

# Women and Employability: transforming lives?

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# Outline

- **Introduction and context**
- **Women, work and a fair society: key themes**
  - **Exploitation, exclusion and inequality**
  - **The workplace and the labour market**
  - **Diversity among women**
  - **Tackling social exclusion**
- **Policy agendas**
  - **Woman-friendly labour markets**
  - **Empowering women**
  - **Care, health, work and life - transforming lives?**



# Introduction and context

*From .... **Women's Working Lives***

*..... **Gender, Employment and Local Labour Markets** .....*

*To ..... **Work, Care and a new Social Contract***



# GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT IN LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS: 2005-6



# Major themes – the past

- **Exploitation**

- Agriculture, textile factories, ‘sweated’ trades, metal manufacture, potteries, domestic employment
- Prostitution, domestic drudgery

- **Exclusion**

- From the professions, education, qualifications, trade unions, ‘men’s’ jobs

- **Inequality**

- Pay, wages
- Promotion and advancement
- Division of labour

# Labour market change

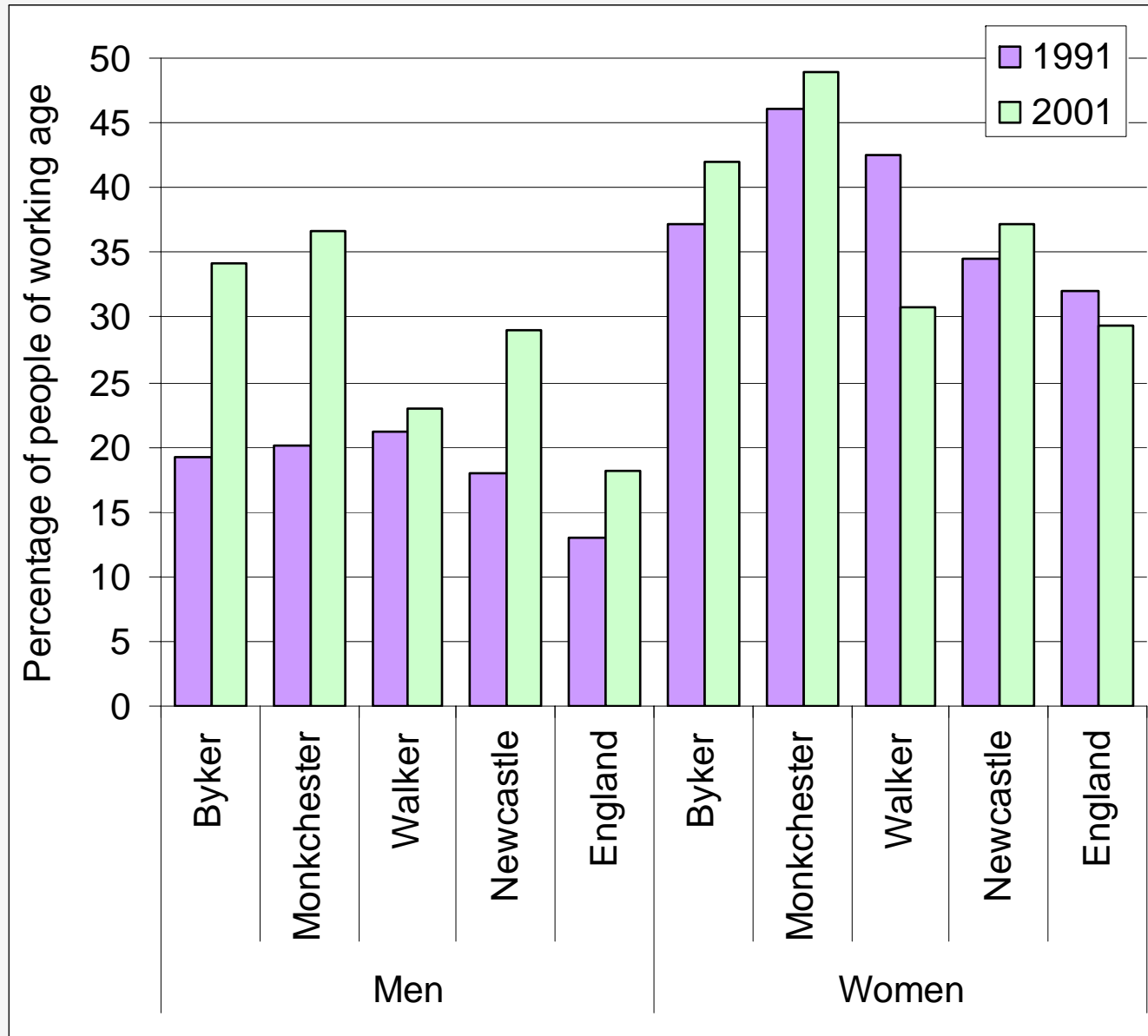


- **Restructuring**
  - Emergence of the public sector
  - New jobs in clerical work, management, finance, retail, leisure
  - Emergence of part-time work and 24/7 economy
- **Regulation**
  - Working hours
  - Safety at work
  - Rights and entitlements
- **Changed relationship between home and work**
  - Driven by technological change

# Contemporary perspectives



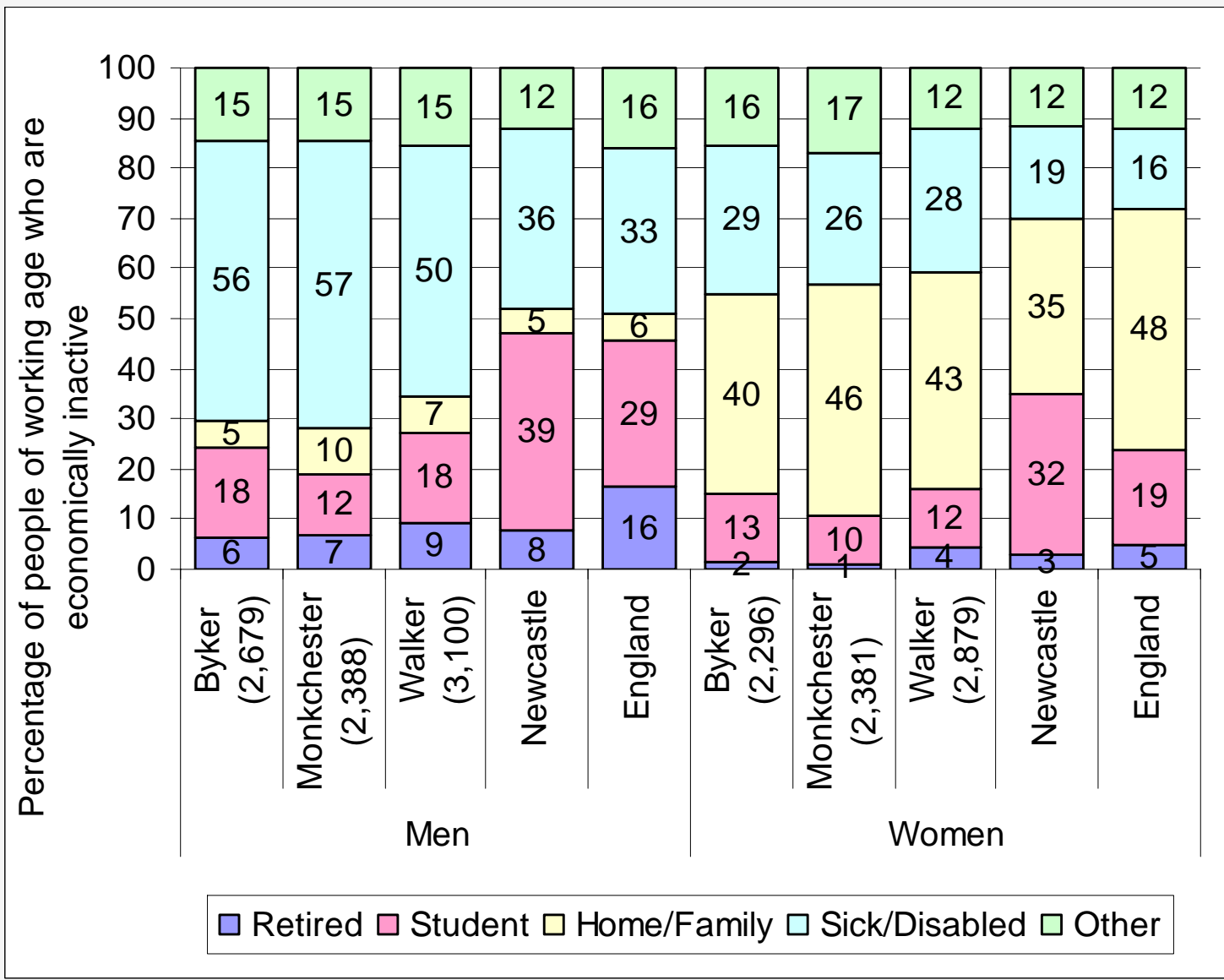
- **Exploitation** .....
- Sex work, migrant labour, ‘sweatshops’ in LDCs
- Harassment and bullying at work
- ‘Dead end’ jobs
- **Exclusion**
- ‘Clustering’ in low paid work
- Problems in ‘accessing’ employment
- **Inequality**
- Top pay and bonuses
- ‘Hidden’ caring labour
- Domestic violence – stigma and silence
- **Participation** - ‘employability’ - activation



**‘Economic inactivity rates’ for men and women, 1991 and 2001, Newcastle and selected wards**

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003. 1991 Census LBS, Crown Copyright 1993.

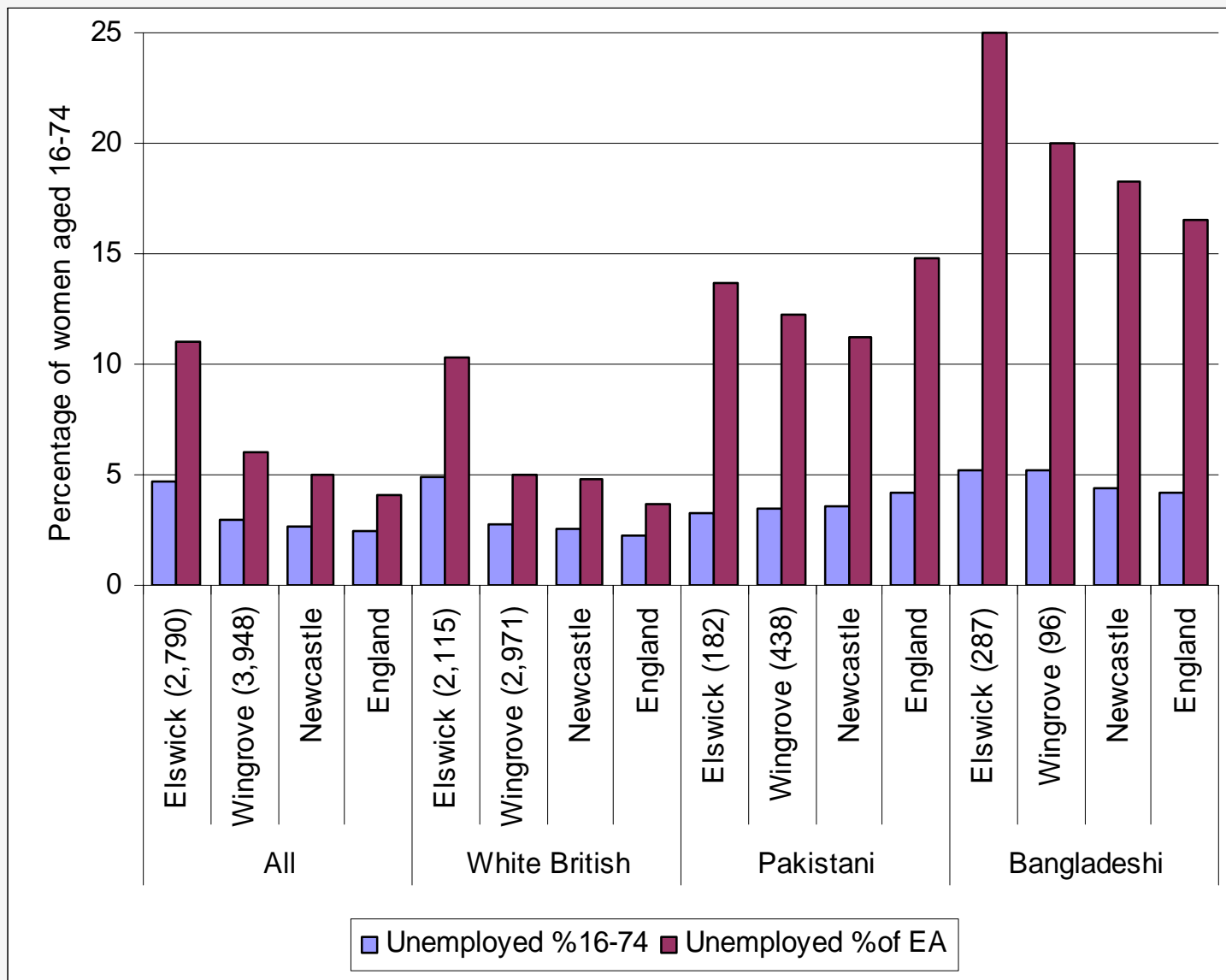




**'Economic inactivity', by reason: 2001**

**England, Newcastle and selected wards, women 16-59 & men 16-64**

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003



**Unemployment among economically active women aged 16-74, selected ethnic groups, Newcastle and selected wards: 2001**

Source: 2001 Census Standard Tables, Crown Copyright 2003.

# The workplace and the labour market: policy and academic debates



- Background issues
  - Why are women lower paid?
  - What keeps them in ‘women’s jobs’?
  - Why do so few women ‘reach the top’?
- How do women cope?
  - Support systems
  - Renegotiating domestic labour
  - ‘Doing it all’
- What happens in the workplace?
  - Trade unions
  - Human resources policies
  - Employment law

# Diversity among women



## Difference, choice, preference, double bind?

- Lone parents
- Women in ethnic minorities
- Sexual orientation
- Disabled women
- Age and the life course
- Social and economic divisions



# Tackling social exclusion

- Social class and cultural capital
- Education and skills
- Complex problems
  - **Health, care, housing, poverty, safety**
- Women 'outsiders'
  - Offenders, sex workers, addicts, rebels
- Harassment and violence
  - **Sexual, racial, domestic**
- The woman within
  - **Identity, self-esteem, assertiveness, confidence, empowerment, ambition, mental health, depression**



# Legislative progress

- *Equal Pay Act 1970*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*
- Other equalities legislation
- Maternity rights
- Employment protection
- Health and safety at work
- Right to time off
- *Work and Families Act 2006*



# Policy agendas

- **Current priorities**

- Labour market activation and welfare to work
- Poverty, benefits, tax credits and pensions
- Children and families – Sure Start, Children’s Centres
- Regeneration and neighbourhood renewal
- Equality, diversity and human rights
- Health and social care

- **Some sub-texts**

- Dependency
- Outsiders
- Sub-cultures of worklessness

# What's holding women back?



- At home, in their communities, at work?
  - FT/PT ☹ UE/EI ☹ Segregation ☹ Pay ☹ Progression ☹
- **Design and operation of the labour market**
  - Entry, Progression, Rewards
- **Weak infrastructure for everyday life**
  - Services, systems, information
- **Undervaluing of caring labour**
  - A 'handicap', not a skill
- **Health, justice, protection systems**
  - Directed at problems not solutions



# Woman-friendly labour markets



- **Flexible working arrangements**
- **Recognition of skill and experience**
- **Fair rewards at work**
- **Opportunities to progress or build a career**
- **Learning and re-skilling opportunities**
- **Personalised 'return to work' support which listens and responds**
- **Dignity and respect**



# Empowering women

- **Identity and self-esteem**
- **Confidence and assertiveness**
- **Ambition, empowerment and achievement**
- **Support to deal with**
  - Mental health and depression
  - Domestic or sexual violence
  - Harassment and hate crimes
  - Grief, loneliness, illness, loss
- ***Current systems penalise rather than support those with care roles, poor health, disability***



# Care, health, work and life

- Changing and ageing populations
  - Require high employment rates
  - Need more carers
  - Depend on effective economies
- **Priorities** .....
- Equip everyone to participate in the labour market and its rewards
- Provide the support they need to do this
- Respect difference; value contribution
- Empower women to identify/achieve personal goals
- ..... ***Transforming lives***



## Further information

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