

Working Below Potential: Women and Part-time Work

Synthesis Report

Linda Grant
Sue Yeandle
Lisa Buckner

Centre for Social Inclusion



Sheffield
Hallam University



CONTENTS

Preface	ii
The GELLM Partnership and Research Programme	ii
The GELLM Synthesis Reports	iii
The GELLM Research Studies	iii
1 Introduction	1
The study	1
The policy context	2
Part-time work and part-time workers	3
2 The Growing Importance of Part-time Employment	5
3 Working Below Potential	14
Why women work below their potential	15
Manager's perspectives on part-time workers	19
How women experience working below their potential	20
The pay-setting process	23
Summary	24
4 The Design of Part-time Jobs	26
Types of part-time jobs	26
Task-based part-time jobs	26
Demand-based part-time jobs	28
Advantages of part-time employment: managers' views	29
Disadvantages of part-time employment: managers' views	30
Part-time workers: manager's views	31
Senior-level part-time jobs	31
Trade Union perspectives	34
Summary	37
5 Policy Messages	39
References	42
Appendix 1 Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets	44
Appendix 2 Research Methods	45

PREFACE

The GELLM Partnership and Research Programme

Between 2003 and 2006, the **Gender and Employment in Local Labour Markets (GELLM) Programme**¹ explored an extensive range of factors affecting the labour market situation of women in 11 local labour markets in England.

This unique programme of research, perhaps the most extensive study and analysis ever undertaken of the local labour market situation of women in England, was developed in a close and active partnership with 11 local authorities, and with support, guidance and additional investment from two national agencies, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC). Working closely with its 13 external partners, the GELLM project team, comprising an experienced and diverse group of social scientists (with expertise in sociology, social policy, urban and regional studies, social statistics, and gender studies) produced 12 **Gender Profiles of Local Labour Markets** (Buckner et al 2004, 2005), each presenting a comprehensive picture of gender-disaggregated local labour market statistics². The team then went on to develop, in 2004-5, six new **Local Research Studies**, each carried out in parallel fashion in up to six of the local labour markets which had been profiled, and designed and implemented in close collaboration with local policy-makers. The evidence from these studies was reported at the local level in 31 **Locality Reports** published (in spring 2006) with the support of the local authorities concerned, and disseminated in each of the English regions in a series of successful local events³.

Carrying out this research in partnership with a wide range of local authorities over a three year period was important in a number of ways:

First, it enabled us to focus our studies on topics which were of interest not only as subjects for academic study, but also as issues of major policy relevance and current concern to our partners. We debated the topics we should explore (and the precise focus of each study) with each of our partners in meetings of the GELLM *Regional Project Groups* (established by each local authority partner to support the project at local level), in consultations with the GELLM *National Advisory Group* (which comprised all our local and national partners, and also had the benefit of three external academic advisers with relevant expertise⁴), and within the research team. This led to the decision to develop 6 multi-method *Local Research Studies*, with each local authority partner able to participate in up to three of the studies.

Second, it enabled us to design the studies so that they would draw on local intelligence and expertise about the issues involved. This was particularly important in those studies where there was thought to be existing research, or a body of knowledge about our topic, which had not previously been drawn together into a single report (and most notably in our study of ethnic minority women and their local labour markets).

Third, our partnerships made the process of securing research access (to organisations, documentation, agencies and individuals) both efficient and effective. Our various partners thus assisted in identifying suitable venues for focus groups, in contacting agencies and individuals who could provide a practitioner or policy-maker perspective at the local level, and supported us in accessing interviewees, workshop facilitators and the additional resources needed to support this type of research.

Finally, the partnership ensured that this body of research was not merely 'policy relevant', but achieved our wider aims for the GELLM programme. These were: to produce an *evidence base fit for the purposes of local authorities* and their partners; to deliver the research in a way which was 'policy engaged' and recognised the realities and challenges of addressing the entrenched local labour market problems which underpin women's employment disadvantage; and to conclude the partnership, at the end of the three year

¹ The programme was based in the *Centre for Social Inclusion* at Sheffield Hallam University, and directed by Professor Sue Yeandle. It was made possible by a large core grant from the *European Social Fund*.

² The *Gender Profiles* were launched at events hosted in each locality by our local authority partners in 2004-5, and were attended by a total of approximately 800 people.

³ A list of the 31 *Locality Reports* and details of the local dissemination events can be found at www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi.

⁴ Prof. Ed Fieldhouse and Prof. Damian Grimshaw, both of the University of Manchester, and Prof. Irene Hardill of Nottingham Trent University.

period, by supporting our local authority partners to *mainstream gender equality* in their planning, operations and strategic policy-making in relation to local labour market issues. Our Locality Reports were presented at well-attended conferences and workshops organised by our local authority partners in spring/summer 2006. These events were used to launch the reports, to debate the new evidence and recommendations, and to consider what actions should follow. Across the country, over 500 people attended these events, and at most of these meetings clear commitments were made to give further detailed consideration to the research findings, and to explore ways of addressing the issues identified at the local level.

The GELLM Synthesis Reports

This *Synthesis Report, Working Below Potential: Women and Part-time Work*, draws together the findings from the local research study of women's part-time employment in low paid occupations, which was carried out in Camden, Leicester, Thurrock (Essex), Trafford, Wakefield and West Sussex (Crawley and Mid Sussex). It provides a comparative analysis of the issues associated with the under-use of part-time women workers' labour market skills, and experience and their qualifications in 6 local labour markets, and draws on the wider body of GELLM research of which it forms a part. As indicated above, it is one of the 6 GELLM *Synthesis Reports* published in summer 2006, and completes the study output as funded under the original research award.

In the 6 *Synthesis Reports*, we show how both gender and locality play out in the way local labour markets operate, and identify features which affect women's labour market situation in similar ways across 11 very different local labour markets. We also show that in some cases, particular local labour market circumstances act as quite locally specific constraints and opportunities for the women living and working within them. In each case we explore the diversity of the female working age population, and take account of changes and developments which have affected the structure of the local labour market. In our analysis we have tried to tease out those factors which are within the sphere of influence of local authorities and their local partners - employers, trade unions, voluntary sector organisations and publicly funded agencies – as well as to identify those policy issues which require attention at the national level if local agencies are to achieve their objectives.

Because they offer a comparative analysis of data relating to different local labour markets, our *Synthesis Reports* present the research findings in ways which will be of particular interest to national and regional agencies with responsibilities for developing effective labour market policy, and for ensuring that the labour market operates in an inclusive manner, making full and fair use of the talents of both women and men across the whole economy. The research therefore contains messages of crucial importance to:

- those charged with seeking effective ways of **tackling local pockets of 'worklessness'**
- those responsible for achieving a high level of **productivity** and making effective use of national **investments in education, skills and training**
- employers and trade unions seeking to create **modern workplaces** which can attract and retain staff and support employees to **achieve their full potential**
- employers and service providers concerned about **labour and skills shortages**

The GELLM Research Studies

We developed the *GELLM programme* in a partnership in which all parties shared the view that local labour markets should aim to offer women (and men) equitable access to employment opportunities and a fair chance to realise their full potential as labour force participants - and that they should assist those who desire to enter the labour market to do so. Across the entire programme we have therefore:

- i) explored the situation of women outside the labour market who wished to enter it (Grant et al 2006a; Escott et al 2006j)

- ii) examined the particular situation of women from minority ethnic groups (Stiell et al 2006)
- iii) looked in detail at women's employment in the local authority sector (Bennett et al 2006)
- iv) studied the situation of women in low-paid jobs and examined why so many part-time women workers are employed 'below their potential' (Escott et al 2006; Grant et al 2006b)
- v) explored the recruitment, retention and workforce development policies of employers in the highly feminised domiciliary care sector (Yeandle et al 2006)
- vi) through the **Gender Profiles** (Buckner et al 2004, 2005), provided the fullest possible statistical evidence for our topic of enquiry, making extensive use of the 2001 Census and other official statistics.

As we pointed out in the introduction to the **Gender Profiles**, given the importance of two critical factors - the gendered nature of labour force participation and the local nature of most employment - it is remarkable that previously so little attention has been given in analysis of labour force participation and behaviour to gender-disaggregated data at the sub-regional level. We believe the output from the GELLM Programme represents a major step forward in developing evidence-based policy in this field, makes it quite clear that such data is available, and shows that new evidence-based understanding of entrenched labour market problems and how to tackle them can be secured through a gender-sensitive approach to labour market analysis.

Box 1 Policy Relevance of the GELLM Research Programme

When we began the study, we could not know quite how close the fit between our research and new developments in public policy would be.

During the research period:

- The **Women and Work Commission** reported its findings (in 2006).
- The Prime Minister commissioned two major **Equality Reviews** (reporting in 2006).
- The **Equality Act 2006**, setting up the *Commission for Equality and Human Rights* and placing a new duty on public bodies to promote gender equality (from 2007), achieved the royal assent.
- The *Equal Opportunities Commission* conducted **new GFIs**⁵ into:
 - ◆ **occupational segregation**
 - ◆ **pregnancy discrimination**
 - ◆ **flexible and part-time working**
 - ◆ **ethnic minority women at work**
- Important new developments occurred at the national level, affecting policy on:
 - ◆ skills and productivity - **The Leitch Review of Skills 2005**
 - ◆ access to the labour market - DWP Green Paper 2006 **A New Deal for Welfare: empowering people to work**
 - ◆ the delivery of health and social care - DoH White Paper **Our Health, our Care, our Say: a new direction for community services**
 - ◆ work and family life - **Work and Families Act 2006**

⁵ GFIs are the 'General Formal Investigations' which the *Equal Opportunities Commission* has statutory powers to conduct under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*.

1 INTRODUCTION

The study

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. The study 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. Further research, by the Equal Opportunities Commission, based on some of our findings reported earlier (Grant et al 2005), has shown the scale of this problem. Nationally, 2.8 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 waste of women's potential is occurring, and developing policy to address it, are important not only for women themselves but also for those concerned with efficiency in local economies. This is why government at national and local level, and their partners, have an interest in the issue of why women are working in jobs below their potential. The Government, local authorities and their partners play a key role in developing efficient local labour markets. They also need to reap the optimum benefits from public investments in education and training. This involves making productive use of the skills and talents of local people. Yet when the resources invested in women's education and training are being wasted and over a half of part-time women workers are employed in jobs below their proven past potential, labour markets are not working as efficiently as they could be. Employers seeking to maximise productivity also have an interest in this issue. If women are employed below their potential, local employers are not making the most productive use of their entire workforces.

In order to understand why women do not always use all of their qualifications and labour market skills when they work in part-time jobs we sought to explore:

- Why women who are working 'below their potential' make specific decisions in relation to the labour market.
- The context in which individual women make these decisions.
- Women's experience of, and views about, working in jobs 'below their potential'.
- Trade union perspectives on part-time work and women 'working below their potential'.
- Why employers design certain jobs as part-time.
- How employers set pay and the factors they take into account when setting pay.

Our research has involved a survey of women working in 22 workplaces in six localities in England (Camden, Leicester, Thurrock, Trafford, Wakefield and West Sussex) during 2004 and 2005 (see Appendix 2 for details of the participating workplaces). These workplaces were located in industries in the public and private sectors: health, education, social care, sports, cultural services, hotels and restaurants, retail, transport and communication, food and engineering. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with senior managers in these workplaces, and 333 women completed questionnaires. 89 part-time women workers who were 'working below their potential' were interviewed face-to-face. (See Appendix 2 for details of the women interviewed). Focus group discussions were held with 29 Trade Union representatives in three discussion groups (See Appendix 2 for details). The research also involved analysis of statistical data on employment and a detailed look at part-time employment.

There are a range of reasons why we chose part-time employment as a focus for our research. Part-time jobs have been growing in importance as a form of employment across the country. With part-time employment now representing 31% of jobs and 48% of all women's jobs England⁶, the quality of the part-time jobs on offer has major implications, not only for women's economic well-being and their quality of life, but also for the prosperity of local economies.

⁶ Source: Annual Business Inquiry 2004 via NOMIS, ONS, Crown Copyright.

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 women and their families during years when they may wish to develop their careers or need to maximise their earnings.

The policy context

The research reported here has important implications for a number of issues already high on the public policy agenda. Here we set out some key aspects of this policy context.

Facing both a shrinking working age population⁷ 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 the growth of full-time jobs filled by women has been much less strong than the growth in part-time jobs in the economies we have studied; most of the new jobs being created are part-time. If more women 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 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.

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 are 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 employer⁸. 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

⁷ Although the numbers of people of working age in England is projected to grow between 2003 and 2028 by approximately 1.6 million, the share of the total population represented by working age people is expected to decline over this period (from 66% to 62%).

⁸ The Work and Families Act 2006 extends these to carers of older, sick and disabled people. These rights provide for a 'right to request' and the request can be refused by employers.

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 seeks 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.

Part-time work and part-time workers

The growth and significance of part-time work in the UK and other western economies has encouraged considerable research into the nature of part-time work and the characteristics of part-time workers. One theme in this research concerns the association between low pay and part-time work. Part-time jobs are concentrated in the less skilled, lowest paid occupations and sectors of the industrial structure. Women experience a 'pay penalty' for working part-time and the prevalence of women working part-time in the UK economy is a key factor affecting the gender pay gap (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2001; Harkness, 2002; Olsen and Walby, 2004; Francesconi and Gosling, 2005).

A second important theme in the examination of part-time employment is the tendency for women to under-use their skills and qualifications in the labour market. One aspect of this is that, after childbirth, some women move into jobs which are at a lower level than their previous jobs. Blackwell (2001) has explored this downward mobility and identified the importance, in explaining this loss of status, of the shift that many women make from full-time to part-time work. Similarly, Manning and Petrongolo (2004) explain how women in Britain who change their hours of work from full-time to part-time on average make a 'downward occupational move'. Thus many part-time women workers are failing to use their full range of skills and qualifications in the labour market.

Existing research reveals in broad terms why women work part-time. These reasons include: domestic circumstances; the lack of affordable, accessible childcare; the demands of caring responsibilities; level of educational qualifications; and labour market conditions and opportunities. These circumstances and conditions operate as constraints on women in the labour market. Part-time working is also associated with specific stages in the life cycle. In particular, many women with young children find that only by taking part-time employment can they balance the responsibilities and demands of family life and work. Having said this, there is considerable disagreement concerning why women work part-time. Recent debate has been fuelled by Hakim's (1996; 2000) challenging 'preference theory', which argues, *inter alia*, that most part-time work is voluntary and most part-time workers have a specific 'home-centred' orientation to work, distinct from that of full-time workers.

There is an excellent examination of the range of issues involved in the contemporary debate in Warren and Walters (1998). Warren and Walters reveal the limitations of what they term the 'part-time/full-time dichotomy'. In particular, they critique its tendency to divide women into two separate categories of 'home-centred' and 'employment-centred'. In their analysis, it is the variety of potential reasons why women work part-time which matters, yet, as Walsh (1999) argues, why women work part-time has been an under-researched issue. The growing evidence of involuntary part-time employment, alongside voluntary part-time employment and contemporary research pointing to the importance of diversity in the characteristics of

women, including household circumstances, class background and stage in the life cycle, complicates any straightforward analysis of preference (McRae, 2003; Fagan, 2001).

Thus the nature and extent of 'choice' facing women in the labour market has been questioned. McRae (2003) has argued that women make their 'choices' in a context which includes both each woman's sense of herself as a woman, worker or mother and the gender relations within families, all of which can affect women's decisions about their 'appropriate' labour market location. In addition, economic conditions and the social support available to working women create a context which can limit women's decisions about work. Thus, for example, the nature of job opportunities and the availability of childcare are important factors conditioning women's choice. Fagan (2001) has shown how women's orientations to work can change over the life course as well as in relation to changing employment conditions and domestic circumstances. Furthermore, social policies provide a framework within which women's orientations to work are shaped.

Employers' employment strategies and wider economic circumstances are also significant elements in the tendency for women to work part-time. Some specific benefits for employers can arise from the construction of part-time jobs and the employment of part-time workers (Warren and Walters, 1998). In particular, part-time work has been associated with high levels of productivity, flexibility in terms of the deployment of labour and cost savings in comparison with full-time jobs. Employers have been shown to be influenced in the construction of part-time jobs by prevailing attitudes regarding the gender division of labour (Beechey and Perkins, 1987). This results in a preponderance of part-time jobs in occupations and sectors which employ large proportions of women. Changes in the British economy from the 1980s have been associated with the development of 'flexible' forms of employment, including part-time working (Atkinson, 1984). In the 1990s, the fragmentation of the public sector, the dismantling of traditional career paths and the decline of collective bargaining in organisations have created favourable conditions for the further construction of part-time jobs (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2001).

To understand the tendency for women to work in low paid part-time jobs, we must therefore acknowledge the broader economic and ideological context, the benefits that employers accrue from part-time working and contemporary changes in employment and industrial relations, as well as women's individual perspectives and domestic circumstances. Overall, there is a combination of powerful forces and processes channelling women into low-paid, part-time work in the British economy. Thus it is not surprising that we find so many women workers located there.

Yet, despite the growing understanding of part-time employment, what has not been fully explored and explained by existing research is why significant proportions of the women who work in low paid, part-time jobs do so even though they have the potential to work in more skilled, higher status, better paid jobs. Nor has it examined women's views about this situation. This study has used linked, locality-based research to explore the reasons for this. We begin by explaining some key developments in relation to part-time employment in the recent period and set out some of the features and outcomes of this in the localities studied.

2 THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

One of the most significant features of employment change in the local labour markets we have studied is the growing share of jobs which are part-time. In this section we explore some of the key dimensions of this important development. The chapter shows that whilst there is a very dynamic picture in terms of the growth of part-time employment across most of the localities, some aspects of part-time employment remain static. In particular, women's part-time employment remains concentrated in a limited range of occupations and industries, with important implications for women seeking to utilise their full range of skills and experience.

During the period 1991-2002 (in England), the total number of part-time jobs held by women rose by 31%, while those held by men more than doubled. At the same time, the total number of full-time jobs held by people of both sexes rose by 11% (13% for women and 9% for men). This increased importance of part-time jobs in the national economy played out in very different ways in different local labour markets. In the six local authorities studied (see Table 1), the net growth in female part-time jobs ranged from just 13% in Leicester, to 73% in Thurrock and 100% in the London Borough of Camden.⁹ Male part-time jobs grew even faster than female part-time jobs in all these localities, but the percentage of jobs held by men that are part-time remains relatively small in all the economies, as Table 2 shows.

Table 1 Percentage changes in employment, 1991-2002

Job type	Sex	Camden	Leicester	Thurrock	Trafford	Wakefield	West Sussex	England
Part-time	Female	100	13	73	31	20	36	31
	Male	118	102	214	172	116	98	103
	All	104	29	93	54	33	46	44
Full-time	Female	17	-2	45	35	-3	19	13
	Male	16	-8	20	17	6	39	9
	All	16	-5	27	23	3	31	11
All jobs	All	28	3	44	30	11	36	19

Source: Annual Employment Survey/Census of Employment 1991, Annual Business Inquiry 2002, ONS, Crown Copyright 2004.

Notes: Data show the change in the number of employees in each district by part-time and full-time status and sex of employee

Table 2 Percentage changes in the share of employment, 1991-2002

	% jobs that are part-time		% jobs held by women that are part-time		% jobs held by men that are part-time	
	1991	2002	1991	2002	1991	2002
Camden	14	22	20	30	8	14
Leicester	24	29	39	42	8	16
Thurrock	25	34	52	56	6	14
Trafford	25	30	48	47	7	15
Wakefield	27	32	48	54	7	13
West Sussex	30	32	47	50	11	15
England	26	31	45	48	9	15

Source: Annual Employment Survey/Census of Employment 1991, Annual Business Inquiry 2002, ONS, Crown Copyright 2004.

The rate of part-time job growth is very marked in all of the labour markets studied, as Table 2 shows. In a number of the labour markets studied the proportion of jobs which are part-time has grown from about one

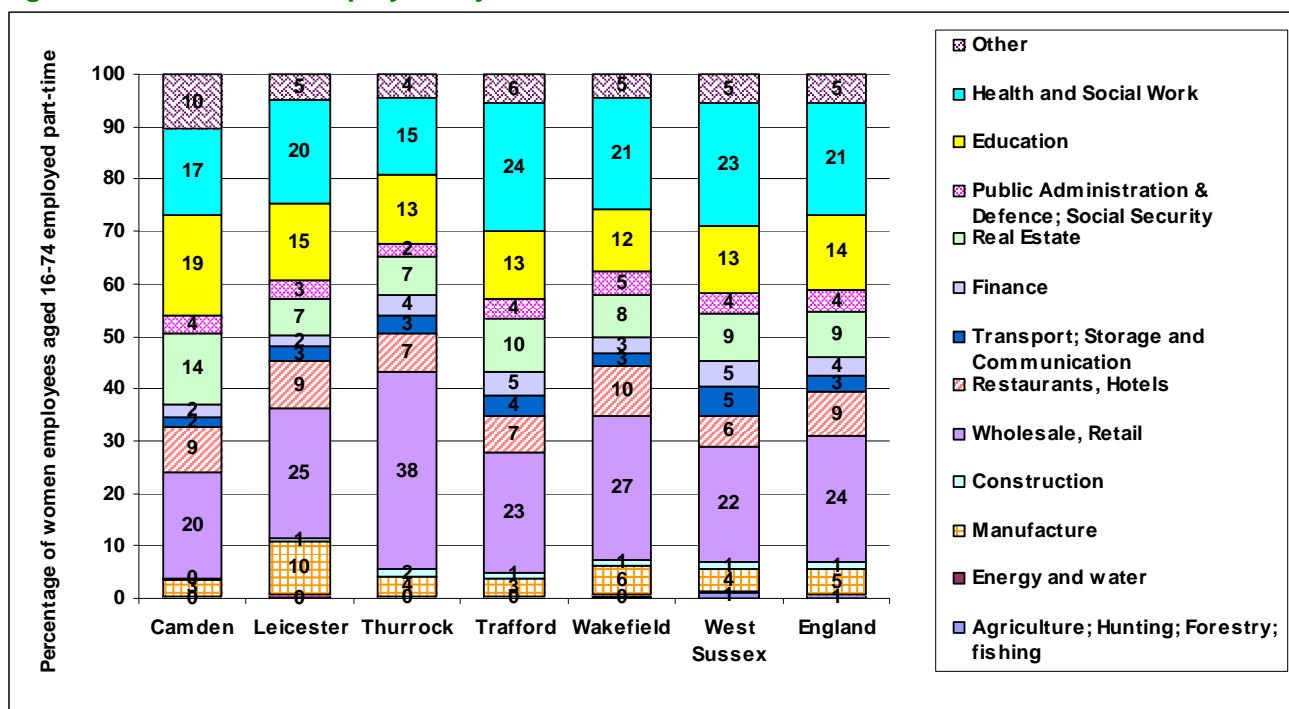
⁹ Table 6.1 shows estimates of the numbers of employees located in each local authority district, using data from surveys (the Annual Employment Survey/Census of Employment in 1991, and the Annual Business Inquiry for 2002). Although these data sets are not precisely comparable, they do give an indication of the magnitude and direction of change and therefore allow comparisons to be made across different localities.

quarter of all jobs in 1991 to about one third in 2002. And in most of the economies the proportion of jobs that are part-time has grown by at least 5 percentage points. Only in West Sussex was the growth rate for part-time jobs lower, at 2 percentage points. But here part-time jobs already accounted for 30% of all jobs in 1991, a level with which the other economies have been catching up. Even where part-time jobs remain a relatively small proportion of all jobs (as in Camden) the growth in part-time jobs is still very marked. Indeed, in Camden the growth in part-time jobs has been particularly strong, growing by 8 percentage points (from 14% of all jobs to 22% of all jobs) compared with a growth rate in England of 5% (from 26% of all jobs to 31% of all jobs).

The percentage of jobs held by women that are part-time has also been growing across the labour markets, as Table 2 shows. In some of the local economies, part-time jobs now account for one half or more of women's jobs. For example, in Trafford, 47% of all jobs held by women are part-time, in Thurrock, 56% of all jobs held by women are part-time and in Wakefield 54% of all jobs held by women are part-time. The growing importance of part-time jobs has important implications for women, for whom part-time employment has provided a means to combine aspects of domestic life, for example caring for children or elderly relatives, with paid employment. The growth of women's part-time jobs has clearly enabled many more women to enter paid employment over the past 10 to 20 years.

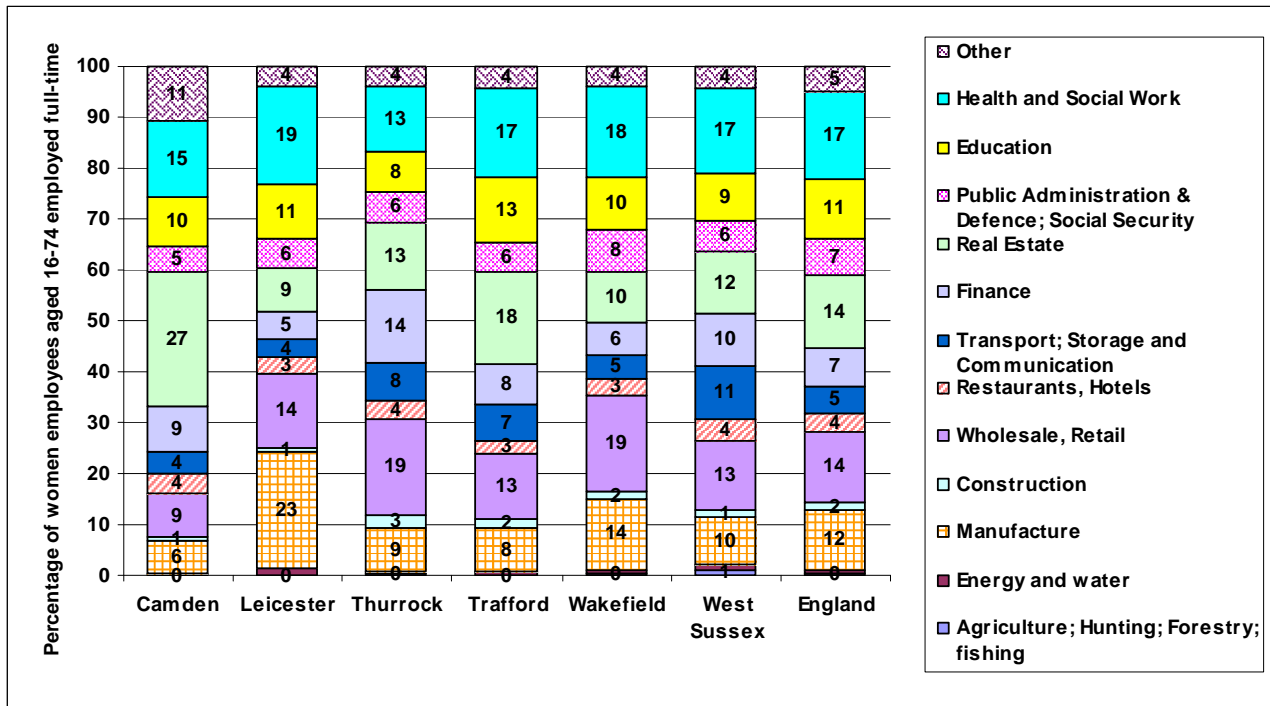
Whilst a feature of all the labour markets studied is the significant growth in the percentage of jobs held by women that are part-time, the proportion of jobs held by women that are part-time differs across the labour markets. In Camden only 30% of the jobs held by women are part-time and in Leicester only 42%, compared with England as a whole where 48% of all jobs held by women are part-time. However, there are some distinctive features of women's employment in Camden and Leicester which may account for these differences. These distinctive features include: the distribution of women workers in the industrial structure; the female employment rate; and the female part-time employment rate. Compared with England and the other economies studied, in Camden, as Figures 1 and 2 show, a higher proportion of full-time and part-time women employees work in the real estate sector, but only a small percentage (14%) of female part-time employees work in this sector. Similarly, compared with England and the other localities, in Leicester a higher proportion of part-time and full-time women workers work in manufacturing industry, but only a comparatively small percentage (22%) of women workers who work part-time are employed in this sector.

Figure 1 Part-time employees by industrial distribution: women resident in selected localities



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure 2 Full-time employees by industrial distribution: women resident in selected localities



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

The overall employment rate may also be important in explaining the distinctive features of these two local labour markets. Both have a low female employment rate. In Camden the female employment rate is 56%, and in Leicester it is only 54%. This compares with a female employment rate of 64% in England as a whole. Finally, the female part-time employment rate is also much lower in these local labour markets than elsewhere (see Table 3). In Camden only 17% of employed women work part-time, and while in Leicester the figure is not as low, at 35%, this is still lower than in England as a whole, where it is 39%.

Table 3 Employed women who work part-time by age %s

Age	Camden	Leicester	Thurrock	Trafford	Wakefield	West Sussex	England
16-24	13	25	19	17	24	18	20
25-34	11	33	33	26	39	34	31
35-49	24	40	49	43	50	48	45
50-59	29	39	47	46	52	47	47
16-59	17	35	39	36	44	40	39

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Table 4 examines changes in some of the key industrial sectors affecting women workers, and reveals an even more dynamic situation than appears in the overall figures.

Table 4 Part-time jobs held by women 1991-2002, in selected industrial sectors

Locality		Manufacturing	Distribution Hotels and Restaurants	Transport and Communications	Banking and Finance	Public Administration Education and Health
Camden	no.	400	5,950	170	3,360	6,000
	%	65	140	40	65	95
Leicester	no.	-370	3,300	-70	900	-500
	%	-15	40	-15	25	-5
Thurrock	no.	50	3,600	160	330	1,700
	%	15	95	50	40	70
Trafford	no.	200	3,400	460	1,900	140
	%	35	55	150	45	2
Wakefield	no.	-1,100	1,700	1,100	1,600	4,600
	%	-55	20	400	80	60
West Sussex	no.	260	7,100	2,700	3,800	5,800
	%	10	70	200	40	20
England	no.	12,200	388,500	52,300	212,600	142,100
	%	25	110	170	170	75

Source: Annual Employment Survey/ Census of Employment 1991, Annual Business Inquiry 2002, ONS, Crown Copyright 2004

All our localities saw significant increases in female part-time employment in *distribution, hotels and restaurants* (although the percentage change ranged from a remarkable 140% in Camden (5,950 employees) to just 20% in Wakefield (1,660 employees), and in *banking and finance* (with increases in these locations of between 25% and 80%). Overall, 600,000 part-time jobs employing women have been created in these sectors. There was also marked growth in the number of part-time jobs held by women in the *public administration, education and health* sector in all our localities - except in Leicester, where the number of these jobs declined. Part-time opportunities in the *transport and communications* sector also increased for women in some localities (notably Trafford, Wakefield and West Sussex), but declined or barely changed in Leicester and Camden.

Except in Wakefield and Leicester, the net change in the number of female part-time jobs in *manufacturing* was numerically small. While the other localities all saw small increases in the number of part-time manufacturing jobs held by women, Leicester, and more especially Wakefield, experienced significant losses of this type of work. By 2002, Wakefield women had lost 1,100 part-time manufacturing jobs, a startling 55% of the number held in 1991.

This evidence underlines the dangers of assuming that women's part-time employment can be understood through an interpretation of national level data only. Locality information shows that while 18% of all people in employment in the English economy are women working in part-time jobs,¹⁰ the comparable local figures range from 20% in Wakefield, to just 10% in Camden. While 22% of all women part-time employees in Camden are in managerial or professional occupations, this figure barely exceeds 5% in Thurrock. And while one in four women part-time employees holds an administrative or secretarial job in Trafford, this is true of only about one in six women part-time workers in Leicester.

A further dimension of diversity in women's experience of part-time employment is explored in Table 5. This shows the part-time employment rates of women aged 16-59 years across different ethnic groups. For comparative purposes, this table also shows the overall female employment rate. It reveals that part-time

¹⁰ Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003. Calculated as all women of working age in part-time employment as a percentage of all men and women in employment.

employment rates are highest among the White British female population in all our districts, except for Camden and Trafford. By contrast, Chinese women have low part-time employment rates in each of the selected districts, although their overall employment rates are not especially low. Black Caribbean women have consistently high overall employment rates, but (except in Camden) their part-time employment rates tend to be rather low.

As others have noted (Dale et al, 2002) women from the Pakistani community have much lower overall employment rates than the total female population. In England as a whole in 2001, just 20% of Pakistani women of working age were employees. In our local authority districts, however, the rates are above the national average, with between one third and one half of Pakistani women in some form of employment. The exception to this is in Wakefield where this figure is very low (only 16% are employees). In Camden, part-time employment among Pakistani women is also exceptionally low (15%) by comparison with our other districts and with the average for England.

At the national level, Bangladeshi women have the lowest employment rates of all (17%). In our districts, the figures are just 18% in Thurrock, 17% in West Sussex and 17% in Leicester, while in Camden they are as low as 15%. The picture is very different in Trafford, however (28%).

In Camden and Leicester, Black African women had very low rates of employment when compared with Black African women in the other localities and in England as a whole.

Table 5 Women of different ethnic groups who are part-time employees as a percentage of all employees, showing percentage of working age women who are employees in italics

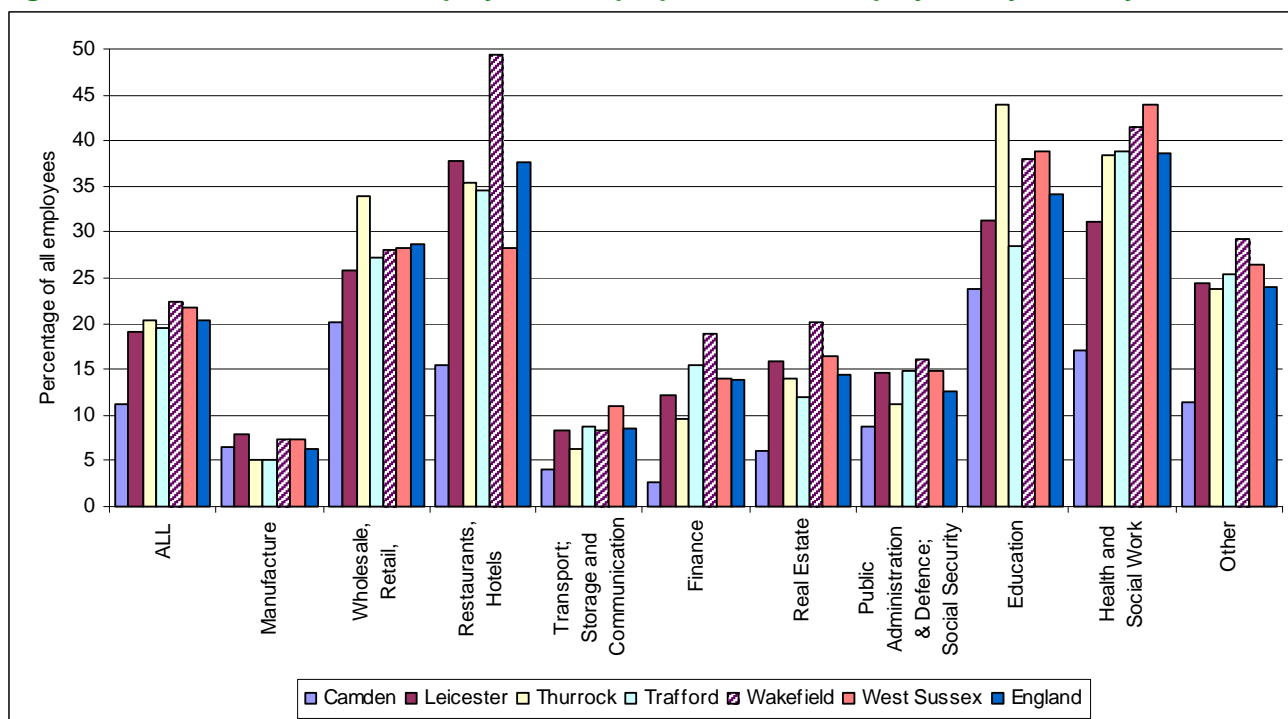
	Camden		Leicester		Thurrock		Trafford		Wakefield		West Sussex		England	
White British	16	<i>55</i>	37	<i>57</i>	40	<i>65</i>	36	<i>66</i>	44	<i>61</i>	41	<i>64</i>	40	<i>62</i>
White Irish	19	<i>51</i>	34	<i>60</i>	32	<i>62</i>	41	<i>63</i>	36	<i>56</i>	38	<i>66</i>	32	<i>61</i>
White Other	17	<i>48</i>	30	<i>44</i>	33	<i>60</i>	29	<i>57</i>	39	<i>51</i>	32	<i>59</i>	27	<i>51</i>
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	20	<i>35</i>	39	<i>38</i>	24	<i>54</i>	31	<i>46</i>	37	<i>39</i>	36	<i>56</i>	31	<i>46</i>
Mixed White & Black African	24	<i>34</i>	30	<i>37</i>	**	<i>**</i>	19	<i>51</i>	**	<i>**</i>	30	<i>46</i>	28	<i>43</i>
Mixed White & Asian	9	<i>41</i>	34	<i>39</i>	30	<i>44</i>	36	<i>51</i>	31	<i>45</i>	30	<i>58</i>	28	<i>47</i>
Other Mixed groups	23	<i>36</i>	39	<i>43</i>	17	<i>51</i>	26	<i>46</i>	15	<i>45</i>	29	<i>54</i>	27	<i>45</i>
Indian	14	<i>43</i>	32	<i>46</i>	24	<i>54</i>	38	<i>29</i>	31	<i>38</i>	28	<i>60</i>	29	<i>49</i>
Pakistani	15	<i>34</i>	38	<i>26</i>	33	<i>45</i>	42	<i>23</i>	27	<i>16</i>	43	<i>33</i>	38	<i>20</i>
Bangladeshi	42	<i>15</i>	45	<i>17</i>	30	<i>18</i>	50	<i>28</i>	**	<i>**</i>	27	<i>17</i>	38	<i>17</i>
Other Asian	23	<i>33</i>	36	<i>34</i>	22	<i>54</i>	49	<i>36</i>	15	<i>49</i>	36	<i>48</i>	31	<i>41</i>
Black Caribbean	23	<i>52</i>	30	<i>54</i>	36	<i>67</i>	33	<i>64</i>	44	<i>60</i>	26	<i>68</i>	25	<i>60</i>
Black African	24	<i>32</i>	28	<i>22</i>	19	<i>64</i>	26	<i>53</i>	21	<i>53</i>	19	<i>52</i>	25	<i>42</i>
Other Black	21	<i>39</i>	32	<i>45</i>	**	<i>**</i>	29	<i>53</i>	**	<i>**</i>	22	<i>51</i>	28	<i>49</i>
Chinese	11	<i>36</i>	22	<i>28</i>	30	<i>48</i>	32	<i>46</i>	34	<i>45</i>	33	<i>44</i>	26	<i>39</i>
Other ethnic group	21	<i>35</i>	29	<i>30</i>	41	<i>48</i>	37	<i>32</i>	27	<i>62</i>	28	<i>51</i>	27	<i>40</i>
ALL	17	<i>47</i>	35	<i>51</i>	39	<i>64</i>	36	<i>64</i>	44	<i>60</i>	40	<i>64</i>	39	<i>59</i>

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 in each ethnic group, missing data is due to small population sizes.

Although the total number of part-time jobs held by women increased significantly between 1991 and 2002 in all our selected localities, creating additional opportunities for employment for those women who need or prefer to work part-time, it cannot be assumed that their new employment is necessarily secure, flexible as regards hours of work, or located in the industrial or occupational niche of their choice. In some districts, there has been considerable displacement of women from part-time employment in manufacturing and some other types of work, with new opportunities arising in very different employment sectors, such as retailing and hotels. These changed opportunities may require different skills and attributes, and often offer very different working arrangements and conditions. While these developments could potentially present some women with opportunities for career progression or to extend their skills and experience, many may find that local labour market developments have created few opportunities for them to use their experience and skills, and that the part-time labour market opportunities available in fact leave them in a very poor position to make the fullest contribution to the economy of which they are capable.

Figure 3 Part-time female employees as a proportion of all employees, by industry



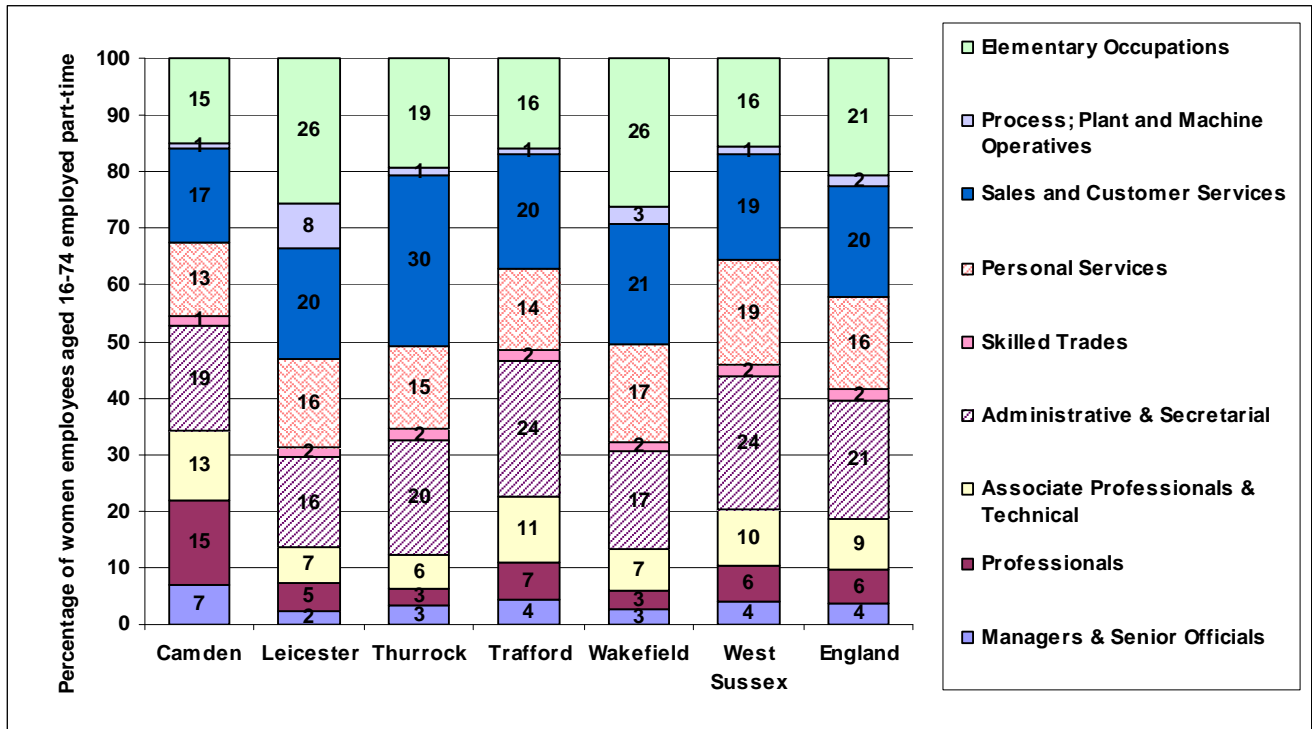
Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure 3 shows that in some industrial sectors there are high percentages of part-time women workers, whilst in others the proportion is very low. Across most of the localities there are only four sectors where at least a third or more of employees are part-time women workers: wholesale and retail; restaurants and hotels; education; and health and social work. In all the other major industrial sectors where women workers are employed in any numbers, the percentage of part-time women employees is lower than this - and often much lower than this. Only in Camden is the pattern different, where the percentage of female employees is low across all sectors.

Some industrial sectors, then, have relatively significant proportions of part-time women workers. But what kinds of jobs are women undertaking in these sectors? Figure 4 shows the percentage of all part-time women workers working in a range of occupations for each locality. What this figure shows is the tendency for part-time women workers to be concentrated in lower paid, lower skilled occupations.

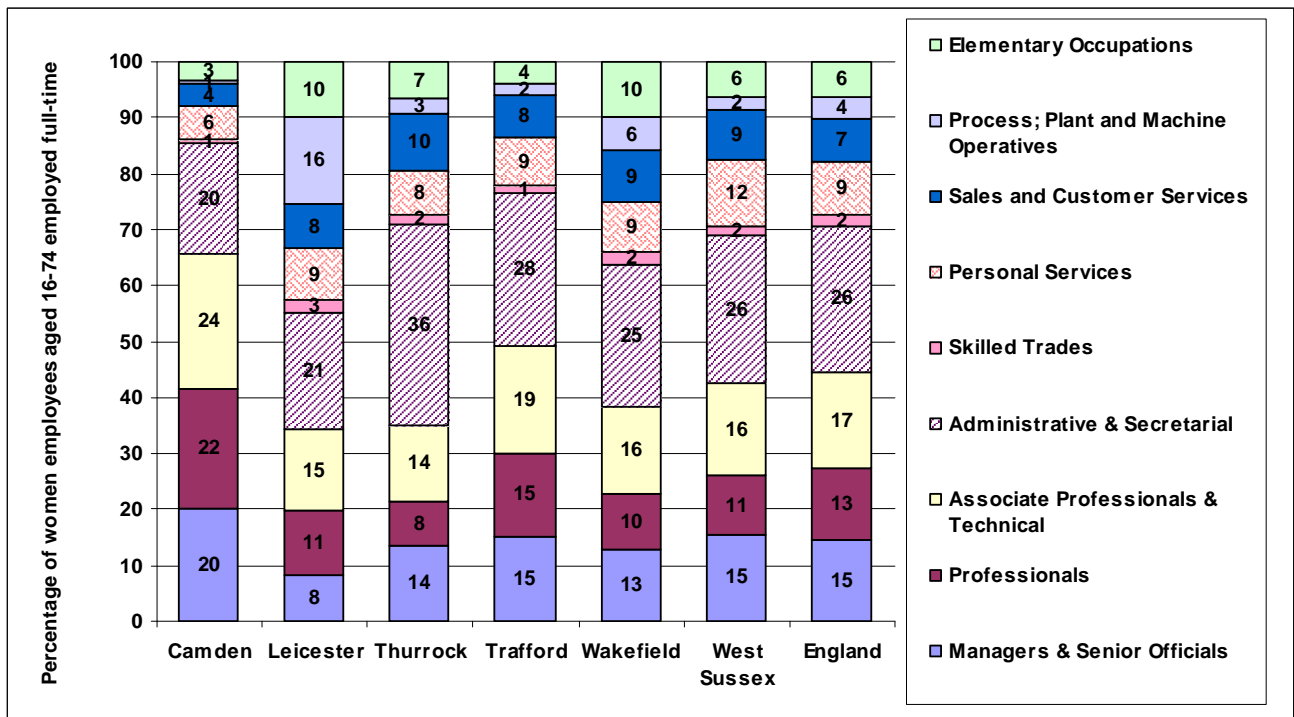
In three of the localities (Leicester, Thurrock and Wakefield) there is a very marked concentration of part-time women workers in lower paid occupations, with more than 2 in every 3 (over 66%) of part-time women workers in the these economies working in just four of the lower paid occupational groups: elementary occupations; process, plant and machine operative jobs; sales and customer service jobs; and personal service jobs. The concentration of part-time women workers in these lower paid jobs is slightly less marked

Figure 4 Part-time women employees by occupation: women resident in selected localities



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Figure 5 Full-time women employees by occupation: women resident in selected localities



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

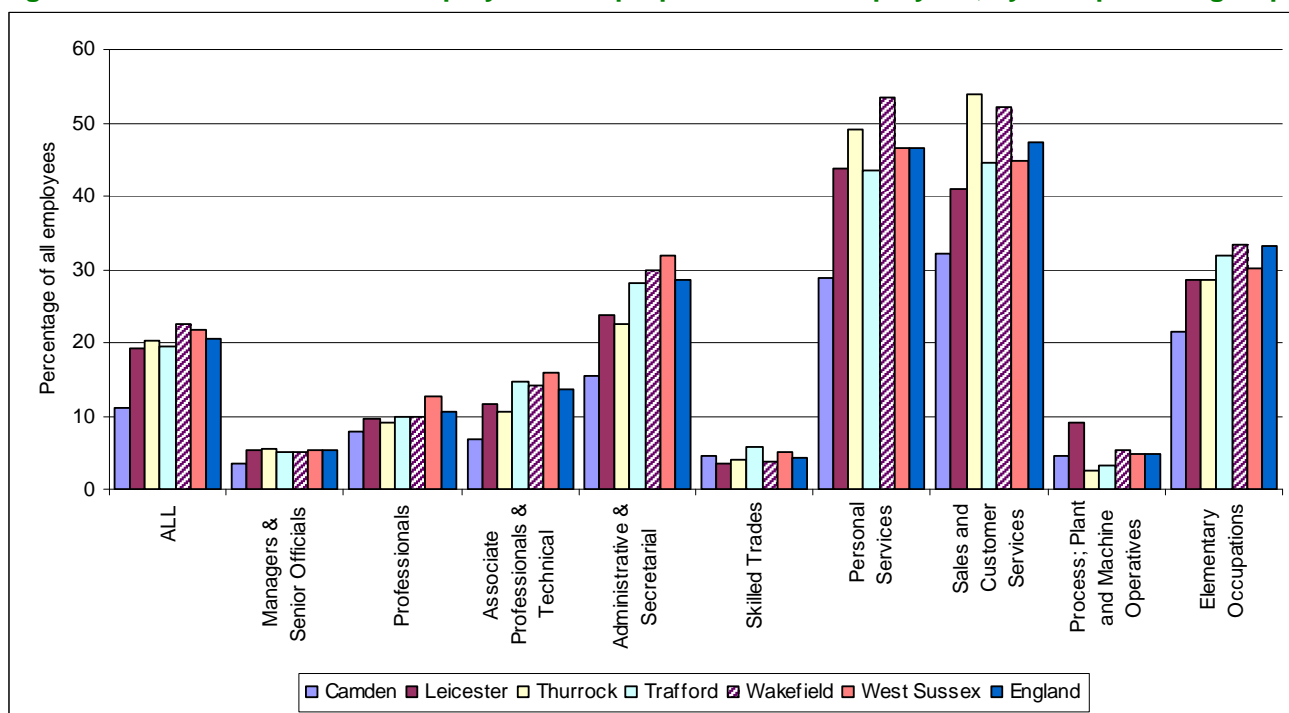
in Trafford and West Sussex, with just over 1 in every 2 (over 50%) of part-time women employees in these jobs. In Camden, in contrast, only 46% of part-time women workers occupy these lower paid jobs. However, a distinctive feature of the Camden economy is the very low percentage of women working in part-time jobs overall. Thus, although more than one half of part-time women workers work in higher paid occupations, the numbers of Camden women working part-time and the proportion of working women working part-time is very small. This may be an outcome of the high cost of living in Camden, which makes it more likely that women will seek full-time work. And, as already mentioned, the industrial structure in Camden differs from that in the other economies.

A comparison of women's occupations between those in part-time and full-time work also shows that part-time women employees are much less likely to hold better paid or senior level jobs. In Leicester, Thurrock and Wakefield, for example, fewer than 15% are in technical, professional or managerial jobs, compared with 34% or more of women working full-time in these jobs in these localities (Figures 4 and 5).

Overall, despite the growing significance of part-time employment within the labour markets studied, the growing proportion of women's jobs which are part-time, and the growing numbers of women being drawn into part-time employment, the kinds of occupations in which the majority of part-time women workers tend to be employed are at the lower end of the occupational hierarchy.

Another way to appreciate the concentration of part-time women workers in low paid jobs is revealed in Figure 6 which shows the proportion of all workers who are part-time women workers in a range of occupations. This reveals that in some of the lower paid occupations there are high or very high percentages of part-time women workers. By contrast, in many higher paid occupations part-time women workers form only a relatively small percentage of employees. Thus, across the labour markets only 5% of managers and senior officials are part-time women workers, and only around 10% of professional workers are women working part-time, whilst, with the exception of Camden, about one half of the workers employed in sales jobs and personal service jobs are part-time women workers, and one third of those employed in admin and secretarial jobs and elementary jobs are part-time women workers. This shows that it is very much easier to find a part-time job in some occupations than in others.

Figure 6 Part-time female employees as a proportion of all employees, by occupational group



Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

Thus, despite the variation in patterns of part-time employment across the localities, there are also some features of part-time employment which are more or less consistent across the localities. These consistent patterns, which relate to the concentration of women's part-time employment in particular industries and occupations are vitally important in understanding why women work below their potential.

As we have shown, across the economies the growth of part-time working is very marked. But if women are to benefit from this growth in part-time jobs, the quality of the part-time jobs available to them, and the pay associated with these jobs, is crucial. Women can only utilise their full labour market potential if they can use their qualifications, skills and labour market experience. Equally, if they are to maintain their earnings level they need to be able to access well-paid, part-time jobs. There is some variation in terms of growth sectors across the localities, but overall the picture is one in which part-time women workers are concentrated in particular sectors and occupations. The concentration of part-time employment in certain occupations and sectors provides the background to understanding why women work 'below their potential' in low paid, part-time jobs. In the next chapter we set out how women explain and experience this process.

3 WORKING BELOW POTENTIAL

One of the key aims of this study was to understand the extent to which, and why, women do not always use all of their qualifications or their labour market skills or experience when they work in part-time jobs. As has been shown in the previous chapter, part of the explanation of why women work below their potential lies in the concentration of part-time jobs in lower paid, lower skilled occupations. Higher paid, higher skilled part-time jobs are relatively scarce across the labour markets studied. We have also conducted a survey of part-time workers in the participating workplaces to try to assess the extent to which part-time women workers are employed below their potential. And in our interviews with women we explored the context in which individual women made their decisions to take specific jobs and the reasons women themselves put forward for working below their potential.

The chapter begins by seeking to assess, on the basis of the survey of part-time workers, how many low paid, part-time workers are working below their potential. This evidence is compared with that from a separate EOC omnibus survey. We then set out a number of explanations of why women working in part-time jobs do not always fully use their labour market skills and experience or their full range of qualifications in their current job. This is based largely on interviews with women workers. Finally, we set out managers' views on the question of women working below their potential.

Table 6 is based on an analysis of the survey of 333 women from workplaces across the six localities in the study. This shows that 54% of the part-time women workers surveyed had previously worked in jobs requiring either higher qualifications, or more skills or experience, or which had involved more management or supervisory responsibility than was required for their current job. A total of 39% had previously worked in a job involving more responsibility for supervision or management of staff than their current job.

Table 6 Working below potential: survey evidence

Proportion of sample who:	Per cent
Required higher qualifications in previous job/s	29
Required more experience in previous job/s	34
Required more skills in previous job/s	39
Had more management or supervisory responsibility in previous job/s	39
Required either higher qualifications, and/or more skills and/or experience in previous job/s, and/or previously had more management or supervisory responsibility	54
Worked more hours in previous job/s	76
N	333

Source: GELLM Survey of part-time women workers.

On the basis of this analysis, it can be seen that significant numbers of the women surveyed, who are working in low-paid, part-time jobs, are working 'below their potential'. These are women who are working in jobs that do not use their full range of qualifications, experience and skills. This is unused potential that has been developed previously through labour market experience, or as a result of training and education.

The findings from our study can also be compared with those from an Omnibus survey which was conducted by BMRB for the EOC in November-December 2004 (Darton and Hurrell, 2005). The survey covered about 2,300 male and female part-time workers aged 16 or over, 78% of whom were women, in line with the proportion of women in the part-time workforce.

A series of questions were asked in the survey, based on the GELLM study, to ascertain how many part-time workers were working below their potential. Those whose previous job or jobs had required either higher qualifications and/or higher level of skills and/or who had exercised more managerial or supervisory responsibility in a previous job(s) were defined as working below their past potential.

Of those interviewed, over half (51%) defined themselves as working below their potential in these terms, a very similar proportion to the 54% revealed by the GELLM survey. This means that in Britain a staggering

3.6 million part-time workers, of whom 2.8 million are part-time women workers, are working below the potential that they have already demonstrated in previous jobs.¹¹

Why women work 'below their potential'

In the GELLM study, follow-up interviews were conducted with 89 of the 333 women surveyed. It is from this qualitative evidence that we have been able to draw out a series of explanations which capture why women work below their potential. (A description of the characteristics of these interviewees is presented in Appendix 2).

From the analysis of the interview data, we have developed five distinct categories which help to explain why the women interviewed were working below their potential in their current jobs. These are:

- **Women who are working below their potential because they face a *restricted labour market*.**

This reflects the experience of women who had found that there were few senior, higher paid, jobs available with part-time hours on the open labour market.

- **Women who are working below their potential because they face *restricted workplace opportunities*.**

This reflects the experience of women who wanted to stay in their current field of employment, but who had found that there were no promotion pathways in their workplace, or that there were no promotion prospects for part-time workers in their workplace.

- **Women who are working below their potential because they have experienced an *unacceptable intensity of work* in higher graded work.**

This reflects the experience of women who had chosen their current job because of specific and negative experiences in their previous employment in the recent past.

- **Women who are *taking steps to realise their potential* in the labour market.**

This reflects the experience of women who were in a period of transition to alternative, more senior level, employment by engaging in training or education.

- **Women who are *content to work below their potential* in the labour market.**

This reflects the experience of women who, whilst having qualifications or experience which would equip them for higher graded work, had chosen to work in lower paid, low graded, jobs.

Restricted labour market

The first category reflects the experience of women who were working below their potential because of the limitations in the labour market. Because of their desire to work part-time, they were restricted to jobs which did not use their full range of skills as the part-time jobs available on the open labour market are heavily skewed to low paid, low skill, low status, jobs. In seeking part-time work, the women in this category were confined to an occupationally restricted labour market and, sometimes, to a geographically restricted labour market. In other words, there was a scarcity of more senior level, higher paid, part-time jobs on the open labour market:

¹¹ There are also people, particularly in the younger age range, who may be capable of working at a higher level, but have not yet had the opportunity to do so. In addition to those working below their past potential, a further 30% of the BMRB sample said that they could 'easily work at a higher level'. Clearly this could include some people who are unrealistic about their abilities, but the fact that the question says 'easily' and the fact that there will also be some who, conversely, do not recognise they could work at a higher level, gives us some confidence in using this figure as an estimate of 'latent' potential. Taking the two together (those working under their past potential and those with latent potential) means that 4 in 5 part-time workers are 'working below their potential'. This is 5.6 million part-time workers; about a fifth of the entire working population.

In terms of responsibility, this job is a lot more interesting than it was when I started. But, you know, I ran a company, and we had about 25 staff. If there were part-time jobs that were able to use my experience it would appeal to me, but they're basically not there. I'd like a higher level of responsibility, but I know that kind of job doesn't exist.

I did look around, and there's a lot of really, really junior jobs in my field, which I don't want to do. I'd like to move into public health strategy, but the kind of jobs I want are full-time. Maybe once you're established you can do them part-time.

All the jobs that came up were in the retail industry. The other sort of job, the higher paid job that I was looking for, were few and far between. There were jobs out there I was capable of doing and qualified to do but they didn't have the kind of hours I needed.

I've been looking elsewhere for a job, but I've literally got a brick wall up against me... because they are so few and far between, suitable posts with the hours of work I want.

These were primarily women who had had a break from paid employment after childbirth. They experienced the disadvantage and downward mobility associated with women returners.

The reality of the limited nature of the open labour market confronting women wishing to work part-time is an important issue, and stands in contrast to the picture of the labour market painted by the managers interviewed. The latter were often keen to emphasise that they were willing to transform any full-time job into a part-time job. However, as previous research has revealed (see Walsh, 1998, for a discussion of this), although a category of 'retention part-time jobs' at the higher levels of workplace hierarchies is evident, these usually occur where employers seek to retain valued employees occupying higher paid jobs. Such jobs are rarely available on the open labour market. Women returners, and other unemployed women seeking part-time employment, do not have ready access to these jobs.

Restricted workplace opportunities

The second category reflects the experience of women who were working below their potential primarily because there were few, or no, opportunities for advancement for part-time workers in their workplace. Some were women who had been drawn to a particular field of work or workplace and would like to progress in that field/workplace. Others were in an area of work which held no particular attraction at first, but within which they were now happy to remain. Promotion would only be possible by switching to full-time hours. Thus the predominant factor explaining why they were working below their potential was the policy and practice within the workplace:

I came into care work because I really wanted to become a social worker, so I thought it would be a great experience and it would open up all kinds of doors and opportunities. That's why I took this job...but it hasn't worked out. I don't feel as valued as a full-time employee.

I am always open to opportunity...but it is very difficult because the job I am in, there is no training I can do to get any higher up the scale. There is no job there. There was one job that came up but that was a full-time job, the part-timers couldn't even apply. We just have to accept it...We did feel we missed out because we were part-time.

I'd like to be a section supervisor... they've advertised it externally now... it would not be available on the hours I work... one of the people on our team was enquiring about it, and they said it wasn't available on the hours she wanted.

The women in this category were working in areas and levels of employment, such as social care¹², learning support, cleaning, catering and other manual work, in which there were no obvious career paths from the level they currently occupied or where there was no access for part-time workers to the training which would equip them to move up to more senior levels.

I do want to do NVQ Level 3, the next level to my job being management, but as I am not a manager I can't, so I've literally come to a standstill.

¹² Our companion study (Yeandle et al 2006) discussed some of the opportunities for progression beginning to open up in employment in social care.

They won't train me on the machines because I am only part-time...I said I'd like training on basically anything that would need any training...and I never heard anything at all. I just said, 'well, I'm not going to pursue it because I know it's because I'm part-time'. And if I wanted to go up the ladder to a supervisory role I'd have to go full-time.

I'd like to be doing something at the higher level, but it's quite regimented in terms of the level that people are at. You can't just get trained for the higher level work; they tend to want to keep it all separate. I've never had a chance to prove myself.

Some were working in 'dead end' jobs where there were no clear pathways from one level or type of job to another. Some were working in jobs where virtually all the jobs were part-time and where part-time is equivalent to a low grade status. In this context of poor workplace opportunity, women working below their potential can feel degraded and their talents can remain invisible.

Unacceptable intensity of work

The third category reflects the experience of women who were working below their potential because the demanding nature of work in their previous job had persuaded them to reassess the role of work in their lives. Workplace conditions and the tenor of employment at the turn of the century are the key factors defining this category of women. Essentially they were victims of the intensity of work in the current period. They were seeking an improved work-life balance.

These were women who had occupied senior or professional posts in the recent past. They described the conditions of work in their previous jobs as highly demanding, leaving them little time or energy for other aspects of their lives:

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.

I was a sales manager. I did that full-time and I did it for three years and it was good but it was just so stressful....It was supposedly 9 to 5 but it was really long hours...you were expected to do three calls in a day, so you'd drive up to Manchester and I'd get up at half past 5 in the morning, then after that you'd have to go up to Newcastle...and then other days I had to drive to Plymouth...It was just too much in the end. And then when you got home at 8 at night, you'd put your laptop on and you'd have emails from all your accounts...They could have been more supportive and rationalise the work, but they didn't. After three years of doing that job I was just ill in the end. Now my job fits in around my life.

I did enjoy the job but it just got too stressful without the support...because it was literally constant, you just didn't get a break from it.

These women made a clear contrast between their current job and the lack of responsibilities associated with it, and their previous employment experience, which was often a source of stress and anxiety. The undemanding nature of their current jobs was welcomed, to some extent, but circumstances had more or less forced them into a lower grade job.

The nature of work in the contemporary period is significant in explaining the location of this group of women in low paid, part-time work. The transition to a lower level job, whilst of benefit in terms of the reduction of work-related stress, brings its own anxieties. Low income, lost pension rights and lost status are significant outcomes. The absence of workplace support and wider social support to enable women to retain their position in the labour market is evident.

Taking steps to realise potential

A fourth category reflects the experience of women who were in a period of transition from their current low paid, part-time, job to a new, higher paid, job. Again, the predominant factor explaining the under-use of potential related to the current workplace. These were women working in workplaces in which there were few opportunities for job enrichment and personal advancement. In the past, this group of women had found their current job and hours of work satisfactory, but they were now engaged in further study or

training or active job search, as a means to secure higher paid, more highly skilled, usually full-time work. A number of these women were studying for a degree, others were undertaking vocational training. However, the process of gaining higher or new qualifications required considerable personal and financial resources:

I'm studying for a PGCE...It's taken me a long time to get here and I don't really feel that I've had the support I should have had...I started the PGCE off my own bat. I decided enough was enough. I was going to do it whether I got encouragement or not. I've done a lot of years when I was capable of a lot more. I was clearing out cupboards and taking people to the loo and I've got a degree.

I am a learning support worker, but I really want to be a tutor. I got a BA in Education two 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.

I'm doing a degree, part-time, in Social Policy. It takes 7 years and I've done three years...but it's a lot of pressure trying to complete the assignments and I don't get any support with the costs.

I am studying to be a driving instructor. The training is about £2,500, but the college offer a guaranteed placement scheme and financial advice. It's a good career move for me... It's not an option to upgrade here... all the posts are part-time.

The women in this category had a strong desire to realise their potential. Some had held senior or management jobs in the past, but in areas of work in which they no longer had an interest. Some already held degrees. Others had recognised that the qualifications they gained at school were inadequate to secure the level of job they now desired, and thus were studying for higher level qualifications:

I am doing an Open University degree in Social Science. I was a computer programmer before I had my first child, but I couldn't work part-time or job share in that job so I had to leave. I am at a cross-roads in my life as I know I am wasting my brain, so I am planning to go into teaching.

The transition to higher graded work was often, however, a difficult process and sometimes women could face setbacks:

I attempted to re-train and started a PGCE but my youngest child was only about two and a half and the course was very intense and obviously there was the childcare costs and the course fees and it just got impossible really, so I did drop out from that.

This category of women confirms the analysis that women's orientations to work are not necessarily fixed over time (Fagan, 2001; Warren and Walters, 1998). Women's orientation to the labour market can move in cycles from, for example, skilled, professional or management level work, to periods outside the labour market, to jobs which do not use their full range of talents, and then back to professional or senior posts. However, as the earlier discussion reveals, the process of returning to jobs which fully utilise women's skills involves a complex set of transitions. The women interviewed were drawing on their own resources, both financial and personal, to make these transitions and regain their previous position in the labour market. They lacked support to achieve this, either within their current workplace or outside the workplace, in the wider social, educational and vocational guidance support systems. Thus, as women, they required considerable personal determination and confidence to break out of the low paid sector in which they had found themselves at a particular point in their lives.

Content to work below potential

The final category of women reflects the experience of women who, despite their qualifications and previous experience in the labour market, were content to work below their potential. They had no current plans or desire to recapture their previous place in the labour market. They ranged in age from 30 to 50 and older.

Most explained that other aspects of their lives were more important to them than their employment:

There really are too many other things going on in my life to worry about the pressures of the kind of job I had in the past. I don't need it. I am trying to look after two teenage children, running a house and doing all my little jobs. I am quite happy.

My ideal job is just to be out of the house, doing something not too pressurised. I mean I've done pressurised jobs before and worked long hours and gone home and worried about it. So now I just want, I suppose, an easy life that fits around my children.

In a way, when you've got kids and you're juggling lots of things it's quite nice to have a job that you can leave at work, although I was always incredibly ambitious before I had the kids.

Sometimes women were content to work below their potential because the content of the job they were doing had developed and been enriched over a period of 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.

Yet for some, there remained a certain ambivalence about their future:

Sometimes, yes, I do think about other work, because it can be quite boring here. It's not physically exhausting work but it can be mentally tedious because it's quite repetitive work... I think if I could find, perhaps, a job with the same set of hours, term-time working, 9-3, but there again...

Others expressed regret at decisions made in the past which had led to a long-term loss of job status:

I don't think it was good to completely give up work when I had the children. I should have carried on, even working a few days. I should have pursued more of a career. But now I've come to the decision it's not worth it. I'm not getting anywhere and they are not going to give me any more money...but I've got a nice balance...I can do my shopping, get my washing done, go walking... so it's just quality of life, isn't it, really.

In general, for this category of women, the hours of work; the proximity to home of the workplace; the opportunity to boost wages periodically and voluntarily with additional hours of work; the absence of pressure and responsibility; and the opportunity to devote time to housework and childcare, outweighed any tedium associated with the job.

What is revealed by this examination of the context in which women make decisions about which jobs to take is that it is the nature of the labour market and the way in which jobs and opportunities are structured within workplaces which are the critical factors in explaining why most women who work below their potential do so. The majority of women are not choosing to work below their potential; rather they are constrained by the processes within labour markets and workplaces.

Managers' perspectives on part-time women workers

Despite the labour market experience and ambitions amongst women part-time workers, many of the managers interviewed were unaware of the talents of the part-time women workers at their workplace. The general view was that most were working in jobs suited to their capabilities and ambitions:

I think the majority are in a job that suits them. The level that is comfortable to them.

We may have one or two who are over-qualified.

They are not over-qualified

A few managers praised the qualities of their part-time workers:

Some of the home carers are extremely intelligent women. I don't know about their qualifications, but I have met a large number of them and certainly last year... I personally interviewed over 100 myself and I was astounded by what skills and intelligence they all displayed and that was the general level. Some of them were just outstanding, and I thought, what are you doing in this job? But they are doing it because they really do want to do it and they enjoy doing it and get something out of it. It's certainly not the money particularly, because it is pretty low paid work.

Perhaps the most accurate picture was provided by a manager who recognised that the qualities of the workforce were diverse:

Some are definitely capable of more. Some have come from totally different backgrounds - clerical, banking, teaching. Some had had their own businesses. Others are struggling to do the NVQ. Some have literacy problems, and they need a lot of support.

But commonly, managers viewed part-time workers as 'returners' who had 'chosen' not simply a part-time job, but also an undemanding job. In other words, they were viewed by their managers as lacking in ambition and drive, and essentially, in the words of their managers, working for 'pin money':

It's people's personal preferences. If they want to come back to work, how much they want to commit themselves. I think sometimes you get to a point in your life where you've battered yourself working and you get to a point where you still need the mental stimulation but don't want to give the 140% you are required to give in a full-time job in today's society.

You've got this group of people, waiting until their partners come in, and then they're coming out for a little bit of pocket money or a little bit of independence themselves.

Most people say I've got a house full of kids; I want to earn some money. I want to do something useful, but I don't want a job which is going to eat up my whole life.

A typical part-time worker is somebody who has got outside commitments... probably supporting the family income... to help support the holiday and really more on the social side of life.

How women experience working below their potential

Managers' views that women were largely content to work below their potential was not confirmed by this study. Many of the women interviewed described their experience of working below their potential as a fairly negative experience. They felt keenly the way in which their capabilities were overlooked:

I don't think the company taps into us at all. They've got this huge resource of people like myself who've worked in a variety of industries and they could use us to improve things... but nobody's ever asked us. The managers on the floor have no idea of our past and they don't talk to you to find out, so... They don't tap into anything you've ever done, which is sad. It's sad. It's a totally wasted resource.

At work, women in this category were fully aware that they were working 'below their potential' and that their income was suffering as a consequence. As a result, they could sometimes feel frustrated by the approach to work of their more senior colleagues. Often they took on responsibilities at work beyond those required for their current jobs:

Because I was very experienced, because I've worked at management level and because of the pressure that they are under at the day centre, I've had a lot of new staff at my level, and people that are more senior to me, constantly asking me for advice and information, which I am aware I am working at a higher level than I am being paid for.

I think they could use me better. I mean, I've got management experience... there are things here I could do, but don't.

Some were deeply bored by their day-to-day work experience:

You're not using your skills. To be an input clerk - am I allowed to use the word boring? I feel like you're a robot and you're just part of a production line.

Others had found ways to extend and elaborate the content of their jobs, but without the pay associated with it:

You're aware that you are doing a lot more, bringing a lot more to the job, than the actual job description.

Loss of confidence

However, once women begin working in a low skilled, low status, job, a combination of factors can trap them at their current level. This is despite their awareness that they have more to offer:

I think that when you do a job like this, in a way, you feel you've sort of pigeon-holed yourself. You are support staff at a certain level, and you don't step over that... Most of the people who teach don't assume that you might be as intelligent as they are.

Part of the explanation is that as a consequence of working in a low status job, women can lose confidence in their capabilities, even though their employment history reveals that they are women with considerable talent and skills:

I'd like to be a primary school teacher, but it means going back to studying again and, really, I've lost my confidence in that respect.

Well, to be honest, when you've been out for so many years... you lose your confidence really and think, can I do that, can I really cope with all that? I know I can do it... but these days it all seems to be a bit daunting.

It's all to do with confidence... when you've spent years at toddler groups and, you know, mixing with other women in similar situations... just filling in the application form (for this job) was quite daunting.

I think I would prefer to do something that uses more of my qualifications, but it's self-confidence, finding jobs that would make use of my skills and pushing myself into chasing them up. I don't feel I've got the confidence to do it.

I'd been at home for so long... going out into a different environment was quite nerve-racking... I wanted to work part-time... I wouldn't have been confident enough to go back and be a teacher.

Obsolete skills and qualifications

A further factor is that skills acquired in previous employment have become obsolete. Some women explained that they had lost out in terms of skill development because of the lack of continuity in their working careers. They are thus not in a position to step back into jobs at a level equivalent to their previous work:

When I left newspapers, before my son was born, that was just when they were changing to desktop publishing... In retrospect, had I gone back after he was born for a short period, I would have acquired the new skills and then probably would have just worked part-time in newspapers... and might have stayed in journalism... I missed the boat in acquiring the ability to do the job.

I keep thinking I should get trained up on the computer, because it's done me out of all my jobs... When I left work to have my daughter, just at that time, everything was changing. So, by the time you're ready to go back to work, really, there is such a huge difference.

In their current workplace, the opportunity to advance and regain their lost status did not exist, especially if they wished to remain in part-time employment:

The thing is, to progress I'll probably have to go full-time, because... most of the jobs I could apply for are full-time.

There was an interplay of factors which channelled and then trapped women who wanted to work part-time in low paid, low status, work, in particular: the absence of higher paid part-time jobs on the open labour market; the absence of promotion pathways in their current workplace; the long hours and intensity of full-time work in the current period; the obsolescence of their skills, and a loss of confidence.

This range of factors can encourage women themselves to adopt a perspective that in wanting to work part-time, little more than a low-paid job can be expected. Thus, despite the poor rewards and the financial struggle that this can create, expectations can become limited.

Pay

One very important dimension of women's experience of working below their potential is the low pay associated with the part-time jobs they undertake. Across the localities average hourly pay in 2005 for part-time women workers varied, from a high of £9.26 in Camden, London to a low of £5.85 in Leicester (Table 7). Equally, across the economies average hourly pay for women workers was much lower than that for both full-time women workers and full-time male workers.

Table 7 Gross weekly pay, average hourly pay and hours worked for men and women by employment status

Area		Gross Weekly Pay (£)		Hourly pay (£)		Total hours worked (weekly)	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Camden	All	616.80	473.00	15.68	13.56	36.7	35.0
	Full-time	650.70	536.60	16.19	14.68	37.4	36.5
	Part-time	**	176.80	**	9.26	20.6	18.0
Leicester	All	354.80	244.40	8.59	7.37	38.7	38.7
	Full-time	370.80	319.90	8.76	8.51	39.0	37.0
	Part-time	**	110.10	6.69	5.85	18.0	18.3
Thurrock	All	478.80	260.70	11.07	7.90	39.4	34.0
	Full-time	496.60	368.80	11.73	10.11	40.0	36.2
	Part-time	**	114.30	**	5.99	**	18.0
Trafford	All	498.60	295.70	12.30	8.97	37.5	34.9
	Full-time	526.10	378.20	13.08	10.64	37.5	37.0
	Part-time	**	141.90	**	7.30	**	19.0
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
West Sussex	All	458.90	274.70	11.51	8.43	38.0	34.9
	Full-time	492.70	364.10	12.20	9.53	39.1	37.1
	Part-time	138.40	143.80	7.03	7.55	19.2	18.8
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

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 common 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, on average, only 60p.

Across the localities women's views on their level of pay varied. Some felt that the pay they received was appropriate for the job being undertaken. However, this did not necessarily mean that they found it easy to manage on their current pay.

I think it's fair pay for what we do, but it's not enough to live on in London...I've got another four days before I get paid, and at the moment I've got no food in the house.

I would certainly wish that I could have the wage level of a more senior post, because it's very, very difficult managing on what I am managing on at the moment.

But many women were very critical and disappointed about their pay levels.

I am not very satisfied with my pay at the moment because we have to do a lot of things, a lot of paper work, I think £5.32 is a bit disgusting when you've got to make sure staff are in place and they've got the right equipment.

I think the pay is awful, terrible. I think I am worth an awful lot more - twice that, treble that. We have to be all seeing, all dancing, all caring, everything that you can think of.

I get paid £5.05p an hour and sometimes I sit here and think, well that's not much for what I do. We're on the minimum wage and that's it...and when you get new people coming in and they are on the same wage as what you are it doesn't seem right...but there is not a lot we can do about it.

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.

The argument that women are working for 'pin money' and thus not concerned about pay levels is not confirmed by this study.

The pay-setting process

Because of the low pay associated with part-time work, we asked managers to describe how they set wages in these jobs. Not all of the managers interviewed had been involved in the pay setting process, as this took place either at a more senior level or at a national level. But to the extent that the managers interviewed had been involved in the pay setting process they put forward three main explanations for low pay.

First, some managers stated that 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 is a pool of people willing to undertake these roles ... so recruitment is not a massive problem.

Secondly, managers argued that 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.

Thirdly, it was argued that 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 generally followed trends in inflation, but employers sought to keep their wages and wage increases in line with other employers, as a number of managers explained:

I am asked every year by the Chief Executive to give my estimation of what I think the pay rise should be and all I will do is look at the retail price index, I would look at underlying inflation and we do market research in the industry...What we do is a pay survey of other (similar) businesses. There are a handful of businesses that I would write to or simply contact and we share information with each other. So I get to know about 15 to 20 businesses, what their pay awards are.

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.

The way we set pay is looking at the roles and responsibilities of the job, and then looking at what other similar companies are doing. We belong to an association of similar (employers). We get together and meet regularly, and we share and exchange information, that's how the rates are set.

At the lower levels we do a salary survey amongst the hotels in our group in London. We use that as a benchmark and also we have a sense of what competitors are doing. We get some quite stringent financial targets, so our payrolls have to be in line with those...and I phone HR at hotels outside our group and find out what their rate of pay is and they ring me.

The outcome of this pay setting process, in which employers confer with one another about pay, is to trap wages for the jobs studied in a low wage segment of the economy. As long as pay levels do not appear to interfere with staff recruitment there is little incentive to increase them. Indeed, even in tight labour markets, where a few managers had experienced difficulties in recruitment, this had not led to any major changes in pay rates:

We are having difficulties recruiting people. Working in a small locality - and you have quite a large independent sector in our field and a small pool of staff to recruit from - so we are all trying to fish from the same pond.

In one case a manager believed that low pay rates were affecting the ability to recruit the quality of staff they were seeking.

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.

Mostly, however, managers regarded the pay offered as fair and appropriate, especially where it was combined with other benefits.

This locality is low in the pay index. I think our rate of pay is competitive without being excessive. But we offer a benefit package over and above our competitors. You cannot find a final salary scheme for love nor money, and few offer private health care, profit sharing, and a subsidised restaurant.

I think with the rates of pay...people need to look at the whole package. It's not just take home pay, it's the benefits...we have a good benefits package.

The jobs studied are jobs which 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 the low paid jobs studied are held by both men and women in some of the workplaces, for women workers the consequences of these static low wages are more significant. Among men, these jobs are undertaken largely by those who are young and seeking to boost their income while studying and by older male workers nearing retirement. Thus, in general, these jobs are peripheral as sources of male employment and income (Francesconi and Gosling, 2005). For women, in contrast, regardless of the distribution of workers by sex in specific workplaces, part-time, low paid work is a typical and long-term form of employment for many women in their 30s, 40s, and 50s, the prime years of working life

Summary

The research has revealed a range of reasons why women work in jobs which are below their full potential in the labour market. The most important factors were the limitations of the labour market and the limited access to training and promotion for part-time workers in many workplaces. There were no significant variations across the labour markets studied; in all of the localities the same set of factors emerged.

Part-time jobs are widely available and many offer hours of work which are attractive to women with children, including some availability of term-time working. However, on the open labour market, job opportunities tend to be restricted to low paid work at the lower end of workplace hierarchies. In most of the workplaces studied, managers explained that there were women working part-time occupying higher grade jobs, but they tended to be women who had negotiated a new pattern of work after maternity leave and who had remained with the same employer. Based on the women interviewed for this study, however, many of the women working below their potential are women who have taken a break from employment. They found themselves in workplaces where there were no clear career paths, or no opportunities for advancement for part-time workers occupying the lower grades.

Many women returners had lost their confidence in relation to the labour market during their absence from it. Returning to jobs which were below their potential had compounded this loss of confidence. Although many of the women interviewed were planning to regain their lost status at work, it will require considerable personal resources, determination and confidence to do this. The higher grade skills they had were sometimes obsolete in the contemporary labour market, and thus they needed to engage in time-consuming and costly training and education to find the high paid jobs they would prefer. There is little publicly funded support for women in this situation and thus new career paths have to be forged independently.¹³

Some of the women working below their potential had 'chosen' low graded jobs because of their experience of a pressurised and intense work environment in the recent past. They were now counting the cost of demotion in terms of loss of status, income and pension rights. Although their new work enabled them to achieve a better work-life balance, which was welcomed, they had lacked support to negotiate an intense work schedule in their previous jobs.

Some women had 'chosen' to work below their potential in order to achieve what they regarded as a reasonable work-life balance. But as is the case for those who were escaping the pressures of senior level employment, there can be ambivalence in the choices made. It is impossible to know whether choices might be different in the context of a different type of labour market.

Many of the women interviewed expressed regret at their lost status and were critical of the pay they received in their current jobs. Some were struggling to make ends meet. But it appears unlikely that there will be significant changes in the pay levels for the jobs studied. The pay setting process is one which appears to trap these jobs in low waged segments of the economy and this is further encouraged by the way in which employers confer with each other to maintain similar levels of pay across industrial sectors and localities.

Overall, the absence of higher paid part-time work on the open labour market and the poor opportunities for progression for part-time workers and for women working in certain sectors, suggests that there is much that could be done to rescue wasted talent and to utilise the wasted investment in women's education and training. Given the crucial importance of maximising labour supply in the coming decades, when the combination of new jobs in the economy and a shrinking working age population will create major recruitment difficulties for many organisations, it is essential that these issues are tackled. We discuss some of the policy implications arising from the research in the conclusion.

¹³ The Skills White Paper 2003 introduced a 'Level 2 entitlement' to free tuition support for adults to gain their first full Level 2 qualification in two pilot regions (North East and South East) which are likely to be rolled out nationally in the future. This entitlement is available to people in work as well as those who are unemployed or outside the labour market. The Employer Training Pilots first introduced in 2003 (currently being run in some regions and going national from 2006) have provided employers with access to government funds to upskill existing employees. This is mainly limited to basic skills and training up to Level 2 at present, but is a model which could potentially be developed to support upskilling to higher levels in the future.

4 THE DESIGN OF PART-TIME JOBS

Given the limited range of job opportunities for women seeking part-time work, we have sought to understand why part-time jobs are clustered in low paid, low skilled jobs. This chapter explores how and why the employers in the workplaces studied design part-time jobs, and how these jobs are reproduced over time. We also examine managers' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of part-time work and their views regarding part-time workers. The chapter seeks to explain why there are so few part-time jobs in more senior, management level positions and discusses why most managers are resistant to the creation of senior level part-time jobs in their workplaces. We also outline the views and experiences of trade union representatives on these issues.

Types of part-time jobs

The interviews with managers revealed two distinct types of part-time jobs, reflecting the different ways in which part-time workers were used in the participating workplaces. These two types of jobs are:

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

Such jobs can be, and are, filled by employees on either full-time contracts or on part-time contracts, although they tend to be filled by women on part-time contracts.

- 'Demand-based part-time jobs', i.e. 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.

These jobs are filled by employees on part-time contracts who can be men or women.

'Task-based part-time jobs'

For the purposes of this study, '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 which fit into this category include care assistant, cleaner, learning support worker, catering assistant and administrative worker.

Some jobs are viewed as involving tasks which can be completed in a limited length of time, i.e. in a time period less than a full-time period. Other jobs involve tasks which are only performed at certain, limited, times of the day. Many employers evaluate the length of time required to fulfil a particular task, e.g. to clean the ward of a hospital, to provide personal care services to an individual, or to offer a support service to students in a classroom setting, and construct employment on this basis.

Keeping costs down

The aim is to use part-time employment as a means of avoiding unnecessary wage costs by not paying for 'down time' in the working day, i.e. time 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.

A departmental manager will look at what is needed. For example, he will know it takes 30 hours to clean a ward so we will recruit someone for 30 hours or 2 people at 15 hours... and domestic staff have to work when people are not there, either very early in the morning or late in the evening when everybody's gone.

If you're simply supporting in the classroom, as a learning support assistant, putting it bluntly, if they are not needed they are not paid. Their hours fit in with the time the students are here, when they are needed.

Obviously, teachers work much longer days than that...With support staff we are just paying people when they need to be here. The bottom line is saving money.

We try to avoid down time, time when there isn't any work, it's quite difficult to allocate someone work continuously over a period of 7 or 8 hours. In the old days when someone had a lot of free time we'd say, 'Oh look, Mrs. Bloggs could always do with a bit of extra care, go round and do some cleaning'. But we can't do that now because we work strictly to care plans and service users are charged by the hour.

What we try to do is avoid unproductive time...when I take people on I know the hours I need to cover. It's the needs of the service which drives when you employ people.

In some workplaces, deploying people for very specific periods of the day has been fine-tuned over a number of years. Thus one manager stated:

What we had before was staff working say from 8 'til 12, but whilst they were very busy from 8 'til 9.30, up 'til 12 o'clock there was nothing for them to do and they'd be hanging around... Now the whole thing is based on, what does the customer need and when do they need it. So the patterns of working and the hours of working tend to be geared to that.

In these cases, part-time employment results from a situation where the work tasks delivered are not deemed to be required on a continuous basis, but only at specific times of the day, week, or year. Hours of work can be finely tuned to avoid excess wage costs.

Task-based part-time workers regarded as 'easily replaced'

For some managers, this approach is underpinned by a view of the workers employed in task-based part-time jobs as easily replaceable. As one manager explained:

It's perceived, rightly or wrongly, that the less complicated the job (the more) it lends itself to part-time, because you are just looking for a bum on a seat as opposed to the continuity of the individual.

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.

'Task-based part-time jobs' attract women looking for part-time work

Although 'task-based part-time jobs' can be filled by people on full-time or part-time contracts, the people attracted to 'task-based part-time jobs' tend to be women looking for part-time work. It is likely that such jobs have always been advertised on a part-time basis. Custom and practice, and gendered assumptions, have 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. Prospective employees are aware that this area of work is normally offered on a part-time basis. Thus, over time, a number of factors have combined to ensure that certain jobs tend to be filled by women on part-time contracts:

Because of the type of service you are delivering, personal care, it lends itself more to attracting part-timers.

What the manager really means here is the service attracts *women* looking for part-time work. Managers often stressed the ease of recruiting to task-based part-time jobs; the hours of work were often relatively stable over time and some are term-time only:

People like them because it fits with family responsibilities. In other words, you can work as a learning support assistant...and still drop off your own children and pick them up at the end of the day...So the job would be advertised as 25/26 hours per week, term-time, and we would be inundated with applicants.

Contracts can vary

For 'task-based part-time jobs', however, the nature of the contracts on which employees are employed can vary. Not all 'task-based part-time jobs' are filled by employees on part-time contracts. Full-time employees can carry out more than one 'task-based part-time job' in a workplace:

I don't think we designate as part-time, that's the wrong word, as it could be a full-time member of staff providing the service. It's to do with recruitment. It's about who you've got available and sometimes there is

difficulty with part-time staff because of the hours. It may be 7 - 11 in the evening and that's not a favourite time to go out to work... we're looking at the amount of hours we have to cover. If we cover that with all full-time staff or all part-time staff it would do as well. So it's not designated as a full-time or a part-time role.

Indeed some managers were seeking to break out of the 'part-time job/woman's job' approach. Jobs which had historically been regarded as a 'part-time job/woman's job' had recently been advertised on a full-time basis as well, with surprising results:

I guess it is historical, and it's about people's availability, and also the people who apply. Sometimes when people apply, generally, they are not always looking for full-time work. But when we advertised for full-time people we did get... we had more males apply... so that did produce different results. And as well, the existing (female) staff saw the adverts and seized the opportunity to work full-time.

This suggests that by constructing rotas in particular ways, more 'task-based part-time jobs' could be filled by people on full-time contracts. This approach would help to break down the association between part-time jobs and women. In turn, it would also help to create more balanced workforces in which more flexible working hours arrangements were encouraged.

'Task-based part-time jobs', as explained above, are *the* jobs, within the range of part-time employment, which tend to be dominated by women employees. Thus their association with 'women's work' has become widespread and deeply embedded.

'Demand-based part-time jobs'

As well as a category of 'task-based part-time jobs', there is also a category of 'demand-based part-time jobs'. In this case, it is the *flow of business and the nature of the labour market* which are important in understanding the design of part-time jobs. Employers design '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. The jobs which fit into this category include checkout operators, production and assembly workers in manufacturing, library assistants, security workers and bar workers.

Easing recruitment

Some employers had constructed 'demand-based part-time jobs' in order to ease recruitment and/or to solve retention problems. For example, some of the employers pointed out that the combination of low unemployment in their locality and low pay had created significant recruitment problems. The construction of 'demand-based part-time jobs' can be a solution. As one manager explained:

Term-time, school hours working, arose as a response to low unemployment in this area. We were scratching around for any ideas to get people in. We haven't always been madly keen on that as a group, because you've got this big summer holiday to deal with and it does require management... and there's so many INSET [In-Service Training] days... so we can be literally down to about 38 weeks of the year.

Filling shortfalls

In some workplaces, 'demand-based part-time jobs' had been constructed to fill a shortfall in the personnel available to deliver a service or to produce a product. Using full-time employees would not fill these gaps cost effectively, as the additional staffing is not needed for a full-time period. Gaps can be additional hours in a day or additional whole days. For example, one retail organisation had recently extended its opening hours. The longer, additional, hours had been filled by using employees on part-time contracts. Similarly, one of the manufacturers had experienced increased demand for its products which had led it to operate production over a longer time period, each day and across the week. Again, the additional hours and days were filled by employing people on part-time contracts:

We just started taking on part-timers to cover the gaps. We were trying to meet the demand for products. There was no altruistic or work-life balance reasons for it. It's purely for the commercial needs of the business.

Boosting numbers

In some workplaces, 'demand-based part-time jobs' were constructed to boost the number of workers at particular times of the day or week, for example because of a particularly heavy workload or trading period:

There is no area of work where we just say, that is purely for part-time. There are jobs, a lot of jobs, where we have the work duties aligned to when the work comes in, but we don't differentiate saying that can only be for part-time. Part-time workers are boosting the staff available at that time of day.

We have to match the labour to the trade... so it doesn't really matter whether it's full time or part-time. It's where you are going to best spend your money. What hours do you actually need... and what's the cost.

Demand-based part-time jobs: a fluid picture

In workplaces using 'demand-based part-time jobs', the use of part-time employment appears to be more fluid than in workplaces where 'task-based part-time jobs' dominate. As we have seen above, in some of the workplaces which were heavily dependent on 'task-based part-time jobs', managers were beginning to review their approach. In some of these cases, this was likely to lead to the greater use of full-time contracts. In workplaces where 'demand-based part-time jobs' were used, by contrast, the balance between full-time and part-time tended to be constantly under review in line with business needs:

As a business we don't go out of our way to upset our people, but there are probably better ways to manage our business with fewer part-timers... we are not consciously recruiting part-timers now.

As the service we provide has expanded, so that we are now open for longer hours and open on Sundays, so we have developed a greater mix of hours that people work. If you took 30 of our staff you might get 23 different combinations of hours. The needs of the service are paramount. If there is an additional 15 hours we need to cover, that's what we try to recruit, but it's very fluid.

An aspect of this re-assessment of the part-time/full-time balance occurring in these workplaces was the desire to wrest control over flexibility away from workers and to reassert management control over flexibility:

We had a long hard look at our business, and we noticed that a lot of part-timers were working 5 days a week. They had a one day contract, but they were working 5 days one week and 3 days the next and 2 days, whatever and... we said, right, you can have a choice of a five day contract or no contract... So we have tried to move away from the part-time working now and gaining more flexibility through the week by altering our shift patterns.

All the time, we are trying to become more efficient in the operation, and that involves getting rid of heads and becoming more productive with the heads you've got... On the late shift we converted a lot of overtime into part-time work because the night shift people would pick and choose what nights they did. They wouldn't do Fridays and it left us vulnerable... But the full-time staff see the part-time staff as taking away their earnings opportunities.

This consideration of the reasons why employers construct part-time jobs helps us to understand why part-time jobs tend to be clustered in lower skilled jobs. The part-time nature of the job fulfils the working time requirements associated with particular tasks and particular workplaces. This is why working time on these jobs tends to be controlled by the employer rather than the worker themselves.

A further insight into why certain lower skilled jobs are associated with part-time work is provided by an examination of managers' views about part-time employment.

Advantages of part-time employment: managers' views

Whether a part-time employee is working in a 'task-based' or in a 'demand-based' part-time job, managers highlighted a variety of advantages of part-time contracts. In particular, managers argued that part-time employees can offer low-cost overtime, are easier to cover when absent and, in workplaces with large numbers of part-timers, create a bigger pool of labour and thus a more flexible workforce.

Enhancing flexibility

Many of the managers stated that employees on part-time contracts provided them with a significant degree of flexibility. That is to say, their hours of work could be increased when required. Most managers had little difficulty in securing additional working hours from many of their part-time employees, and this was seen as a cost effective means to cover, for example, holidays and sickness absence because overtime rates of pay were not incurred:

They provide us with a lot of flexibility... in that sometimes they are able to work more hours if necessary, and if they do that it is an economic benefit to us because we are not paying enhanced rates... So they are attractive to us from a purely commercial point of view.

As a company, part-time gives us more flexibility, it gives us more heads to the business... and a bigger pool of labour for overtime.

If you employ someone for 20 hours a week, we are able to flex them up to 39 and get some overtime out of them.

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

I think it helps the service we provide. We've got lots of different workplaces, lots of different opening hours, we need people who are able to accommodate that and be flexible. The traditional 9 to 5 is not what the service is about...we need some flexibility.

In its extreme form, this control over working time involves employing staff on 'banded contracts'. This means that:

One week they might do 10 hours, another 20 hours and one week they may not have any work at all, and then another it will increase. They work up to 30 hours a week, but the idea is to maintain it between 20 and 30 hours over the month.

In a number of workplaces, contracts for a guaranteed minimum numbers of hours are offered, although employees almost always work additional hours:

They usually have a contractual agreement with a minimum number of hours so they may be contracted to work 16 hours, but are prepared to work over, so their hours fluctuate. They might be on a 16 hour contract but working 30 hours if we're really busy.

We have lots of cashiers on flexible contracts where they work, for example, 20 hours or 30 hours flexible....Their rota may change on a weekly or monthly basis. So one Thursday they might work between 10 and 4 and another Thursday they work between 2 and 8....These are people who say to us 'we are available between 10 and 8, Monday to Friday'.

Disadvantages of part-time employment: managers' views

Paradoxically, whilst managers value the low cost flexibility that many part-time workers offer them, they also claim that part-timers are often unprepared to work additional hours and thus can be *inflexible*. They regarded this as partly a consequence of the restrictions which family responsibilities and other responsibilities outside work place on part-time workers:

They do offer flexibility, you can juggle their hours. The reverse is that people come into the job because of other responsibilities, so sometimes they can't be very flexible in an emergency.

Lots of our part-time applicants are not very flexible. A lot have children and they are working around childcare and the cost of childcare and they're working around their partners...that's probably our biggest challenge, flexible part-time people.

To be honest, sometimes with part-timers, if they've got a commitment outside work, some might not have that flexibility and they say to you, this is what I can work and that is what they'll stick to...so sometimes you do have disadvantages which don't suit the business.

Part-time people are less flexible because they have either got two jobs or they've got family commitments. They are working part-time for a reason, and so that means if we do want them to work full-time they might not be able to.

Managers also claimed that part-timers' flexibility can be constrained by the workings of the tax and benefit system:

Workers say, 'I need to have my hours under a certain level for Tax Credits'. To be honest, I can see that, there is a lot of money to earn with tax credits.

They will come in and speak to us and, you know, say 'I'm a lone parent and I'm claiming this... so I am limited to what I can work'. So we often have to accommodate their needs,

In fact, under current rules, to qualify for Tax Credits employees must work 16 hours or more per week and there are incentives within the Tax Credit system designed to encourage people to work longer hours than this. Claimants of Income Support, on the other hand, must work less than 16 hours to retain access to the benefit. And because Income Support operates as a passport to other benefits, including Council Tax Benefit, workers are understandably keen to maintain their eligibility. Some managers were critical of this system:

For employers, having to reduce hours to meet the tax and benefit system is not good... We are trying to meet the needs of the business, but people are coming to us with all these issues.

Overall, the ability to extend part-time hours of work, without incurring overtime costs, was one of the key advantages of part-time employment.

Part-time workers: managers' views

We discussed with managers their views about part-time workers. Some managers took a very positive view of part-time workers:

The part-time workers, we are really dependent on them. They bring a different feel to the store, 'cos they've got other lives as well, and they encourage us to remember the work-life balance.

However, it was quite common for managers to hold negative views about part-time workers, regarding them as less loyal, less focused on their work, and less reliable:

Part-timers are inevitably less loyal... There is quite a lot of loyalty amongst the workforce when we do our employee surveys... but the number dips for part-time employees, and I think that's (because) if you are only coming in one day a week, it's pin money, so that's the essential difference.

We seem to get more problems with the part-time staff, and I think that is because they are trying to balance more things... There is more absence, being late, sometimes reliability about what they are doing whilst they are here. I think the quality and the calibre of the full-time staff is higher than the part-time staff.

The study shows that the main reasons why most part-time jobs are at the lower levels is because employers have very specific reasons for designing specific jobs as part-time. These reasons relate to keeping wage costs down, being able to boost numbers of staff at specific times and enhancing flexibility. Part-time workers are widely regarded by managers as replaceable workers, whose hours and patterns of work can be changed to suit business needs.

Senior level part-time jobs

Given these distinct purposes which employers assign to part-time employment, and which underpin job design, it is not surprising that opportunities to work part-time in senior or management level jobs were limited. In the research we found that while in the workplaces studied there were individual women working

part-time in senior or management positions, senior jobs were usually full-time, unless an existing member of staff had negotiated a reduced-hours contract.

The managers interviewed stated that they would be willing to consider requests from existing senior staff seeking to re-negotiate reduced hours or a job share arrangement and, under the terms of the Employment Act 2002, certain categories of employee have the 'right to request' flexible working, including part-time work.¹⁴ In some of the workplaces studied, arrangements for this had been established. Yet, despite this, for existing employees working part-time in lower level jobs, the barriers to accessing managerial jobs are substantial. This is because managerial jobs are almost invariably constructed as full-time jobs. Internal candidates for these positions would normally be expected to increase their hours to full-time:

If it's a full-time managerial job they would have to be able to do full-time hours.

If you want to work part-time, the opportunities for promotion are limited.

There were a number of reasons for this.

Replacing 'like with like'

First, in many workplaces, the balance between part-time and full-time staff remains much the same year on year, because line managers tend to replace 'like with like', part-time with part-time, and full-time with full-time, maintaining existing patterns of employment over long periods of time.

Not a lot of thought goes in – 'should this be a part-time job?' I shouldn't think that happens very often...someone leaves, the person's full-time and the line manager doesn't think – 'can I do that in another way?' He should be, and that's the role of HR to challenge that.

I think, over the years, we've pretty much replaced like with like and we've not really ever thought, is this role worth splitting in two, would it give us a bit more variation to re-evaluate the position and say, there's a bit more focus needed in that area...I guess no one has ever sat back and thought, is there a different way of doing this?

Job content

Secondly, managers argued 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, and essential decisions would not be taken.

I think philosophically you'd like to do it...but my experience of people being appointed part-time to management is that they end up not doing some aspects of management because you've got to be here. I wouldn't be averse to a job share if someone requested it, but I wouldn't advertise a management job as a job share...All other jobs a job share would be considered, but at management level, no.

It would be very difficult to justify a part-time role, say, as a duty manager... because they are all on a 3-week shift rota... If you introduced a part-timer into that it's going to throw them out... and it couldn't be done as job share... where would you get the continuity and the decisions that are made - every senior management team meeting that we had, you'd have to have both of the people doing that job in all the meetings...it wouldn't, it couldn't work.

You couldn't have a part-time department head... it's just the bulk of the work that's involved, unless another manager took on more of the responsibility. But then it would be a cascade effect; the work would still be here. You're managing a team of people, and even in 39 hours a week you still can't manage it.

Putting systems in place

However as managers engaged with us in a discussion about opening up part-time jobs at more senior levels, a few thought that perhaps this could work if new mechanisms were put in place to ensure that outstanding work was completed and important decisions could be taken.

¹⁴ At the time of writing, only parents of a child aged under 6, or of a disabled child under 18, have these rights protected by law. The Work and Families Act 2006 extends these to carers of older, sick and disabled people. These rights provide for a 'right to request' and the request can be refused by employers.

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...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.

Yet other managers were concerned that if senior posts were advertised part-time on the open labour market the calibre of candidates would decline.

We're not going to get such a good field if we advertise for someone 4 days a week...the field won't be as good as it would be for full-time.

Interestingly, this view was held despite the fact that in this, and in other workplaces, there was a growing tendency for existing full-time employees to request reduced hours working, i.e. precisely those people who might be looking for part-time work on the open labour market if their requests at their current place of work had been declined. Other managers would only consider the option if they were forced to do so by circumstances, for example, if they faced difficulties in recruiting full-time staff.

At the senior level it's mainly full-time staff. But I suppose it could be possible to do part-time. But it would depend on how easy it would be to fill the vacant hours...Your staff would need to know who to approach on certain issues, but it's not impossible. I think it would be easier to do if you can propose how to overcome the barriers...it depends on the individual rather than the organisation, and our business reason for that would be if we had difficulty recruiting full-time.

I think the one area where (part-time) would be difficult, and as yet nobody has requested it, is as head of a large department...The problem is then, who manages that department when they are not here...If you are not in for, say, one day a week you won't find someone willing to pick up all the hassle for one day's pay. If they want to go literally point 5¹⁵ we could probably do it as a job share...It is a specific one, but we will probably have to find a solution to that as well.

Conceptual barriers

Perhaps one of the key barriers to the development of more senior level part-time jobs was that the very concept of a 'part-time manager' is something that many managers find difficult to accept.

My role is too important to be part-time. It's a full-time position... there is literally too much work for one person to do in half the time.

I've never thought of it. We'd only do it if someone in a head of department role wanted to change to point 5, but I haven't come across anyone at that level of responsibility who is part-time.

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. 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, regardless of where we conducted the research, 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.

Looking to the future

Nevertheless, the introduction of the right to request flexible working for some employees (under the *Employment Act 2002*) is opening up this issue in workplaces, and may encourage new ways of thinking about patterns of work and job design. The issue is whether the full-time/part-time balance which persists in most 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. As some managers looked to the future, they could see a range of reasons why part-time jobs would be more likely

¹⁵ 'Point 5' means exactly half of a full-time contract.

to be available across a wider range of jobs. One important reason was the increasing importance attached to achieving a better work-life balance.

There is a view in other organisations – part-time's OK but only for jobs down here...I've never come across that here. There is a push here to get the work-life balance correct. There is a push against the long hours culture.

What I tell staff about this is that this workplace is no different to any other organisation...in terms of family friendly policy and creating more opportunities for part-time work. We have to do it, we are doing it.

I think sometimes the managers are fairly closed to new ways of doing things. Maybe they can't see the opportunity...there is a bit of our HR strategy which hasn't been finalised...And I do think sometimes I need to say, 'would it be better as a job share?', which still meets the needs of the service. When I joined here there was a real anti-job share approach, but now we have got a lot more job shares and they work.

A second factor which may encourage the development of a wider range of jobs as part-time related to tight labour markets in some localities and the need to open up recruitment to as wide a range of people as possible.

We need to be more proactive about how we see roles...we want to recruit the best so we shouldn't be narrowing everything down to full-time...so we are going in the right direction, but we are not there yet.

I think it is very interesting. It's no good if we put barriers up to a big, potential workforce...we just put out the advert, the standard 39 hours and to someone it could be the most basic barrier...it's about how explicit you are, up front, with the advert. Do you put all your cards on the table, or should you leave yourself a bit of flexibility. Something to think about.

There was also a view that by restricting certain jobs to full-time hours it was difficult to achieve a diverse workforce which reflected the wider community.

The reasons why we'll have more part-timers in the future is about attracting the right people, opening recruitment to a wider group, being fair and having a workforce which is more reflective of the wider community. The more flexible options we can offer the wider we cast our net recruitment-wise, and that's got to be good news for diversity generally.

Finally, one manager argued that the changing nature of employment and the need for increasing flexibility would widen the occupations in which part-time employment was available.

I guess one of the challenges, if we are being critical of this whole process, is we are in this full-time frame of mind...and I think, overall, industry in general is going to get a lot more flexible...The whole idea of a forty hour week is probably going to be very different in 10 years' time. There's going to be a lot more movement between employers, especially around specialist skills. The industry will demand more flexibility, so I guess it's something we need to start thinking about.

Yet despite these reflections by managers on the future place of part-time employment within workplaces and labour markets, at the present time, even in workplaces where managers took a broadly positive view regarding part-time jobs at senior level, the managers were clear that the process of designing more senior level, part-time jobs was in the very early stages of conception. In none of the workplaces was there a clear and established policy to advertise all jobs, regardless of their level, as available on both a part-time or a full-time basis.

Trade union perspectives

One aspect of this study has been to explore the views and experiences of trade unionists with regard to part-time working. The trade union representatives (reps) interviewed in this study took a very positive view of part-time working, seeing it as a valid working pattern and essential if workers are to be able to combine family responsibilities and paid work. There was also a widespread view amongst the reps that addressing the quality of part-time jobs, and the conditions associated with them, were important priorities for the trade union movement.

The reps were supportive of the notion of extending the range of part-time jobs available on the open labour market, and concerned that some of the issues associated with women working below their potential in low paid, part-time jobs had in the past been overlooked by the trade union movement.

The wider issue of the cluster of part-time jobs in the low wage economy has been missed by the unions.

The reps' experience was that the higher the level of the job, the less likely that part-time work would be considered by managers. Managers, they argued, were often very resistant to creating senior level part-time jobs.

You can have part-timers doing any job that a full-time worker does. It's just that the employers need to support part-time workers doing the jobs. Most employers, mine is one of them, only see the value of employing part-time workers at the lower end, and he doesn't want to put in the effort to enable part-time workers to do the range of jobs, across the whole spectrum.

There is massive resistance to part-time working at every level on the open market, because taking on two people means twice as much training, twice as much resource, it's cheaper to employ one.

It was pointed out that while in the public sector many jobs were routinely advertised on a full-time or job share basis, in competition, a worker able to work full-time would invariably be favoured over one who could only work part-time. And where job share agreements are in place, the responsibility for finding a job share partner was often placed on workers themselves. The reps wanted 'employers ... to make part-time more accessible and more available, but argued that while some line managers were willing to consider new approaches to recruitment, others can be reluctant to try something new.

If people come up with something different or suggest working in a different way, there are some managers who say, 'it can't be done', whereas others will say, 'let's see if we can make it work'.

There was also a concern that even where organisations have very good policies, local managers may fail to put them into practice.

It's important to remember that corporate policy announcements often differ from the entrenched, private views of local managers.

The reps put forward a range of ideas about how to open up more jobs at every level to part-time working.

Extending the right to request flexible working

Introducing legislation to extend the right to request flexible working to all workers was regarded as vitally important:

What we need is the right to request flexible working for all. This will enable more women to stay in their jobs.

Part-time working, they argued, should cease to be seen as an option only granted to certain employees.

We have to get away from seeing the opportunity to work part-time as a favour and something that other employees should not be told about, something to keep to oneself. We need to get the issue more into the open.

Re-thinking job design

The second important issue was the need for more creative thinking around job design. This was essential if more jobs were to be constructed as part-time jobs.

What we want are decent jobs. We have to apply the principle of good job design to everybody, and accept that any job can be done on a part-time basis. The issue is not about whether people work part-time or not, it's actually about identifying what resources we need in this area of work and looking at what the resources would be and making sure we have got sufficient resources, irrespective of whether it's part-time or full-time people doing it.

It's easy to do some jobs on a part-time basis, they lend themselves to that. If we want more and different jobs on a part-time basis we have to do a lot of thinking about restructuring jobs.

Addressing the equality agenda

For the trade union representatives the case for a wider availability of part-time jobs across all occupational levels should be part of the mainstream agenda for equality in workplaces. The argument here was that women's access to jobs and their promotion opportunities were limited as long as part-time jobs were restricted to the lower levels.

Where I work, part-timers can't go anywhere, they can only progress to a certain level. And in our department they want to tap the blue eyed boys on the shoulder, and that depresses the opportunities for part-timers even further.

We want more part-time jobs, but what we don't need is more crappy, low-end jobs with no prospects.

The concentration of part-time jobs within lower skilled occupations was regarded as an aspect of sexual discrimination in the workplace.

We need to remind employers that this is indirect sexual discrimination.

It was crucial to break down the segregation which led to 'men's jobs' and 'women's jobs'. If participation in jobs were more mixed, the disadvantages women part-time workers experience might begin to be tackled. But unions also needed to give more attention to the broader issues of concern to women. Many of the problems associated with part-time work, and the restriction of part-time jobs to low paid work, should be presented and addressed as women's issues. As such, they could be given more attention at the national level.

There is a real need for a more concrete 'women's agenda'.

Unions need to organise themselves with more women within the union structure and to address issues of concern to women.

Overall, it was suggested that unions do have a role in breaking down the negative views that persist about part-time workers and part-time work. This might involve rethinking the very term 'part-time', and highlighting the skills and abilities of part-time workers

We have to promote part-time jobs as equal to full-time jobs. The term 'part-time' has negative connotations. We need to get rid of that tag.

We have to get across the message that part-time workers work part-time; they are not part-skilled.

Trade unions need to be speaking up the skills of these people. We need to be telling employers that we've got people in part-time jobs with knowledge, experience and skills

The trade union representatives were thus keen to see more part-time jobs at every level within their workplaces but they felt there would be considerable difficulties in taking these issues up on a workplace basis. They hoped, therefore, that at the national level, and also at the European level, trade unions would be keen to pursue this issue.

Reps tend to 'fire fight' on a day to day basis. It's difficult to deal with longer term, strategic aims because we don't have the facility time and we don't get any cover for our mounting workloads. You have to do everything off your own bat, in your own time. This should be taken up nationally.

We don't have the resources at a local level to be effective. This is a trade union strategy that needs to be implemented at the national and the European level.

We want to tackle these bigger issues, but we have to deal with the day to day issues rather than the long term issues.

Summary

The design of part-time jobs takes different forms in different workplaces. In some workplaces, 'task-based part-time jobs' are constructed, where employers argue that the tasks involved are capable of being completed in less than a full-time period. In other workplaces, 'demand-based part-time jobs' are constructed in order to ease recruitment, to cover extended operations and to introduce additional employees to meet peaks in trade, production and service delivery.

'Task-based part-time jobs' tend to attract women looking for part-time employment. The jobs which fit into this category include care assistant, cleaner, learning support worker, catering assistant and administrative worker. With a careful organisation of rotas, task-based part-time jobs can be undertaken by employees on full-time contracts, and this has occurred in some workplaces. If adopted more widely, this approach would lead to a more even balance between part-time and full-time jobs in workplaces and thus might help to break down the strong association between 'task-based part-time jobs' and women, as more men might be attracted into these jobs. In turn, this might help in raising income levels in these jobs.

'Demand-based part-time jobs' tend to attract both men and women, although again it is predominantly women who occupy these jobs. The jobs which fit into this category include checkout operators, production and assembly workers in manufacturing, library assistants, security workers and bar workers. Managers report that the men occupying these jobs are either students, or sometimes men with full-time jobs elsewhere who are supplementing their weekly income. Employers using 'demand-based part-time jobs' seek flexibility from their employees to accommodate changes in production or meet service delivery needs. In these workplaces, managers are concerned to assert managerial control over flexible working.

Managers reported a range of advantages in using part-time workers, in particular the ability to increase their hours of work without incurring overtime costs. At the same time, some part-time workers are regarded as inflexible in terms of working hours because of their other commitments. Thus the wider notion of the importance of a work-life balance is not readily embraced.

In the workplaces studied, part-time working was normally associated with specific jobs at the lower end of workplace hierarchies. Thus the balance between full-time jobs and part-time jobs in some workplaces tended to be reproduced year on year. Line managers often had a specific and critical responsibility for requesting replacement staff, and they often replaced 'like with like'. The balance between part-time and full-time jobs in workplaces in which 'demand-based part-time jobs' are constructed is more fluid. But changes in the use of part-time and full-time staff are not driven by a desire to create a more balanced workforce so much as by reflections of some of the perceived disadvantages of part-time workers.

Some managers were concerned that, if jobs which were normally constructed as full-time were advertised as part-time on the open labour market, they would be less likely to secure a strong field of candidates. The option of advertising *all* jobs as available on a full-time or a part-time basis did not appear to have been considered in the workplaces studied.

Managers were generally very resistant to constructing management level jobs on a part-time basis. Whilst they were willing to consider requests from existing staff for job sharing at this level, they were mostly adamant that management roles necessarily involved full-time hours of work. This is an area where new thinking about the way jobs are designed would be required if a more even balance between full-time and part-time jobs were to be developed. There must also be an acceptance of the popularity of reduced hours working for some people at particular periods in their lives. Given that requests for reduced hours working can be declined, this inevitably pushes this group either onto the open labour market or into unemployment.

The Employment Act 2002 introduced a new right for certain categories of employee to request flexible working. This is forcing managers to rethink the deployment of staff and can cut across established approaches to the construction of full-time and part-time jobs. As a result, this is helping to prise open a debate about whether the full-time/part-time balance which persists in 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.

Trade union representatives were keen to see the right to request flexible working extended to all workers. But they also wanted to see a more creative approach to job design. For the trade union representatives many of the issues associated with part-time working were intimately linked to the wider equality agenda. It was women's access to the full range of jobs which was being limited by the concentration of part-time employment in the lower occupational levels. At the same time they argued that the very concept of 'a part-time job' held such negative connotations that it may be time to abandon the term 'part-time' and re-think how jobs are defined.

5 Policy Messages

This study has shown that over half of women working in low paid, part-time jobs are 'working below their potential'. That is to say, significant proportions of women working in part-time jobs are not using all of their skills, experience and qualifications in their current jobs. This figure is very similar to that found in a recent quantitative survey carried out for the EOC. As 44% of all employed women aged 16 and over worked part-time in Spring 2004 and women comprised 78% of all part-time workers (Hurrell, 2005), this is a serious and worrying statistic.

This failure to use women's talents and skills represents a waste of the training and education invested in women which, especially in a tightening labour market, the economy can ill afford. For women themselves, this can be a source of personal regret and frustration, impacting negatively on their own and their families' economic well-being. Despite strong growth in the number of part-time jobs available, as seen across the country and in all the districts studied here, large numbers of the women in this study could not find jobs that used their abilities; there are simply too few part-time jobs available at an appropriate level for the skills and experience of all the women seeking part-time work to be fully utilised.

At the same time, our evidence from managerial interviews confirms that part-time jobs are being reproduced year on year, as managers' practices tend to replace 'like with like', full-time with full-time, and part-time with part-time, without an awareness of the wider implications of this approach. The effect is that the part-time working pattern has become associated with particular types of jobs, to which low wage levels are attached and which are often characterised as low status. As we showed in Section 2, female part-time employment is strongly concentrated in the wholesale and retail, health and social work, restaurants and hotels and education sectors, and indeed almost 60% of women working part-time are in elementary, operative, sales and personal service occupations (compared with well under 30% of those in full-time employment). Our study confirms a widespread resistance to creating senior level part-time jobs, with the majority of managers interviewed holding a view that higher level jobs need to be full-time.

The lack of part-time jobs above the lowest pay levels on the open labour market is one of the predominant factors explaining why so many women work below their potential. Within workplaces too, opportunities for advancement are often just as limited. Thus women can find themselves trapped in low paid jobs if they wish to work part-time, as higher level jobs are often constructed only as full-time positions.

Evidence from the part-time employees we surveyed and interviewed confirms that once women work in a low paid, low status job for any length of time, they can lose confidence in their abilities and skills, further trapping them at the lower level. Others in this unsatisfactory situation are actively seeking to re-train or to update their educational qualifications in order to re-establish their position in the labour market. But this requires significant personal and financial resources, and is often done at considerable personal cost, since there is little public policy support for mature women in these circumstances.

Some women feel forced to leave their full-time jobs at a more senior level because of the intensity of work they experience. The long-hours culture and the range of demands on employees at senior levels in many workplaces forces some women to 'demote' themselves to low graded part-time jobs, in an effort to achieve a better work-life balance. Genuine and effective support for a healthy work-life balance was not evident in our research data. And while some women (and men) now have the legal right to request reduced or flexible hours working while retaining their position in the labour market, this option is not universally available or applied. The most recent DTI survey of flexible working found that 65% of British employees were aware of the right to request to work flexibly, although only 14% had requested a change to their working arrangements in the past two years. Amongst those who had made a request to change their working pattern, four-fifths of employees had had their request fully or partly accepted, while a tenth of requests had been declined, with the remainder awaiting a decision (Holt and Grainger, 2005).

We also found evidence that part-time workers are sometimes valued less highly than full-time workers by managers. They are seen as replaceable and their skills go unnoticed or are overlooked. Many of the managers in this study viewed part-time work as appropriate only in certain lower graded jobs; many could not conceptualise part-time working at every level and in every workplace. Thus the association between

women, part-time work and low pay has become embedded in the labour market structure and in organisational cultures, and in the way in which policy-makers, employers, trade unions and academics think about it.

Part-time jobs take different forms in different workplaces, and they are constructed for different reasons in different workplaces. In Section 4, we identified two broad types of part-time job: 'task-based' and 'demand-based'. These serve different purposes for employers. Depending on the type of part-time job predominant in any particular workplace, the balance between full-time and part-time jobs and between men and women can vary. To create a better balance between full-time and part-time jobs, and to improve the availability of part-time jobs at higher graded levels, more consideration therefore needs to be given to the factors underpinning the creation of part-time jobs, and how these differ. There is scope to break down the current full-time/part-time split which confines part-time workers to the lower levels, but it will require new thinking about how and why jobs and rotas are designed in specific ways. As we move towards a society in which an increasing range of goods and services are produced and consumed on a 24-hour, seven day a week basis, the time is ripe for a fresh look at the full-time/part-time balance of jobs. A number of managers in our research noted that they were receiving requests from both men and women to reduce their hours of work at particular points in their lives. This therefore also provides a timely context in which to reassess the distribution of full-time and part-time jobs.

The tendency for certain jobs to remain trapped in a low wage segment of the economy is partly underpinned by managers' perspectives about part-time employment and part-time workers. Managers in this study often saw low pay as appropriate for certain jobs and indeed for some individuals. As we noted in Section 3, some still regarded part-time women workers as working for 'pin money', regardless of their real economic circumstances. Employers also confirmed that they both confer with each other and share intelligence on pay rates to maintain pay levels within certain parameters. In some of the workplaces we studied, pay rates above the NMW, even a mere 50 pence above, were seen by some employers as generous.

Part-time work is a typical and long-term form of employment for many women throughout a long period in 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. This pattern of female part-time employment means that the economic well-being of hundreds of thousands of women is affected by the limited range of part-time jobs on offer, and by the low pay attached to the available part-time jobs. Many women do make a conscious choice to work part-time, but mostly they do not choose to squander their skills, abilities and earnings potential. To overcome this, more part-time jobs are needed at every level, in every workplace, and across the whole spectrum of industries and occupations.

The policy implications of this analysis lay down a challenge to employers, trade unions and government to open up a much wider range of part-time employment, so that the full range of women's talents and potential can be used (Kingsmill, 2001).

There are clear messages in this research too for those working at national, regional and local levels who are developing skills policy, responsible for vocational advice and guidance, and working with employers facing labour or skills shortages. At present, there is little to suggest that the millions of part-time employees who are locked into jobs below their potential are, or have ever been, at the centre of their thinking, planning and activities, where they urgently need to be.

There is a remarkable consistency across the localities in the range of explanations women provide for working below their potential. However, in each locality there are unique labour market conditions. A knowledge of these distinct local conditions will provide the key to opening up flexible and part-time employment in every workplace, at every level. That is to say, any strategy for developing a wider range of part-time jobs must take account of the specific issues to be tackled at the local level, whether the issue is the scarcity of part-time jobs, a low female employment rate, the concentration of part-time jobs in particular sectors or particular occupations, or low levels of pay. These kinds of factors are more or less important in different localities. An understanding of their salience in a specific local labour market, along

with knowledge of local patterns of employment change, provides vital evidence about how best to improve women's job opportunities and to extend their ability to access jobs which utilise their full labour market potential.

Finally, our analysis opens up a wider research agenda. Part-time employment suits the needs of many employers, enables organisations to operate flexibly and responsively, and draws much needed additional labour into the labour force. Further research is needed which can explore successful uses of part-time employment at higher levels of skill and in a wider range of occupations and industries, from the points of view of both employers and employees. This would enable us to understand the conditions in which part-time employment could be used so that skills can be used more fully.

Our interviews with women part-time workers also emphasise the need to reconnect large numbers of qualified and experienced workers with occupations and careers more fitting to their talents. New research into the most effective ways of tackling this, and the financial support arrangements necessary to make it a reality for the many mature and qualified women who need it, is now required. The Regional Skills Partnerships which have recently been formed in England have an opportunity to experiment and to pilot suitable schemes in conjunction with the Learning and Skills Councils and the Sector Skills Councils. It will be important to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements they make for women working below their potential in part-time jobs.

Alongside this, new research is also needed to explore the contribution which part-time workers make to their communities, to their families and to their neighbourhoods. As women working part-time have told us, these are important elements of their lives and ones to which they choose to make a commitment. This 'other side' of the lives of part-time workers is poorly understood, little documented and under-valued by society. A fuller understanding of this aspect of women's lives could help to ensure that the contribution women make to their families, to their communities and to the labour market are all valued and rewarded.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson J. (1984) *Flexibility: Uncertainty and Manpower Management*. Brighton: Institute of Manpower Studies, Report no. 89.
- Beechey, V. and Perkins, T. (1987) *A Matter of Hours: Women, Part-Time Work and the Labour Market*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bennett, C., Tang, N., and Yeandle, S. (2006) *Women's Career Development in the Local Authority Sector - Synthesis Report* Sheffield: Centre for Social Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University.
- Blackwell, L. (2001) 'Occupational sex segregation and part-time work in modern Britain', *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 8, 2: 146-63.
- Buckner, L., Tang, N. and Yeandle, S. (2004-2006) *Gender Profile of Local Labour Market*. GELLM Research Programme Series 1, part 5 (Camden), part 6 (Leicester), part 7 (Thurrock), part 12 (Trafford), part 4 (Wakefield) and part 8 (West Sussex). Sheffield: Centre for Social Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University. Available at: <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/csi/publications.html>
- Dale, A., Shaheen, N., Kalra, V. and Fieldhouse, E. (2002) 'The Labour Market Prospects for Pakistani and Bangladeshi Women', Working Paper No. 11, ESRC Future of Work Programme, ISSN 1468-1531.
- Darton, D. and Hurrell, K. (2005) *People working part-time below their potential*. Manchester, EOC Available at: http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/research/below_their_potential.pdf
- Escott, K. and Buckner, L. (2006) *Addressing Women's Poverty: Local Labour Market Initiatives - Synthesis Report* Sheffield: Centre for Social Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University.
- Equal Opportunities Commission (2005a) *Part-time is no crime - so why the penalty?* Interim report of the EOC's investigation into flexible and part-time working. Manchester: EOC.
- Equal Opportunities Commission (2005b) *Britain's hidden brain drain*. Final report of the EOC's investigation into flexible and part-time working. Manchester: EOC.
- Fagan, C. (2001) 'Time, money and the gender order: work orientations and work-time preferences in Britain', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 8, 3: 239-66.
- Francesconi, M. and Gosling, A. (2005) *Career paths of part-time workers*. EOC Working Paper Series no. 19. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.
- Grant, L., Yeandle, S and Buckner, L (2005) *Working below potential: women and part-time work*, EOC Working Paper Series No 40, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission
- Grant, L. and Buckner, L. (2006) *Connecting Women with the Labour Market - Synthesis Report* Sheffield: Centre for Social Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University.
- Grimshaw, D. and Rubery, J. (2001) *The Gender Pay Gap: A Research Review*. EOC Research Discussion Series. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.
- Hakim, C. (1996) 'The sexual division of labour and women's heterogeneity', *British Journal of Sociology*, 47, 1: 178-88.
- Hakim, C. (2000) *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century: Preference Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harkness, S. (2002) *Low Pay, Times of Work and Gender*. EOC Working Paper Series no. 3. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.
- Holt, H. and Grainger, H. (2005) *Results of the second flexible working employee survey*. Employment Relations Research Series No. 39. London: DTI.
- Hurrell, K. (2005) *Facts About Women and Men in Great Britain*. Manchester: EOC.
- Kingsmill, D. (2001) *Review of Women's Pay and Employment*. London: Department of Trade and Industry.
- McRae, S. (2003) 'Constraints and choices in mothers' employment careers: a consideration of Hakim's preference theory', *British Journal of Sociology*, 54, 3: 317-38.
- Manning, A. and Petrongolo, B. (2004) *The Part-time Pay Penalty*. London: Women and Equality Unit
- Olsen, W. and Walby, S. (2004) *Modelling gender pay gaps*. EOC Working Paper Series no. 17. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission.

- Phillips, A. and Taylor, B. (1980) 'Sex and skill: Notes towards a feminist economics', *Feminist Review*, 6: 79-88.
- Walsh, J. (1999) 'Myths and counter-myths: an analysis of part-time female employees and their orientations to work and working hours', *Work, Employment and Society*, 13, 2: 179-203.
- Warren, T. and Walters, P. (1998) 'Appraising a dichotomy: a review of 'part-time/full-time' in the study of women's employment in Britain', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 5, 2: 102-18.
- Yeandle, S., Shipton, L. and Buckner, L. (2006) *Local Challenges in Meeting Demand for Domiciliary Care – Synthesis Report* Sheffield: Centre for Social Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University.
- Yeandle, S., Stiell, B. and Buckner, L. (2006) *Ethnic Minority Women and Access to the Labour Market – Synthesis Report* Sheffield: Centre for Social Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University.

APPENDIX 1 GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT IN LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS

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/csj
- 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/csj. 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 (first 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 research for this study of women's part-time work included:

- Negotiating access to 22 workplaces in 6 localities: Camden, Leicester, Trafford, Thurrock, Wakefield and West Sussex. (See Table A)
- A questionnaire survey of women working in part-time jobs in these workplaces
- Interviews with women in part-time jobs working 'below their potential' in these workplaces
- Interviews with 22 senior managers in these workplaces.

The field work for the study was conducted during 2004 and 2005. The research also involved extensive analysis of statistical data, including the 2001 Census, and focus group interviews with 29 trade union representatives.

The *interviews with managers* explored: levels of pay and pay structures for part-time workers; 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 significance of the local labour market; and issues associated with the under-utilisation of women's skills and experience.

Managers in participating workplaces distributed a *questionnaire* to all part-time women workers in the workplace or, in large workplaces, to up to 50 part-time women workers. Table B shows the distribution of full-time and part-time workers in the workplaces. 333 women completed questionnaires. These were used to identify women working below their potential, in terms of qualifications, previous labour market experience and current study and training. 89 face-to-face, semi-structured *interviews* were conducted with a sample of these women in each workplace, at their workplaces and during working hours (Table A shows the types of jobs held by interviewees). These interviews explored: levels of pay; hours of work; satisfaction with pay and hours; and the motivating factors involved in women working below their potential (e.g. domestic circumstances, hours of work, expectations and pressures from family and friends, local labour market conditions, transport, and the tax and benefit system).

The key characteristics of the 89 women interviewed were:

- 10 were aged 16-24; 11 were aged 25-34; 44 were aged 35-49; 24 were aged 50+
- 67 were living with a partner or husband; 7 were living with parents; 2 were living with friends; 11 were living alone; 2 were living with siblings
- 43 had no dependent children; 46 had 1 or more dependent children
- 13 were caring for an elderly relative; 13 had an additional part-time job
- The women described themselves as follows: 75 as White British; 1 as White Irish; 2 as White 'Other'; 3 as Indian; 2 as British Asian; 2 as Black African; 1 as African Caribbean; 1 as Mixed White and Chinese; 2 as Mixed White and African Caribbean
- 58 said they would like to be in a different job using more of their skills or qualifications or labour market experience in the next 3 years.

Of the 333 women who completed questionnaires:

34 were aged 16 – 24; 43 were aged 25-34; 129 were aged 35-49; 127 were aged 50+

The 29 trade union representations were members of the following unions: AMICUS; AUT; GMB; NATFHE; NUT; Prospect; RCN; PCS; Unison

Table A **Characteristics of the workplaces included in the study**

Workplace	Sector	Industry	Types of jobs done by women 'working below potential'
1	Private service	Health	Catering, cleaning, administrative
2	Public sector	Health and Social Care	Care assistant, administrative
3	Public sector	Health and Social Care	Care assistant
4	Public sector	Health and Social Care	Care assistant
5	Public sector	Health and Social Care	Care assistant
6	Public Sector	Health and Social Care	Care assistant
7	Public sector	Education	Learning support, catering, cleaning, administrative
8	Public sector	Education	Learning support, catering, administrative
9	Public sector	Education	Learning support, administrative
10	Public sector	Education	Learning support, administrative
11	Public sector	Sports, Leisure and Hospitality	Library assistant
12	Private service	Sports, Leisure and Hospitality	Pool attendant, café work, reception, administrative
13	Private service	Sports, Leisure and Hospitality	Cleaning, bar work, catering, sales
14	Private service	Sports, Leisure and Hospitality	Bar work, leisure facility work, reception
15	Private service	Retail	Check-out operative, stock replenishing
16	Private service	Retail	Cleaning, customer service, administrative
17	Private service	Retail	Cashier work, stock replenishing, administrative
18	Private service	Retail	Customer service, check-out operative
19	Public sector	Transport and Communications	Manual work
20	Private service	Transport and Communications	Security work
21	Private manufacturing	Food	Production work
22	Private manufacturing	Engineering	Assembly work

Table B Full-time and part-time employees in the selected workplaces

Workplace	Women			Men			All employees			Women working PT	
	FT No.	PT No.	PT %	FT No.	PT No.	PT %	No.	PT as % of total	Women as % of total	As % of all PT	As % of total
1*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	79	167	68	10	26	72	282	68	87	87	59
3	28	92	77	1	2	67	123	76	98	98	75
4	420	834	67	253	66	21	1,573	57	78	93	53
5	791	1,336	63	280	63	18	2,470	57	86	95	54
6	20	49	71	4	2	33	75	68	92	96	65
7	173	110	39	105	20	16	408	32	69	85	27
8	193	198	51	145	70	33	606	44	65	74	33
9	210	191	48	152	35	19	588	38	68	85	32
10	76	17	18	56	1	2	150	12	62	94	11
11	176	363	67	196	224	54	961	61	56	62	38
12*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	58	18	24	122	21	15	219	18	35	62	8
14	45	18	29	71	24	37	158	27	40	43	11
15	34	49	59	17	24	59	124	59	67	67	40
16	97	27	22	224	26	10	374	14	33	51	7
17	97	319	77	144	194	57	754	68	55	62	42
18*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	104	57	35	404	100	20	665	24	24	36	9
20	378	52	12	573	39	6	1,042	9	41	57	5
21	263	87	25	447	57	11	854	17	41	60	10
22	39	17	30	32	2	6	90	21	62	89	19

Notes: * In these workplaces these data were unavailable/could not be supplied