

Working Below Potential: Women and Part-time Work in Wakefield

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Foreword

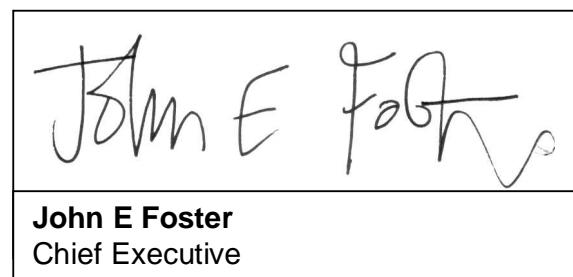
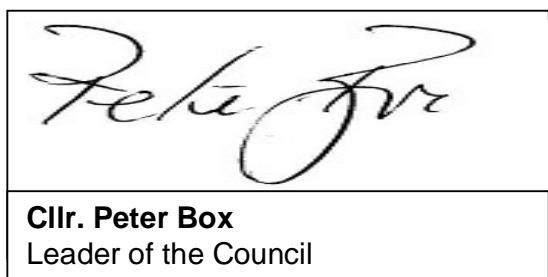
Changing, improving, and sustaining progress

Wakefield MDC has worked in close partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, and eleven other local authorities over the last three years to take part in this national research study, the Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets Project (GELLM).

In participating in this project the Council has made a firm commitment to disseminate and implement the research findings by engaging with key stakeholders during all stages of the project. The Council is keen to take forward both the research and the outcomes from the local research studies.

We will use this learning to inform reviews of key strategic and service plans. This will help us to meet the:

- **Changing** legislative requirements around gender through the public sector duty on sex equality
- Council's commitment to continuous **improvement** and **sustainability**



Acknowledgements

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Contents

Key findings	2
Introduction	3
Part-time work	4
Working below potential	4
Policy and part-time employment	4
Part-time work in Wakefield	5
Working below potential in Wakefield	7
Women's pay in part-time employment in Wakefield	9
Job design: the construction of part-time jobs	11
Senior-level part-time jobs	12
Recommendations	14
References	16
Appendix 1 Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets (GELLM)	17
Appendix 2 Research methods	18
Appendix 3 Additional data on women's employment in Wakefield	19

Key findings

The aim of this research was to understand why women work ‘below their potential’ in low paid, part-time jobs – that is, to find out why women do not always use all of their skills, experience and qualifications when they work in part-time jobs. This report relates to Wakefield only. The findings of the full study, conducted in six English districts, are reported separately (Grant et al 2006). Our key findings relating to Wakefield are:

Women’s employment in Wakefield

- The employment rate for women in Wakefield is equal to that in England as a whole, at 64%.
- Employed women in Wakefield are more likely to work part-time, and less likely to work full-time, than women in England.
- The part-time employment rate for women varies according to ethnicity. There are much lower levels of part-time employment among Indian and Pakistani women in Wakefield than among White British women. Indian and Pakistani women are also less likely to be in employment than women from other ethnic groups.
- Women aged 35+ are much more likely to work part-time than younger women. They are also more likely to work part-time than women aged 35+ in England as a whole.
- Part-time women workers in Wakefield are much more likely to work in low paid, low skilled occupations, and much less likely to work in high paid, high skilled occupations, than part-time women workers in England.
- Part-time jobs in higher paid occupations are relatively scarce in Wakefield.
- Between 1991 and 2002 the number of part-time jobs held by women in Wakefield grew, while the number of women in full-time jobs fell.
- Despite growth in women’s part-time jobs in Wakefield, the rate of growth was slower than in England as a whole.
- There was a significant loss of women’s part-time jobs in manufacturing in Wakefield.
- There was particularly strong growth in part-time jobs in transport and communications
- Others sectors which experienced growth in women’s part-time jobs in Wakefield were: public administration, education and health;

banking and finance; and distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Women’s pay in Wakefield

- Average hourly pay for part-time women workers in Wakefield was lower than in England as a whole.
- In Wakefield, hourly pay is significantly lower for women working part-time than for men working full-time: this pay gap is similar to that found in England as a whole.

‘Working below potential’ in Wakefield

- Over a half of the women working in low paid, part-time jobs in our study in Wakefield were working ‘below their potential’. This indicates that there is a massive waste of women’s skills, talents and experience in Wakefield.
- Unlike many of the managers in our national study, managers in the workplaces studied in Wakefield were aware of the skills, talents and aspirations of women working in low paid, part-time jobs.
- Two of the managers interviewed in Wakefield argued that it would be possible and desirable to create more senior level, part-time jobs.
- In Wakefield, the lack of higher level part-time jobs on the open labour market was important in explaining why women worked ‘below their potential’.
- Women who want to continue working part-time often lack opportunities for progression and promotion in their place of work.
- Once in a low-paid, part-time job, women tend to lose confidence in their abilities and skills, and to become trapped at the lower level.
- Women seeking to re-establish their former position in the labour market, through education or training, lack financial and public policy support.
- Some women had moved into low-grade, part-time jobs because of the intensity of work in senior level, full-time jobs and because of the absence of effective work-life balance policies and practices within workplaces.
- The full-time/part-time split which keeps part-time women workers in low-level jobs could be changed, but needs a new approach to job design and rotas.
- The concentration of part-time work in specific sectors and occupations lies behind these

problems: to realise women's full potential, part-time work needs to be available in all types and levels of work.

Recommendations

We recommend that employers:

- Adopt a more strategic approach to the design of jobs and the replacement of employees.
- Rethink the value of part-time working and part-time employees.
- Recognise the wider organisational benefits of part-time working.
- Take a risk in opening up part-time opportunities at all levels.
- Offer senior and management posts on a part-time basis when recruiting on the open labour market.
- Address the long hours of work associated with senior level jobs.
- Ensure that part-time workers can progress at work.

We recommend that local authorities and their partners:

- Acknowledge the waste of local women's talents and skills.
- Adopt good practice within the local authority.
- Encourage their employer partners to 'take a risk'.
- Work with partners to extend and advertise the training and education opportunities open to women returners.
- Work with partners to develop financial support to women returners seeking to upgrade their skills and qualifications.

Introduction

This study aimed to explore why women are employed in low paid, part-time jobs which are below their full potential in the labour market, in terms of skills, experience and qualifications, and to investigate the design of part-time jobs and how pay rates for part-time jobs are set.

Our research on women working below their potential in part-time jobs across England has revealed that over a half of part-time women workers are not using all of their labour market skills and experience in their current jobs (Grant et al 2005). Further research, by the Equal Opportunities Commission, based on our findings, has shown the scale of this problem nationally. Nationally, 3.8 million part-time women workers are working below their potential (Darton and Hurrell 2005). This is a massive waste of women's talents, often in the prime years of their working lives. Understanding why this is occurring, and developing policy to address it, are important for local economies.

Our research In Wakefield involved a survey of women working in three workplaces during 2005. These workplaces were located in industries in the public and private sectors: health; social care; and retail. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with senior managers in these workplaces, and 82 women completed questionnaires. 12 part-time women workers who were working below their potential were interviewed face-to-face. The research also involved analysis of statistical data on employment and part-time employment.

This study is one of six local research studies carried out within the GELLM programme (see Appendix 1). Parallel studies have also been undertaken in: Camden, Leicester, Thurrock, Trafford and West Sussex. The study of women and part-time work across England involved research in a total of 22 workplaces. Interviews with senior managers were conducted in each workplace, and altogether 333 women workers completed questionnaires. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 87 women. A synthesis report, bringing together the findings from all six areas, is available separately (Grant et al 2006).

Part-time work

There are a range of reasons why we chose part-time employment as a focus for our research, and why it is an important issue for Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, its partners and the people of Wakefield.

Part-time jobs have been growing in importance as a form of employment across the country, including in Wakefield. With part-time employment now representing 31% of jobs in Wakefield¹, the quality of the part-time jobs on offer has major implications, not only for local people's economic well-being and their quality of life, but also for the prosperity of the local economy.

Many women want to work part-time at particular times in their lives. Part-time employment is often undertaken by women who wish to combine paid work with childcare or other caring responsibilities. It is important to consider how far the opportunities available to them in the local labour market match their skills, experience and aspirations.

Part-time work is a major form of employment for many women throughout the middle of their working lives, in their 30s, 40s and 50s. This contrasts with male part-time employment, which is clustered at the start and end of working life, but is rarely experienced by men in the prime decades of employment. The quality of part-time jobs affects the economic well-being of local women and their families during years when they may wish to develop their careers or need to maximise their earnings.

Working below potential

This study has examined why some women workers are employed 'below their potential' in low paid, part-time jobs, asking: 'Why do some women occupy low paid part-time jobs even though they have the skills, qualifications and labour market experience to work in more skilled, higher status, better paid jobs?'

Understanding why this occurs and its implications is important for local authorities and their partners, for local employers, for local women and for the prosperity of local economies.

Local authorities and their partners play a key role in developing efficient local labour markets. This involves making productive use of the skills and talents of local people. When, as in Wakefield, around half of part-time women workers are employed in jobs below their proven past potential, local labour markets are not working as efficiently as they could be.

Local authorities and their partners need to reap the optimum benefits from public investments in education and training. Yet the shift many local women make during their working lives from full-time work to part-time work can involve a waste of the resources invested in their education and training.

The lower status of the part-time jobs these women occupy affects their income and their long-term earning power. Other research has also shown that women tend to make a 'downward occupational move' when they change from full-time to part-time work (Manning and Petrongolo 2004). However, previous research has not fully explained why so many women workers experience a loss of status and pay when they shift to part-time employment. Nor has it examined their views about this situation.

Local employers want to maximise productivity. Yet, if women are employed below their potential, local employers are not making the most productive use of their entire workforces.

Given the extent to which women are working below their potential in the Wakefield economy, we wanted to identify what could be done to prevent this waste of talent and resources.

Policy and part-time employment

The research reported here has important implications for a number of issues already high on the public policy agenda.

Facing both a shrinking working age population and expected job growth in the overall economy, the government has set a target of engaging 80% of the working age population in paid work. Yet full-time jobs for women have been declining in the Wakefield economy, and most of the new jobs being created are part-time. If more women in Wakefield are to enter the labour market, the part-time jobs on offer will need to use their skills and talents and to offer them genuine prospects for

¹ Source: Annual Business Inquiry 2004 via NOMIS, ONS, Crown Copyright.

progression and promotion. Part-time jobs do not need to be concentrated in low paid, low skill, low status occupations – but to offer such work across all levels will mean opening up a wider range of jobs on a part-time basis.

As we pointed out in the *Gender Profile of Wakefield's Labour Market* (Buckner et al 2004), the gender pay gap is now widely recognised as a persistent but unacceptable feature of the British economy, acting as a brake on the achievement of full economic prosperity and preventing women from benefiting equitably from the economic contribution they make. The gap between men's and women's pay is most marked when we consider women's part-time employment. Women working part-time are earning 40% less per hour on average than men working full-time (EOC 2005).

Part-time employment remains segregated in the low waged segments of the economy and of individual workplaces, and part-time workers are widely seen as peripheral workers, and even today sometimes described as working for 'pin money'. This out-dated view is associated with the idea that the growth of part-time jobs should be resisted, and that the economic interests of part-time workers are unimportant. Our study shows how crucial it is to improve the standing of part-time workers and to raise the status of part-time working.

Achieving an appropriate work-life balance is high on the contemporary agenda for government, employers and trade unions alike. More and more workers are requesting reduced hours work to help them strike the balance that is right for them and, under the *Employment Act 2002*, some workers who are parents have been granted a legal entitlement to have their request for flexible working considered by their employer. At the same time many employees experience long hours and an unacceptable intensity of work which damages their health and quality of life, as other research within the GELLM research programme confirms (Bennett et al 2006). Part-time employment offers a solution for many people in these circumstances, but the poor pay and prospects associated with part-time jobs means they pay a heavy price in pursuing this option.

To be successful, efficient and competitive in the 21st century, employers and the economy as a whole must make use of all available talent, and capitalise on investments in education, skills and training. Both government and organisations are

continuing to make huge human capital investments, and recognise the importance of making good use of the skilled and knowledgeable workforce they produce. While skills policy has been rising up the official agenda in recent years, those who take a break from paid work, who change career, or who need a second chance in education or training are still poorly served in terms of access and support. Access to skills, re-skilling, re-training, and education remain especially difficult for women returners and other mature women, and their talents and contribution are often wasted because of this.

The UK's new approach to equalities (set out in the *Equality Act 2006*) involves widening the agenda to encompass all aspects of equality and diversity and seeking to strengthen policy responses by creating a new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. This should draw more effective attention to the fact that women from ethnic minority groups are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market, and are especially concentrated in low paid jobs, even when well qualified (Buckner et al 2004; Escott et al 2006; Grant et al 2006; Stiell et al 2006). To adequately address these policy issues, we require a much better understanding of part-time working, part-time jobs and part-time workers, and to examine in more detail why women work below their potential in part-time jobs. The remainder of this report tackles these issues, using evidence from the Wakefield study.

Part-time employment in Wakefield

The importance of part-time employment in Wakefield

In 2001, 44% of working women in Wakefield were working in part-time jobs. This was 5% above the national average figure. As we show in the more detailed statistics presented in Appendix 3, these Wakefield women in part-time employment were very strongly concentrated in lower level jobs (Figure A8) and in the health, social work, education, retail and hotels/restaurants sectors (Figure A10)

Between 1991 and 2002, there were important developments in the Wakefield economy. Women's full-time jobs declined in number, while women's part-time jobs grew by nearly 5,500. By 2002, 32% of all jobs in Wakefield were part-time positions, compared with 27% ten years earlier.

In some areas of employment growth in Wakefield, the increase in part-time employment (taking jobs held by both sexes) was especially marked. In the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector 52% of employment growth was in part-time jobs. In public administration, education and health 56% of employment growth was in part-time employment, and in banking and finance 71% of local employment growth was in part-time jobs. Thus overall, the growth in part-time employment in Wakefield has been significant.

In some sectors, additional part-time jobs held by women were a key feature of employment growth. This was particularly the case in banking and finance, in which 52% of all employment growth was in part-time women's jobs and in public administration, education and health, where again women's part-time jobs accounted for 52% of employment growth.

In sectors where the growth of jobs for women was particularly strong, a high percentage of job growth was in part-time jobs. 60% of women's job growth in transport and communications was in part-time jobs, 71% of job growth for women in distribution, hotels and restaurants was part-time, and in public administration, education and health, 73% of the growth in women's jobs was part-time. This underscores just how important the growth of women's part-time employment has become as a feature of the Wakefield economy.

The level of part-time working amongst women varies according to age, and is a particularly important form of employment for women aged over 35; in Wakefield, over half of all employed women in this age group work part-time.

Table 1 Job change in Wakefield 1991-2002, by full-time/part-time status and sex²

Job Type	Sex	Number of jobs		Change in number of jobs 1991-2002	Percentage change 1991- 2002		
		1991	2002		Wakefield	Yorkshire & The Humber	England
Full-time	Female	28, 381	27, 490	-891	-3	11	13
	Male	53, 284	56, 358	3, 074	6	7	9
	All	81, 665	83, 848	2, 183	3	9	11
Part-time	Female	26, 341	31, 709	5, 368	20	8	31
	Male	3, 957	8, 558	4, 601	116	97	103
	All	30, 298	40, 267	9, 969	33	20	44
All	All jobs	111, 963	124, 115	12, 152	11	12	19

Source: AES/ Census of Employment 1991, ABI 2002, ONS

Table 2 Job change in Wakefield 1991-2002, by full-time/part-time status and industry

Numbers (%)
change)

	Women		Men	
	Full-time Numbers (%)	Part-time Numbers (%)	Full-time Numbers (%)	Part-time Numbers (%)
Energy & water	*	*	-4,002 (-72)	*
Manufacturing	-3,827 (-50)	-1,114 (-53)	-2,103 (-13)	120 (83)
Construction	-116 (-20)	*	-486 (-8)	-49 (-32)
Distribution, hotels, restaurants	676 (12)	1,659 (17)	3,453 (41)	2,795 (182)
Transport, communications	755 (123)	1,133 (405)	2,368 (50)	629 (304)
Banking, finance	-100 (-3)	1,600 (83)	983 (22)	569 (179)
Public admin., education and health	1,700 (18)	4,604 (59)	2,126 (34)	359 (38)
Other	103 (12)	10 (1)	535 (45)	149 (23)
Total	-891 (-3)	5,368 (20)	3,074 (6)	4,601 (116)

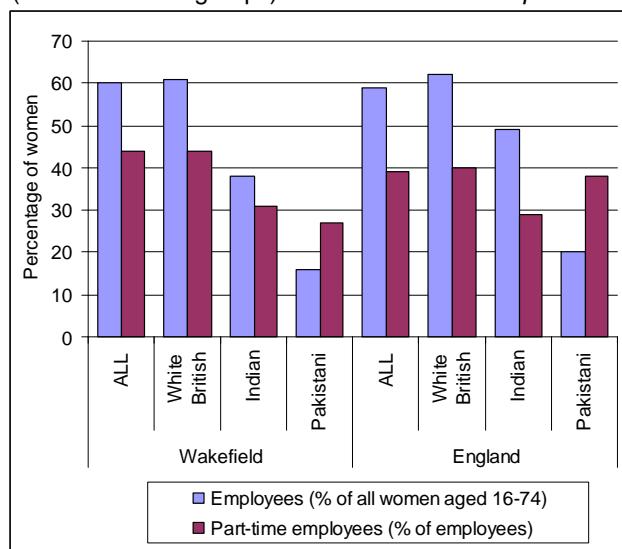
Source: AES/ Census of Employment 1991, ABI 2002, ONS. Note: * Missing data due to small numbers sampled in the survey

² These data relate to jobs located in Wakefield. Some of these jobs may be held by men or women who live elsewhere.

Part-time employment also varies according to ethnicity and in Wakefield is most common among White British women. 44% of White British women employees work part-time. Among Indian and Pakistani women in employment in Wakefield levels of part-time employment are low; just 27% of employed Pakistani women and 31% of Indian women employees work part-time (Figure 1).

Overall the proportion of employed women in these groups are also low. Only 16% of Pakistani women of working age, and 38% of Indian women of working age, are in employment in Wakefield, compared with 61% of White British women.

Figure 1 Employment rates and part-time employment rates for women, by ethnicity (selected ethnic groups)



The occupations of part-time women workers in Wakefield³

Across England, women part-time workers are concentrated in some of the lowest paid occupations. This concentration in low paid jobs is particularly marked in Wakefield.

In 2001, 26% of women part-time workers in Wakefield worked in elementary occupations, where pay levels tend to be particularly low, compared with 21% in England. But there are also high percentages of women working part-time in retail jobs and in personal service jobs in Wakefield, which are also low paid sectors. These jobs, along with low paid jobs in manufacturing, account for 67% of women's part-

time employment in the Wakefield economy, compared with only 59% in England.

Overall, therefore, there is a very high concentration of part-time jobs in the lowest paid occupations within the Wakefield economy.

In contrast, higher paid part-time jobs in administrative, technical, professional and managerial occupations are scarce in Wakefield. Only 32% of women's part-time jobs are in this type of work in Wakefield, compared with 42% in England as a whole. And only 6% of part-time women workers in Wakefield work in the highest paid occupations, as managers or in professional jobs, compared with 10% in England.

Working below potential in Wakefield

Women's reasons for working below their proven past potential

Just over a half (52%) of the women working in low paid, part-time jobs surveyed in Wakefield were working below their potential, very close to the national estimate of 53% identified by the Equal Opportunities Commission in its national survey following up our research findings (Darton and Hurrell 2005).

At the national level, this means that 3.8 million women in part-time employment are thought to be working below their potential. In Wakefield alone, this would mean that around 13,000 women working part-time are working below their proven past potential.

This was captured in the comments of one of the managers interviewed:

We have got a lot of mums that at one time had really good jobs and earned a lot of money and then they chose to stay at home for a while, or there wasn't the option of working part-time in their old job and they came to us.

Given the staggering under-use of women's skills and talents, we need to ask why this is occurring, so that policy can be redesigned to address this issue.

Our study has revealed five different explanations for this situation, all given to us by the women we interviewed who were working below their potential in their current jobs:

- Some women are working below their potential because they face a **restricted**

³ Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

labour market. These women had found there were very few senior or higher paid jobs available with part-time hours on the open labour market. In Wakefield, where there are so few part-time jobs in senior or managerial occupations, this is particularly important.

I've been looking for work in personnel, part-time. That's what I used to do. If I could find something part-time that would be ideal. I keep looking. I did see one 6 months ago in social services, it was a job share. I applied, but I didn't hear anything. I think jobs like that, they've probably got someone already lined up.

- Some women are working below their potential because they face **restricted opportunities in their workplace**. These women wanted to stay in their current field of employment, but had found there were no promotion pathways in their workplace, or that there were no promotion prospects for part-time workers in their workplace.

If somebody said to me, you can do that, I'd do it, because you tend to put yourself down, even though you can do it. My capabilities are not just serving customers. I'm looking for other work, because I am not using my skills or my qualifications. It's a waste, but I've never seen any other opportunities come up here.

- Some women are working below their potential because they have experienced an **unacceptable intensity of work** in previous, higher graded work. These women had chosen their current job because of specific, negative experiences in their previous employment in the recent past.

I was on a bit of runaway train in terms of hours, and I was never up to date - and more and more duties kept coming down, and the place kept expanding. So it was a crazy spiral really, it was 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - which was pretty harrowing, to say the least. I made a deliberate choice of, OK, what I am going to do? I'm going to do something where the balance is life and not work. It was a deliberate life choice in terms of work life balance. So now I do 15 hours.

- Some women are **taking steps to realise their potential** in the labour market. These women were in a period of transition to alternative, more senior level, employment by engaging in training or education. But this is a journey for which women need considerable personal resources as there is little financial

support available to women returners seeking to upgrade their skills and qualifications.

I am a learning support worker, but I really want to be a tutor. I got a BA in Education 2 years ago, and now I'm doing my PGCE, but I've had to initiate it myself, I've had to fund it myself. When I was doing my degree, we managed without my income.

- Some women are **content to work below their potential** in the labour market. These women had qualifications or experience which would equip them for higher graded work, but had chosen to work in lower paid, low graded, jobs. Sometimes this was because their job, although remaining low paid, had become more satisfying and interesting over time.

I think because of where the job's gone over the years, it's been developed along the way. We have been learning a lot of new skills, so it hasn't been stagnating. So in that respect it has been interesting. So I'm fairly satisfied. I don't want to change now.

Our evidence indicates that the main reasons behind the under-use of women's skills and experience in part-time jobs are:

- The absence of higher paid part-time jobs on the open labour market.
- The absence of promotion pathways in their current workplace.
- The intensity of work and the long hours associated with senior level, full-time jobs currently.
- The fact that skills can become obsolete after breaks from the workplace.
- The loss of confidence in relation to the labour market after breaks from work.

The demands of caring for children, or for others in need of support, of course encourage many women to take up part-time employment. This may be their choice, their only option (if alternative childcare or other services are inadequate or too expensive), or a compromise they are more or less willing to make. But it is the way part-time jobs are designed, and the lack of public policy and financial support for women returning to the labour market, which leads to millions of part-time women workers wasting their skills and qualifications in the poor quality part-time jobs on offer.

Our research shows that women are not actively choosing to squander their talent, education or skills when they move into part-time employment. Nevertheless, this is the price many seem to pay when they move into part-time work.

Women's pay in part-time employment in Wakefield

As well as exploring why women do not always use their labour market experience and qualifications when they work in part-time jobs, we also wanted to find out about levels of pay in part-time jobs locally, what women think about their pay, and how employers set pay rates.

In 2005 the average hourly pay for part-time women workers in Wakefield was low, at £6.42 an hour (Table 3). This is important given the high percentage of women working part-time in the lowest paid occupations within the occupational structure. It means that tens of thousands of local women are working for very low pay. The average hourly pay for part-time women workers was much lower than that for both full-time women

workers and full-time male workers. Full-time women workers' average hourly pay was £8.79 an hour and full-time male workers' average hourly pay was £9.90.

There is, then, a large gap between men's and women's pay. One way to appreciate the significance of the gender pay gap is to compare average hourly pay for men working full-time, a typical working pattern for men in the prime years of their working lives, with average hourly pay for women working part-time, a typical working pattern for women in the prime years of their working lives. In 2005, using this comparison, women's average hourly earnings in part-time jobs were only around 60% of men's earnings in full-time jobs. In other words, for every pound these men earn, women earn only 60p.

A quarter of women part-time workers in Wakefield were earning less than £80 a week in 2005, and only one quarter of part-time women workers earned more than £186 a week (Table 4).

Table 3 Average gross weekly pay, hourly pay and hours worked

Area		Gross Weekly Pay (£)		Hourly pay (£)		Total hours worked (weekly)	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Wakefield	All	394.10	223.50	9.67	7.34	39.0	30.5
	Full-time	411.40	336.00	9.90	8.79	39.3	37.0
	Part-time	**	125.70	6.84	6.42	19.4	20.0
Yorkshire & The Humber	All	412.80	237.30	10.09	7.57	38.8	32.5
	Full-time	438.70	335.50	10.48	8.87	39.3	37.0
	Part-time	117.60	130.90	6.46	6.38	18.1	19.9
England	All	449.00	270.10	11.13	8.45	37.9	34.0
	Full-time	479.10	375.20	11.63	9.98	39.0	37.0
	Part-time	121.40	134.40	6.59	6.75	18.0	19.0

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2005

Note: ** Missing values are based on very small numbers of people and therefore cannot be included

Table 4 Average gross weekly pay – the top and bottom 25% of earners

		Full-time		Part-time	
		25% earn less than	25% earn more than	25% earn less than	25% earn more than
Wakefield	Men	305.30	559.40	**	**
	Women	246.00	508.60	79.20	186.50
Yorkshire & The Humber	Men	320.60	598.60	71.60	213.50
	Women	247.80	487.50	81.50	190.30
England	Men	342.20	675.60	74.50	207.30
	Women	275.30	536.60	82.50	202.40

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2005

Note: ** Missing values are based on very small numbers of people and therefore cannot be included

The women we interviewed in Wakefield were generally disappointed with the level of pay they received. They also felt that their jobs warranted higher pay levels. They pointed to the responsibilities associated with their jobs, and the complexity of the tasks involved.

The pay, £5.45 an hour, it's not enough for what we do, and what we're expected to do. It's definitely not enough.

I think the pay is rubbish. I sometimes think I'm mad because of what I used to earn. I do think it's appalling when I think about the money that is made by this company, and I think about how old we are. I knew that when I started, but it should be higher for the amount of work we do, it is quite demanding.

I think it's very low for the job we're expected to do. You have to know a lot, think on your feet, and there is quite a lot of responsibility.

Because of the low pay associated with part-time work, we asked managers to describe how they set wages in these jobs. None of the managers interviewed in Wakefield had been involved in the pay setting process, as this took place either at a more senior level or at a national level.

In our national study managers put forward three main explanations for low pay:

- The (low) pay offered is not a barrier to recruitment and thus there is no necessity to increase it. Those facing recruitment problems used other strategies, such as altering employment patterns, to attract staff.

There are a lot of people willing to undertake these jobs, so recruitment is not a massive problem.

- The pay offered is appropriate for the jobs being performed, and in line with that paid by local and national competitors for similar jobs.

The pay rates - I think the staff would like pay rates to be higher. I think they are competitive, to a degree. I think if you asked most people would they like to earn more, they'd say yes.

- The pay offered is appropriate for the people filling the jobs, characterised as working for 'pin money'.

There are a lot of people who want to work for pin money, so it's not difficult to recruit people.

These kinds of explanations for low pay suggest that employers will be reluctant to raise pay levels in the jobs that we have considered in this study.

The key concern was to keep wages in line with national sector competitors and with local labour market competitors. Wage increases year on year were generally kept in line with inflation, but employers also sought to keep their wages and wage increases in line with those of other employers.

In September we swap rates with (local branches of national retailers and) our local retailers. We'll have a little ring round, or they'll ring us... and we feed that back to Head Office. That's really how they do it. They contact comparative organisations, retailers and just make sure we're at the same kind of level. We tend to be a little bit higher, so we're quite proud of that.

However, future changes in the labour market may alter this. In Wakefield, where there is a relatively high employment rate for women and an expansion of part-time work, one of the managers explained that it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit part-time staff:

The pool is getting smaller and the calibre of recruits is dropping. It's partly to do with the rate of pay. People may not want to work for £5.45 an hour, when you can go to a call centre where it is a lot less demanding physically, for £7.50 an hour. And there are other retailers round about as well. I can't influence the pay rate, but I do feed this back to head office.

In the workplaces participating in the research, hourly pay ranged from £5.45 an hour to £8.00 an hour. These rates exclude enhancements that were payable in some workplaces for working unsocial hours or at weekends, and are drawn from the bottom of graded pay structures. These rates compare with the Minimum Adult Wage set in October 2005 of £5.05 an hour.

The jobs studied are essentially trapped in a low wage segment of the economy for as long as employers adhere to the wider societal evaluation of certain jobs as 'low paid jobs' and make only minor adjustments to wage rates year on year. Trade union intervention does not appear to be significant in countering this tendency.

Although, in some of the workplaces, the low paid jobs studied are held by both men and women, for women workers the consequences of low wages are more significant. For men, these jobs are undertaken largely by young employees, to boost their income while studying, or when nearing retirement. Thus they are usually peripheral as sources of male employment and

income (Francesconi and Gosling, 2005). For many women, in contrast, part-time, low paid work is a typical and long-term form of employment throughout their 30s, 40s, and 50s, the prime years of working life.

Job design: the construction of part-time jobs

In our study, we also examined the reasons employers gave for designing particular jobs as part-time jobs. We wanted to understand this so that we could begin to assess the extent to which part-time working could be extended into a wider range of jobs.

We found two distinct types of part-time job: 'task-based part-time jobs' and 'demand-based part-time jobs'.

- 'Task-based part-time jobs' are jobs or tasks which employers argue *can be completed* in less than a full working day.

'Task-based part-time jobs' are jobs which involve undertaking tasks which employers argue can be completed in a limited number of hours, i.e. in less than the full working day or less than a full working week. In this case, it is the nature of the task that is important in understanding the part-time employment. Jobs in this category include care assistant, cleaner, learning support worker, catering assistant and administrative worker. Employers calculate how long it takes to complete a task, e.g. to clean a hospital ward or care for an elderly person, and they arrange hours of work accordingly. Employers aim only to pay for the hours when the task is being carried out, and thus seek to avoid unnecessary wage costs when the task is not being performed.

We evaluate the job and we know what is needed to carry out the tasks. For example, we know if we need someone for 20 hours...From the business point of view you pay for what you want... You don't want to pay for a full-time post for a job that can be done part-time.

Part-time employment occurs where work tasks are required only at specific times of the day, week, or year. Hours of work can be finely tuned to avoid excess wage costs. Part-time jobs are constructed because the continuity that could be provided by a single individual occupying the position is regarded as unnecessary at this level of job. Although these kinds of jobs can be, and are, filled by employees on either full-time

contracts or on part-time contracts, they tend to be filled by women on part-time contracts. Custom and practice has led to a situation where, for example, home care work, learning support roles and cleaning are widely regarded as essentially jobs based on a part-time contract which will be filled by a woman. In workplaces or in areas of work in which 'task-based part-time jobs' predominate, part-time working is a dominant employment pattern. This pattern has tended to be stable over time and the workforces or areas of work tend to be female-dominated.

- 'Demand-based part-time jobs' are jobs or tasks which employers argue *only need to be carried out* during a part of the working day, or for which the hours of work required can be variable.

In 'demand-based part-time jobs' it is the *flow of business and the nature of the labour market* which are important in understanding the construction of part-time employment. Employers construct 'demand-based part-time jobs' for a range of reasons, including assisting recruitment and filling gaps in full-time cover. However, people doing 'demand-based part-time jobs' tend to work alongside people on full-time contracts in the same jobs. Jobs in this category include checkout operator, production and assembly worker in manufacturing, library assistant, security worker and bar worker. These jobs are filled by employees on part-time contracts, and there is often a mixture of men and women occupying these jobs.

We employ part-time workers because it gives us more flexibility as an employer. We can change their hours of work.

In workplaces or in areas of work in which 'demand-based part-time jobs' have been constructed, the balance between part-time and full-time jobs can be quite fluid. Men tend to occupy a higher proportion of demand-based than task-based part-time jobs. In these jobs, therefore, the association between women and part-time work is less strong. Demand-based part-time jobs are often designed in order to fill shortfalls in full-time cover or to boost numbers of staff at particular times of the day, week or year and are thus held by an especially vulnerable workforce.

Understanding the basis on which employers design part-time jobs is important. In many workplaces, occupations and industries in which

there are large numbers of women part-time workers employers have specific reasons for using part-time staff and for the much greater use of part-time working in low paid jobs than in higher paid jobs.

This is illustrated further by considering managers' views about the advantages and disadvantages of part-time jobs.

Managers outlined a range of advantages of part-time employment. Part-time employees offered low cost overtime, were easier to cover when absent and, in workplaces with large numbers of part-timers, created a bigger pool of labour, and thus a more flexible workforce. The kinds of advantages they highlighted are those that might be associated with low paid workers who are regarded as replaceable.

If you have someone who is full-time and they are off sick, it's more difficult to fill those hours. But if you have two part-time people the other part-time person will normally be flexible and make up those hours.

Managers also outlined some disadvantages of part-time employment. Paradoxically, part-time workers were sometimes regarded as 'inflexible'. Managers argued that this was because of their commitments outside work or because of the way in which the tax and benefit system operated which, they claimed, encouraged some part-time workers to define the limits of their hours of work.

People come into the job because of other responsibilities, so sometimes they can't be very flexible in an emergency.

Senior level part-time jobs

In the research we found that while in the workplaces studied there were individual women working part-time in senior or management positions, part-time employment was generally restricted to specific jobs at lower levels within workplaces. As we have shown, employers have specific reasons for designing particular jobs as part-time jobs. In many workplaces, the balance between part-time and full-time staff remains much the same year on year. Line managers often replaced 'like with like', part-time with part-time and full-time with full-time, maintaining existing patterns of employment over long periods of time. This was changing, however.

I think that used to be the case, but we are moving away from that now. If you had somebody who worked 10 til 2, Monday to Friday and they left, they wouldn't necessarily replace them 10 to 2, Monday to Friday. We don't necessarily replace like with like. We encourage managers to look at it in a different way, and they are given the tools to help them do that, and now and again we re-rota a whole department.

Yet opportunities to work part-time in senior or management level jobs were limited. Senior jobs were usually full-time, unless an existing member of staff had negotiated a reduced-hours contract. In our national research, managers were generally resistant to the idea of part-time working at the senior level, arguing that the content of senior jobs required a full-time worker. Employing part-time workers in these posts would, it was believed, lead to a situation where uncompleted tasks would fall to other managers, and other workers, to complete.

The limited availability of part-time jobs at a senior level restricted the opportunities for part-time workers to progress within organisations and constrained the job opportunities for well-qualified, experienced women looking for senior level part-time work on the open labour market.

Despite this, two of the managers interviewed in Wakefield were keen to see more part-time jobs at senior levels. One of the managers explained that to achieve this would require the will to bring about change, and a new conceptualisation of the content of senior jobs:

If it's a key role and a unique role, there is the problem of continuity. But it has been done, to have two people doing it. The difficulties are not insurmountable, but it makes it harder. It's because of the case work. It's difficult to start something and then for someone else to take over. But it's not insurmountable - I don't think anything is impossible really. It's difficult to conceptualise it when you are talking about 30 hours, but I'm sure most jobs could be done in that amount of time.

Systems could be put in place to ensure arrangements for the completion of tasks and to ensure continuity.

It is difficult for the team, so there needs to be a system in place to cover the decisions that need to be made in the absence of that individual. I think we have got a lot to learn from organisations that operate on a 24 hour basis, because they've got managers that are not in all the time. You have different managers coming in at different times. So

they work out other ways of communicating than we do in an organisation that is 9 to 5.

However, attempts to change the balance of part-time/full-time at senior levels would be met with resistance in most organisations. This is because the overwhelming view within organisations was that part-time jobs were only suitable at the lower level.

I'd like to see a climate where part-time is encouraged at all levels, and where it wasn't seen as negative. But it is. It's all linked to the long hours culture.

The introduction of the right to request flexible working for some employees (under the *Employment Act 2002*) has opened up this issue in workplaces, and is encouraging new ways of thinking about patterns of work. This is opening up a debate about whether the full-time/part-time balance which persists in some workplaces is an outcome of tradition and inertia, or whether there really are barriers to creating a more even balance between part-time and full-time jobs, at every level, in every workplace.

Recommendations

We estimate that over 50% of part-time women workers in Wakefield employed in low paid, part-time jobs are working below their proven past potential in the labour market. This is a waste of women's talents and experience, and a waste of the education and training invested in them.

The issue of women working below potential in part-time jobs also raises questions about the efficiency of the local labour market. Although there are shortages of skilled labour, we continue to under-use the skills of local women.

The under-use of women's labour market experience also has implications for women themselves. It affects their quality of life and the standard of living of their families.

There are ways to address this problem.

We recommend that employers:

- Adopt a more strategic approach to the design of jobs and the replacement of employees**

In many organisations the replacement of jobs takes place at the line manager level. This

can lead to a situation where job design is static and traditional, as some line managers tend to replace like with like; part-time with part-time and full-time with full time. A more strategic approach would place the emphasis on skills and work outputs rather than working time.

- Rethink the value of part-time working and part-time employees.**

Part-time jobs are currently seen by employers as having very distinct and limited purposes within a workforce, i.e. where tasks are time-limited or where the size of the workforce needs to expand or contract to meet changes in demand for products or services. Part-time working can have a value beyond these limited purposes.

- Recognise the wider organisational benefits of part-time working**

Part-time working has additional value as a tool for enhancing employee retention, and can make an organisation the 'employer of choice' for skilled and qualified women who do not wish to work full-time.

- Take a risk in opening up part-time opportunities at all levels**

Organisations are concerned that senior level jobs cannot be performed on a part-time basis. But organisations which have taken this risk are enjoying the benefits of a wider pool of labour, find part-time workers have high productivity (Cooper 2005) and report that good job applicants are choosing them because of the flexibility they offer (Yeandle et al 2006).

- Offer senior and management posts on a part-time basis when recruiting on the open labour market**

Many organisations are willing to offer flexible or part-time working patterns to existing employees who they wish to retain. But this does not help skilled women who are searching for work. Only by offering more part-time jobs on the open labour market can we fully use women's talents and skills.

- Address the long hours of work associated with senior level jobs**

Some organisations are losing skilled and talented women because of the difficulties they face in balancing their home lives and their working lives.

- **Ensure that part-time workers can progress at work**

In many organisations part-time workers are required to work full-time to secure promotion.

We also recommend that local authorities and their partners:

- **Acknowledge the waste of local women's talents and skills.**

As long as 52% of local women are working below their past potential in the labour market, the local economy is losing out. At the same time investment in the training and education of many local women is being squandered. By addressing this we could improve the standing of part-time workers as well as raising the status of part-time work.

- **Adopt good practice within the local authority**

The local authority has an opportunity to lead the way in this field, by opening up a wider range of jobs to part-time working.

- **Encourage their employer partners to 'take a risk'**

The local authority, in its engagement with other local employers, has an opportunity to use this new evidence-based research about Wakefield to raise the local problem of women working below their potential, and encourage local employers to open up more opportunities for part-time working at all levels within their organisations.

- **Work with partners to extend and advertise the training and education opportunities to women returners**

Women returning to work after an absence often lack knowledge of the educational and training opportunities open to them. Some cannot find the support and training they need. More could be done to reach out to women in the places they go, in schools and community centres and to inform them of the support and training available

- **Work with partners to develop financial support to women returners seeking to upgrade their skills and qualifications**

Women have to draw on their own financial resources to upgrade their skills after an absence from work. There is scope to offer

women more financial support so that they can regain their labour market status.

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Appendix 1 Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets(GELLM)

The *Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets* project was funded, between September 2003 and August 2006, by a core European Social Fund grant to Professor Sue Yeandle and her research team at the *Centre for Social Inclusion*, Sheffield Hallam University. The award was made from within ESF Policy Field 5 Measure 2, 'Gender and Discrimination in Employment'. The grant was supplemented with additional funds and resources provided by a range of partner agencies, notably the Equal Opportunities Commission, the TUC, and 12 English local authorities.

The GELLM project output comprises:

- new statistical analysis of district-level labour market data, led by Dr Lisa Buckner, producing separate **Gender Profiles** of the local labour markets of each of the participating local authorities (Buckner, Tang and Yeandle 2004, 2005, 2006) - available from the local authorities concerned and at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi
- 6 **Local Research Studies**, each involving between three and six of the project's local authority partners. Locality and Synthesis reports of these studies, published spring-summer 2006 are available at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi. Details of other publications and presentations relating to the GELLM programme are also posted on this website.
 1. *Working below potential: women and part-time work*, led by Dr Linda Grant and part-funded by the EOC (published by the EOC in 2005)
 2. *Connecting women with the labour market*, led by Dr Linda Grant
 3. *Ethnic minority women and access to the labour market*, led by Bernadette Stiell
 4. *Women's career development in the local authority sector in England* led by Dr Cinnamon Bennett
 5. *Addressing women's poverty: local labour market initiatives* led by Karen Escott
 6. *Local challenges in meeting demand for domiciliary care* led from autumn 2005 by Professor Sue Yeandle and prior to this by Anu Suokas

The GELLM Team

Led by Professor Sue Yeandle, the members of the GELLM research team at the *Centre for Social Inclusion* are: Dr Cinnamon Bennett, Dr Lisa Buckner, Ian Chesters (administrator), Karen Escott, Dr Linda Grant, Christopher Price, Lucy Shipton, Bernadette Stiell, Anu Suokas (until autumn 2005), and Dr Ning Tang. The team is grateful to Dr Pamela Fisher for her contribution to the project in 2004, and for the continuing advice and support of Dr Chris Gardiner.

The GELLM Partnership

The national partners supporting the GELLM project are the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC. The project's 12 local authority partners are: Birmingham City Council, the London Borough of Camden, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Leicester City Council, Newcastle City Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Somerset County Council, the London Borough of Southwark, Thurrock Council, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and West Sussex County Council. The North East Coalition of Employers has also provided financial resources via Newcastle City Council. The team is grateful for the support of these agencies, without which the project could not have been developed. The GELLM project engaged Professor Damian Grimshaw, Professor Ed Fieldhouse (both of Manchester University) and Professor Irene Hardill (Nottingham Trent University), as external academic advisers to the project team, and thanks them for their valuable advice and support.

Appendix 2 Research methods

The study of part-time work discussed here has involved the collection of original qualitative data from individual women working part-time, and senior managers in workplaces in the public and private service sectors. The field work for the study was conducted during 2004 and 2005. In addition, the research has involved extensive analysis of statistical data, including the 2001 Census.

In Wakefield, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers in the participating workplaces. These interviews explored a range of issues including: levels of pay and pay structures for part-time workers; special factors involved in the determination of part-time pay; the process of pay determination; employers' perspectives on pay rates; the nature of the part-time jobs; the decision-making process involved in the construction of part-time jobs; employers' reasons for the use of part-time employment and the employment of women in these jobs; the determination of rates of pay; the significance of the local labour market; and issues associated with the under-utilisation of women's skills and experience.

Managers in participating workplaces were asked to distribute a questionnaire to all part-time women workers in the workplace or, in large workplaces, to up to 50 part-time women workers. The completed questionnaires were used to identify women who were working below their potential, in terms of qualifications, previous labour market experience and current study and training. Follow-up, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with a sample of women workers, with interviews taking place at their workplaces and during working hours. The employee interviews explored a range of issues including: levels of pay; hours of work; satisfaction with pay and hours; and the motivating factors involved in women working below their potential (including domestic circumstances, hours of work, expectations and pressures from family and friends, local labour market conditions, transport, and the tax and benefit system).

Workplace One provides social care services. It employs 2,470 people, of whom 86% are women. 63% of those women work part-time. 93% of the women part-time workers work between 16 and 30 hours a week.

Workplace Two provides educational services. It employs 599 people of whom 68% are women. 47% of those women work part-time. 88% of part-time women workers work between 16 and 30 hours a week.

Workplace Three is a retail organisation. We do not have exact details of the workforce in this organisation. Approximately 75% of the workforce works part-time and the majority of the workforce is women.

Of the 12 women who took part in a face-to-face interview in Wakefield: 1 was aged 25-34, 7 were aged 35-49 and 4 were aged 50+. 11 of the women were living with their partner or husband and 1 was living with friends. 8 of the women had no dependent children; the remaining four had either 1 or 2 dependent children. 2 of the women were caring for elderly relatives. All the interviewees were White British women. 2 of the women held an additional job. 7 of the 12 women said they would like to be working in a different job which used more of their skills, qualifications and experience within the next three years.

Of the 82 women who complete questionnaires in Wakefield, 4 were aged 16-24, 15 were aged 25-34, 34 were aged 35-49 and 29 were 50+.

Appendix 3 Additional data on women's employment in Wakefield

Table A1 Economic activity of women and men of working age

		Economically active	Employed part-time	Employed full-time	Self-employed part-time	Self-employed full-time
Wakefield	Men (100,061)	79 (79,115)	3 (3,236)	59 (59,312)	1 (1,151)	8 (8,463)
	Women (93,662)	69 (64,953)	27 (24,955)	34 (31,481)	1 (1,301)	2 (1,809)
Yorkshire & Humber	Men	80	4	57	2	10
	Women	70	26	33	2	2
England	Men	82	3	58	2	12
	Women	71	23	36	2	3

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Table A2 Employed women who work part-time by age %s

Age	Wakefield	Yorkshire & The Humber	England
16-24	24	24	20
25-34	39	38	32
35-49	50	49	46
50-59	52	52	47
16-59	44	44	39

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

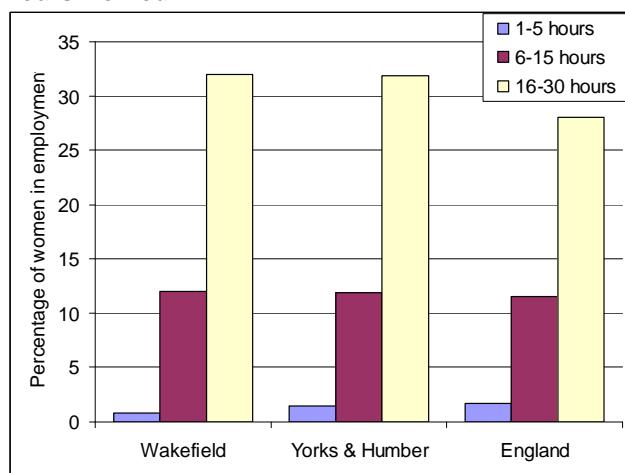
Table A3 Women who are part-time employees as a percentage of all employees, by ethnicity (showing percentage of working age women who are employees (FT and PT) in italics) %s

Ethnicity	Wakefield	Yorkshire & The Humber	England
White British	44	61	40
White Irish	36	56	32
White Other	39	51	27
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	37	39	31
Mixed White & Black African	**	**	28
Mixed White & Asian	31	45	28
Other Mixed groups	15	45	27
Indian	31	38	29
Pakistani	27	16	38
Bangladeshi	**	**	15
Other Asian	15	49	31
Black Caribbean	44	60	25
Black African	21	53	25
Other Black	**	**	28
Chinese	34	45	26
Other ethnic group	27	62	27
ALL	44	60	59

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003 and 2001 Census Commissioned Tables, Crown Copyright 2004.

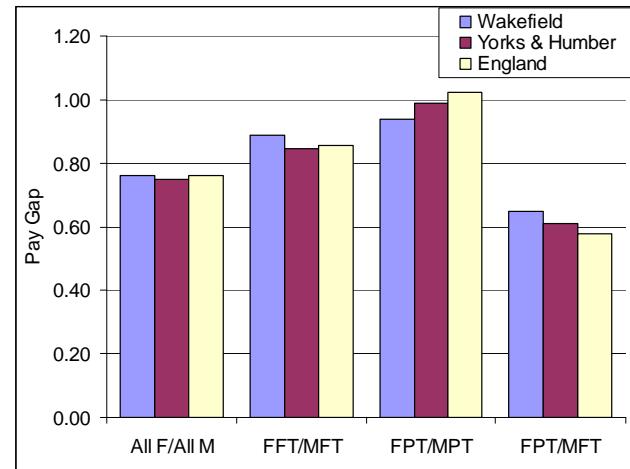
Note: ** Data are only included for populations of 50 or more women

Figure A4 Women working part-time by number of hours worked



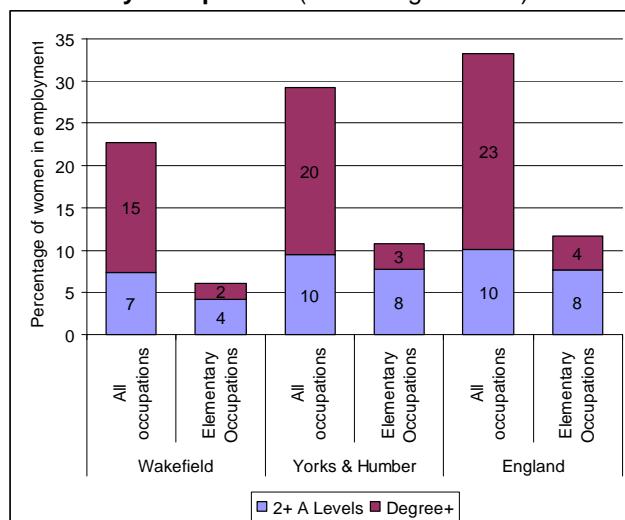
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure A6 Pay ratios – Hourly pay



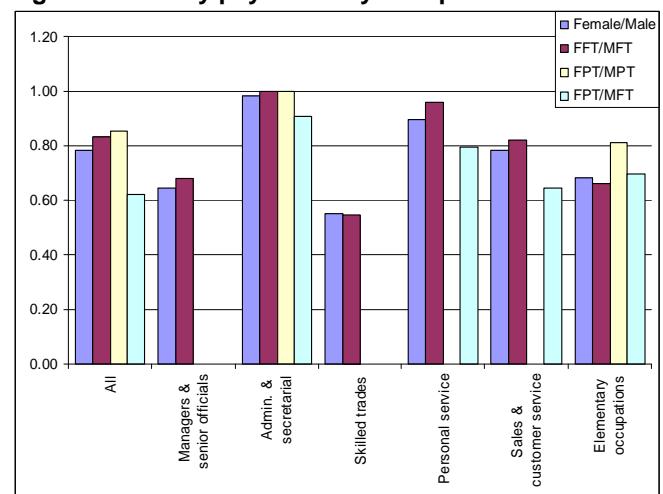
Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2005

Figure A5 Qualified women employed in elementary occupations (women aged 16-74)



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

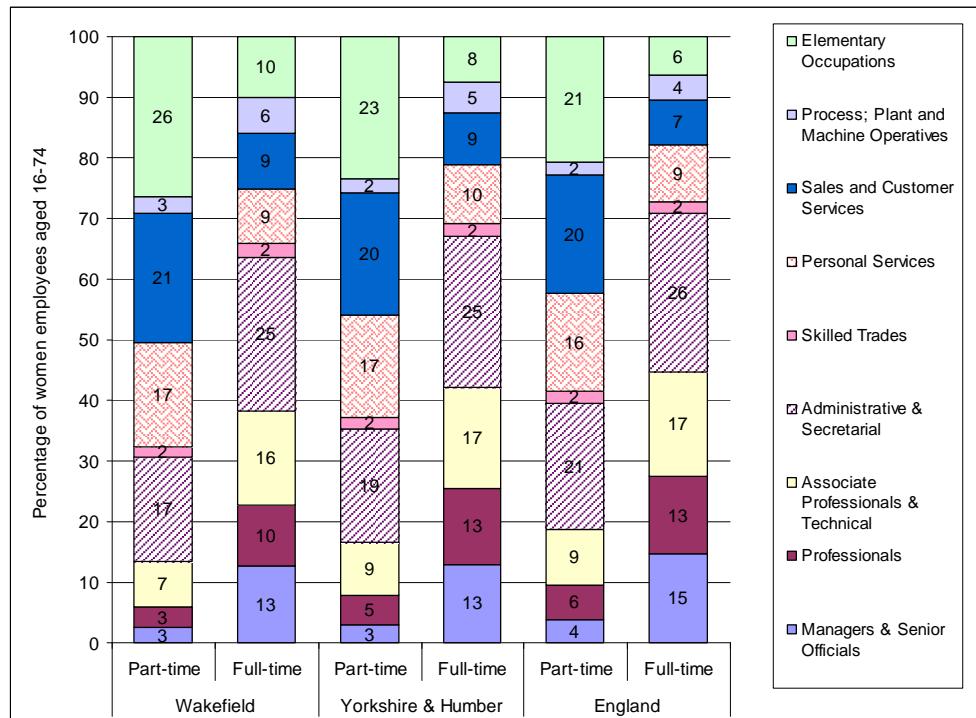
Figure A7 Hourly pay ratios by occupation



Source: New Earnings Survey, 2003

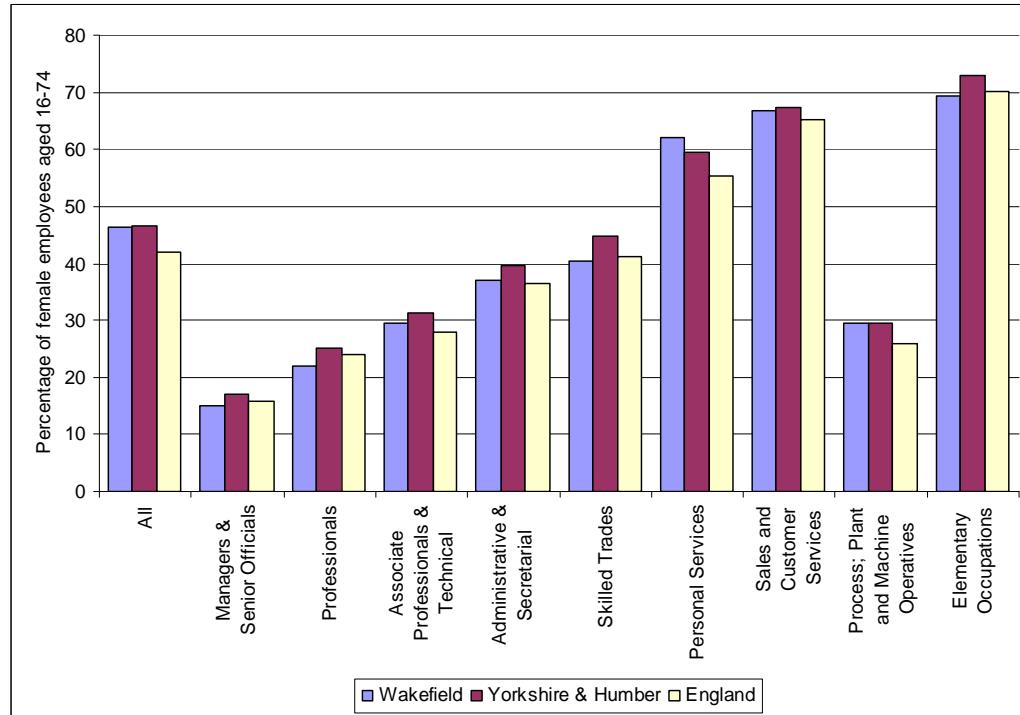
Note: ** Missing bars are due to small numbers working in particular occupations

Figure A8 Female employees by occupation and FT/PT employment status (women aged 16-74)



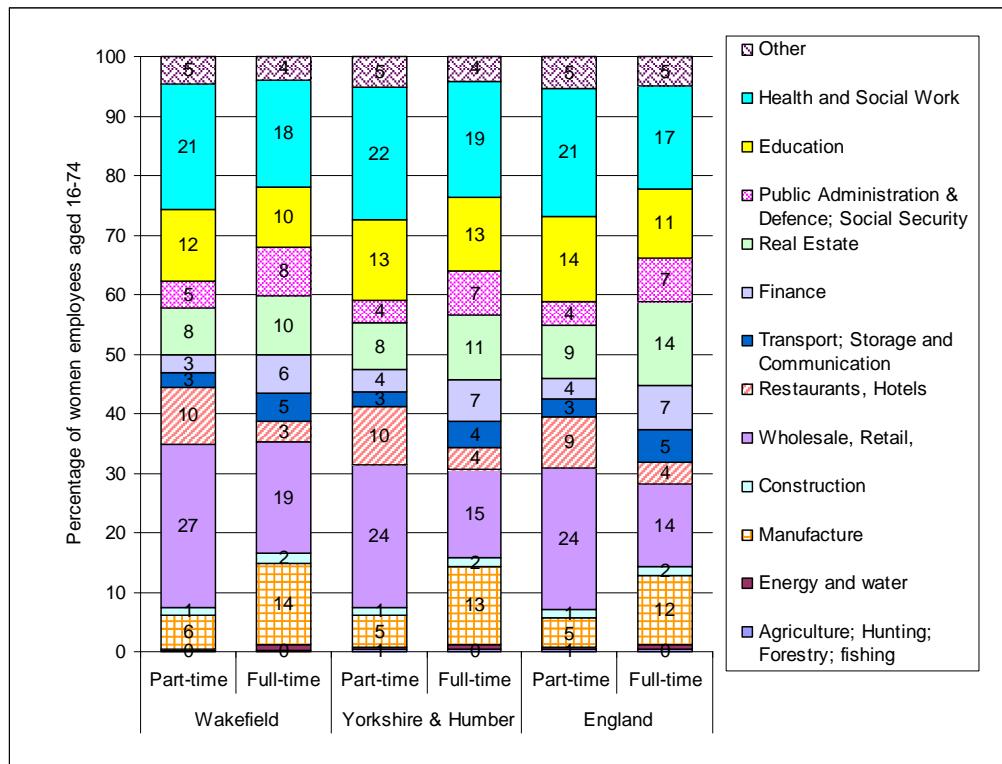
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Figure A9 Female employees who work part-time, selected occupational groups (women aged 16-74)



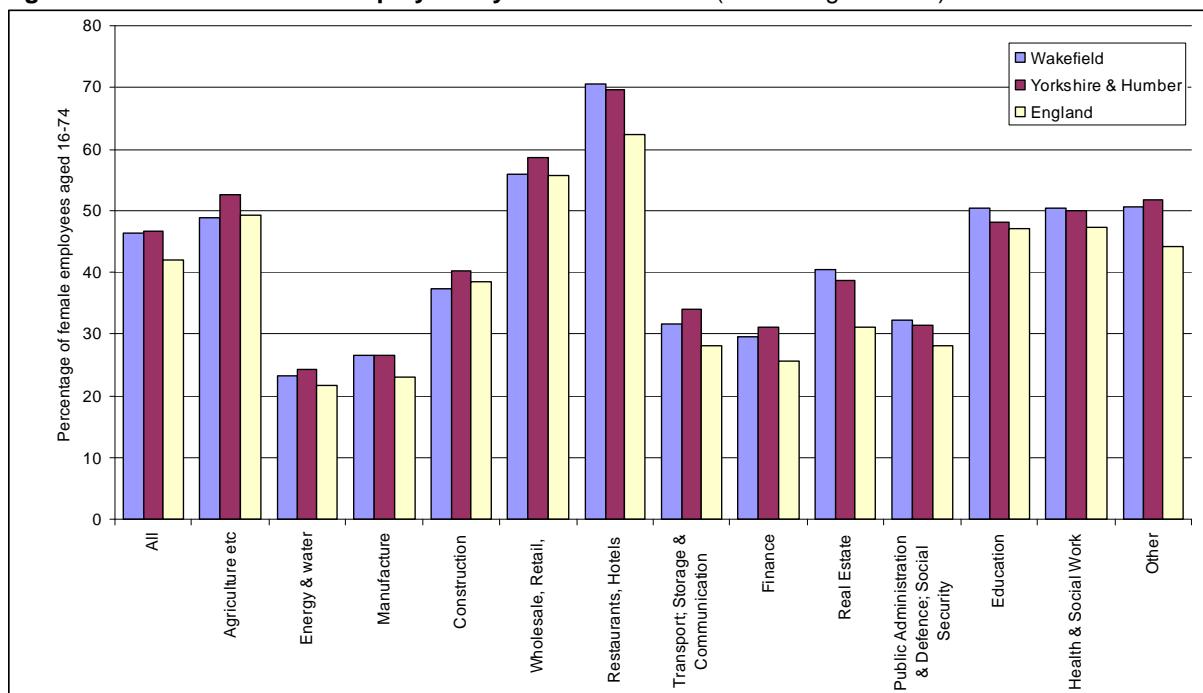
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Figure A10 Part-time female employees by industry and employment status (women aged 16 – 74)



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Figure A11 Part-time female employees by industrial sector (women aged 16-74)



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