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‘Quality’ part-time work: a review of the evidence

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Executive summary

Many women in the UK work part time, often to take care of children or older relatives. There is much evidence that there are fewer higher-level jobs available on a part-time basis and, as a result, well-qualified women are crowding into lower-level jobs. There is further evidence that women become stuck in these jobs, leading to negative effects on both career and earnings over the longer term. In response to this evidence, the Government has made a commitment to supporting employers to create more high-quality part-time and flexible posts (Department for Communities and Local Government 2006; GEO, 2010).

This evidence review has been prepared as part of the ‘Improving understanding of “quality” part-time work’ research project, commissioned from the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick by the Government Equalities Office (GEO). The GEO has recently published *Working Towards Equality: A Framework For Action* (2010), a strategy aimed at improving gender equality in the workplace, increasing the availability of quality part-time work, and improving the experiences of those in such positions. This review provides a synthesis of the available evidence on quality part-time work, including analysis of relevant datasets to examine the level of part-time work in the UK, and provides a review of the international literature to formulate a working definition of ‘quality’ part-time work.

Who works part time?

- Part-time work is commonly defined as working 30 hours per week or less, including in government labour market statistics. Full-time work is therefore defined as working more than 30 hours per week, although there are large variations in the hours worked by both part-time and full-time employees.
- Forty-five per cent of working women and 13% of working men are currently in part-time employment in the UK, representing one of the highest levels of part-time work for women in Europe and countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹
- For women, those who work part time are more likely to be white, between the ages of 30 and 44, to be in lower socio-economic groups and have fewer qualifications than those who work full time. Those with work-limiting disabilities are also more likely to work part time than those without.
- For men, those working part time are more likely to be of other ethnic groups than white, to be either younger (students) or older (pre-retirement), to be in lower socio-economic groups and have fewer qualifications than those who work full time. Those with work-limiting disabilities are also more likely to work part time than those without.
- London has particularly low levels of part-time workers in comparison with national averages: 33% of women and 11% of men work part time. Northern Ireland also has lower levels of part-time work than UK averages, with the level for women at 38% and the level for men at under 9%. The highest levels of part time work for women are in the South West (47%) and the South

¹ Labour Force Survey data, 2009

East (excluding London), at 46%. For men, there is less variation, with the highest level overall in the South West, at 15%.² Occupational distribution in part-time work is related to the types of industries most prevalent at a local level.³

- In almost all occupational groups, apart from administrative and secretarial occupations, a rise in part-time work is projected for men. Large increases are also expected in part-time work among women in professional and managerial occupations, as well as personal service jobs. Reductions in part-time work among women are expected in administrative and secretarial occupations, skilled trades, machine and transport operatives and elementary occupations. Men are increasingly likely to move in on female domains as they are squeezed out of traditional male jobs like manufacturing. Indeed, men are already working in many more parts of the service sector, particularly in customer services.⁴ The relative security of such jobs in an economic crisis may encourage more men to apply. It remains to be seen if these jobs will be used as a stop-gap measure or a stepping stone to full-time jobs in the future.
- During the recession, figures from the Labour Force Survey, from September to November 2009, show that the number of people in full-time employment fell by 113,000, and the number of people in part-time employment increased by 99,000 to a record high of 7.7 million. Recent figures show that 25% of men working part time said that they were doing so because they could not secure full-time employment, compared with 10% of women (although there are still many more women than men working part-time).⁵
- In terms of where part-time workers work, there is a higher proportion of part-time workers in the public sector (29%) than in the private sector (25%). While there is a marginally lower propensity for women to work part time in the public sector (39%) than in the private sector (44%), this is more than offset by the higher proportion of women in the public sector workforce (65%) than in the private sector workforce (41%).⁶ Ten per cent of men employed in the public sector work part time, compared with 13% of men working in the private sector.⁷
- A higher percentage of the workforce in very small organisations work part time than those in larger organisations. For example, 55% of women and 16% of men in organisations with fewer than ten employees work part time. This is compared with 29% of women and 6% of men in organisations with 500 employees or more.⁸
- The wholesale, retail and motor trades, as well as hotels and restaurants, have the highest proportion of women and men working part time. Fifty-eight per cent of women and 22% of men in wholesale, retail and motor trades, and 57% of women and 36% of men in hotels and restaurants work part time. Only 23% of women and 2% of men in electricity, gas and water supply companies work part time.⁹

² Labour Force Survey data, 2009

³ Grant et al. (2005)

⁴ UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009)

⁵ Office for National Statistics data, September–November 2009

⁶ Economic and Labour Market Review, ONS statistics, May 2007

⁷ Labour Force Survey data, April–June 2009

⁸ Labour Force Survey data, April–June 2009

⁹ Labour Force Survey data, April–June 2009

- Organisations with a high rate of part-time employment also tend to have a high proportion of lower-paid jobs. Research into local government jobs in the UK found that female part-time workers are most likely to be found in the most feminised areas and particularly in (low-paid) jobs frequently viewed as ‘women’s work’, such as catering, cleaning, caring and teaching assistance.¹⁰

Occupational downgrading

- Occupational downgrading occurs when more highly qualified or highly skilled women or men choose to reduce their working hours, usually for childcare reasons. However, more women than men do so, and women’s choices are constrained by expensive childcare and long full-time working hours in the UK, in comparison with other EU and OECD countries. Because of the limited part-time options available in highly skilled jobs, many women compromise by crowding into lower-level jobs.¹¹
- Research has shown that a minimum of 14% and probably around 25% of all women who move to part-time work change to an occupation where the average qualification level is below that of their previous full-time job.¹² Downgrading when moving to part-time work affects as many as 29% of women from professional and corporate management jobs, and up to 40% in intermediate-level jobs.¹³ Those most likely to downgrade are women working in smaller-scale managerial positions, with almost half giving up their managerial responsibilities and reverting to standard personal service or sales assistant jobs, well below their skill levels.
- Other research showed that 51% of all part-time workers, male and female, defined themselves as working below their potential.¹⁴ Extrapolating from survey evidence, researchers have estimated that 69% of female part-time ‘downgraders’, equivalent to around 1.25 million women in the UK aged 25–54, are ‘stuck’ in jobs below their skill and experience levels.¹⁵
- Research, using two large-scale datasets, has shown that downgrading affects 35–41% of women in high-skilled occupations who also move employer when changing to part-time work, compared with only 8–18% who stay with the same employer (differences depend on the data source used).¹⁶
- The evidence highlights clearly that part-time workers, usually women, are at a disadvantage in terms of access to training and development opportunities. In April–June 2009, the Labour Force Survey showed that of all full-time working women, 34% took part in some education or training in the previous three months, whereas for women working part-time, the figure was only 24%.¹⁷ Male part-time workers were also at a disadvantage. The part-time disadvantage also appears to occur in higher-level jobs, e.g. researchers found that part-time permanent professionals were 23% less likely than full-time workers to have received five days’ or more training in the past year.

¹⁰ Thornley (2007)

¹¹ Grant et al. (2005)

¹² Connolly and Gregory (2008a)

¹³ Intermediate-level jobs are mid-level jobs (below professional and managerial occupations, but above routine and manual occupations in terms of skills and training required), e.g. secretarial positions, administrative and support roles, bank cashiers.

¹⁴ Darton and Hurrell (2005)

¹⁵ Grant et al. (2005)

¹⁶ Connolly and Gregory (2008a)

¹⁷ Labour Force Survey data, April–June 2009

Without access to training, women working part time will be at a double disadvantage: not only are many already over-qualified for the part-time jobs they are doing, but they are also less likely to receive the training they need to progress further in those jobs.¹⁸

- Some evidence also suggests that women working part time are given different tasks and assigned to different roles than equivalent full-time workers, as well as being consulted on work-related issues less frequently, meaning a loss of vital work-based learning opportunities and inevitable longer-term negative impacts upon career progression.¹⁹ In other words, for those women who do manage to retain their occupational level, many are doubly disadvantaged when moving to part-time work: although they have often trained for many years within a particular occupation, they are sidelined into work that does not maximise their skills, and, as a consequence, they will also be less likely to be considered for promotion.

The gender pay gap and the part-time pay penalty

- Women on average are still paid 22% less per hour than men and, comparing part-time women with full-time men, the gender pay gap is 39.4%.²⁰
- Researchers have found that the main contributors to the pay gap in the UK in 2004–7 are: occupational sex segregation (10%); the industries in which men and women work (12%); differences in years of experience of full-time work (21%); the negative effect on wages of having previously worked part time or taking time out of the labour market to look after family (16%); formal education levels (5%); and unexplained factors (36%).²¹
- For those women who move to part-time work, the pay penalty is more severe if they also change employer: moving to part-time work as well as downgrading and changing employer leads to an immediate earnings reduction of 32%. Upgrading (switching back into full-time work) leads to an earnings increase of around 13%, less than half the negative impact of switching to part-time work. Modelling the career trajectories of different types of women workers over a period of ten years also demonstrated that part-time work brings permanently lower earnings.²²
- British Household Panel Survey data from 1991-92 compared with 2001-02 showed that part-time returners earned £1.49 less per hour than full-time workers, and those who returned full time and maintained full-time work could be expected to earn an extra £2.01 per hour, compared with an increase of £0.15 for those maintaining a part-time career trajectory.²³
- Around two in five (39%) women are employed in the public sector overall, and as many as two-thirds (67%) of women in local government work part time. A study combining pay data analysis, which received over 3,000 questionnaire responses, 985 of which were from women working part time, and a national survey of women and men in local government services, found that six in ten (61%) women working part-time had never been promoted, compared with 35% of women working full time.²⁴ Although differences in promotion are expected to a degree (women working

¹⁸ Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2003)

¹⁹ e.g. Edwards and Robinson (2004)

²⁰ *Working Towards Equality: A Framework For Action* (GEO, 2010)

²¹ Olsen et al. (2010)

²² Connolly and Gregory (2008b)

²³ Tomlinson et al. (2009)

²⁴ Thornley (2007)

full time will often have more relevant work experience), part-time workers also received fewer training days (absolute, not pro-rata) than full-time workers, with a higher proportion of part-time workers than full-time workers receiving 0–3 days of training per year. Findings highlight that very little appears to have changed since a 1987 report on local government occupations.²⁵

- Given the experience of women working part time, changes need to be made to improve the current situation. One way of encouraging change is to improve the quality of part-time work.

What is ‘quality’ part-time work?

- A review of the international literature led to a revised definition of ‘quality’ part-time work, comprising four major criteria at all levels of responsibility:
 1. Jobs that provide the same (pro-rata) terms and conditions, development and progression opportunities as comparable full-time work.
 2. Jobs that enable the job-holders to maintain or enhance their skills.
 3. Jobs that enable the achievement of an acceptable work–life balance, meeting the needs of both employer and employee.
 4. Where a business case can be made, jobs that provide the opportunity to increase the number of hours to full-time work, if desired, at the same or a higher job level.

The common base for all ‘quality’ part-time jobs will be that they provide the same (pro-rata) terms and conditions, as well as training and development opportunities, as a comparable full-time job. Other ‘quality’ part-time jobs may fulfil only three out of the four indicators, as there is a certain aspirational element within the definition.

- Similarly, a report by the Family Friendly Working Hours Task Force (Department for Work and Pensions 2010) defined a ‘quality’ part-time job as one where “everyone has the same opportunities for progression, equal pay, training and responsibility, regardless of the number of hours and patterns they work. In addition to ensuring there is equality between people working different hours and patterns, improving quality family-friendly working practices also means increasing the availability of flexible jobs at supervisory and management levels.”

Key issues in increasing and improving quality part-time work

- The literature relating to ‘quality’ part-time work is limited. However, key themes identified as important in increasing and improving quality part-time work are:
 - opportunities to switch between part-time and full-time work;
 - retaining skill levels and experience when moving to part-time work;
 - equal access to training, development and promotion;
 - improved internal communication and consultation;
 - equal job content (assigned tasks) as for full-time workers, on a pro-rata basis;
 - reduced workload; and
 - improving perceived commitment.

This list is not exhaustive, and other, occupation-specific, issues may be important within different contexts.

²⁵ Beechey and Perkins (1987)

Suggested organisational measures to support quality part-time work

- In response to the issues defined above, suggestions are made with regard to supporting quality part-time work through various organisational measures. The suggested measures are intended to be broad-ranging, allowing for organisations of all types to implement change: evaluating the line manager's role in granting requests for part-time working; mainstreaming part-time work; recognising the business case for expanding part-time work; promoting senior role models working part-time, especially men.

I. Introduction

This evidence review has been prepared as part of the ‘Improving understanding of “quality” part-time work’ research project, commissioned from the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick by the Government Equalities Office (GEO). The GEO has recently published *Working Towards Equality: A Framework for Action*, a strategy aimed at improving gender equality in the workplace. Increasing the availability of high-quality part-time work and improving the experiences of those in such positions is an important focus of this strategy. This review provides a synthesis of the available evidence on quality part-time work, including analysis of relevant datasets to examine the current level of part-time work in the UK, and provides a review of the international literature to formulate a working definition of quality part-time work. An evaluation framework, developed to enable an assessment of the “quality” of part-time jobs, is also provided.

1.1 Aims of the evidence review

The aims of this review are to:

- provide data on who works part time in the UK, where they work and how part-time work is likely to change over time;
- provide evidence on the current status of part-time work in the UK and what problems have been identified;
- critically review and synthesise the evidence on the nature of quality part-time work;
- critically review definitions of quality part-time work, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and to provide suggestions for improved definitions; and
- generate an evaluation framework to enable an assessment of the quality of part-time jobs to be made.

1.2 Background

Many women with young children work part time in order to combine work and caring responsibilities. Indeed, the UK has one of the highest levels of part-time working in Europe and a much higher proportion of women working part time than in the USA. Unlike many other European countries, in the UK full-time working hours are relatively long and formal childcare is very costly, prohibiting many mothers from working full time during the pre-school years. Many other women prefer to spend more time at home with their children while simultaneously contributing to the household income, albeit at a reduced level. Demand for part-time work is therefore high, and regulations relating to the employment of part-time and flexible workers have been introduced (Box 1), partly in response to findings that there was both an increase in the pay gap between women working part time and women working full time, as well as an increasing gender pay gap, with women working part time faring extremely badly compared with men working in similar jobs.

Box 1: Key legislation on the employment of part-time and flexible workers

The **Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000**, came into effect in July 2000. They stipulate that part-time workers:

- must not be treated less favourably in their contractual terms and conditions than comparable full-time workers employed by the same employer, under the same type of employment contract, unless it can be objectively justified by the employer;
- should receive equal hourly rates of pay (unless the employer can show they have a different level of performance to their full-time equivalents);
- should receive equal overtime pay once they have worked more than the normal hours of a comparable full-time worker, as well as equal enhanced rates of pay for working outside normal contractual hours (e.g. bonus pay, shift allowances, unsocial hours' payments and weekend payments);
- should get equal access to any: company pension scheme; training and career development; rights to career breaks; rights to receive enhanced sick, maternity, paternity and adoption leave and pay; parental leave rights; and consideration for promotion; and
- should receive contractual benefits pro-rata, such as staff discounts and profit sharing and share option schemes.

The **Employment Act (2002)** introduced the right for parents of young children (aged 6 and under) and disabled children (under 18) to request flexible working from their employer. From April 2007 this right was extended to cover carers of qualifying adults and, in April 2009, to those with children aged 16 and under.

The **Sex Discrimination Act (1975)** means that if an employer insists on a full-time working week, this might be viewed as indirect discrimination by an Employment Tribunal.

Further information on employing part-time workers can be found on the 'Employing part-time workers' page at www.businesslink.gov.uk

Legislation stipulates that part-time workers should not be disadvantaged or discriminated against in comparison with comparable full-time workers, and that parents or carers should have the right to ask to work flexibly. However, Manning and Petrongolo (2008) concluded that the main cause of the pay gap between women working full time and women working part time is the difference between full-time and part-time jobs, with a lack of more senior jobs available on a part-time basis. The Women and Work Commission (2006) and other researchers (e.g. Grant et al., 2005) have also identified that there are fewer part-time jobs available in higher-level occupations, meaning that many more highly qualified women wishing to work on a part-time basis are crowding into lower-level jobs which do not fully utilise their skills. This 'occupational downgrading' represents a waste of talent and opportunity, and also means lost productivity for the UK economy (Women and Work Commission, 2006). This phenomenon is widespread across many European countries, and only a quarter of establishments with part-time and highly skilled workers in Europe, on average, have any part-time workers in highly skilled positions (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2009). There is further UK evidence that women become stuck in lower-level part-time jobs, in spite of the fact that many would prefer to return to full-time work at a later stage, perhaps as their children become increasingly independent, and that both career and earnings are negatively affected over the longer term (e.g. Connolly and Gregory, 2008a). Connolly and Gregory state clearly

that “socially and personally efficient outcomes would be part-time jobs as reduced versions of women’s full-time jobs, utilising their skills at the appropriate level and avoiding the detrimental effects of occupational downgrading” (2008b). In response to this accumulating evidence, the Government made a commitment to supporting employers to create more high-quality part-time and flexible posts (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006; GEO, 2010).

1.3 Structure of the report

The evidence review begins by outlining the methodology used for the rapid evidence review on definitions of quality part-time work and the nature of quality part-time work in the UK and internationally (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 will then begin by defining part-time work, and will provide recent Labour Force Survey data to describe the characteristics of part-time working in the UK, focusing on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, educational background, socio-economic group and regional differences. Data will also be presented on where part-time workers are most likely to be employed, and the chapter will conclude with sections on future projections of part-time work in the UK and part-time working during the current recession. International comparisons of part-time working levels will also be described. Chapter 4 will move on to highlight the problems relating to current part-time working in the UK, specifically in relation to occupational segregation and downgrading, the gender pay gap and part-time working in public sector organisations. The following chapter (Chapter 5) will introduce the concept of ‘quality’ part-time working, using the evidence review to outline previous international work on this topic. This chapter will conclude with a revised definition of quality part-time work, based on UK and international evidence. Chapter 6 will focus on the nature of quality part-time work in the UK and will introduce the key themes relating to the increase and improvement in quality part-time work, identified from the literature. Chapter 7 will then present suggested organisational measures designed to support quality part-time work in the UK. Overall conclusions will be outlined in Chapter 8.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methods

This report presents the results of an evidence review on current definitions of ‘quality’ part-time work and the nature of quality part-time work. The ‘systematic’ review included published and grey literature²⁶ from the UK and elsewhere that had been issued within the last ten years. Full details of the search strategy and the outcomes are provided in Annex A.1. In particular, the review aimed to address the following key questions:

- How is quality part-time work currently defined in the UK and internationally?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing definitions?
- (In light of the above) how should quality part-time work be defined effectively?
- How can part-time jobs be assessed to identify whether they are quality part-time work positions?
- What are the key issues, identified from the literature, in relation to improving and increasing quality part-time work?
- What suggestions can be made, on the basis of the evidence, to increase and improve quality part-time work in the UK?

In addition to the review of the literature, statistical analyses were undertaken of recent relevant data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), in order to examine the current levels of part-time working in the UK.²⁷ Projections of future levels of part-time work are also outlined.

2.2 Limitations

The initial rapid review identified few relevant documents that explicitly defined ‘quality’ part-time work in either theoretical or empirical terms. Furthermore, it is clear that operationalisations of quality part-time work are not context-neutral – as the debate in the United States/European Union vis-à-vis the EU and Australia shows (see Section 5.3).

Most research on part-time work focuses on lower-level occupations, while recognising the lack of senior roles available on a part-time basis and the associated consequences. Given this dearth of evidence, a decision was taken to focus on research relating specifically to professional and senior part-time roles, as this would enable us to identify what was required for a part-time role to be considered a ‘quality’ job. However, other literature relating to lower-level part-time work has also been examined in relation to the project aims. The main themes identified and the suggestions made with regard to organisational measures to support and increase the provision of quality part-time jobs are deliberately intended to be applicable beyond professional positions.

²⁶ Grey literature refers to documents such as research papers and government policy reports which are available as electronic manuscripts only. These documents are not published in book or journal format through publishers.

²⁷ Part-time work in the LFS is self-defined: the LFS questionnaire includes the question, classified as FTPTW: “In your (main) job, were you working...Full-time/Part-time?” There is an additional note which states that “people on government-supported employment and training programmes who are at college in the reference week are classified, by convention, as part-time”. The documentation for the FTPTW variable also adds this note: “coverage applies to all respondents who are employees, self-employed, and unpaid family workers, plus those on work-based government training schemes, plus those currently unemployed or inactive who have had a previous job within the last 8 years.”

3. Characteristics of part-time work in the UK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed assessment of:

- definitions of part-time work;
- who works part time within the UK;
- what kinds of organisation are more likely to employ part-time workers;
- the future of part-time work;
- part-time working during the recession; and
- international differences in levels of part-time working.

3.2 What is part-time work?

The European Framework Agreement on part-time work, which concluded in 1997, defines a part-time worker as “an employee whose normal hours of work, calculated on a weekly basis or on average over a period of employment of up to one year, are less than the normal hours of work of a comparable full-time worker.” In practice, part-time working or reduced hours working relates to anything less than a full-time working week, and there are, not surprisingly, large variations in the number of hours worked by part-time workers. Most datasets used by UK researchers define part-time work as anything less than 30 hours per week (e.g. the Family Resources Survey; the British Social Attitudes Survey; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data). Others use this definition in their own data analysis for consistency (e.g. Connolly and Gregory, 2008b). Manning and Petrongolo (2008) also claim that the standard definition of part-time work in the UK is basic hours of less than or equal to 30 hours per week. Government labour market statistics, in common with other data sources, use 30 hours to define the full-time/part-time division. As a result of this rather broad definition, full-time work is therefore commonly defined as more than 30 hours per week, although there are also huge variations in the number of full-time hours worked by employees in the UK.²⁸ Unless otherwise stated, part-time work will be defined as 30 hours per week or less throughout this report (but note the self-definition of part-time work in the Labour Force Survey (LFS)).

Flexible working (which generally includes reduced hours working) is defined by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (February 2010) as any working pattern adapted to suit employer and employee needs. It is generally negotiable. Common types of flexible working are outlined as:

- part-time employees;
- flexitime: employees choose when to work around a core time period;
- annualised hours: employees’ hours are worked out over a year;

²⁸ For example, OECD data from 2005 shows that 25% of men and 7% of women in the UK work over 50 hours per week (this compares with 8% of men and 2% of women in Norway, 14% of men and 4% of women in Germany, and 19% of men and 7% of women in France).

- compressed hours: employees work agreed hours over fewer days;
- staggered hours: different starting, break and finishing times for employees in the same workplace;
- job sharing: jobs designed for one person are performed by two or more employees; and
- home working.

For more information, see www.dius.gov.uk/higher_education/widening_participation/professional_recruitment_guide/latest_trends/flexible_working

3.3 Who works part time?

The 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey asked 2,050 managers in workplaces of ten employees or more whether a range of flexible working arrangements were available to some of their employees. These arrangements included: the ability to reduce working hours; the ability to increase working hours; the ability to change shift patterns; flexitime; job sharing; home working; working during school term-time only; working compressed hours; annualised hours; and zero hours contracts.

Results showed that these practices were most common in larger workplaces, in the public sector, and in workplaces with union representation. In those workplaces where more than half the workforce was female, it was more likely that some employees were allowed to use each of the listed practices (with the exception of home working and flexitime) (Kersley et al., 2004). The most common practices were reduced hours working (70%), increasing hours (57%) and flexitime (35%), whereas far fewer workplaces offered compressed hours (16%) and annualised hours (6%) or had zero hours in place (5%) (Kersley et al., 2004).

Although a large number of workplaces offer part-time working, there are large variations in the number of hours worked by part-time workers, as well as large differences in the types of people who work part time in the UK. The following sections will use LFS data to highlight these differences in levels of part-time working.

Gender

As outlined earlier, women often choose to work part time in order to combine their work with other responsibilities during the child-rearing years. Around 8 million women are now working part time in the UK²⁹, 3.7 million of whom have at least one child under 16 in the household, representing an increase of more than half since the mid-1970s (Connolly and Gregory, 2008a). Other women working part time tend to be either younger (students) or older (pre-retirement), although women who have worked part time, initially for childcare purposes, tend to become stuck in such jobs (see Section 4.3). Just under 2.5 million men also work part time in their main job³⁰. Men, like women, work part time at the beginning and end of their working lives, but are much less likely than women to do so after having children (see Figure 1).

Women's employment has sometimes been described as so heterogeneous that, by simply comparing men's and women's employment patterns, important within-gender variations are often hidden (Burchell and Rubery, 1994). Women in more senior positions (high level, non-manual jobs in managerial and professional occupations) are less likely to work part time and more likely to work full time than women in lower-level jobs: for example, in an analysis of over 10,000 female and 12,000

²⁹ Labour Force Survey data, July-September 2009.

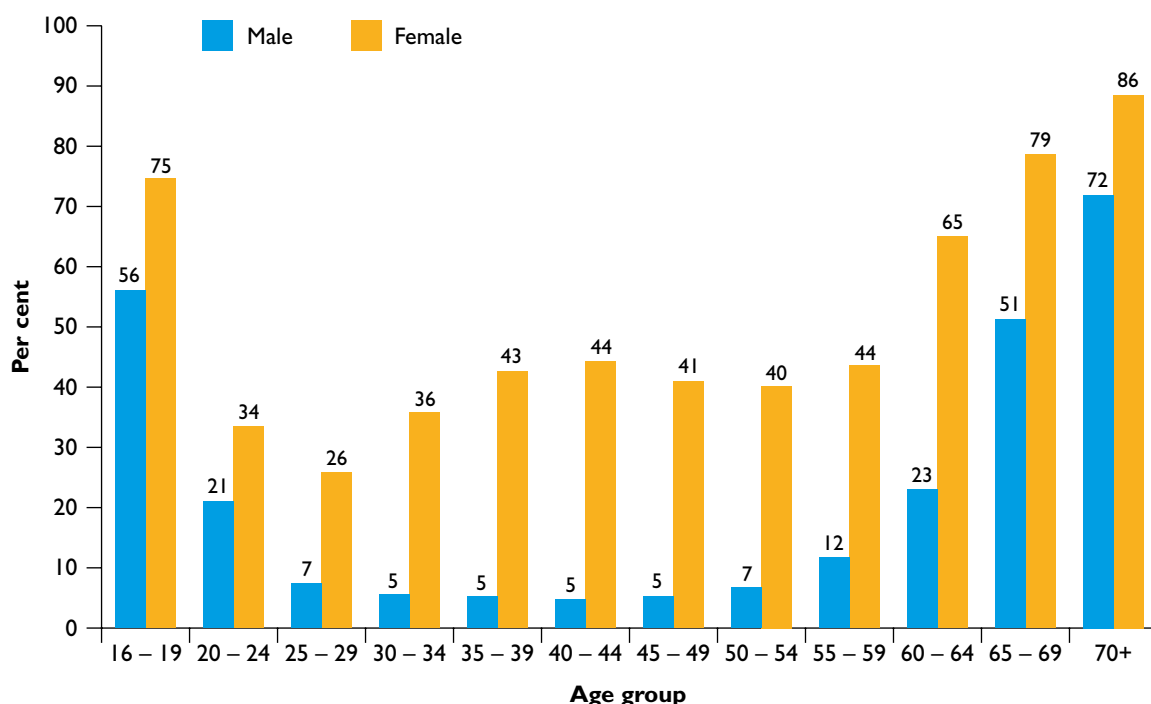
³⁰ Labour Force Survey data, July-September 2009.

male employees in the Family Resources Survey (1995/6 data), Warren (2003) found that 57% of women in manual jobs were working part time, compared with only 24% of women in managerial and professional jobs. Other research reports similar findings: for example, analyses of a longitudinal dataset of over 1,500 mothers from 1988 to 1999 found that mothers in higher-level jobs were over four times more likely to have stayed in full-time continuous employment than mothers in other jobs (McRae, 2008), although in this case, part-time employment was self-defined (see also ‘Socio-economic status’). In all of the following figures, data will be stratified by gender in order to demonstrate the variations between women (and men) working on a part-time basis.

Age

Those working part time (both men and women) tend to be either younger or older than those working full time. For younger workers, part-time work is often undertaken at the same time as full- or part-time study, whereas for older workers, part-time work tends to increase before retirement. However, unlike men, women also demonstrate an increase in part-time work over the key child-rearing years, between the ages of around 30 to 44, after which part-time work then begins to fall again (Figure 1).³¹

Figure 1: Proportion of part-time workers, as a percentage of all employed within age group, by gender, 2009



Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

³¹ It should be noted that the columns represent the percentage of women and men within each age group working part time; 70% of the 16–19-year-old age group translates into a much smaller number of part-time workers overall than the 40% or more of women in the 30–44-year-old age groups.

There is a corresponding rise in the proportion of women working part time when there are children under 16 within the household. For example, LFS data shows that, of all working women with no children under 16 in the household, 6.8 million work full time (62%), compared with 4.2 million working part time (38%); of those with one child, there is an almost even split, with 1.6 million working full time (49%) and 1.7 million working part time (51%). However, of those women with two children, 950,000 work full time (39%), compared with 1.5 million working part time (61%), for those with three children, 210,000 work full time (35%) and 390,000 work part time (65%) and for those with four children, only 33,000 work full time (27%), compared with 88,000 working part time (73%).

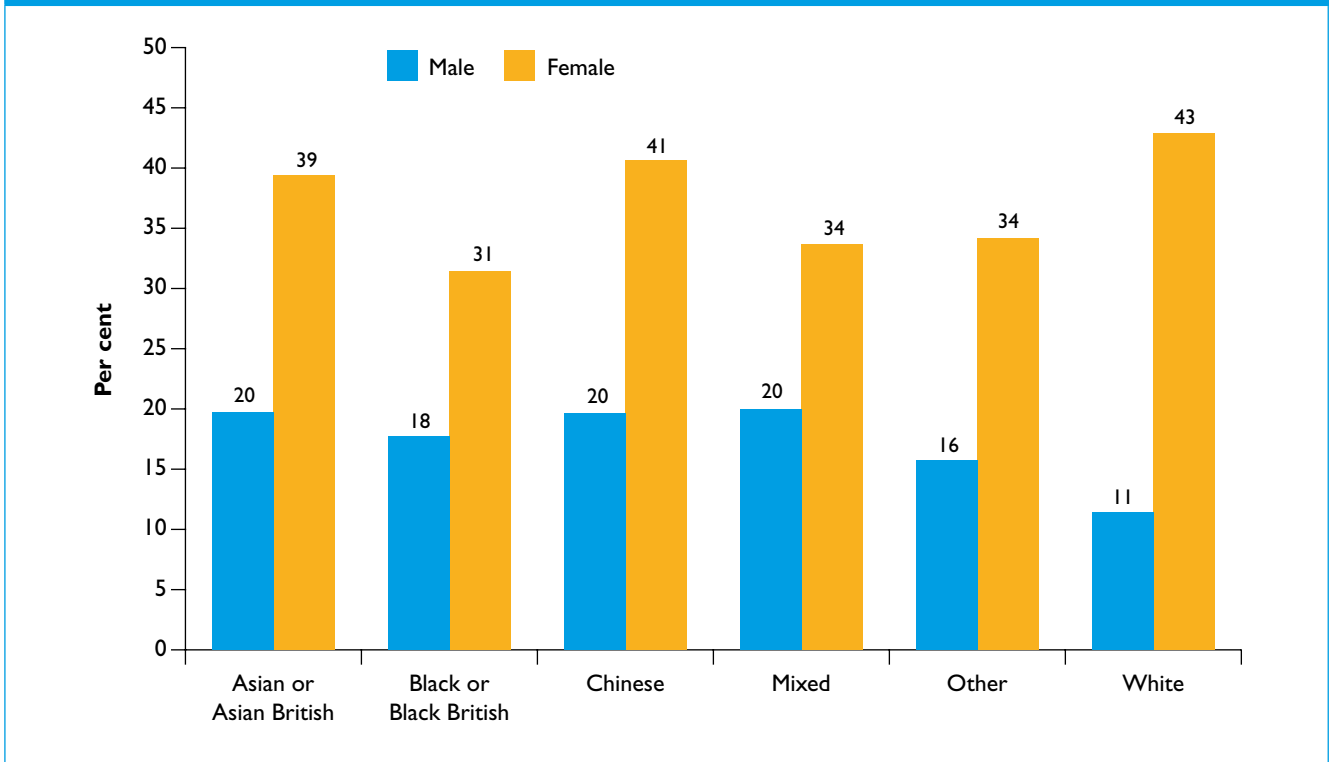
Of those working women currently in full-time employment, 12,600 of those with one child were looking for part-time work (0.8% of all women in this group), as well as 5,200 of those with two children (0.6%) and 2,200 of those with three children (1%). The vast majority were not looking for a change in work, however.

As we have seen, a rising proportion of women work part time during the key child-rearing years. There is a long-standing debate surrounding the so-called 'choices' that women make with regard to their families and their careers. For example, Hakim's 'preference theory' (Hakim, 2002, 2003) groups women by their 'work-home' preferences, which, she argues, shape their lives. In this way, a woman's preference for family over work would lead her to choose to work part time or not to work at all, overriding any outside influences. Others argue that the constraints placed upon women affect their choices, emphasising the greater responsibility placed upon women for childcare and domestic tasks (e.g. Ginn et al., 1996; Crompton, 2002), as well as the high cost of formal childcare and the long hours worked on a full-time basis in the UK. For more information on this topic, see Chapter 6, Section 6.8.

Ethnicity

Dale and colleagues (2008) have demonstrated considerable differences by ethnicity in women's labour market behaviour, with qualifications playing a significant role for all groups in employment participation and in protecting against unemployment (except for Chinese women). The LFS data shown in Figure 2 does not disaggregate by qualification level, but it can be seen that, in comparison with white men, there are higher levels of part-time working among men from all other ethnic groups. On the other hand, there are lower levels of part-time working among women from all other ethnic groups, in comparison with white women. The lowest levels of part-time working can be found in the Black or Black British group of women (31%).

Figure 2: Proportion of part-time workers by gender and ethnicity, 2009



Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

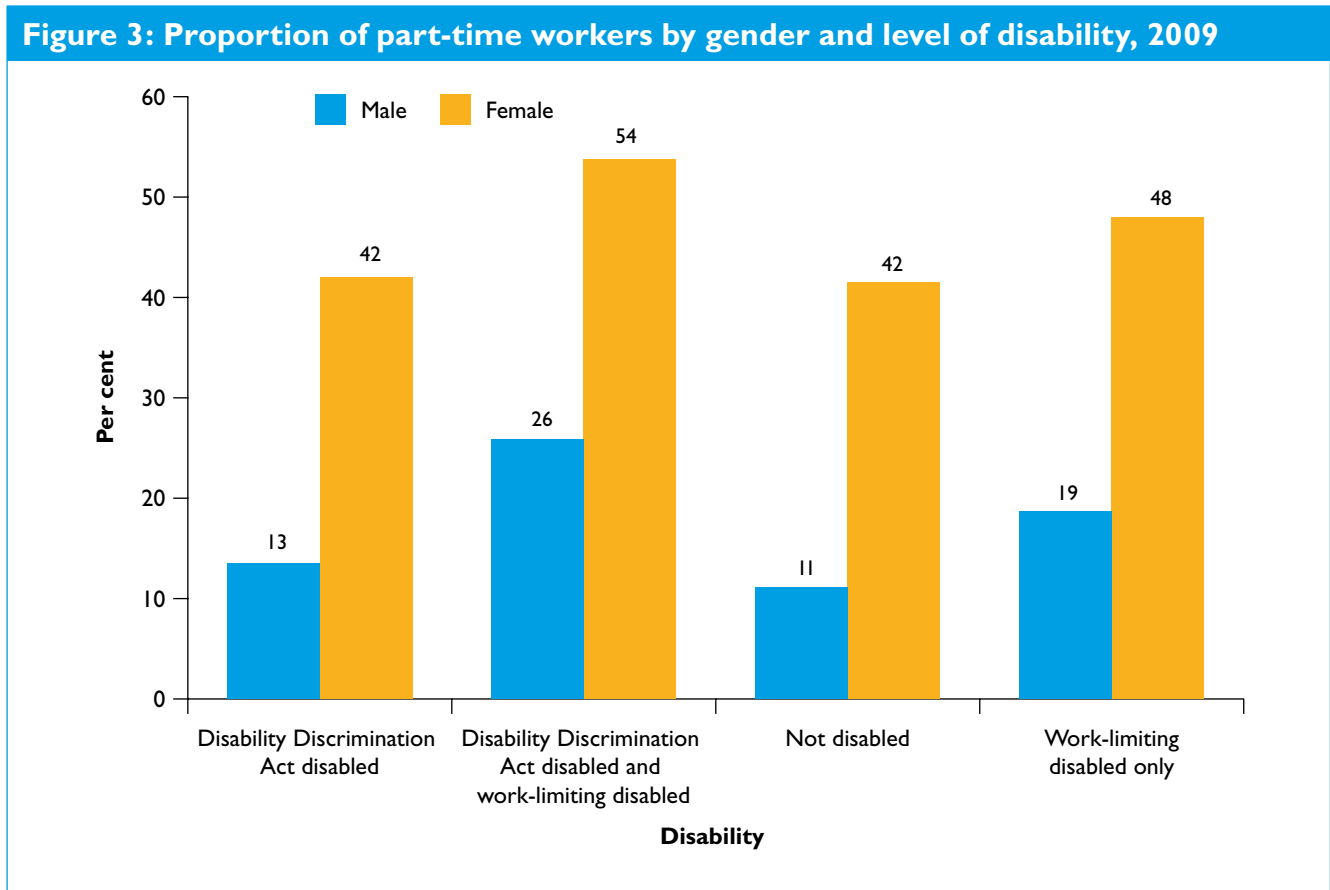
In research undertaken by Grant et al. (2005), Census data from 2001 recorded large variations in the proportions of working women aged between 25 and 59 working part time, according to ethnicity (figures in brackets denote the proportion of all women in employment within each ethnic group):

- 31% of White British women (71%);
- 19% of Indian women (63%);
- 9% of Pakistani women (23%);
- 6% of Bangladeshi women (16%);
- 17% of Black Caribbean women (69%);
- 13% of Black African women (52%);
- 16% of Chinese women (61%).

Although the figures here include working women only, these figures broadly tally with the relative proportions of women working part time within each group presented in the LFS data (Figure 2), as well as Dale’s findings. Black women are more likely to work full time, whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are less likely to work at all. White women, on the other hand, are more likely than any other group to work part time.

Disability

Of all registered disabled and work-limiting disabled employees in the UK, just over a quarter (26%) of men work part time, compared with over half (54%) of women (Figure 3). This compares with 11% of non-disabled men and 42% of similar women. For those registered as disabled with no work-limiting disability, figures are very similar to the gender difference between non-disabled men and women, at 13% of men and 42% of women.



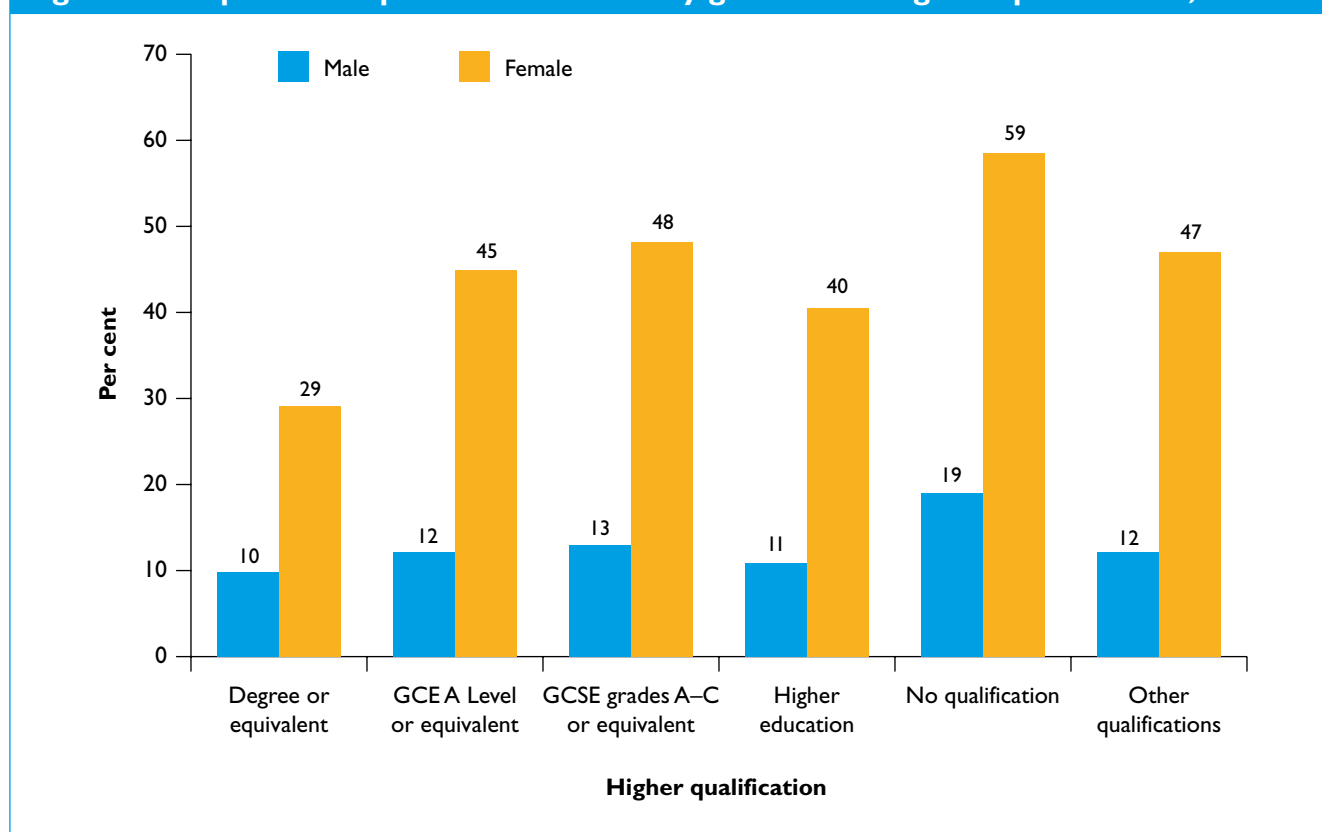
Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

Note: ‘Disability Discrimination Act disabled’ refers to individuals are defined as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act, for example if they have “a long-term health problem or disability that substantially limits a person’s ability to carry on normal day-to-day activities” (Jones and Jones, 2008).

Educational background

It has already been outlined that part-time working for women varies by occupational level, and, perhaps not surprisingly, part-time working patterns for women similarly vary by level of education. Data from the LFS (Figure 4) also highlights educational differences between men working full time and part time. For men, the differences are small, ranging from 10% for those with a degree or equivalent, to 19% of those with no qualifications, perhaps as a consequence of this group's inability to find full-time work. (For more information on the recession and involuntary part-time work, see Section 3.6.) For women, however, those with a degree or equivalent are much less likely to work part time than every other group, and are half as likely to work part time as those with no qualifications (29% compared with 59%), perhaps as a consequence of fewer part-time jobs being available at higher levels. For each level of qualification, however, women were much more likely than men to work part time.

Figure 4: Proportion of part-time workers by gender and highest qualification, 2009

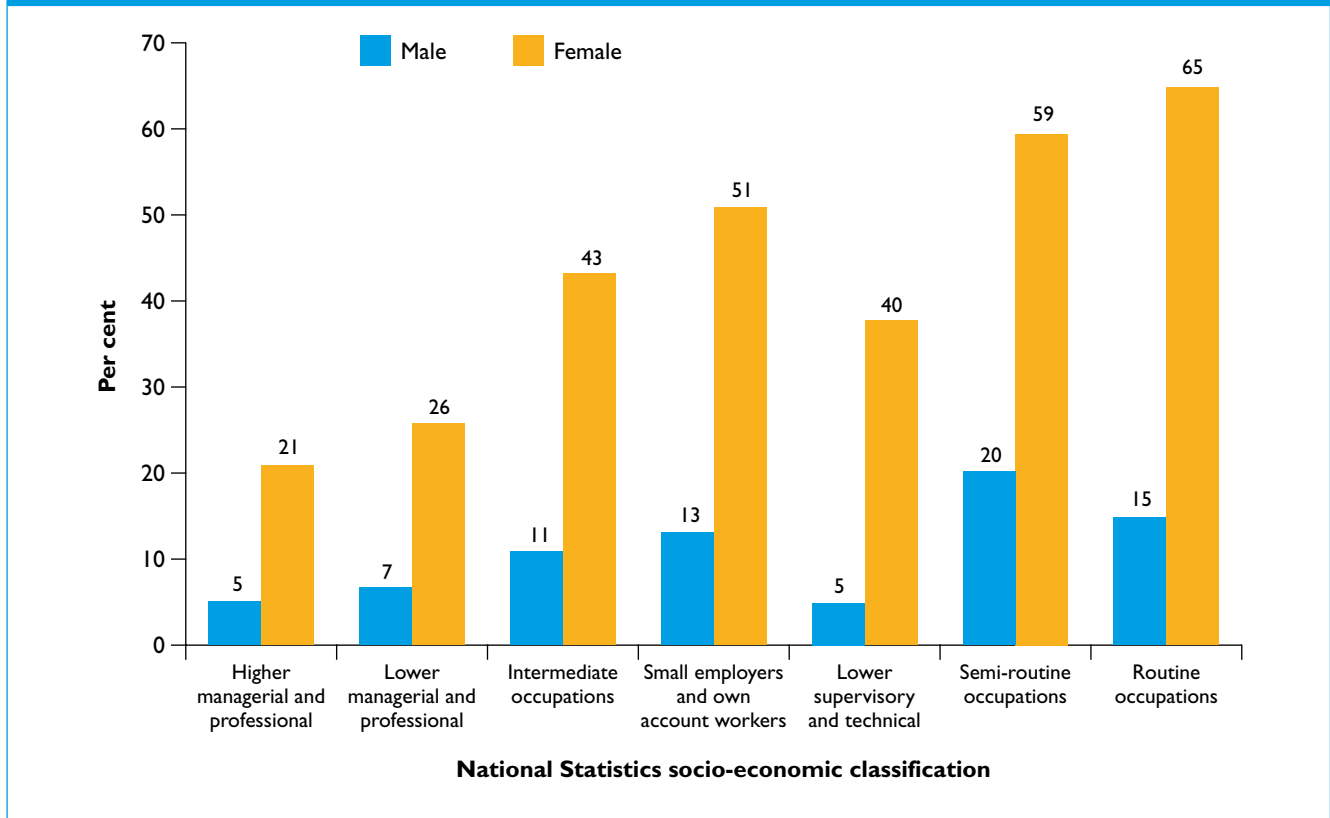


Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

Socio-economic status

As with education level, there are large differences in full-time and part-time working by socio-economic status. In the LFS, this is measured by occupational level. In addition to differences in full-time/part-time working, there is also evidence of variation by occupational level in the number of hours worked part time. For example, Anxo and colleagues (2007) found that ‘long’ part-time working (defined here as 80% of full-time hours) is more prevalent in professional occupations than in lower-level jobs.³² Again, there is a reduced likelihood of men in higher managerial and professional occupations to be working part time (5%), when compared with men in semi-routine (20%) or routine, lower-level occupations (15%) (See Figure 5). For women, the differences are more acute, with 21% of higher professional and managerial women working part time, compared with 59% of women in semi-routine occupations and 65% of women in routine occupations. Note that many women ‘downgrade’ when moving to part-time employment, and so the latter two categories will include women with higher qualifications and levels of experience (for more information, see Section 4.3).

Figure 5: Proportion of part-time workers by gender and socio-economic status, 2009



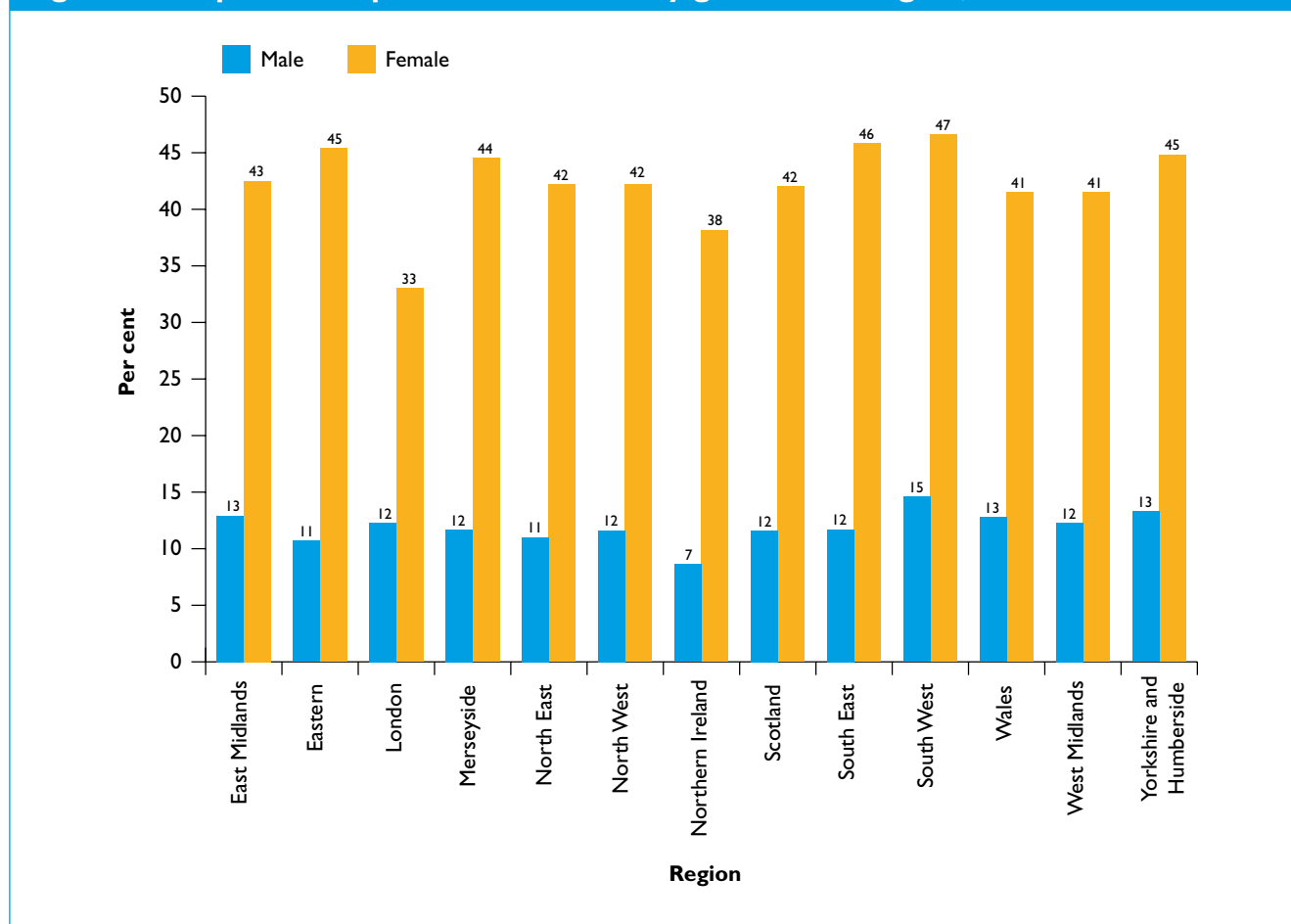
Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

³² Note, however, that a broad definition of part-time working, set at 30 hours a week or less, precludes any detailed analysis of these differences.

Region/geography

There are also regional variations in the proportions of women working part time (See Figure 6). London stands out as having the lowest levels of female part-time workers (33%) and the second lowest level of male part-time workers (11%). However, Northern Ireland also has lower levels of part-time workers than national averages, with the level for women at 38% and the level for men at just under 9%. The highest levels of female part-time workers are in the South West (47%) and the South East (excluding London) at 46%. For men there is less variation, with the highest level overall in the South West at 15%.

Figure 6: Proportion of part-time workers by gender and region, 2009



Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

In the research undertaken by Grant et al. (2005), six local labour markets were chosen for both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Census data from 2001 showed the proportions of working women aged 16–59 in part-time jobs in each location:

- 21% in Camden;
- 36% in Leicester;
- 37% in Trafford;
- 40% in Thurrock;
- 42% in West Sussex; and
- 44% in Wakefield.

Not only are there regional differences in the proportions of women taking up part-time posts, but also in the types of jobs they do on a part-time basis. In their analysis, Grant and colleagues found a high proportion of female part-time employment in Thurrock in sales and customer services (30%); in Wakefield and Leicester, there was a high concentration of female part-time employment in elementary jobs (26% for both). Perhaps not surprisingly, this occupational distribution is related to the industrial structure of local employment in England (Grant et al., 2005). Two-thirds of women working part time work within 5km of their homes, and a fifth walk to work, demonstrating how tied many women are to opportunities within the local labour market. The work by Grant and colleagues (2005) suggests that trends in job growth and job loss affect women in different localities and that the pace of change varies considerably across location.

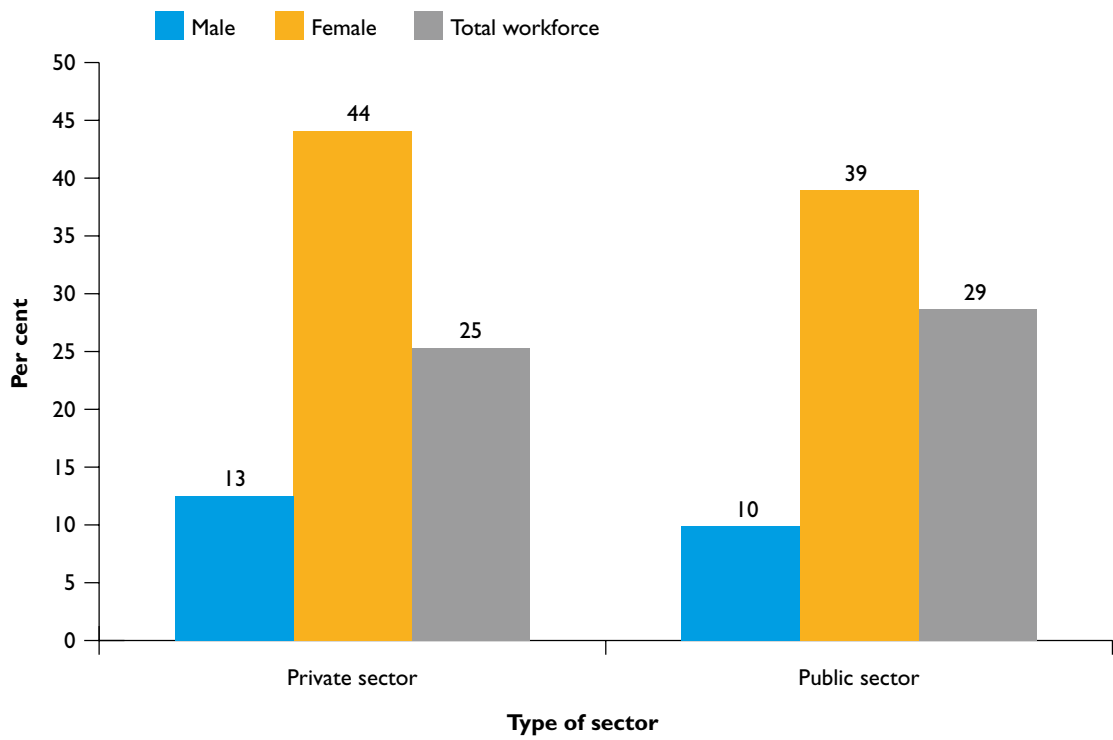
3.4 Which types of organisation employ part-time workers?

As outlined in the previous section, part-time work is related to the kinds of jobs available at a local level. However, part-time work is also widely offered in some sectors but not in others. Europe-wide research undertaken by Anxo et al. (2007) found that, in almost all countries, there were higher levels of part-time working in the public sector than in the private sector, in services than in industry, in larger organisations than in smaller ones, and in those organisations employing higher proportions of women (over 60%) than those with lower proportions of female workers.

Public/private sectors

There is a much higher proportion of women than men working in the public sector and there is also a higher proportion of women than men working part time in both public and private sectors, as expected. There are more part-time workers in the public sector overall than in the private sector (29%, compared with 25%), reflecting the higher proportion of women in the public sector overall (Figure 7). Ten per cent of men employed in the public sector work part time, compared with 13% of men working in the private sector. While there is a marginally lower propensity for women in the public sector to work part time (39%) than in the private sector (44%), this is more than offset by the higher proportion of women in the public sector workforce (65%) than in the private sector workforce (41%).

Figure 7: Proportion of part-time workers by gender and public/private sector, 2009

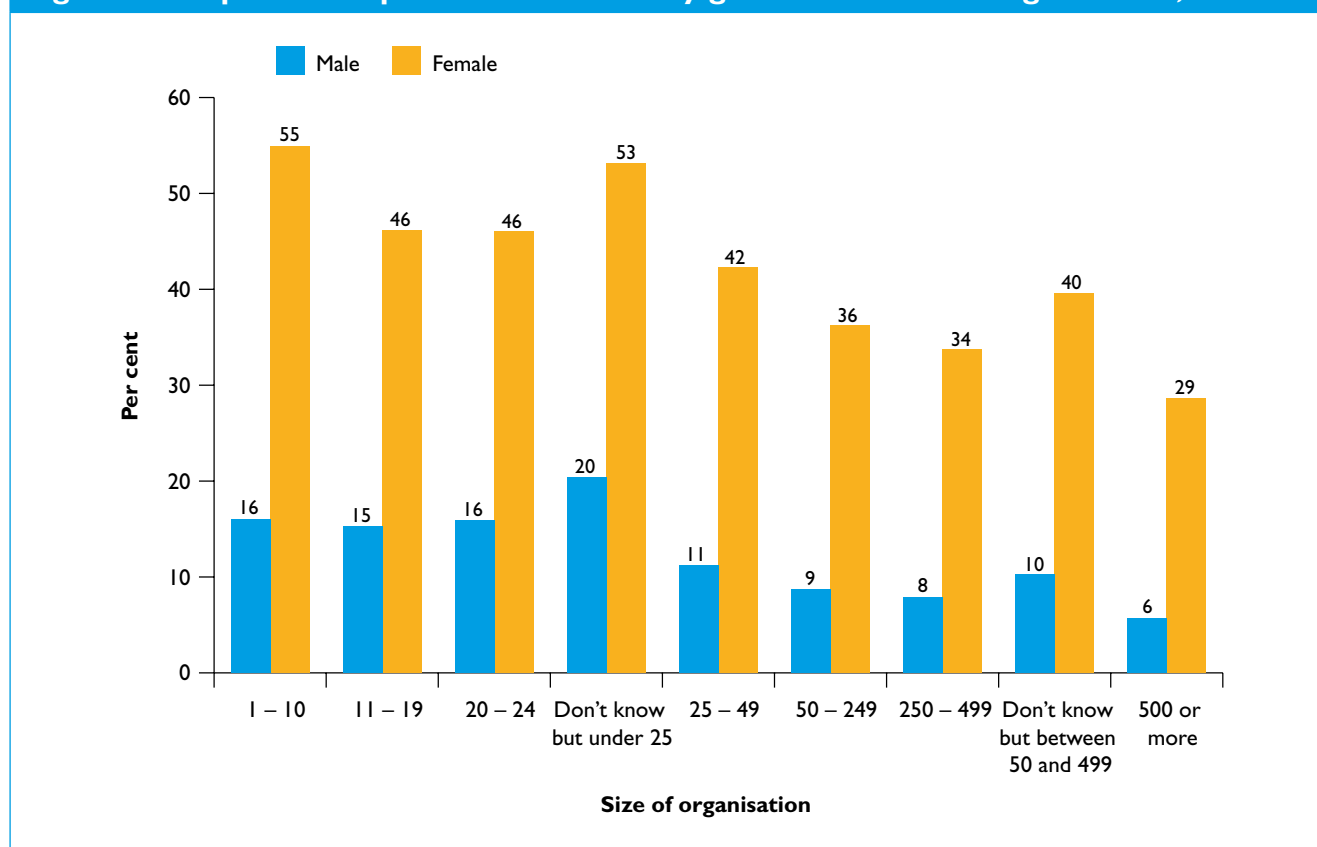


Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

Size of organisations

There are also larger proportions of women and men working part time in smaller organisations than in larger organisations (Figure 8). However, this does not reflect the actual numbers working within small and large organisations. As Anxo et al. (2007) report in their Europe-wide analyses, and Kersley et al. (2004) found with their analysis of Workplace Employment Relations Survey data from 2004 in the UK, larger numbers of part-time workers are found in large organisations, especially those in the public sector.³³ Among the LFS micro organisations described in Figure 8 (i.e. employing only one to ten staff) will be small shops, bars and restaurants where almost all employees are working on a part-time basis. As shown in Figure 9, hotels, restaurants and retail organisations employ among the highest proportions of part-time workers. Much higher proportions of part-time workers are found in smaller organisations overall (under 50 employees), and 55% of women and 16% of men in organisations with fewer than ten employees work reduced hours. This is compared with 29% of women and 6% of men in organisations with 500 employees or more.

Figure 8: Proportion of part-time workers by gender and size of organisation, 2009



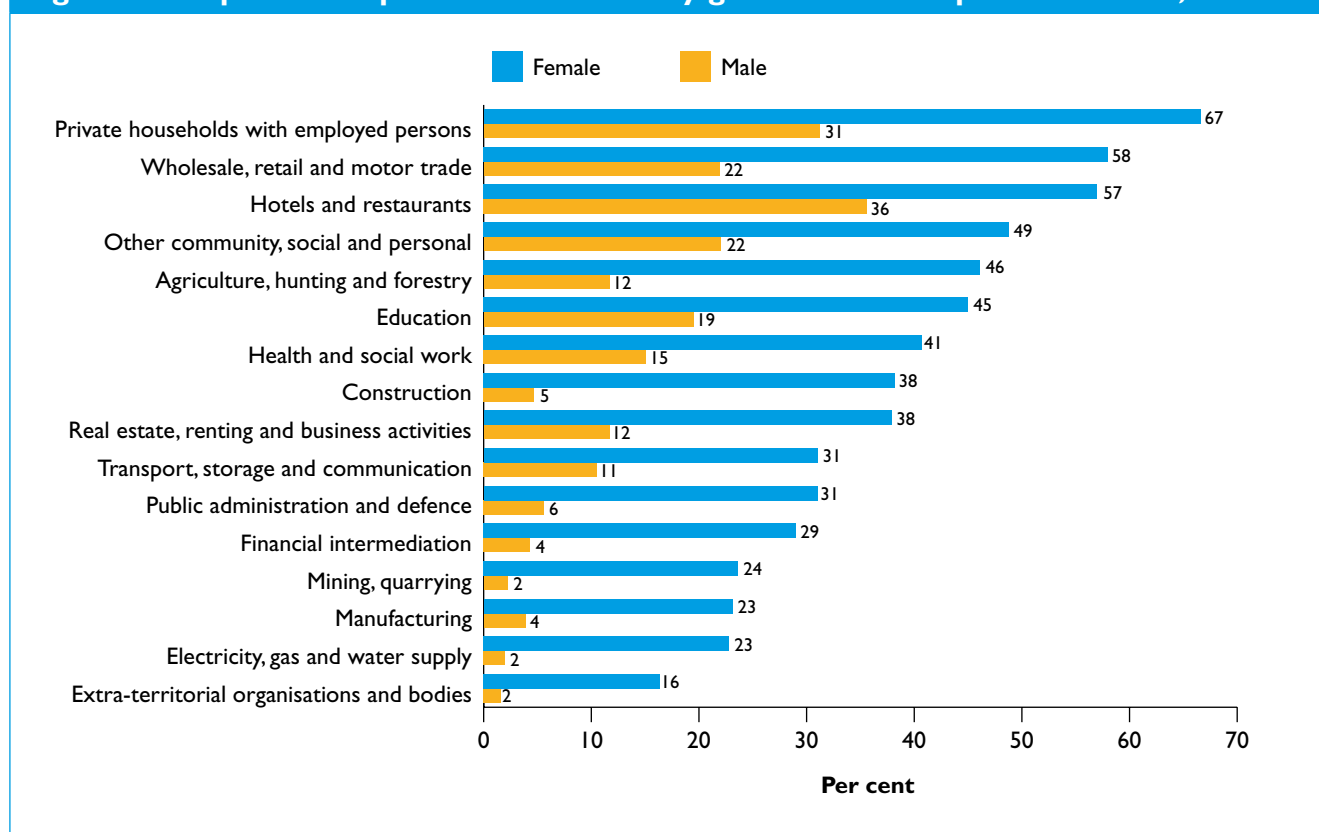
Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

³³ The Anxo et al. (2007) analysis and the Kersley et al. (2004) analysis were based on interviews with managers of workplaces of ten or more employees and so do not take into account the micro organisations included in the LFS data.

Industrial sector

The wholesale, retail and motor trades, as well as hotels and restaurants, have the highest proportions of women working part time. The highest proportions of male part-time workers are also found in hotels and restaurants, wholesale, retail and motor trades, and other community, social and personal occupations. The lowest proportion of both men and women working part time can be found in electricity, gas and water supply companies, manufacturing and extra-territorial organisations and bodies.³⁴

Figure 9: Proportion of part-time workers by gender and occupational sector, 2009



Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07). As there were no part-time workers in the fishing sector this is not displayed

³⁴ These include international organisations such as the United Nations, European Communities, European Free Trade Association, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Customs Co-operation Council, Organisation of Oil Producing and Exporting Countries, International Monetary Fund, World Bank.

The difference in the proportion of part-time working in smaller versus larger organisations appears to be less marked in the UK than in other European countries (Anxo et al., 2007), but there are nevertheless similarities across Europe with regard to the types of organisations more likely to employ part-time workers. Overall, organisations are more likely to have part-time workers if they are operating in the service sector, in the public sector, are larger, and also have a high proportion of women in the workforce. Therefore, organisations with a high rate of part-time employment are concentrated in the following sectors: health and social work; education; other community, social and personal services; hotels and restaurants (Anxo et al., 2007). In the main, these occupational sectors also have a high proportion of lower-paid jobs. In an analysis of local government jobs in the UK, Thornley (2007) found that the areas in which female part-time workers are to be found are also the most feminised and particularly in (low-paid) jobs frequently viewed as ‘women’s work’, such as catering, cleaning, caring and teaching assistance.

Box 2: Summary of who works part time

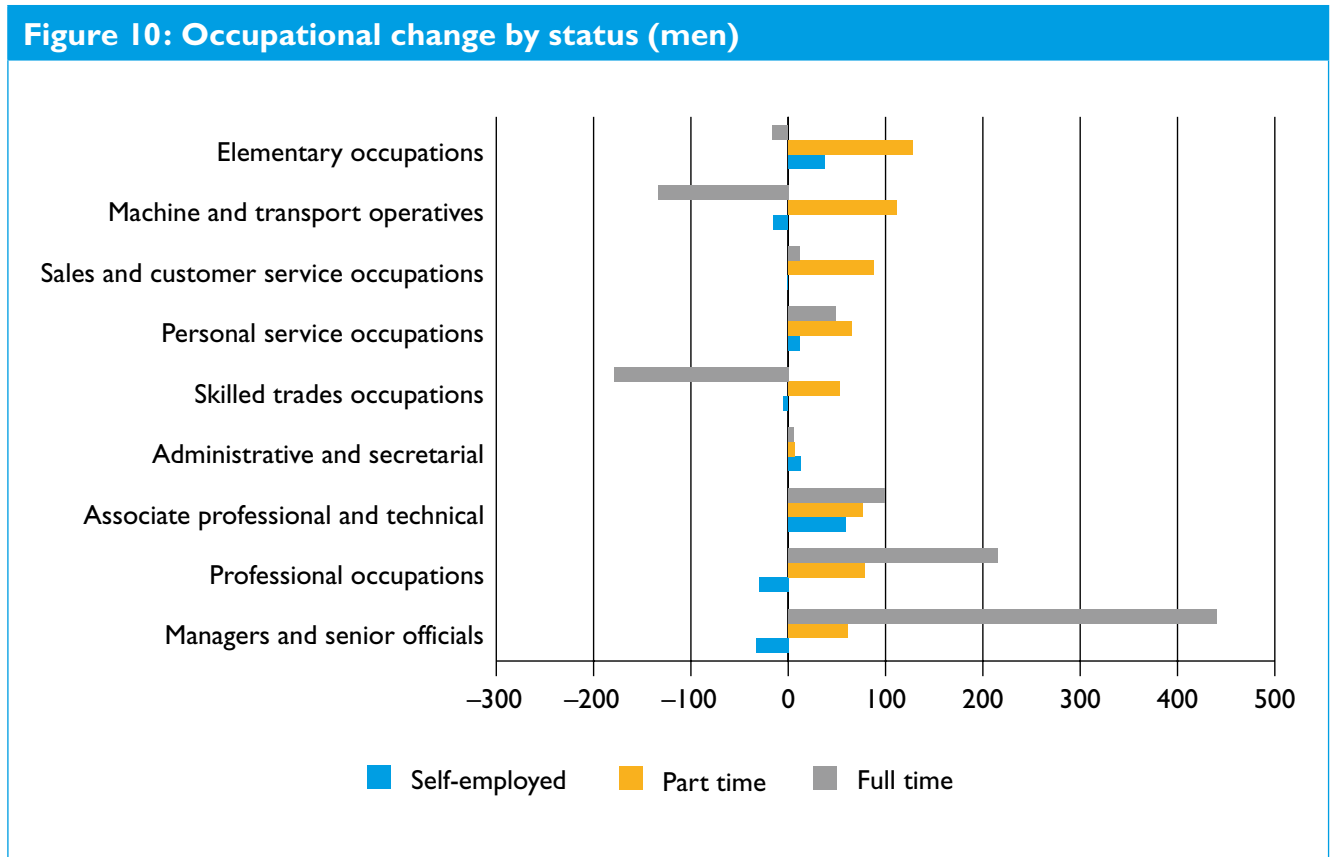
The previous sections have highlighted the fact that, although there are a large number of women (and some men) working part time in the UK, this varies by many different factors. Overall, part-time work is more likely to be done by:

- women aged between 30 and 44, as well as younger and older men and women;
- men and women in lower-level jobs;
- men and women with no qualifications;
- white women, and men from other ethnic groups;
- men and women registered disabled and with a work-limiting disability;
- men and women working in organisations with higher proportions of women overall;
- men and women working in public sector organisations; and
- men and women working in wholesale, retail and motor trades, as well as hotels and restaurants.

The areas in which female part-time workers are to be found are also the most feminised and particularly in (low-paid) jobs frequently viewed as ‘women’s work’.

3.5 Future projections of part-time work

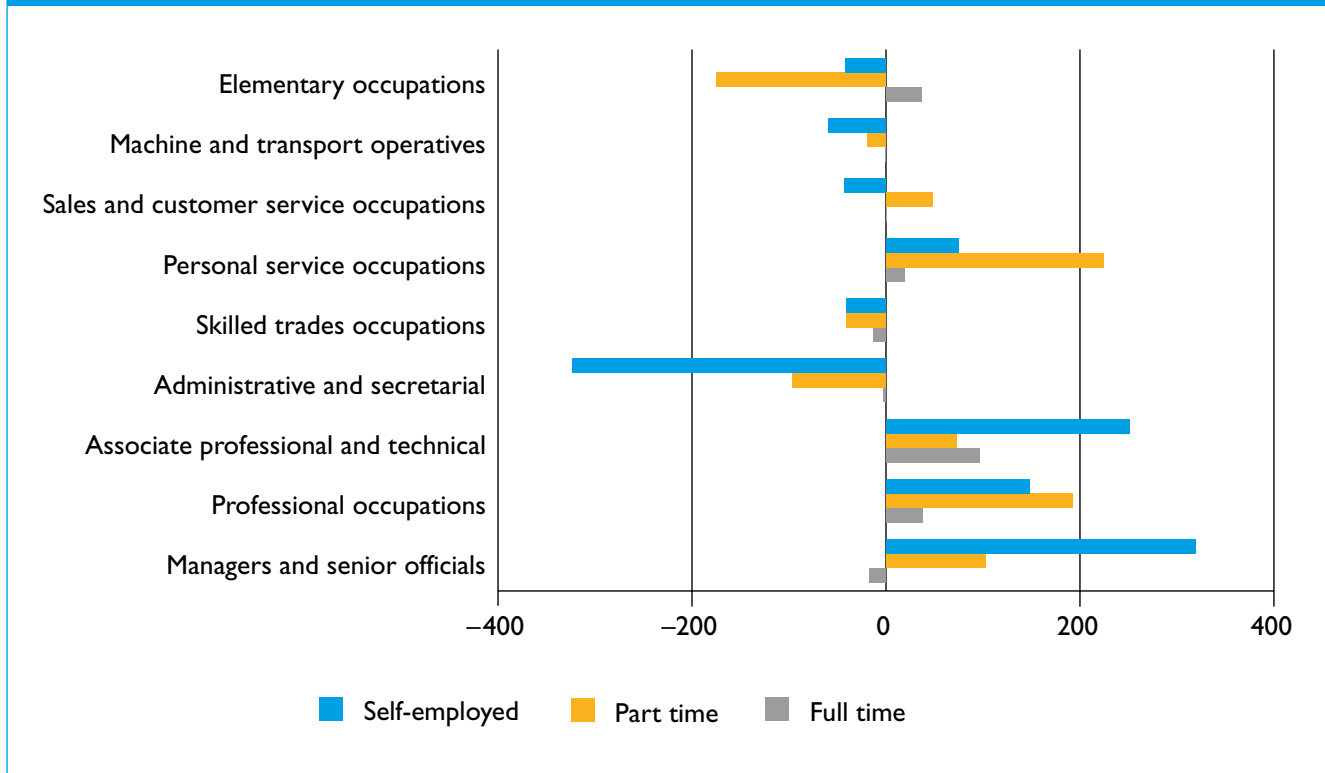
Part-time employment is increasing overall and is expected to continue to increase in relative importance for both women and men in the short to medium term (UKCES 2007-2017; Figures 10 and 11).³⁵



Source: CE/IER estimates, CE projections, MDM C81F9A (revision 900), Alluk.xls. Figures 4.1 to 4.4.

³⁵ The Working Futures projections were produced before the current economic crisis.

Figure 11: Occupational change by status (women)



Source: CE/IER estimates, CE projections, MDM C81F9A (revision 900), Alluk.xls. Figures 4.1 to 4.4.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) reports that men are projected to move in on female work domains as they are squeezed out of traditional male jobs such as manufacturing. Figure 10 also highlights significant decreases in full-time work for men in skilled trades, as well as machine and transport operatives, along with a corresponding rise in part-time jobs in these areas. Indeed, men are already working in more parts of the service sector, especially in customer services, although personal service jobs, such as caring services, are still predominantly undertaken by women, and projections suggest that this will continue.

Projected changes in part-time work vary by occupational sector, with administrative and secretarial occupations, undertaken mostly by women, expected to decrease substantially, displaced by advances in computer technology (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2008). In almost all occupational groups, including professional occupations, a rise in part-time work is predicted for men (although a general rise in all forms of work in professional and managerial occupations is predicted for both men and women). Large increases are also expected in part-time work among women in personal service jobs. For women, a substantial decrease in part-time elementary jobs is anticipated, whereas for men, a rise is expected in part-time and self-employed elementary occupations.³⁶ Self-employment is also expected to rise among women and, to a lesser extent, men in associate professional and technical occupations.

³⁶ Elementary occupations are equivalent to lower-level routine and manual occupations (examples would be labourers and catering assistants; Office for National Statistics).

3.6 Part-time work during the recession

There has been an increase of 223,000 people in short-term work 'for economic reasons' during the current recession, almost double the figure for 2008 (Bank of England, 2009, cited in the *Independent*, 13 August 2009), as well as an overall increase of 964,000 in part-time work, up 40% on 2008 figures (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2009). The ONS Labour Market data also reveal that there are 426,000 people currently in temporary work because they cannot find a permanent position, up by a quarter on the previous year. There have been well-publicised reports in the media of staff being forced to work reduced hours, or even to work without pay for periods of time (e.g. *The Independent*, 17 June 2009, "Struggling BA asks its 40,000 employees to work without pay", and *The Independent*, 13 August, 2009, "Barrister to Barista: the rise of part-time Britain"), which also report upon a growing number of the "shadow unemployed," where many workers operate in "a twilight world between traditional jobs and casual, insecure and poorly paid work".

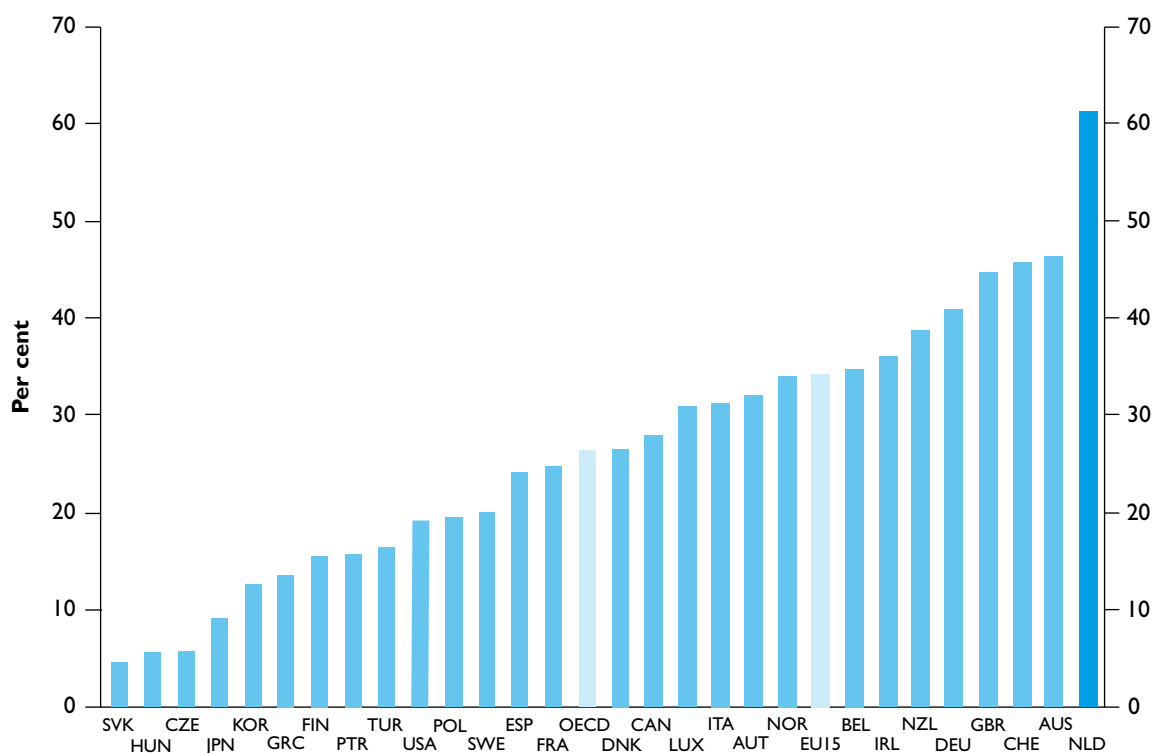
Figures from the Labour Force Survey show that the number of people in employment fell by 14,000 from September to November 2009 to reach 28.9 million, the number of people in full-time employment fell by 113,000, and the number of people in part-time employment increased by 99,000 to a record high of 7.7 million. There were 1.03 million employees and self-employed people working part time because they could not find a full-time job, however. This is the highest figure since records began in 1992 (ONS, 2010).

Data from the TUC show that the majority of involuntary part-time workers are female (May 2009). However, it must be noted that around 80% of the part-time workforce are women, and indeed, recent figures (ONS, September–November 2009) show that 25% of men working part time said that they were doing so because they could not secure full-time employment, compared with 10% of women. The TUC report also warns that people moving to part-time work often face a double pay penalty. Not only are they unable to work enough hours, but they are also likely to earn less per hour (TUC, May 2009). (For more on the gender pay gap and the part-time pay penalty, see Chapter 4).

3.7 International comparisons

The UK is one of the countries with the largest share of female part-time workers across Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (see Figure 12). However, of all countries, the Netherlands has by far the highest proportion of female part-time workers at over 60%.

Figure 12: Incidence of female part-time employment among the EU countries



Source: OECD, Average hours worked, 2006.

In the Netherlands, part-time work is more integrated into the national employment structure than in the UK and specific policies have been developed to protect part-time workers (Anxo et al., 2007). In recognition of the problems associated with increased part-time working (such as lower pay, poorer terms and conditions), the EU has urged member states to set up a legal framework for the equal treatment of those working part time. As a consequence, several legislative reforms have been developed, but the Netherlands emerges as the country with the most developed policy framework, the Dutch Equal Treatment Act (1996). This legislation effectively prohibits employers from differentiating between full-time and part-time employees, without any objective justification, so recognising part-time work as equivalent to full-time work. Part-time workers are entitled to the same (pro-rata) pay and pension rights, bonuses and holidays. In addition, the Part-time Employment Act (2000) gives employees the right to reduce or increase their working hours (employers could only refuse such requests if specific business interests were jeopardised as a consequence).

There is, however, growing recognition that the high incidence of part-time work is linked as much, if not more, to taxation and childcare as it is to individual preferences and choices, just as in many other EU countries. Many low-skilled married females in the Netherlands tend to remain at the margin of the labour market, although they are often willing to work and the service sector needs their labour. However, a heavy tax burden on second earners reduces the ability of women to work full time, and the Government has been addressing this issue by stimulating the provision of childcare services, making it easier for parents to work longer hours. The impact of the current recession on part-time workers in the Netherlands has yet to be addressed.

Summary

Part-time work is usually defined as work of 30 hours a week or less.³⁷

- Women are more likely than men to work part time, particularly during the key child-rearing years.³⁸
- Women who work part time are most likely to be white, of lower socio-economic status and with fewer qualifications.³⁹
- Men who work part time are most likely to be younger (students) or older (pre-retirement), of non-white, of lower socio-economic status and with fewer qualifications,⁴⁰ perhaps as a result of their inability to gain full-time work.
- Disabled men and women are most likely to work part time if they have a work-limiting disability.⁴¹
- More women work in the public sector than men and a higher proportion of women than men work part time in both the public and private sectors.⁴²
- Over half of women and 16% of men work reduced hours in organisations with fewer than 10 employees. This is compared with 29% of women and 6% of men in organisations with 500 employees or more.⁴³
- The wholesale, retail and motor trades, as well as hotels and restaurants, have the highest proportion of women and men working part time, with very small proportions of both working in electricity, gas and water supply companies.⁴⁴
- It is anticipated that more men will work part time in the future, moving into previously female-dominated occupations such as the service sector.⁴⁵
- There has been a rise in the number of men and women working part time during the recession, with a higher proportion of men reporting that they could not find a full-time job.⁴⁶
- The UK has one of the highest levels of female part-time working in the OECD countries.⁴⁷

³⁷ Most datasets used by UK researchers define part-time work as anything under 30 hours per week. Government labour market statistics, in common with other data sources, use 30 hours to define the full-time/part-time division.

³⁸ Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, April–June 2009

³⁹ LFS data, April–June 2009

⁴⁰ LFS data, April–June 2009

⁴¹ LFS data, April–June 2009

⁴² LFS data, April–June 2009

⁴³ LFS data, April–June 2009

⁴⁴ LFS data, April–June 2009

⁴⁵ UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2008)

⁴⁶ ONS data, September–November 2009

⁴⁷ OECD data, 2006

4. Part-time work in the UK: identifying the problem

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the general problems relating to part-time work in the UK. In particular, the chapter will focus on:

- occupational segregation and occupational downgrading;
- the gender pay gap and part-time work;
- part-time work in the public sector.

4.2 Occupational segregation

Occupational segregation is commonly described as the concentration of men and women in different kinds of jobs (horizontal segregation) and/or in different grades or levels (vertical segregation). Studies have shown that as more women enter the labour market, they are recruited into jobs that are defined as 'female jobs' (for more information, see Gonäs and Karlsson, 2006). As shown already, those sectors with a high rate of part-time employment are health and social work; education; other community, social and personal services; hotels and restaurants (Anxo et al., 2007), which also tend to be the most feminised and have high proportions of lower-paid jobs (Thornley, 2007). In addition, there is a wealth of evidence to show that, even when there are similar proportions of men and women in the workplace, men take a disproportionate number of senior level positions (e.g. Purcell et al., 2006), especially as many of these jobs are not offered on a part-time basis.

4.3 Occupational downgrading

What is it?

Occupational downgrading occurs when more highly qualified or highly skilled women (or men), often as a consequence of their domestic responsibilities, choose to reduce their working hours. Because of the limited part-time options available in highly skilled jobs, many women compromise by taking lower-level jobs and then become stuck, with little opportunity for advancement. This is a crucial issue for the UK economy: not only are valued skills and talent wasted, but women's incomes are negatively affected in the long term.

How many people are affected?

The incidence of occupational downgrading among women is substantial. Using longitudinal data from the New Earnings Survey Panel dataset (NESPD) and the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), Connolly and Gregory (2008a) used a measure of occupational downgrading based on the qualification levels of women. Due to the differences between datasets and the large variation between women of different qualification levels, they found that a minimum of 14%, and probably around 25% of all women who move to part-time work, change to an occupation where the average qualification level is below that of their previous full-time job. Downgrading affects as many as 29% of women from professional and corporate management jobs, and up to 40% in intermediate-level jobs.

Those most likely to downgrade are women working in smaller-scale managerial positions (e.g. in restaurants, salons and shops), with almost half giving up their managerial responsibilities and reverting to standard personal service or sales assistant jobs (ibid.). Using the BHPS data, the research found that one quarter of women switching into part-time work, but in continuous employment, move downwards, although 17% move upwards. This balance is reversed on the switch out of part-time into full-time work (although to a lesser extent). The authors claim that, taken together, these patterns “give prima facie evidence that it is part-time status itself which is associated with occupational downgrading” (Connolly and Gregory, 2008a: F60). This data provides substantial evidence for the prevalence of occupational downgrading within the UK.

In further work on these issues, and by tracing the occupational histories of a sample of over 60,000 women between 1975 and 2000, Connolly and Gregory (2008a) found that the proportion of women working full time and employed in high-level occupations rose threefold between 1975 and 2000, while for part-time workers the figures barely changed.

A qualitative study was conducted between February 2004 and May 2005 in six localities across England. Grant and colleagues (2005) conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with a senior manager in 20 separate workplaces. A further 219 women working part time in these workplaces were also surveyed about their labour market experience, educational qualifications and current study and training. Follow-up, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 of these women who were identified as ‘working below their potential’. Although not representative of the country as a whole, the in-depth nature of the research methodology, with a focus on regional differences, allowed for the collection of a rich body of data, with the authors also employing analyses of quantitative data, including the 2001 Census (Grant et al., 2005). In an analysis of regional differences, they similarly found that 53% of women working part time had previously worked in jobs requiring higher qualifications, more skills or more experience, or had involved more management or supervisory responsibility than required in their current job.

Grant et al. (2005) also drew on a survey, conducted for the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2004 (see Darton and Hurrell, 2005), covering around 2,300 male and female part-time workers aged 16 or over, 78% of whom were women, which corresponds with the percentage of the national female part-time workforce. Results showed that 51% of all part-time workers (both men and women, although a much higher proportion of women were working part time) defined themselves as working below their potential. Of these, many were either in the early or later parts of their working lives, but, extrapolating from the survey sample to the population of the UK as a whole, Grant and colleagues (2005) argue that around 2.1 million people working below their potential are aged 25–54, the age when people typically develop their careers and where it is particularly important both for the UK economy and for the individuals involved that their talents are used to the full extent within their current jobs. In this crucial age group, the vast majority of those working below their potential are women: 1.85 million, compared with about 280,000 men (ibid.).

The degree of downgrading also varies by whether or not women move employer at the same time as moving to part-time work (Connolly and Gregory, 2008a). The NESPD data (Table 1) also showed downgrading for 35% of women in highly skilled occupations who move employer when changing to part-time work, compared with only 8% who stay with the same employer; the figures for the BHPS are 41% and 18%, respectively.⁴⁸ These figures vary, partly as a result of the different methods of data collection, e.g., in the BHPS, employment status is based on the main job, defined as that with most hours. This is derived from a face-to-face interview, with maternity leave one of the options that the respondent can record. The New Earnings Survey (NES) is a spot survey, relating to a specified week in April each year, reporting employment status in that week (no guidance is given to employers on how to record maternity leave, however). Perhaps not surprisingly, women already in lower-level occupations are less likely to downgrade when moving to part-time work, meaning that both lower-level *and* higher-level women are competing for the same (lower-level) part-time jobs. However, women in intermediate-level jobs are most likely to downgrade when also moving employer, with figures in both datasets fairly consistent at around 60%.

⁴⁸ The authors argue that no single dataset provides all of the information needed and so use two datasets. The New Earnings Survey Panel Dataset (NESPD) is the panel dataset generated from the sequential annual New Earnings Surveys (NES). The NES is a survey of the pay, hours of work, occupation and other employment details for a random sample of all employees drawn from individual National Insurance numbers. Since individuals retain their NI number for life and the same terminating digits are used to draw the sample in each year, the cross-sectional sampling frame automatically generates a panel; this forms the NESPD, currently available to 2001. The NESPD provides data on over 70,000 women each year. By sampling randomly on individual NI numbers it covers women at all stages of the life-cycle and in employment in all types and sizes of firms. The Statistics of Trade Act, under which the Survey is conducted, makes return of the Survey questionnaire compulsory, providing a high response rate. However, there is significant under-sampling of job-movers. As part-time workers change jobs more frequently, this becomes a further source of their under-sampling. The NES also contains only limited information on personal characteristics. The better-known BHPS was established in 1991 as an in-depth annual survey of a nationally representative sample of 5,500 households. Each adult member of the household is interviewed, including new members as they join and adults leaving their original household are followed to their new household. Children are added as they reach age 16. In addition to employment status and occupation the BHPS records a range of further personal and household circumstances potentially affecting women's labour supply, including presence of spouse or partner, number and ages of children present and highest level of qualification held. The survey comprises around 2,500 women of working age each year. To match in with the period available in the NESPD and with the use of SOC90 for occupational coding, the authors use the first 11 waves, covering the period 1991–2001 (for more information, see Connolly and Gregory, 2008a). The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) was developed to replace the New Earnings Survey (NES) in 2004. The ASHE provides information about the levels, distribution and make-up of earnings and hours paid for employees within industries, occupations and regions.

Table 1: Occupational transitions by skill level of origin and destination, job-stayers and movers, NESPD and BHPS, 1991–2001

	NESPD			BHPS		
	Number	Up- grading (%)	Down- grading (%)	Number	Up- grading (%)	Down- grading (%)
High skill						
All FT to PT	7,927	3.3	15.5	242	7.9	28.9
Stayer and FT to PT	5,700	1.8	8.0	127	5.5	18.1
Mover and FT to PT	2,227	7.3	34.9	115	10.4	40.9
Intermediate skill						
All FT to PT	4,985	5.4	26.7	197	13.2	40.6
Stayer and FT to PT	3,308	3.1	9.8	99	11.1	20.2
Mover and FT to PT	1,677	10.0	60.2	98	15.3	61.2
Low skill						
All FT to PT	12,950	15.1	9.0	427	24.1	17.1
Stayer and FT to PT	8,870	6.7	3.5	222	14.9	7.7
Mover and FT to PT	4,080	33.4	21.1	205	34.1	27.3

Source: Connolly and Gregory (2008a)

Changes over time

Not only are there substantial penalties for women in taking a part-time job on returning to work after a child, but there is also evidence that this penalty has increased in comparison with earlier generations of women (Dex et al., 2008). Using the Women and Employment Survey (WES), in which the sample of women was broken down into quasi-cohorts (those born between 1922 and 1936 and 1943 and 1953) and the more recent National Child Development Survey (NCDS), a longitudinal dataset of babies born in one week in 1958, the authors found that the likelihood of downward occupational mobility (similar to occupational downgrading) declined over time if the mother returned to work full time. However, returning to work part time was associated with a much higher chance of downward mobility in the later cohort than in the earlier ones (Dex et al., 2008). It should be noted, however, that there were fewer returns to part-time employment among the NCDS women than the WES women. Taking longer breaks from work for childbirth also increased the associated penalties for the later generation of women (ibid.).

Reasons for occupational downgrading

In the study comparing women working part time in different regions in England referred to earlier, which employed both quantitative and qualitative evidence, Grant et al. (2005) found that some women effectively ‘demote’ themselves to lower-level occupations because of the intensity of full-time work at senior levels and also because of the absence of any effective work–life balance policies and practices within the workplace (see also Section 6.5). In a breakdown of the survey evidence provided in Darton and Hurrell (2005), Grant et al. (2005) highlighted the reasons given by women for working below their potential (Table 2).

Table 2: Working below potential: BMRB national survey, Great Britain (women only, aged 16–54 years, 2004 data)

	Age		
	All 16–54 years	16–24 years	25–54 years
% of all PT women working below potential	49	32	52
Caring			
I am working PT to combine working with caring responsibilities	73	37	78
Avoiding stress			
I am doing lower-skilled work because it is less demanding and stressful than previous jobs	42	39	43
Limited labour market opportunities			
I feel held back because career opportunities are limited with current employer	18	27	17
I would prefer to work FT, but there are no opportunities for FT work with current employer	14	21	13
I cannot find PT work that uses my skills, qualifications or experience	21	26	20
I am working PT because there are no suitable FT jobs in my area	12	21	11
Actively taking steps to improve position			
I am actively looking for better paid work	22	50	19
I am training or studying for a qualification so that I can get a higher paid job	23	56	19
Base (unweighted)	725	72	653

Source: BMRB survey 2004, cited in Grant et al., 2005

Over three-quarters (78%) of women aged 25–54 were working part time to combine work with caring responsibilities and only 13% of this group would prefer a full time job. Grant and colleagues (2005) summarise the evidence by saying that in comparison with younger women (aged 16–24), few of the older women (25–54) were actively looking for better paid work. However, 43% reported that they were doing lower-skilled work because it was less stressful and demanding than their previous jobs. In all, around 1.25 million women in the UK aged between 25 and 54 are ‘stuck’, working below their potential (2005: 43).

Occupational downgrading and loss of earnings

It has already been shown that there are substantial career penalties for women in taking a part-time job on returning to work after a child, and that this penalty has increased over time (Dex et al., 2008). These female 'returners' also have to contend with penalties relating to salary and longer-term earnings.

Connolly and Gregory (2008a) focused on the impact of part-time work on women's subsequent earnings and career paths after a shift from full-time to part-time work, usually for childcare reasons. Quantitative analysis of the New Earnings Survey Panel Dataset (NESP), with a sample of those who recorded at least three years in work, showed that:

- moving to part-time work plus downgrading plus changing employer equates to an immediate earnings reduction of 32% (part-time working alone was economically unimportant); and
- upgrading (switching back into full-time work) equates to a less marked earnings increase of around 12.8%, less than half the negative impact of switching to part-time work.

Connolly and Gregory (2008a) also modelled the career trajectories of different types of women over a period of 10 years, demonstrating that part-time work brings permanently lower earnings as a consequence.

Similarly, Tomlinson et al. (2009) carried out a quantitative analysis of the employment profiles of women returners, using data from 2001 from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Employers Skills Survey (ESS). It showed that part-time returners earned £1.49 less per hour than full-time workers and those who returned full time and maintained full-time work could be expected to earn an extra £2.01 per hour, compared with an increase of £0.15 for those maintaining a part-time career trajectory.

The evidence provides compelling evidence that part-time work appears to have both short-term and long-term effects on career prospects and on earnings, and there is further evidence that women often lose confidence in their abilities and skills once they become 'trapped' in lower-level part-time jobs (Grant et al., 2005).

Research has shown that women's orientation to the labour market can change over time, for various reasons (Fagan, 2001; Warren and Walters, 1998) and that many women would prefer to move back into full-time work or increase their part-time hours. However, as Grant and colleagues (2005) report, the process of returning to jobs that fully utilise women's skills involves a complex set of transitions. Often, such women had to use their own resources to regain their previous position in the labour market due to a lack of support either within their current workplace or in the wider social, educational and vocational guidance support systems (ibid.). These women, therefore, "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" (2005: 56). 'Quality' part-time work should, where a business case can be made, provide the opportunity to increase the number of hours to full-time work, if desired, at the same or a higher level (see Chapter 6 for more details).

4.4 The gender pay gap

In spite of the current regulations (see Box 1), the prevalence of part-time working women in the UK has been found to be a key factor affecting the gender pay gap (Kingsmill, 2001; Grimshaw and Rubery, 2001; Harkness, 2002; Olsen and Walby, 2004; Grant et al., 2005; Olsen et al., 2010). The gender pay gap is generally defined as the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings within the economy as a whole but can be calculated in different ways (e.g., using median hourly pay or mean hourly pay, excluding overtime, ONS, 2010).

Many researchers have examined the impact of working part time, concluding that women experience a 'pay penalty', both in comparison with women working full time, but also, and more importantly, in comparison with full-time men (e.g., Warren, 2003). A recent study commissioned by the Government Equalities Office (Olsen et al., 2010) shows that the gender pay gap for female part-time workers in the UK, in relation to male full-time workers, was 39% in 2006 (Low Pay Commission, 2007), while the gender pay gap for women working full time has improved slightly, moving from 19% in 2001 to 17% in 2007 (Leaker, 2008). Women are on average still paid 22% per hour less than men. The pay gap between 2004 and 2007 was found to be insignificant at school-leaving age, became positive at age 27 and then rose to a peak at age 45 (Olsen et al., 2010).

For as long as part-time jobs pay significantly less than similar full-time jobs, women will continue to be at a disadvantage, both in terms of current salary and longer-term savings, but also in terms of their perceived 'equivalence' to full-time workers when being considered for promotion. At the very minimum, a 'quality' part-time job should be one that pays the same (pro rata) salary as a similar full-time job (see Chapter 6 for more details). In its current form, however, part-time work maintains patterns of segregation and inequality in the UK (Tomlinson et al., 2009).

Olsen et al. (2010) carried out detailed statistical modelling of the BHPS to examine how much of the gender pay gap was accounted for by various factors:

- 10% of the overall pay gap can be attributed to occupational sex segregation. Having 10 percentage point greater share of men in an occupation is associated with 2% higher average hourly wages.
- 12% of the gap is due to the industries in which men and women work.
- 21% of the gap is due to differences in years of experience of full-time work.
- 16% of the gap is due to the negative effect on wages of having previously worked part time or of having taken time out of the labour market to look after family.
- 36% of the pay gap cannot be explained by any of the characteristics that have been controlled for in this study.
- 5% of the pay gap is due to formal education levels.

The gender pay gap in the public sector

As shown earlier, a high proportion of women work in the public sector (65% of all employees are women) and part-time jobs are common. In fact, 39% of women in the public sector work reduced hours (LFS data, April–June 2009), although these figures vary across particular employment areas within the public sector (Thornley, 2007). One might expect, therefore, that the gender pay gap would be less pronounced in a sector where women form the majority of the workforce. Thornley (2007) assessed the impact of part-time work on the gender pay gap in the public sector, specifically focusing upon local government occupations, where 67% of women work part time. Her conclusions ran counter to expectations, and highlight that very little appears to have changed since an earlier report by Beechey and Perkins (1987), which also examined local government occupations. Thornley uses a combination of original pay data analysis and a wider national survey of pay and employment of women and men in local government services. The survey was supplemented by statistical and documentary work and fieldwork interviews. Completed questionnaires were received from over 3,000 workers, 985 of whom were female part-time workers.

Results showed that “part-time women are concentrated in particular occupations in the lowest grades in the occupational hierarchy, and given scant recognition or remuneration for the real skills employed and the actual job content” (Thornley, 2007: 470). Furthermore, these workers are “locked in to part-time work because of the lack of possibilities for training and promotion and severely under-developed career paths” (ibid.). For example, 61% of part-time workers had never been promoted, compared with 35% of full-time workers. Part-time workers also received fewer training days, with a higher proportion of part-time workers than full-time workers receiving just 0–3 days per year. Part-time workers were also disadvantaged within occupational pay hierarchies and some of the lowest paid put in substantial amounts of unpaid overtime. Problems were exacerbated by a lack of transparency of payment systems for workers with complex and variable working patterns, and meant that many women were struggling, especially as the majority provided an important source of the overall household income, and over a fifth were sole or main earners.

Because part-time work is, and will continue to be, important to many women (and increasingly to men) who wish to share their care responsibilities with work, even if only for a short period of time during the life-course, many argue that the challenge is to improve the quality of part-time work and the overall availability of quality part-time work (e.g. Connolly and Gregory, 2008a; Manning and Petrongolo, 2008; Women and Work Commission, 2006). By increasing the provision of part-time work in more senior roles, women will not be forced to downgrade and to under-utilise their skills and training, which in turn will represent a substantial boost to the economy and to the talent pool in the UK. Chapter 6 will outline the experience of ‘quality’ part-time work in the UK and will move on to suggest changes at the organisational level that will help to encourage and support quality part-time workers. First of all, this review will describe the international evidence on ‘quality’ part-time work.

Summary

- Downgrading when moving to part-time work affects as many as 29% of women from professional and corporate management jobs, and up to 40% in intermediate-level jobs.⁴⁹
- Research, using two large-scale datasets, has shown that downgrading affects 35–41% of women in high-skilled occupations who also move employer when changing to part-time work, compared with only 8–18% who stay with the same employer. Women with intermediate-level skills fare even worse.⁵⁰
- An estimated 69% of female part-time downgraders, equivalent to around 1.25 million women in the UK aged 25–54, are 'stuck', working below their potential.⁵¹
- High levels of women work in the public sector, many of whom work part time. However, evidence shows that they are still concentrated in lower-level jobs, with reduced opportunities for training and promotion, when compared with equivalent full-time workers.⁵²

⁴⁹ Connolly and Gregory, 2008a

⁵⁰ Connolly and Gregory, 2008a

⁵¹ Grant et al., 2005

⁵² Thornley, 2007

5. What is 'quality' part-time work?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will:

- briefly outline the evidence relating to what defines a 'quality' part-time job, drawing on international research;
- provide a revised working definition of quality part-time work; and
- provide a context within which to set the UK-specific evidence and the framework for definitions of quality part-time work.

5.2 What is job 'quality'?

In order to examine the nature of 'quality' part-time work in the UK, it is first of all necessary to define what is meant by a 'quality' part-time job. Much of the previous work on defining 'quality' part-time work has been carried out in Australia, the USA and Europe, with very little research having been done to date in the UK. An examination of the quality of part-time work inevitably raises the question of what defines a 'quality' job. Burgess (2005) differentiates the following four approaches to the measurement of job quality (see Table 3).

Table 3: Approaches to the measurement of job quality

Approach	Description
1. Minimum standards approach	Jobs need to meet prescribed core labour standards
2. Identification of 'decent' job attributes	Jobs need to meet prescribed standards which are higher than the core ones (e.g. International Labour Organization and European Commission standards)
3. Characteristics approach	Jobs are checked against components which contribute to job quality
4. Job quality index	Jobs are measured against a number of dimensions of job quality and combined into one index

Source: adapted from Burgess (2005)

Since the European Employment Strategy (1997), concerns have been raised about the erosion of quality jobs across the EU. Several factors have been highlighted as contributing to this deterioration: increased globalisation, leading to frequent downsizing and outsourcing; increased use of temporary work, linked to precarious employment; skill-biased technological progress, putting lower-skilled workers more at risk; socio-demographic factors such as increased ageing and the increased participation of women in the labour market (*Employment in Europe* report, 2008). These factors are perceived as going hand in hand with increased job insecurity, deteriorating working conditions (including work stress), reduced possibilities to combine work and non-work activities, and the increased inability of social security schemes to cope (European Commission, 2008).

The European Commission, in its communication ‘Employment and social policies: A framework for investing in quality’, has identified ten dimensions of quality in work, encompassing: the composition of jobs and their qualification requirements; the profile of workers, their inclusion and access to the labour market; workers’ skills and career development, and their subjective job satisfaction; the aims and operating practices of employers; the working environment, and health and safety at work in particular; gender equality and non-discrimination; and the direction and priorities of employment and social policies. The *Employment in Europe* report (European Commission, 2008) proposes an analytical framework for the measurement of job quality based on four key dimensions:

1. Wages and socio-economic security.
2. Working conditions and work intensity.
3. Skills and training.
4. Reconciliation of work with family life (including gender equality aspects).

The report also remarks upon the heterogeneity of job quality outcomes across Europe, with the Northern European model defined by high wages, good job conditions, but also high work intensity, high educational attainment and participation in training. Bearing these differences in mind, various researchers across the EU, North America and Australia have attempted to define ‘quality’ part-time work more clearly.

5.3 International evidence on quality part-time work

Australia

Some recent evidence has emerged as a result of policy emphasis in the state of Victoria and a two-year Australian Research Council funded project on quality part-time work. The New South Wales Quality Part Time Work Round Table described quality part-time work as: “secure, worthwhile work which reflects the skills, training and expertise of workers, and offers equivalent opportunities for job satisfaction and career development to jobs undertaken on a full time basis” (New South Wales Government, 2009). Similarly, Charlesworth and Whittenbury (2007) suggested that “in very simple terms, a quality part-time job can be understood as a ‘good’ or ‘decent’ job ... comparable to a full-time job, apart from reduced hours, in its conditions, opportunities and benefits” (ibid.: 36). A fuller definition is presented by Charlesworth et al. (2002):

1. substantial hours – of at least 20–25 hours;
2. effective access to part-time work at all occupational seniority levels and for both men and women;
3. the same protections as full-time work with respect to job protection, contracted hours and discrimination;
4. pro-rata wages and access to benefits;
5. equal access to training; and
6. employees are able to transfer either way between full-time and part-time work.

This definition (apart from the minimum hours criterion) has largely been adopted in the Australian Quality Part-time Work project, which explored quality part-time work in a number of economic sectors (Victoria Industrial Relations, 2005; Bardoel et al., 2007) and in a related project on part-time working in the police force (see Charlesworth and Whittenbury, 2007; Charlesworth et al., 2009). Following on from the empirical work, good practice guidelines for each of the five sectors covered in the project were developed by Victoria Industrial Relations in collaboration with employer associations and trade unions. These contained a checklist for part-time work, comprising indicators 2–6 above, plus two more:

7. part-time staff are treated the same as full-time workers;
8. recognition that part-time staff have a life outside work.

In some sectors, there may be further criteria. For example, in law firms, part-time workers may have their client load adjusted to their workload, and have a similar job content and status as full-time workers (Victoria Industrial Relations, 2007). Chalmers et al. (2005) divided the definition of quality part-time work into two sections, focusing on working time and job-related variables:

Working time variables:

- Reduced hours available
- Schedule available during social hours
- Employee-oriented flexibility of hours and schedules
- Ability to move between full-time and part-time hours in one job.

Job-related variables:

- Wages comparable to full-time employee wages
- Employment benefits
- Employment security
- Access to training and career progression
- Employee voice
- High skill and task autonomy of job.

European Union

In Austria, Bergman et al.'s (2004) definition took into account the EU debate about the quality of part-time work, the results of workshops undertaken in the context of the commissioned project, findings of employee and employer studies, and the results of international comparisons. Bergman et al. (ibid.) essentially adopted a 'characteristics approach' for the definition of quality part-time work. These key dimensions are listed in Table 4, together with the key conditions for the promotion of quality part-time work.⁵³

⁵³ This definition also featured elsewhere, see e.g. Scambor and Fasshauser (2006).

Table 4: Key dimensions of and conditions promoting quality part-time work ('qualifizierte Teilzeitarbeit')

Key dimensions of quality part-time work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job security: permanent contract • Working hours: 'self-determination' regarding number of hours and schedules (including right to return to full-time work) • Opportunities to participate in training • Opportunities for career development and promotion • Income security: allows the individual to secure his or her subsistence • Employment that reflects the qualification level and skills of the employee • Integration into the formal and informal communication flows within the organisation
Key conditions promoting the development of quality part-time work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to a high-quality and affordable childcare place • Fair distribution of unpaid household and care work • Well-developed public sector • Right to reduce hours of work and return to full-time work • Reducing gender-specific differences in income • Worker participation and representation of interests

Source: Bergman et al. (2004)

It is also interesting in this context that Bergman et al. (2004) compared 'quality of part-time work' internationally, using four proxy indicators in the absence of other available data (number of hours worked; distribution by economic sector and by occupational groups; the ratio of wages of part-time workers to those of full-time workers). Based on these limited data, Sweden came out top, followed by the Netherlands, while Great Britain did less well on all four indicators.⁵⁴

In their empirical study on the potential of quality part-time work, Wagner et al. (2008) have applied a different definition of 'qualifizierte Teilzeitarbeit', which essentially covers part-time work in the skilled and highly skilled segment of the labour market. The study generated interesting results, particularly with regard to the experiences with and assessments of a sample of 18 employers regarding part-time work among skilled employees.

United States of America

Because of differences in labour law, the literature in the USA defines job quality largely along the dimensions of wages and access to benefits. This leads to a dichotomy between so-called 'good' and 'bad' jobs, with 'good' jobs, broadly speaking, offering upward mobility and higher wages, and 'bad' jobs offering low pay and limited or no benefits. Haley-Lock (2009: 423) argues that "much of the scholarly literature dedicated to assessing part-time employment quality has dichotomised jobs along these basic good and bad dimensions".

⁵⁴ It should be noted that Bergman and Sorger have been commissioned by the Austrian government to investigate the quality of part-time work, focusing in particular on men and women in senior positions. The project is currently being completed and will shed more light on international good practice examples. For further information see <http://www.lrsocialresearch.at/content.php?aid=483&lng=de&pg=archiv>.

Tilly (1996), for example, distinguishes two types of part-time jobs: 'retention' jobs or 'good' part-time jobs, on the one hand, and 'secondary' or 'bad' part-time jobs on the other. Designed to retain valued staff, the employment conditions of the former are comparable to or better than those of full-time staff, as valued staff would be costly to replace. Typically, these staff members are part of the highly skilled segment of the labour market (e.g. skilled and professional occupations). In contrast, 'secondary' or 'marginal' jobs provide little opportunity for career advancement.

Spencer (2009) examined the quality of part-time work in the USA and changes in the quality of part-time work over a quarter of a century (1980–2005), using a national statistical dataset, the Central Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement. She used four available indicators to measure quality part-time work: voluntary/involuntary work; employer-based health insurance coverage; employer-based retirement plan coverage and wages. These indicators may not only reflect restrictions as a result of analysing an existing dataset but also the nature of the debate about quality part-time work in the USA, where entitlements to benefits are a key indicator for the quality of part-time work. A similar approach is used by McGovern et al. (2004), who adapted the analyses of Kalleberg et al. (2000) of 'bad' jobs in America for the UK. Kalleberg et al. (2000) defined the following 'bad' characteristics: low pay without access to health insurance and pension benefits. For the analysis of the quality of part-time work in the UK, 'bad' jobs were conceptualised by McGovern et al. (2004) as those with (a) low pay, (b) no sick pay, (c) no pension scheme beyond the basic state scheme and (d) those that are not part of a recognised career or promotion ladder.

While the indicators used to classify 'good' and 'bad' jobs are suitable for the US context, they would not be entirely appropriate in the UK and the EU contexts, as the EU and UK laws, (EU Part-time Directive (98/23/EC) and the UK Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (2000)) require part-time employees to be paid pro-rata wages and benefits, unless a specific case is made. However, the notion of a part-time 'retention' job is an interesting one as it refers to the bargaining power of certain groups, largely within the internal labour market. Even this group may face some disadvantages when trying to negotiate part-time work in terms of type of work allocated, career prospects and actually gaining a better work–life balance, as shown in a project on attorney retention (American University Washington College of Law, 2003).

It has been reported that some US companies have started offering part-time jobs that are "high-status, career-oriented, reduced-hour options that conserve pro-rata professional salaries and benefits" (Hill et al., 2004, citing Barnett and Gareis, 2000). This is referred to as "new concept part-time work" (Hill et al., 2004) or "customized work" (Meiskins and Whalley, 2002). In the study by Hill et al., (2004), research focused on a large multi-national company which offered its staff the opportunity to continue working in their profession at reduced hours (20 to 30 hours per week) while maintaining pro-rata pay and benefits and being eligible for promotion, with the research itself concentrating on professional women only. There appear to be strong parallels here to the 'retention' jobs described by Tilly (1996).

Canada

Comfort et al.'s (2003) study on part-time workers in Canada presented national statistical data on the quality of part-time work, based on traditional indicators (hourly wage; non-wage benefits such as access to employer-based pension and medical insurance) and 'softer' ones (job satisfaction overall, and with regards to pay and benefits; participation in training within the last 12 months; having received a promotion since working with the current employer; and having supervisory responsibility

for at least one employee). While the study did not set out to clearly define quality part-time work, it is interesting to note that what the authors called ‘traditional indicators of quality part-time work’ mirror those in the USA.

United Kingdom

There does not appear to be much research in the UK that explicitly defines quality part-time work. Edwards and Robinson (2001) explored the characteristics of part-time jobs in two skilled occupations where one might expect to find ‘better’ part-time jobs (policing and nursing, see also Chapter 6). They explored flexible working arrangements (with a focus on part-time work), wages and benefits, training and development, career progression, working relationships and job satisfaction. It is worth noting here that jobs in these two areas met most of the above criteria for quality part-time work, with variations within and across these two areas indicating differences in managerial decisions and bargaining powers of individuals.

5.4 Working definition of ‘quality’ part-time work

There are few relevant documents which **explicitly** define ‘quality’ part-time work in either theoretical or empirical terms. Furthermore, it is clear that definitions of quality part-time work are not context-neutral – as the debate in the USA vis-à-vis the EU and Australia shows. A comprehensive overview of the dimensions of quality part-time work found in the international literature is presented in Annex A.2.

Drawing on the previous international literature, we have developed a working definition of quality part-time work, focusing on four key areas (see Box 3).

Box 3: Proposed working definition of quality part-time work

At all levels of responsibility, quality part time work;

1. provides the same (pro-rata) terms and conditions, development and progression opportunities as comparable full-time work;
2. enables the job-holder to maintain (or enhance) his or her skills;
3. enables the achievement of an acceptable work–life balance, meeting the needs of both the employer and employee; and
4. where a business case can be made, provides the opportunity to increase the number of hours to full-time work, if desired, at the same or a higher job level.

Ideally, quality part-time work should fulfil all criteria, but it is acknowledged that the working definition has an aspirational element, certainly with regard to the opportunity to reduce hours and increase them again at a later stage, as it is recognised that this will be dependent on both the business needs and the financial situation.

In reality, there may be different types of part-time working edging closer and closer to the ideal. For example:

- Retention jobs (Tilly, 1996), which clearly meet criterion 2, but may not meet criterion 1 fully, as the job may not provide the same progression opportunities as for full-time workers.
- Where people have voluntarily or involuntarily taken up a part-time job below their skill level (i.e. criterion 2 has not been met, but the job itself may well meet criterion 1).

6. The nature of ‘quality’ part-time work within the UK

6.1 Introduction

In an attempt to provide some indication of the nature of quality part-time work within the UK and to shed light on one or more dimensions of quality part-time work in intermediate-level and managerial jobs, and because of the well-documented lack of part-time jobs at more senior levels, the evidence review on the nature of quality part-time work focused on studies which included assessments of part-time professionals and senior staff. Due to the nature of the majority of part-time work in the UK, most of the literature refers to lower-level jobs and so there is a lack of research into more senior part-time roles. This does not mean, however, that quality part-time jobs cannot be found in lower-level occupations, and the implications of our review can be extrapolated to other part-time jobs.

Overall, the evidence on the nature of quality part-time work is minimal (in terms of published statistical data analysis) and patchy (covering only certain occupational groups). However, in spite of the limited evidence, a number of key themes relating to the ‘quality’ of part-time work emerge from the literature and are presented in Sections 6.2–6.9, using examples from both large-scale quantitative studies and case study data focusing on specific occupational sectors. These themes are:

- reversibility between full- and part-time work;
- retaining skill levels and experience;
- access to training and development;
- access to promotion;
- internal communication and consultation;
- job content – assigned tasks;
- workload; and
- perceived commitment.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list and it is likely that other occupation-specific issues will be important. However, in order to provide a comprehensive list of issues which represent part-time workers across different sectors, the most important themes relating to part-time employees in more senior occupations have been evaluated and highlighted. Each theme has been identified within the literature as a potential problem for women who move into part-time work, and all the issues clearly need to be addressed in order to improve the experiences of part-time employees, both in the short term and in the longer term. Some of the identified issues have been widely adopted and addressed by many employers, within both the public and private sectors, and are regulated within internal human resources (HR) policies, as evidenced by the evaluation of the Quality Part-time Work Pilot Programme (see the Evaluation of the Quality Part-Time Work Fund, Lyonette and Baldauf, forthcoming). Such issues include access to training and development and access to promotion. However, other issues are somewhat more difficult to regulate and are often left to the discretion of line managers or supervisors (for example, internal communication and consultation, job content and assigned tasks).

6.2 Reversibility: opportunities to switch between part-time and full-time work

To avoid women becoming stuck in lower-level jobs with few opportunities for advancement, more active measures need to be undertaken to increase the opportunities for women to return to full-time work after a period of part-time work, if they wish to do so, as well as encouraging and supporting those who wish to increase their hours while remaining part time. UK evidence has shown that many women stay in lower-level part-time jobs, in spite of the fact that many would prefer to work more hours, especially those with very short part-time hours (e.g. Fagan, 2001). For example, those working fewer than 16 hours per week tend to want to work more hours and those working full time want fewer hours. Labour Force Survey figures for April–June 2009 show that 55,000 women with children and currently working part time were looking for full-time work. The longer-term impact of women remaining in lower-level part-time work is enormous, with reduced pension contributions and greater future dependence on the state.⁵⁵

Labour Force Survey figures show that between September and November 2009, there was an increase on the previous quarter, from 9.6% to 10.1%, in the proportion of women saying that they were working part time because they could not find a full-time job.⁵⁶ There was also an increase of 0.6% percentage points (from 24.1% to 24.7%) in the proportion of men in part-time work saying that they could not find a full-time job.

In a Europe-wide study of part-time workers, drawing on interviews with managers (1,500 in the UK) and employee representatives (468 in the UK), about a third of UK establishments providing part-time work indicated that part-time workers could get a full-time job “quickly” in their company, 46% that this would only occur in “exceptional” cases and 18% that there would be “no chance” (Anxo et al., 2007). Figures for changing from full-time to part-time work were 39%, 37% and 20% respectively for skilled workers, and 34%, 30% and 28%, respectively for unskilled workers. Overall, 16% of UK establishments indicated that they could offer changes in both directions, i.e. from full-time to part-time working and from part-time to full-time working. This last figure relates to the assessment of managers only, as country-specific figures for the assessment by employee representatives are not provided.

Among EU-21 countries (the 15 ‘old’ Member States of the European Union and six of the new Member States – the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovenia), opportunities for reversing from full-time to part-time working, and vice versa, are affected by a number of organisational variables, such as sector, company size, employment trends, incidence of part-time work, number of female employees, work–life balance measures and attitudes. However, this data has acknowledged limitations, as no further information about coverage or take-up of these opportunities by grade or occupational group is provided (Anxo et al., 2007).

⁵⁵ However, Fagan (2001) highlights the limitations of surveys which ask individual employees about preferences to work only “full-time” or “part-time”, due to the large variation in hours worked. She argues that further reforms are needed to ensure that the part-time jobs available are “long hour” rather than marginal “shorter hour” forms of work (Fagan and O’Reilly, 1998). Other European researchers have also tried to take account of the heterogeneity within part-time hours, distinguishing between marginal (up to 19 hours per week) and substantial (20 to 34 hours per week) part-time work (Bielinski, Bosch and Wagner, 2002).

⁵⁶ There was also during the same period an increase of 30,000 women saying that they did not want a full-time job.

In a study focusing on the nursing profession, Edwards and Robinson (2004) found that 32% of nurses studied were not satisfied with their working hours, and that 41% of part-time workers, compared with 11% of full-time nurses, were in fact undertaking extra paid work (43% of them as bank workers, but 57% for another employer or Trust).⁵⁷ Staff turnover averaged around 13% a year within the NHS Trusts in the study and it was noted that senior staff often increased their budgets by filling staffing gaps with bank workers. This was a source of frustration to senior managers who were keen to reduce costs. It was acknowledged by senior management that an unknown number of nurses leave as a consequence of failing to achieve their preferred working hours. As the authors noted at the time of the study (Edwards and Robinson, 2004), the direct costs of each replacement nurse were more than £5,000, and initial training costs for nurses were then £30,000 (Audit Commission, 1997). In addition, several more years of training are required for nurses to be fully proficient, and continuous training is vital for nursing staff to maintain their competence in new techniques and practices (Kings Fund, 1998). Clearly, this mismatch between preferred and actual working hours, also identified by Fagan (2001), needs to be addressed wherever possible.

Many women wish to work part time for only a relatively short period of time within their overall working lives (usually for childcare or eldercare purposes). For example, in the Edwards and Robinson study (2004), 59% of part-time nurses had reduced their hours for childcare and 2% to enable them to look after other dependants. Other research has shown that before they have children, over 90% of working women are employed full time; the first birth then begins a substantial move towards part-time work, which continues steadily for the following 10 years; part-time work then declines while full-time work rises again quite rapidly (Paull, 2008, cited in Connolly and Gregory, 2008a). Nurses, as well as many other professionals and managerial staff, require a high level of expensive and ongoing training to enhance their skills, which will be lost if women who have undertaken it then seek their preferred hours of work elsewhere. While some women do want to remain in part-time work over longer periods of time, allowing and supporting women to move back into full-time or longer part-time work, where possible, would increase individual earnings and pension contributions, as well as retaining those with valued skills and training.

6.3 Retaining skill levels and experience when moving to part-time work

A further key issue identified within the literature in relation to 'quality' part-time work is the ability of women to retain skill levels and experience in the move to part-time employment. There are now more women returning to work after having children than ever before (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005, cited in Tomlinson et al., 2009). For example, in 1975 only 25% of women with a child under 5 years were in employment, while in 2005 this had risen to 56% (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005). Of these, 66% worked part time. While these returners are generally better qualified than women who do not return to work, part-time career opportunities are severely limited. As already demonstrated in Section 4.2, women who return to work part time tend to move into female-dominated sectors where there is already a high proportion of female workers. Connolly and Gregory (2008a) demonstrated that one-quarter of women in Britain who switch from full-time to part-time work experience occupational downgrading, including over 20% of professional women.⁵⁸ As an example, two-thirds of women who leave full-time nursing become part-time care assistants, allowing them to use only a limited portion of their specialised skills.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that the research focused on three NHS Trusts in the London area, and self-report questionnaires were conducted with a relatively small sample of nurses, only 32% of whom (n=124) worked part time.

⁵⁸ However, women in higher-level occupations are more likely than women in lower-level occupations to return to work full time after having children.

Edwards and Wajcman (2005) examined part-time work for managers and professionals, highlighting the “mommy track” (various organisational arrangements, originally developed in the USA, which allow female managers the opportunity to spend more time at home with children). Effectively, this is the point at which the employee’s career goes downhill. Similarly, Jackson and Hayday (1997) found that 68% of women in a small-scale study of female accountants, who were currently working part time or who had worked part time in the past, reported that this had reduced their career opportunities, while 65% agreed that they could not further their careers without working full time.

Results from a combined quantitative data analysis of female returners, using the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) 2001, Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2001 and Employer Skills Survey (ESS) 2001 datasets,⁵⁹ showed that, of all mothers who worked part time in 2001, 67% worked in occupations for which they were over-qualified. In the top five occupations for women working part time (administrative occupations, secretarial and related occupations, sales and customer service occupations, and elementary and service occupations) this equates to 23% of all women, and the average level of over-qualification in 2001 in these occupations was 2.2 years. The largest three sectors each employed around 16% of all part-time returners. Full-time returners were around four times more likely than part-time returners to work as corporate managers and twice as likely as part-time returners to work as teaching and research professionals. Full-time returners were also much more likely than part-time returner to work in a wider range of occupations, with less gender segregation and higher earnings. Section 4.3 demonstrated that although 23% of women who switch to part-time work and change employer move up the occupational ladder, 41% move down (Connolly and Gregory, 2008a). Once women move into these lower level occupations, previous training and skills are effectively lost. The crowding of such highly qualified women into lower-level occupations in order to work reduced hours is likely to entail a general erosion of vital skills and a reduction in their capacity to maintain a career over time, as well as longer-term losses to the UK economy.

The figures relating to the downgrading of female returners echo results from over a decade ago (Burchell et al., 1997), even though Tomlinson et al. (2009) note that there are now many more returners than before. Very few women return to science, engineering and technology (SET) occupations after having children, and these and other male-dominated occupations are those with the highest skills shortages. The authors conclude that employers in the UK do not appear to be committed to adopting practices to encourage women to work in areas of high gender segregation, particularly in SET, and that UK policies on training and up-skilling have the potential to be undermined by employers who do not recognise the value of a diverse workforce. The innovative methodology employed by Tomlinson and colleagues, employing a large sample of women returners from three different sources and across a wide range of occupational sectors, provides a sound basis from which to conclude that the promotion of part-time work across a broader range of occupational areas is vital. Otherwise, women will continue to be over-qualified for the jobs they are employed to do when they return to the labour market (Tomlinson et al., 2009).

⁵⁹ The BHPS provided data on work-life histories going back many years for each woman; the LFS gave accurate coverage of small occupational sub-groupings; and the ESS gave information about the level of formal education and skills perceived to be required for particular jobs in well-defined sub-groups. The LFS was linked to the ESS to create a large and detailed dataset with a dual unit of analysis – the person and the job occupation type (Tomlinson et al., 2009).

In an earlier case study of the hospitality industry, Tomlinson (2006a and 2006b) researched the occupational mobility of women, in particular their chances of accessing part-time management positions across all five grades, drawing on interview data with mothers in full-time and part-time work and with human resources and senior managers in five establishments. Her research, in an industry sector with a high incidence of part-time workers and 24-hour working, found that being able to work part time was particularly unlikely in low- and middle-level management jobs. Where requests for part-time working were granted at management level, this was seen as an exception in four establishments, where managers sought to retain high-performing members of staff with a long service record and valued firm-specific expertise. This research demonstrates the inability of women to retain jobs commensurate with their skills levels and experience when asking to work part time in managerial positions, even in an industry which has a high proportion of part-time workers overall. However, due to the small sample of interviews undertaken, the results should be treated with caution and not viewed as representative of other industries with high levels of part-time working.

Using data from both a male-dominated and a female-dominated profession, Edwards and Robinson (2001) suggested that the increasing proportion of part-time workers in professional and managerial roles should lead to a weakening of the links between part-time work and inferior status. In a study of the nursing profession, and using in-depth case studies, they found that part-time nurses often compromised when moving to part-time work, undertaking worse duties, dropping grades or changing departments. A higher concentration of part-time workers was found in departments with sympathetic line managers, whereas those less sympathetic to part-time workers tended to use agency nurses to fill staff shortages. This research demonstrates the importance of line managers, an issue which will again be highlighted in Section 7.2.

In an evaluation of the Flexible Careers Scheme (FCS) for GPs in 2004, set up to help provide additional, centrally funded part-time flexible posts for GPs and to encourage better recruitment and retention in general practice, Viney et al. (2007) found that the FCS was seen to be almost universally beneficial: 34% of those on the scheme, mostly women, wanted it to run longer, although there was some concern over job security after the scheme ended. Viney et al. (2007) concluded that the FCS was especially successful in supporting those women re-entering substantive posts or working as locums or retainers after having children, without having to compromise their levels of skill and experience. However, general practice has been recognised as an occupational sector in which women can take time out of the labour force or work part time without incurring a career penalty, which has led to an increase in the numbers of mothers (and some fathers) choosing it as a career (Crompton and Lyonette, 2010, forthcoming). This move into general practice, therefore, is often at the expense of other, highly prestigious medical specialities, such as surgery, which do not offer such benefits.

The lack of part-time jobs at more senior levels presents a stark choice for many women: either return to work full time with very young children in order to retain skills and career progression, or find a part-time job at a lower level, so losing vital skills and compromising career opportunities and earnings in the longer term. Opening up more quality part-time jobs in a variety of occupational sectors will enable women's skills and training to be used to best effect.

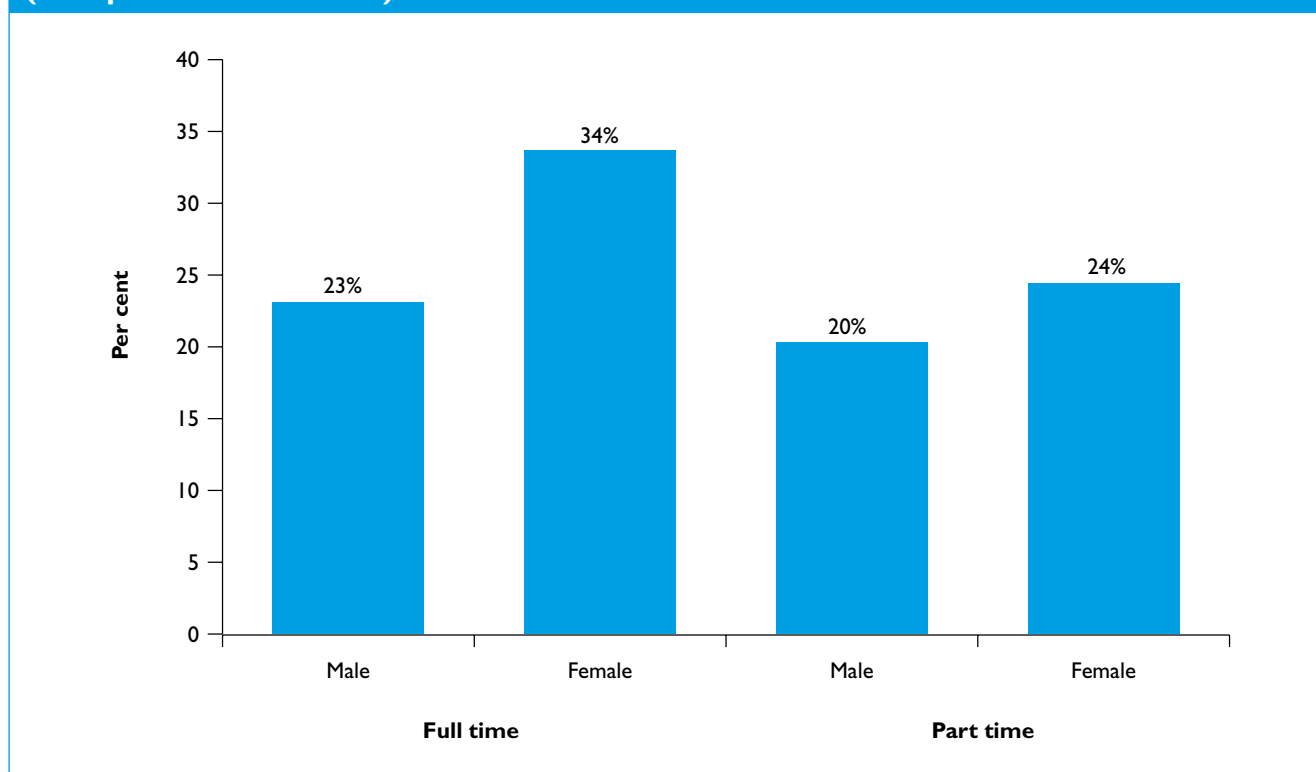
6.4 Access to training and development

Many organisations in both the public and private sectors explicitly state in their human resources policies that all part-time workers should have the same access to training and development opportunities as comparable full-time workers (see the evaluation report, Lyonette and Baldauf, 2010). Some organisations do try to accommodate their part-time workers by holding training courses or meetings on different days of the week or offering time off in lieu. However, there is evidence that such policies are not always translated into practice. If training courses take place on days when a part-time employee is not at work, it is often left up to the individual employee to rearrange childcare or eldercare. If an employee is unable to take up a training course, this is likely to have longer-term implications for future career growth.

LFS data shows that access to training and development is greater for full-time workers than for part-time workers, although the differences are greater for women than for men.⁶⁰ Female workers appear to enjoy more access to training and development opportunities than similar male workers (for example women working full-time compared with men working full-time), but female part-time workers do not enjoy a similar level of access to training as women working full time (and it is important to remember that the overall proportion of men working part time is very low). Figure 13 shows that of all men working full time, 23% took part in some education or training. Of all women full time, 34% took part in some education or training. For women working part time, the figure was 24%. In other words, part-time workers, most of whom are women, appear to be disadvantaged in terms of training and development opportunities when compared with those working full time, giving rise to longer-term disadvantages in terms of promotion, general career development and wages.

⁶⁰ Respondents were asked: "In the 3 months since beginning [date] have you taken part in any education or any training connected with your job?"

**Figure 13: Training opportunities by gender and full-time/part-time status
(% of part-time workers)**



Source: LFS, April–June 2009, weighted (pwt07).

One might expect that those in lower-level occupations are less likely to receive training than those in more highly qualified and senior-level positions. Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2003) used data from the 1998 Workplace Employment Relations Survey to analyse how likely it is that professionals working on a non-standard basis (part-time and/or temporary or fixed-term contracts) have access to training and development, compared with their full-time counterparts in permanent positions.⁶¹ (The term ‘professionals’ used here comprises managers and senior administrators, professionals and associate professionals, the first three major groups of the one-digit statistical occupational classification (SOC) classification.) The statistical evidence presented suggests that part-time professionals are more likely to have poorer access to training and development, compared with similar full-time workers. For example, part-time short-term professionals were 44% less likely than full-time permanent professionals to have discussed their chances of promotion, 23% less likely to have discussed their training needs, and 48% less likely to have received five days’ training or more in the previous year. Finally, part-time permanent professionals were 7% less likely than permanent full-time professionals to have discussed how they were getting on with their job, 41% less likely to have discussed their chances of promotion, and 23% less likely to have received five days’ training or more in the past year. Part-time temporary professional staff fared even worse in comparison with full-time permanent professionals.

⁶¹ The indicators for training and development looked at whether, within the last 12 months, the respondents had discussed with their line manager how they are getting on with the job, their chances of promotion and their training needs and the amount of training received, paid for or organised by the employer within this period. Indicators for consultation related to the frequency with which the respondents had discussed with their line manager future plans for the workplace, staffing issues, changes to work practices and health and safety at work (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003: 672).

The authors concluded by arguing that marginalisation of non-standard employees within the workplace will occur, regardless of occupational level. In other words, those more senior-level employees who do succeed in working part time are still disadvantaged when it comes to training and development opportunities. More rigorous procedures, including and in addition to internal HR policies, need to be in place in order to regulate the provision of skills and development opportunities.

Tomlinson's qualitative study of the hospitality industry (2006a and 2006b) identified several accounts of difficulties for part-time workers in accessing training, partly owing to the timing of the training in a 24/7 workplace and/or strong competition for available training places. Supportive measures implemented by one organisation included a national job-share register for management positions, clear communication of policies to employees and implementation of organisational policies at workplace level. Incidentally, this firm aimed to promote itself as an employer of choice. Most interviewees in this organisation commented on receiving good access to training and development opportunities, in some cases better than full-time workers. However, the other organisations included in the research effectively blocked training courses for many of the part-time workers. As the authors argued, "certainly this had negative implications for part-time workers' accumulation of human capital, both in absolute terms and relative to full-time workers' accumulation, in the other four organisations" (Tomlinson, 2006).

This research was undertaken shortly before the Part-Time Workers Directive came into force in 2002; therefore organisational changes may have occurred as a result. Furthermore, the findings were based on a relatively small number of interviews with full- and part-time workers, making them more difficult to generalise for other industries and occupational sectors, although the comparison of nursing and the police force, undertaken by Edwards and Robinson (2001), found many similarities. While formal training on a regular basis was a requirement for both services, none of the part-time workers interviewed were successful in competition with full-time workers in gaining places on top courses, which part-time workers were also expected to attend in their own time. In addition, no part-time nurses had in fact received any training in the past year, despite strict legislation regarding annual training. This again raises the issue of a disparity between clearly stated HR policies and what happens in practice, even in (seemingly) highly regulated public sector organisations.

The Flexible Careers Scheme for GPs was seen to be of great benefit to continuous professional development (Viney et al., 2007), allowing doctors to concentrate on extra learning and self-development, options that were especially valued by ex-locums (84% of all respondents felt they were educationally supported, although, even here, there were some concerns that additional training needs were not met by the scheme, including information sharing within the practice).

The evidence highlights clearly that part-time workers, usually women, are at a disadvantage in terms of access to training and development opportunities, even in the public sector and in higher-level jobs. While it must be acknowledged that training courses will invariably be run on days when some part-time workers are not in the workplace, efforts can be made by line managers and supervisors to support part-time workers in gaining vital skills, such as allowing time off in lieu, and alternating training and meeting days. If given advance warning, part-time workers may be able to make alternative arrangements, where possible, for childcare and eldercare. Without access to training, women working part-time will be at a double disadvantage: not only are many already over-qualified for the part-time jobs they are currently doing, but they are also less likely to receive the training they need to progress further in those jobs.

6.5 Access to promotion

As with access to training and development, women working part time are often disadvantaged when it comes to promotion opportunities. This is, in many ways, linked to the previous issue: women working part time are less likely than full-time workers to receive training and development opportunities, which will have a knock-on effect when it comes to being considered for promotion. Women working part time will also have less directly relevant work experience as a consequence of working part time for longer periods, which will also impact on opportunities for promotion. However, it is not only the fulfilment of training requirements which affects the chances of promotion for women working part time. Negative perceptions of part-time workers, by colleagues and by line managers, can also present a barrier to women's progression.

In a Europe-wide representative survey carried out in more than 21,000 establishments, personnel managers and, where available, formal employee representatives were interviewed (Anxo et al., 2007). A total of 70% of managers surveyed in the UK reported that the promotion prospects of part-time workers were 'about the same' as those of full-time workers, with 18% stating that they were worse and around 12% not providing an answer.⁶² This compares well with all EU-21 countries, where on average 61% of managers and 49% of employee representatives reported similar promotion prospects for part-time workers. However, other evidence presents a very different picture.

In Tomlinson's examination of the hospitality industry (2006a and 2006b), Weber's (1968) theory of open and closed relationships, or 'closure', was examined. As the author reports: "Closed relationships take place as members of a particular group wish to reserve their privilege. In forming closed relationships, a method of 'status disqualification' is necessary to establish for whom relationships are closed. Closed relationships, on the basis of status, are often mobilized to exclude certain individuals from gaining access to resources that enable them to compete for economic or material rewards" (Tomlinson, 2006a: 68). Tomlinson found in some establishments that unofficial 'closure' was implemented by line managers to discourage women from seeking promotion while working part time within the hospitality industry.

Similarly, the recent Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report on the financial services sector reported that promotion is "often at the discretion of middle managers, who are predominantly male" and that "women are less likely than men to feel that the promotion process is fair and consistent" (EHRC, 2009: 12). Without similar access to promotion opportunities, women are unlikely to maximise their full potential, often staying at grades below their capabilities. The perceptions and ultimate discretion of line managers in enabling or blocking female part-time workers' progression will be further considered in Section 7.2.

Within the accountancy profession, part-time workers themselves often accepted that they could not be promoted while working reduced hours (Smithson et al., 2004). Women were often reluctant to seek promotion to the highest levels, aware of the extra commitment required (Lyonette and Crompton, 2008). Again, the choice/constraint model could be applied to these findings: on the surface, many women with childcare or eldercare responsibilities may be 'choosing' not to seek promotion, even where it may be possible, although the recognised difficulties of higher-level occupations act as an effective barrier to their aspirations. Until workplaces adjust their practices to take into account the needs of part-time workers, it seems unlikely that such women will seek

⁶² Country-specific data is only presented in graphical form, thus UK figures had to be gauged from the charts and may differ by plus or minus 1% compared with the original figures used for the charts. Not all figures add up to 100%.

promotion to higher levels, at least in the short term. In so doing, they are effectively putting their careers on hold, and will invariably lag behind men (and female full-time workers) in terms of career progression. Part-time jobs need to be recognised as such, even when women are working long part-time hours.

6.6 Internal communication and consultation

Using the 1998 Workplace Employment Relations Survey, Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2003) also examined differences in communication and the likelihood of consultation and involvement in decision making on work-related issues between short-term and permanent part-time staff and short-term and permanent full-time staff, such as (1) future plans for the workplace; (2) staffing issues, including redundancy; (3) changes to work; and (4) health and safety at work. The survey comprised 28,240 observations, with survey questionnaires having been distributed to a random selection of 25 employees employed in 1,880 of 2,191 workplaces surveyed.

With regard to consultation, the authors found that part-time professionals were marginalised, compared with permanent, full-time professionals. Although full-time short-term professionals were also consulted less frequently than full-time permanent staff about work-related issues, part-time short-term professionals were 25% less likely to be frequently asked for their views on health and safety, and part-time permanent professionals were 18% less likely to be frequently asked for their views on future plans for the workplace, 20% less likely to be frequently asked about changes to work practices and 24% less likely to be frequently asked about health and safety. The authors concluded that “there is therefore considerable evidence to suggest that non-standard professionals are less likely to be consulted than their full-time permanent counterparts” (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003: 679). Citing Hunter et al. (1993), they added: “This is perhaps testimony to the role played by stereotypes and organizational culture in leading to the marginalization of these groups” (2003: 679). When the same comparisons were undertaken for female and male professionals separately, the results indicated that differences between full-time permanent professionals and part-time professionals were more pronounced for women. Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2003) argued that “our study confirms other research that points to the more generally gendered consequences of part-time and temporary employment” (2003: 680).

Communication issues were also highlighted within the nursing profession. ‘Occasional’ communication problems with part-time staff were identified by 21 of 51 line managers interviewed (42%). Such problems included giving and receiving information with the team, and communication with other staff, patients, patients’ families, supervisors and subordinates (Edwards and Robinson, 2001). If part-time staff did not work unpopular shifts, this could lead to the perception that full-time staff had to carry the load. On the whole, however, working relationships were considered good on both sides. Within the police force, working relationships and communication were usually better when the part-time member of staff was already well-known and respected (i.e. had previously worked full time). Again, the perceptions of line managers appear crucial in the successful integration of part-time staff in the workplace. Other key players include colleagues, often working full time, who perceive part-time workers as gaining unfair advantages such as not working at unpopular times.

Viney et al. (2007) similarly found that, for those GPs working part time within the Flexible Careers Scheme, there were some negative knock-on effects on others already working full time at the practice, and that information sharing was sometimes a problem.

Lack of access to internal communication and consultation on work-related matters can impede progress and individual efficacy. For part-time workers who may already be absent for some crucial meetings and training courses, communication with colleagues and line managers may be doubly important and efforts should be made at the workplace level to ensure that this is conducted effectively. Any perceived resentment by colleagues or managers can only lead to longer-term negative outcomes for part-time workers.

6.7 Job content – assigned tasks

Not only do female part-time workers often face restrictions in access to training and development opportunities, but there is some evidence to suggest that they are also assigned different, less challenging tasks when moving to part-time work, in comparison with equivalent full-time workers. Owing to the limited nature of available evidence, however, it must be noted that these differences in assigned tasks could be occupation-specific and may not be widespread across all part-time posts, and that there are possibly some occupation-specific tasks that are difficult to do on a part-time basis. In spite of this caveat, women in professional roles who are assigned different tasks from their fellow full-time workers are likely to be impeded from further progression. Not only was this practice common in male-dominated occupations such as the police force, but also in nursing, a highly feminised occupation. Restrictions for both part-time police officers and nurses were common with regard to their range of tasks and responsibilities, in comparison with full-time staff. This could lead to reduced opportunities for increasing the skills and training required for promotion (Edwards and Robinson, 2001). In spite of a comparable proportion of part-time staff and female full-time staff in more senior positions within the police force (9% of female full- and part-time police officers at more senior grades) and within the nursing sample (16% of part-time workers and 15% of full-time workers), there was general agreement among managers that managerial and supervisory roles could not easily be undertaken on a part-time basis.

A later study of the nursing profession also showed that part-time nurses were less likely to carry out activities that involved managerial or supervisory duties; in particular, only 26% acted in place of a manager, 29% appraised other staff and 41% acted as a clinical supervisor (Edwards and Robinson, 2004). Part-time workers were less likely to attend management, research and practice development meetings, shadow staff and be involved in developing clinical guidelines. Only 45% were satisfied with their involvement in clinical decision making, compared with 59% of full-time workers. Managers supported these findings, with only 60% saying that tasks and duties were the same for full-time and part-time workers. In addition, the restricted roles assigned to part-time workers were perceived negatively by full-time workers, with 14% thinking that part-time workers had increased the responsibilities of other staff.

Other research on policing argues that part-time officers within the police service, which operates a system designed around full-time work, present management problems: managers lack control over the timing and incidence of any moves to part-time work, with inconsistent supervision, communication and briefing often perceived as problematic (Dick and Hyde, 2006). Managers will therefore often redeploy part-time workers to tasks and roles that may be compatible with their reduced hours, but not with their needs for professional or career development (ibid). The authors conclude that “part-time professionals may experience marginalisation because they are generally construed as different from full-time employees” (Dick and Hyde, 2006; Hyde 2008).

Similarly, a recent study of professional medical careers (Crompton and Lyonette, 2010, forthcoming) reported on the contrast between hospital medicine and general practice over the question of part-time work. One hospital doctor argued that moving to part-time work might mean not being 'part of the team', or 'losing vital skills':

... a lot of the time the part-time posts are just waiting list initiatives, you know, they need somebody to see this number of back pains or this number of people with such and such, whereas a full-time post, you're part of the team, you're setting up a service or doing something a bit more meaningful. So it would be difficult to get the equivalent post as a part-time person, I think.

(Female hospital doctor)

Women working in professional occupations are doubly disadvantaged when moving to part-time work: although they have often trained for many years within a particular occupation, they are sidelined into work which does not maximise their skills, and, as a consequence, they will also be less likely to be considered for promotion because of such restricted roles. Any professional role offered on a reduced-hours basis must provide similar challenges and assigned tasks as comparable full-time work. If not, highly qualified women will be left without the skills and experiences they need to develop further.

6.8 Workload

In spite of the findings that many women working part time are assigned different tasks from equivalent full-time workers (above), many other women working part time find that they have too much to do in a short space of time. This is especially the case in more senior-level occupations, where part-time workers already tend to work longer hours than those in lower-level part-time occupations (for more information on this issue and further evidence, see the evaluation report, Lyonette and Baldauf, 2010). Smithson et al. (2004) reported on the problems associated with reduced workloads for part-time accountants, arguing that socialising outside of work hours for career progression within the profession was extremely common. Within the finance sector, male-oriented networking was also highlighted as a 'career enabler', in terms of relationship building with clients and being visible to senior managers (EHRC, 2009).

For those with childcare responsibilities, this kind of socialising (seen as an essential part of the job, especially at the highest levels) is incompatible with home life. In a qualitative research study on accountancy (Lyonette and Crompton, 2008), one senior accountant in a large practice commented:

Partner level, you need to bring in more work, so as a consequence of that you need to do a lot of wining and dining and there's a lot of responsibility that goes with it. There's also all the management responsibility... there are lots of extra things that won't necessarily fit into a working day. And I don't want to compromise my family life for that, not even for additional financial benefits. You know, we just about have a stable life, with both of us working and children and commuting into London, that little bit extra could tip us over the edge.

(Female director in practice, part-time)

Many women working part time in professions such as accountancy are already working long (part-time) hours and often make themselves available on days off for telephone calls and email contact. Trying to maintain a senior position on a part-time basis often means trying to complete a full-time job in part-time hours (Lyonette and Crompton, 2008). Another senior woman working in a large telecommunications company gave her views on part-time work:

And I think the danger with working part time, and I've seen this amongst a number of my friends who've gone back part time, is what you really have is a full-time role but you get paid part time and actually you're just so stretched that on the day off, which is your fifth day, you're just exhausted, and that's pointless.

(Female manager in business, full time)

These kinds of working patterns will undoubtedly have negative consequences for women, in terms of work–life conflict, which represents a source of stress due to the lack of overall fit between work and family (Frone, Russell and Barnes, 1996; Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1992). Any extra work-based responsibilities can represent insurmountable difficulties in combining work and childcare. The workload of part-time employees needs to be adjusted according to the hours worked.

6.9 Perceived commitment

Hakim's "preference theory" argues that some women are more career-oriented, whereas others are more home-centred than others. It would follow, therefore, that women who stay at home to care for their children are the most home-centred, but that women working part time are less committed to work than women working full time. This kind of view is entrenched in some managers' views of part-time workers. For example, Tomlinson (2006a) found that managers at two of the hospitality organisations surveyed in her study often perceived part-time workers to be lacking in commitment and career motivation. In addition (and echoing Hakim's view), most managers commented that, as part-time work was a 'choice' women made, it was therefore reasonable that part-time workers should not expect the same access to career paths as full-time workers. However, other researchers argue that preference theory does not take account of women's changing orientations to work over time, as most women work both full- and part-time over the life-course (Fagan, 2001). Other work has shown that female part-time workers were those most likely to be dissatisfied with their variety of work and their ability to learn new things (European Commission, 1998), and also with terms of pay and job prospects, particularly those working in lower-skilled part-time jobs (Taylor, 2002).

The importance of the perceptions of colleagues and line managers has already been outlined and the evidence suggests that some managers view part-time workers as less committed or motivated than full-time workers. There is no doubt that many women working part time will struggle to attend meetings or training courses on assigned days off. However, the notion of 'presenteeism' within the UK, in which the best employees are often perceived to be those spending more time at their desks, means that many women, and especially those working on a reduced-hours basis, will be unfairly perceived to be less committed to the workplace.

In the analysis of nurses and police officers, line managers were asked to identify any disadvantages of employing part-time nurses (Edwards and Robinson, 2004). Managers often cited problems with work orientation (e.g. part-time workers did not want extra responsibilities, to tackle new tasks or to train or develop). Managing and supervising part-time nurses created some difficulties in accommodating the wishes of nurses wanting to work parts of shifts or specific parts of the week, complicating the task of shift rostering. There were also some understandable concerns voiced about the effects of a reduced presence in the workplace on continuity of patient care; this was most often mentioned by those in mental health, where the development of nurse–patient relationships is viewed as extremely important (Edwards and Robinson, 2004).

Lewis (2007) commented that, in accountancy, the 'good' accountant has traditionally been defined as one who is always willing to prioritise work, spending long hours in the office, demonstrating commitment. Smithson and colleagues (2004) described one woman's account:

'He (the partner) actually said to me come back on Monday morning full time and we'll promote you, but we will not promote you while you're working part time, because we don't believe you're committed'.

(Female senior manager, large firm)

Another woman who worked standard hours but worked from home, said:

'By going home working, I've effectively eliminated myself from the promotion trail'.

(Female consultant, large firm).

However, in a European-wide survey of managers' and employee representatives' views about part-time working, Anxo and colleagues (2007) found that only 9% of managers with part-time workers in their establishments found part-time workers less motivated than full-time workers. One-tenth of managers found that part-time workers were *more* motivated than those working full time, while 79% of managers did not perceive any differences between full-time workers and part-time workers.

It appears that commitment to the organisation is still entrenched in traditional views of the full-time worker model, where being present in the office is desirable and positively evaluated. Tomlinson (2006a) cites Connell's 1995 discussion of "hegemonic masculinity", where male views permeate societal values and become recognised as 'normal'. Tomlinson argues that "this resonates with the construction of career paths and the notion that the traditional 'male' full-time work trajectory is the appropriate way to measure commitment to a work-career" (2006a). In order for female part-time workers with childcare responsibilities to realise their full potential, negative perceptions of a lack of commitment will need to be addressed. If not, women will continue to be marginalised and sidelined in terms of career opportunities and progression.

7. Organisational measures to support quality part-time work

7.1 Introduction

In light of the recognised issues deriving from the literature, a number of suggestions have been made for organisational measures to help the successful implementation and retention of quality part-time jobs in the UK.

7.2 Evaluating the line manager's role in granting requests for part-time working

Previous evidence outlined in the earlier sections highlighted the ability of line managers to either support or block part-time work. Within nursing, senior managers expressed frustration that bank staff were not attracted to permanent part-time positions, but acknowledged that some line managers were unenthusiastic about part-time workers (Edwards and Robinson, 2001; 2004). Only 4 of the 51 line managers interviewed by the researchers, however, said there was no advantage in part-time working and 21 (41%) said that part-time work was good for reducing stress, 31 (62%) for better retention and 25 (50%) for better recruitment, demonstrating a level of inconsistency between attitudes and behaviour for some. Indeed, there was some evidence that part-time nurses remained in post longer than full-time workers (for example, 53% of the 124 part-time workers surveyed said they would expect to be in their current post in three years, compared with 40% of the 261 full-time workers). There was also a significant difference between median length of service (96 months for part-time workers compared with 84 months for full-time workers) (ibid.).

Results of the comparisons between nursing and policing (Edwards and Robinson, 2001) showed that shift work in both services presented particular problems and that the degree of ability to negotiate suitable shifts varied significantly. There was a concession to current employees in both services to allow flexible working arrangements, rather than a specific managerial strategy to reduce labour costs. For the police force, the right to part-time work was clearly stated in the regulations, equalities legislation was rigidly enforced, and there was a system of clear centralised control, meaning that line managers had limited discretion. Part-time workers had greater bargaining power and most were successful in securing their preferred arrangements. For nurses, however, the rules were less clear and more locally determined, often based on agreements with line managers and supervisors. Ward or departmental managers were less constrained and had more discretion with regard to determining part-time workers' shift patterns.

The much higher proportion of women in the nursing profession (98% of all nurses), in comparison with the male-dominated police force, suggests that working within a female-dominated profession can have unforeseen disadvantages. The de-centralised approach to negotiations between managers and part-time workers over preferred shifts means that a good working relationship is obviously crucial. If this is not the case, many women will be restricted from working their preferred hours and from training and development opportunities, with long-term impacts on career progression.

7.3 Mainstreaming quality part-time work

In her reference to “hegemonic masculinity”, where male views permeate societal values and become recognised as ‘normal’, Tomlinson (2006a) refers to the notion that the traditional ‘male’ full-time work trajectory is the appropriate (normal) way to measure commitment to the workplace. In this way, part-time work will always be marginalised and seen as ‘not normal’. In workplaces where there is a high proportion of part-time working, there is some evidence that more flexible approaches to working are being introduced and encouraged across the board, especially where part-time work is crucial to the organisation (see the evaluation report, Lyonette and Baldauf, 2010). However, it must be remembered that these tend to be workplaces with a higher proportion of lower-skilled jobs.

A study of accountants (Anderson-Gough et al., 2000; 2001) concludes that prioritising work over non-work is a central characteristic of organisational thinking, and the main component in what makes a ‘professional’ in accountancy (cited in Smithson, 2005). In an earlier paper drawing on qualitative research with 50 accountants, Smithson and colleagues (2004) discuss the political goal of ‘mainstreaming’ equal opportunities policies, and that this is not being achieved by gender-blind, more inclusive language, in which terms relating to flexible working policies are equally applied to men and women. They argue that flexible and part-time work are still seen as women’s issues, and that there is a distinct need to normalise flexible working within organisations, particularly in relation to men, and non-parents, working flexibly. Overall, the study findings suggested that flexible working policies are most effective when senior staff, especially men, act as role models by working flexibly (Smithson et al., 2004). Although this was a small-scale study undertaken with a specific, highly-qualified group of accountants, these findings are also supported by recent research undertaken as part of this study (see the Evaluation of the Quality Part-Time Fund, Lyonette and Baldauf, forthcoming).

Other research in the police force also found that female part-time workers often position themselves as ‘other’, i.e. part time, reflecting an ongoing struggle to maintain their identity as professionals (Dick and Hyde, 2006; Hyde 2008). In doing so, the authors argue that they effectively give up the right to be considered as fully-functioning members of the organisation, which furthermore legitimises the long-hours culture and constant availability within the (male-dominated) organisation. Edwards and Robinson (2004) highlight a similar problem within the nursing profession, claiming that part-time workers themselves failed to develop a collective identity and the authors suggest that both the culture and the organisation of work within NHS Trusts need to change. The easy availability of agency workers within nursing also reduces the bargaining power of part-time workers and allows line managers greater flexibility in choosing staff. For both nursing and the police force, a minimal effort had been made to adapt working patterns to part-time workers, leading to marginalisation and reduced career opportunities (Edwards and Robinson, 2001; 2004).

7.4 Recognising the ‘business case’ for expanding part-time work

Until part-time and more flexible forms of work are recognised, where appropriate, as being good for business, it is highly improbable that employers will make efforts to accommodate more ‘quality’ part-time workers. Some workplaces are indeed being forced to think more ‘creatively’ due to the current recession, which includes the expansion of part-time and other forms of flexible working. It seems likely that positive outcomes such as reduced overheads and better recruitment and retention of trained staff will encourage employers, and therefore line managers, to be more supportive of part-time work.

Due to the problems with recruitment and retention of nurses within the NHS, Edwards and Robinson (2004) argue that “ensuring an adequate supply of qualified nursing staff is patently the most compelling element of a new business case for flexible working arrangements in the NHS” (p.170). They also argue that the NHS needs a diverse workforce if it is to meet its strategic objectives of improving service quality and widening access to health care. Edwards and Robinson (2001) suggest that the business case for using part-time workers was particularly strong in both nursing and policing but that equality has yet to be achieved with full-time workers.

Within the accountancy profession, many companies are now promoting themselves as family-friendly in order to attract and retain good employees (Cooper et al., 2001) and to appeal to clients. For example, Edwards and Wajcman (2005) describe research undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, in which work–life balance, rather than income, was the main factor in choice of employer for 45% of new graduates worldwide. In other words, outside influences may have an important part to play in encouraging employers to increase and improve part-time and other forms of flexible working.

Positive changes with regard to quality part-time working may therefore come about via the need to make budget cuts during the current recession, a dwindling supply of qualified staff within certain sectors, and also the perceptions of potential staff and clients.

7.5 Promotion of senior role models working part time

As outlined earlier (Section 7.3), Smithson et al. (2004) found that flexible working policies in accountancy appeared to have the most effect when senior staff, especially men, acted as role models. This in turn led to a greater acceptance of part-time work within organisations, as other employees see how it can be done successfully. In reality, however, men’s requests for part-time work, echoing much previous research (e.g. Fagan et al., 2006), were viewed less sympathetically than women’s. Those (few) men working part time were doing so for different reasons than childcare (mainly financial or business-related). They were older, often already partners or directors, financially stable and less likely to have young children. However, in another qualitative analysis of Chartered Accountants, Lyonette and Crompton (2008) found that several fathers who wished to spend more time with their children expressed a reluctance to ask for any flexible or part-time working options, although they were aware that unless they did ask, things were unlikely to change:

‘I have a number of hours in a week which, if I work more than that it means I see the children less and I get extremely unhappy. I regularly sort of make grumbling noises in the office, I’ve asked about going part time, and yes, I don’t want to work less hours necessarily but...I’d like to be at home when the kids are around rather than the evenings. ...J is a big employer, and I think that would be a hard sell, but if you really pushed hard to get a four-day week, I don’t know, I suspect they probably would. Not many people push hard...that is the reality’.

(Male director in practice)

This presents a fundamental problem: senior men have the capacity to act as role models, working part time and demonstrating how it can be achieved successfully. However, with the knowledge that their requests are more likely to be rejected by senior management, such men are highly unlikely to request reduced hours, especially in the current economic climate, where commitment to the organisation will be especially valued.

Overall, more centralised management, a reduction in the marginalisation of part-time staff, increased application of the business case for part-time work and an increase in senior role models working part time could all effect a change in workplace cultures. These are only suggested organisational measures, however, and it is anticipated that other measures will also stimulate greater acceptance and support of quality part-time work.

8. Conclusions

It is well-documented that there are fewer part-time jobs available in higher-level occupations, meaning that women wishing to work on a part-time basis are increasingly moving into lower-level jobs. In addition to this, part-time jobs have largely failed to share in the general trend towards “up-skilling” within the occupational structure and significantly contribute to the gender pay gap. For example, the proportion of women working full-time and employed in high level occupations rose three-fold between 1975 and 2000, unlike for women working part-time, the proportion in higher-level jobs barely changed over the same period.

The evidence suggests that women who wish to move to part-time work after a period of leave (usually after having children) are at an even greater risk of substantially reducing their earnings if they also move employer. A part-time career trajectory also has long-term effects, compared with those who move to part-time work for only a short period of time, say after having children.

Part-time work is however set to increase, for both men and women, especially as a (possible) short-term consequence of the current recession, but also as men begin to work in previously female-dominated occupations, such as those in the service sector. Projections suggest that women (and men) in many occupational sectors, including those in more senior-level jobs, will increasingly turn to part-time work, which may have the effect of ‘mainstreaming’ part-time work.

The need for increased quality part-time work may also be higher now in response to the increased desire of many women (and men) to achieve a better ‘balance’ between work and home life. Men may be more willing to seek part-time jobs, as well as to help provide domestic support for partners who may be acting as main breadwinners. However, there is a danger that employers will be less willing to offer part-time options at more senior levels, as those employees still in work are asked to work harder and longer. There is evidence to suggest that men in particular may be unwilling to request part-time work, as this may be perceived as demonstrating reduced commitment to the firm.

The evidence relating to ‘quality’ part-time work is somewhat limited and focuses mainly on specific occupational sectors. However, some key common factors arise from the literature. These specifically relate to the ability to move between full-time and part-time work; retaining skills and experience in the move to part-time work; having similar access to training and development and to promotion opportunities as full-time workers; the need for improved communication and consultation; the ability to undertake similar tasks and duties to full-time workers, but with a reduced workload; and perceptions of commitment from both co-workers and line managers.

Not only do quality part-time jobs need to be offered more widely, but a reassessment of the jobs that are currently being done on a part-time basis is also needed. For example, the evidence shows that many senior part-time jobs provide reduced opportunities, both in terms of work content and assigned tasks and also in training and development opportunities. The inevitable consequence of this is that women will become sidelined into occupational roles and groups with a lower chance of being promoted within senior occupations such as medicine and accountancy. These findings are also worrying for women who have already downgraded from more senior positions: not only are they

already doing work well below their level of skills and qualifications, but they are also less likely to be considered for promotion within these new, lower-level roles, while working part time. Other women who are attempting to remain on the career ladder while working part time often find themselves trapped in working longer (unpaid) hours in order to keep up with similar full-time colleagues. The potential consequences of this are higher levels of work–life conflict and increased stress, combined with lower levels of pay and overall status.

It is suggested that organisational measures to support quality part-time work could include an evaluation of the line manager's role in granting requests for part-time working, the mainstreaming of part-time work within organisations (in which part-time work is more widely incorporated with existing organisational structures), the application of the business case for increasing part-time work, and an increase in senior role models working part time, especially men. As described earlier, estimates suggest that nearly two-thirds (65%) of the public sector workforce is female and that nearly two-fifths (39%) of these women work part time. This in itself has not improved the provision of 'quality' part-time jobs, however, with women crowding into the lower-skilled and lower-paid occupations within the sector. Although part-time work is predominantly undertaken by women, usually for childcare and other caring purposes, an increase in the numbers of (senior) men working reduced hours will help to drive the message home to organisations that part-time work can be good for employees, as well as good for business.

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Annex A. I: The rapid evidence review

The rapid evidence review took place between 14 August 2009 and 28 August 2009.

In this Annex, the research process is outlined, detailing the five phases of the rapid evidence review undertaken for the two review questions:

- How is 'quality' part-time work defined (theoretically and empirically) and what is the nature of quality part-time work?
- What evidence exists on experiences with quality part-time work, i.e. processes put in place to increase quality part-time work and its outcomes, costs and benefits for employers and employees, and good practice?

The methodology for the systematic literature reviews was based on the approach developed by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) at the University of London (see EPPI-Centre, 2002⁶³). This methodology has been adapted, using experience and knowledge gained from previous literature reviews, to allow for researcher judgement and the identification of grey literature. By employing this methodology, and using set criteria, a range of literature for both review questions has been identified. This method has provided a robust, transparent and comprehensive review of the literature and also provides a detailed account of relevant studies and findings.

The rapid evidence review of published and grey literature aimed to critically review definitions of 'quality part-time work' and to suggest improved definitions. It considered published and grey literature in the UK and internationally from 1999 to 2009. Most documents which were included in the review were published in English and reported on studies at international, national and local level involving quantitative, qualitative, or a range of research methods.

The following keywords were used in order to capture a wide range of publications from the databases:

- quality flexible work
- quality job-sharing
- quality part-time employment

⁶³ EPPI-Centre (2002). Guidelines for Extracting Data and Quality Assessing Primary Studies in Education Research (version 0.9.7). London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit. <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx>

The process used for the rapid evidence review is systematic and comprises a number of distinct phases:

- Searching: the systematic identification of potentially relevant studies in a range of databases using keywords.
- Screening: the application of pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria derived from the review question to report titles, abstracts and full texts.
- Data-extraction: the in-depth examination of studies, meeting the pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria, to assess the quality of the study and extract evidence in support of the in-depth review.
- Synthesis: the development of a framework for data analysis and identification of key themes.
- Reporting and dissemination: presentation of the review findings.

- quality part-time work
- quality reduced-hours work
- quality reduced-load work.

In most databases the search could be limited to the occurrence of the keywords in either the title or the abstract (or both) of the publication in question. In some databases, however, the search could not be limited to the title and the abstract and the full text was included in the search (e.g. JSTOR).

Early exclusion criteria for a first screening process of the results of the searches were identified as:

- (school) students working part-time while in full-time education; and
- quality of jobs debate, without specific reference to ‘quality’ part-time work.

The following table provides an overview of the searching and screening process.

Database	Result of searching process using keywords	Results of first screening process
Business Source Premier	3,941	60
EBSCO host	186	44
Pro-Quest/abi inform ¹	284	34
Ingenta	277	23
Zetoc	60	13
Papers First	29	10
Taylor and Francis	197	7
Sociological abstracts	48	7
Wiley Interscience	11	3
Ovid	2	2
Springerlink	256	1
Psycinfo	2	1
Assia	0	0
Sage	15	0
JSTOR	6	0

¹ This counting excludes the 518 hits generated by the keyword ‘quality flexible working’. At first glance it did not appear to generate relevant hits and has therefore been discarded for the rapid review.

Documents which were identified as relevant in the screening were imported into a reference bibliographic management system (Endnote). After the identification and deletion of duplicates, 116 publications were assessed for their suitability of inclusion in the data extraction process, based on the full length text. In order to increase the inter-rater reliability and minimise potential bias resulting from decisions made by any one researcher, the inclusion or exclusion of documents was coded by two independent researchers.

The publications were monitored using the following pre-defined exclusion criteria:

- job quality definition/discussion in general without specific relevance to part-time work;
- quality of life as a result of part-time work; and
- description/analysis of part-time work or flexible work without reference to quality of part-time work.

During this second screening process, the references which were included in the rapid evidence review were coded according to their suitability for either Question 1 or 2 using the codes outlined below (for Question 1 part 2 and Question 2 multiple coding was possible).

Question 1

- 1 Document contains a specific definition of quality part-time work or references to other definitions of quality part-time work
- 2 Document mentions quality part-time work without reference to literature (no or partial definition and no reference to any literature)
- 3 Negative definition of quality part-time work (e.g. bad jobs or low-quality jobs)

Question 1 part 2 and Question 2

- 11 Nature and scope of quality part-time work
- 12 Process and outcomes of quality part-time work (how quality part-time work has been implemented in the organisation, what has facilitated or hampered it, what has worked, what the impacts on the organisation are, what the impacts and outcomes for employees are, or professional/managerial/ senior level part-time work where quality part-time work is more likely to apply)
- 13 Good practice, exemplar practice
- 14 Forms of part-time work
- 15 Press news about the Quality Part-time Work Fund and other company initiatives on work-life balance
- 16 International comparison
- 17 Country of conducted empirical work: UK, European Union, Australia, Canada, USA, New Zealand

In the course of the second screening process various other publications and grey papers were identified as relevant for the study. Where possible, they were searched on the internet and included in the study.

In addition to the searches conducted in the databases:

- three documents were identified from references within documents; and
- nine documents from other websites.

If the internet-based search for the full paper was not successful, emails were sent to the authors asking for help in getting access to the grey paper. Altogether, four emails were sent out and two grey papers were obtained in the project timescales.

In addition, we used a search machine, deploying the keywords specified above for the database search. Furthermore, specific websites searched included: Equal Opportunities Commission, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Labour Organization (ILO), U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

In a final phase of the rapid evidence review, relevant information on identified publications was extracted and transferred to a data extraction sheet for as many documents as possible given the short timescale for the first output.

Limitations

The methodology used for these reviews provided the researchers with clear parameters and structure. It enabled a rapid, comprehensive and objective assessment of the available research to be undertaken. Nevertheless, some limitations of the systematic literature review may have resulted in some unidentified literature references – for example:

- Keywords in databases can be inputted either as a phrase or as a combination of words connected with 'AND'. Although both methods should theoretically bring up the same results, this was not always the case.
- The keyword 'flexible quality part-time work' has generated a high number of hits but their relevance appeared to be low. As a result, this keyword has been abandoned for one database which generated a high number of hits.
- Grey literature, by definition, cannot be found easily through usual channels. Nevertheless, grey literature might provide relevant research evidence. The same applies for unpublished Doctoral theses. One Doctoral thesis was identified as relevant for the review, and a request for an electronic copy has been sent to the author via the supervisor.
- Finally, some relevant documents may not have been identified due to the exclusion of publications conducted before 1999.

An alternative strategy would have been to broaden the search by using the keyword 'part-time work'. Given the limited timescale for the rapid review this was not thought to be a feasible option. For example, EBSCO listed 1,471 hits for part-time work and 61 for part-time work in the UK with a quick scan indicating that this would have led to the inclusion of more documents in the review which had not been captured otherwise (e.g. on the career progression of part-time workers in the NHS (nurses and doctors), in retail and hospitality, and part-time workers in education – in particular their integration into the institution). Business Source Premier listed a similar number of publications for part-time work (1,607).

However, an additional search was undertaken in Sociological Abstracts and EBSCO for the keywords 'professional' and 'part-time' and 'work'; 'senior part-time work'; 'managerial part-time work'; and for 'gender pay gap' in Sociological Abstracts for documents published between 1999 and 2009. This generated 291 hits and, taking away duplicates, this resulted in 14 additional papers which were included in the evidence review.

Annex A.2: Overview of the dimensions of quality part-time work found in the international literature

	Dimensions	Charlesworth et al., 2002 (Australia)	Chalmers et al., 2005 (Australia)	VIR, 2005 (Australia) (employer guides)	Bergman et al., 2004 (Austria)	Suggested alternative definition
1	Number of hours worked	At least 20–25 hours (Latta and O’Conghaile, 2000)	‘Sufficient income’		Job secures subsistence	Job secures subsistence
2	Schedules available during social hours		√			
3	Predictability and control over the working hours		√	√	Similar (self-determination of schedules)	✦
4	Reversibility of mode of work (FT to PT and PT to FT)	√	Within same job	Opportunities to work PT across all areas/levels for men and women	Right to return to FT work	Reversibility of mode of work
5	Pro-rata wages	√	√	√	Not explicitly mentioned	✦
6	Pro-rata access to benefits	√	√	√	Not explicitly mentioned	✦
7	Same protection as FT workers with regard to job, contracted hours and discrimination	√	√	√	Job security (permanent contract)	✦
8	Equal opportunities to participate in training	√	√	√	√	✦
9	Equal access to career progression		√	√	√	✦
10	Internal consultation and communication within the organisation		Similar	Similar	Similar	√

	Dimensions	Charlesworth et al., 2002 (Australia)	Chalmers et al., 2005 (Australia)	VIR, 2005 (Australia) (employer guides)	Bergman et al., 2004 (Austria)	Suggested alternative definition
11	Content of jobs		Same skill demand, task autonomy and same value as FT jobs	Challenging, meaningful and satisfying work		√
12	Employment reflects the qualification level and the skills of the employee		Indirect: reversibility of FT to PT work within same job	√	√	✦
13	Workload is adjusted to reflect fractional time of FT work		√	√		√
14	Values: recognition that employees have a life outside work			√		

Legend: VIR: Victoria Industrial Relations; FT: full-time; PT: part-time; ✦: considered part of a 'minimal' requirement for quality part-time work; √: included in the definitions.

Annex A.3: Evaluating quality part-time work


In evaluating all the literature discussed (at both international and national level), a framework has been developed to use in the later stages of this research, as well as any future research on quality part-time work.

Evaluation framework for maximum definition

No	Dimensions	Operationalisation	Comments
1	Pro-rata wages	Part-time (PT) workers receive the same pro-rata wages as a comparable full-time (FT) worker. Pro-rata wages include basic pay and performance-related pay.	First bullet point of the working definition.
2	Pro-rata access to benefits	PT workers receive the same pro-rata access to benefits, such as sick leave, annual leave and pension, as a comparable FT worker.	First bullet point of the working definition.
3	Same protection as FT workers with regard to job, contracted hours and discrimination	PT workers receive the same protection with regard to job protection, contracted hours and discrimination as a comparable FT worker.	First bullet point of the working definition.
4	Equal opportunities to participate in training	PT workers have the same equal opportunities to participate in training as a comparable FT worker (ideally including access to career-enhancing training, at a time when PT workers can access the training during their contracted hours or make alternative arrangements to do so).	First bullet point of the working definition.
5	Equal access to career progression	PT workers have the same opportunities as FT workers to apply for promotion, with applications being considered on their merit.	First bullet point of the working definition. Some qualitative studies suggest that there is an informal closure of promotion opportunities at the workplace even where official policies support equal opportunities.
6	Employment reflects the qualification level and the skills of the employee	PT work is commensurate with the qualification and skill level of the job-holder, e.g. staff reducing their hours on return from a short break, where their skills are still current, can continue working in the same job or a job at the same grade.	Second bullet point of the working definition. There may be sector-specific differences in what constitutes a short leave where skills have remained current (e.g. science/engineering versus other areas).

No	Dimensions	Operationalisation	Comments
7	Predictability and control over the working hours	The hours of PT workers have either been set to meet their own needs or theirs and the employer's needs.	Third bullet point of the working definition.
8	Reversibility of mode of work (from FT to PT and from PT to FT)	It is relatively easy for workers to reduce or increase their working hours, given a certain lead time. The change in hours does not have a detrimental effect on the job-holder's utilisation of skills or the grade attained.	Fourth bullet point of the working definition. Statistical data (Anxo et al., 2007) shows that a change of mode of work in either direction or both ways is not commonplace in organisations and varies according to a number of factors (e.g. size of the company, scope of part-time work).
9	Number of hours worked	The income PT workers receive allows them to secure their subsistence (i.e. at least half of the income of a comparable full-time job, but figures may vary slightly according to differences in practice across sectors).	This includes, for example, public sector workers who work 17.5 hours per week, equating to around 50% of the normal working hours of a full-time worker. Care has been taken not to overemphasise the number of hours as more and more work is results-based.
10	Internal consultation and communication within the organisation	PT workers are consulted about their needs at the workplace and the contribution they wish to make to the organisation. PT workers are also included in all formal and informal communication relevant to their work.	
11	Content of jobs	PT workers have the opportunity to carry out the same tasks, where feasible, as comparable FT workers.	This ensures in particular that PT workers can carry out a wide range of activities, including career enhancing activities. There may be sector-specific differences regarding what can be justified as feasible (e.g. policing versus other areas). A different operationalisation, more along the lines of a 'decent job' line, can be found in Charlesworth et al., 2002 and Chalmers et al., 2005.
12	Workload is adjusted to reflect fractional time of FT work	The proportionate reduction in working hours is reflected in the workload (i.e. staff are not working relatively more unpaid overtime than would be expected of a comparable FT worker).	This reflects the fact that overtime requirements vary between occupational groups, with empirical evidence suggesting that in professional jobs, some overtime may be required or may be seen to be required as part of the job.

Legend: The shaded boxes (numbered 1 to 8) indicate the dimensions the research team would suggest for inclusion in the definition, as a minimum.



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