employment, while smaller cities face greater employment shortages. These findings indicate that regional differences clearly exist in the structure and availability of IT employment. However, our results suggest that such structural regional differences do not necessarily translate into corresponding differences in employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours.

This distinction is important for interpreting the present findings. Regional labour-market conditions may differ substantially in terms of employment opportunities, wages, concentration of IT companies, and availability of skilled jobs, while employees' expectations concerning flexible working hours may nevertheless converge across regions. The digital and geographically flexible nature of many IT occupations may contribute to this convergence. Employees can increasingly access employment opportunities beyond their immediate geographical area, while employers can recruit IT professionals regardless of their place of residence. Consequently, expectations regarding flexibility may increasingly be shaped by

occupational characteristics and sector-specific employment practices rather than by regional affiliation.

The findings are also consistent with recent research among Slovak employees working in flexible work arrangements. Urukovičová and Rošková (2025), using a sample of 309 Slovak employees from different economic sectors, demonstrated that flexible working environments are associated with employees' ability to actively shape their work and with positive work-related outcomes. Although their study did not specifically examine regional differences or expectations regarding working hours, it provides further evidence that flexibility constitutes an important characteristic of the contemporary Slovak working environment.

Overall, the comparison with previous Slovak research suggests a consistent pattern: flexibility is increasingly valued by employees, but the importance attached to flexible working arrangements does not appear to be strongly determined by geographical location. Our study contributes to this body of research by focusing specifically on employees in the Slovak IT sector and by testing regional differences statistically. The absence of a statistically significant regional effect ($p = 0.104$; $\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$) suggests that flexible working hours may represent a relatively general expectation among IT employees across Slovakia rather than a benefit whose importance varies substantially between regions.

Limitations of the Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings.

1. Sample size and statistical power

The total sample consists of 301 respondents distributed relatively evenly across the four groups: Bratislava ($N = 76$), Western Slovakia ($N = 74$), Central Slovakia ($N = 77$), and Eastern Slovakia ($N = 74$). The relatively balanced group sizes represent a strength of the analysis. Nevertheless, the sample may still have limited statistical power to detect very small regional effects. The non-significant result ($p = 0.104$) should therefore not be interpreted as proof that the regional effect is exactly zero. A non-significant statistical test indicates that the available evidence is insufficient to reject the null hypothesis at the selected $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

2. Representativeness of the sample

A further limitation concerns the representativeness of the respondents. Unless probability sampling was used, the sample cannot necessarily be considered representative of the entire population of IT employees in Slovakia. The composition of the sample may differ from the population in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, seniority, company size, employment status, type of IT position, or type of working arrangement. These factors may influence expectations regarding flexibility independently of geographical location. Therefore, the findings should primarily be interpreted as applying to the analysed research sample, rather than automatically being generalised to all IT employees in Slovakia.

3. Regional categorisation

The division into four geographical categories - Bratislava, Western Slovakia, Central Slovakia, and Eastern Slovakia - is useful for analytical purposes, but it may conceal substantial heterogeneity within individual regions. For example, the labour market in Košice may differ considerably from that in smaller municipalities in Eastern Slovakia. Similarly, the labour-market conditions in major cities such as Žilina, Nitra, or Trnava may differ from those in rural areas of the same broader region. This means that a broad regional classification may reduce the ability to identify more localised geographical differences.

4. The region of the company may not correspond to the employee's actual working location

This is particularly important in the context of the IT sector. Because remote and hybrid work allow employees to work from locations different from the formal location of their employer, the geographical location of the company may not accurately capture the employee's actual labour-market environment. An employee may, for example, work for a Bratislava-based IT company while permanently residing and working remotely in Eastern Slovakia. In such a case, assigning the employee exclusively to the employer's region may obscure the actual relationship between geography and expectations. This is an important methodological consideration because the sector has a relatively high degree of cross-regional commuting and geographical mobility (see more <https://www.sustavapovolani.sk/>).

5. Flexible working hours is a multidimensional concept

Another limitation concerns the operationalisation of flexibility. Flexible working hours may include several distinct dimensions, such as flexible start and finish times; freedom to organise

working hours; compressed working schedules; hybrid work; remote work; part-time employment; flexibility in scheduling meetings and tasks. The present analysis appears to focus on employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours as a single factor. Consequently, it cannot determine whether regional differences might exist for particular dimensions of flexibility even though no overall regional difference was detected. Future research could therefore distinguish between temporal flexibility, spatial flexibility, and organisational autonomy.

6. Likert-scale measurement

The use of a five-point Likert scale is appropriate for measuring ordinal attitudes and expectations, and the use of the Kruskal–Wallis test is consequently methodologically reasonable. However, a single Likert-scale item or a relatively narrow operationalisation may not capture the full complexity of employees' expectations. For example, two employees may both select a value of 3, while the underlying reasons for their responses may be completely different. One may value flexibility because of work–life balance, whereas another may value it because of commuting constraints or personal autonomy. A more comprehensive multi-item scale could provide a more reliable measurement of the underlying construct.

7. Potential confounding variables

The analysis examines region as the explanatory factor, but employee expectations may simultaneously be influenced by numerous other variables. These include age; gender; education; income; occupation; managerial responsibility; length of employment; company size; ownership structure; multinational versus domestic employer; organisational culture; current remote/hybrid work arrangement; commuting distance; family responsibilities. If these variables are not controlled for, it is difficult to determine whether regional differences might emerge after accounting for differences in the composition of the four groups. A future study could therefore use multivariable regression or ordinal logistic regression to examine whether region remains a significant predictor after controlling for these characteristics.

Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that regional affiliation does not represent a statistically significant determinant of employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours in the

Slovak IT sector. The Kruskal–Wallis test did not identify statistically significant differences among employees from Bratislava, Western Slovakia, Central Slovakia, and Eastern Slovakia ($H = 6.167$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.104$). Moreover, the epsilon-squared coefficient ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.02$) indicates a negligible effect size, suggesting that regional affiliation has only a very limited practical influence on the observed differences in employee expectations. Therefore, the formulated research hypothesis was not supported. We are thinking that regional differences in the Slovak IT labour market do not necessarily translate into regional differences in employees' expectations regarding flexible working hours.

Although minor descriptive differences were identified, particularly in Central Slovakia, where the median expectation was lower and response variability was greater, these differences were insufficient to establish a systematic regional effect. The findings therefore suggest a relatively consistent level of expectations regarding flexible working hours across the analysed regions.

One possible explanation is the specific nature of IT work, which is characterised by a high degree of digitalisation, geographical flexibility, and opportunities for remote and hybrid work. In addition, competition for qualified IT professionals may encourage employers across different regions to offer increasingly similar working conditions and flexible arrangements. Consequently, employees' expectations may be shaped more strongly by occupational characteristics, organisational culture, job responsibilities, seniority, and individual preferences than by the geographical location of the employer.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted in light of the study's limitations, particularly the non-probability nature and size of the sample, the broad regional categorisation, and the multidimensional nature of flexible working arrangements. Future research should therefore examine additional determinants of employee expectations and distinguish between temporal flexibility, spatial flexibility, and organisational autonomy. Multivariable approaches could also be used to assess whether regional affiliation remains relevant after controlling for individual and organisational characteristics.

Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of flexible work expectations in the Slovak IT sector by indicating that such expectations appear to be relatively homogeneous across regions. The results suggest that flexibility may increasingly constitute a sector-specific expectation rather than a region-specific one, reflecting the changing nature of work in the digital economy.

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