

# **National Report United Kingdom**

## **Socio-economic trends and welfare policies**

**Deliverable 3.1 – November 2006**

**Sue Lewis and Christina Purcell – Middlesex University**



**Middlesex  
University**

**Quality** is an innovative, quantitative and qualitative research project that aims to examine how, in an era of major change, European citizens living in different national welfare state regimes evaluate the quality of their lives. The project will analyse international comparative data on the social well-being of citizens and collect new data on social quality in European workplaces in eight strategically selected partner countries: UK, Finland, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Hungary and a candidate country for EU enlargement, Bulgaria.

Quality is a Specific Targeted Research or Innovations Project funded within the European Commission's Sixth Framework Programme (contract no 028945), Priority 7, Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based Society (March 2006 to February 2009).

## **Acknowledgements**

We acknowledge the useful comments on earlier drafts by Dr Sadia Nadeem of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, and of Dr Rhona Rapoport, formerly director of the Institute of Family and Environmental Research.



**Universiteit Utrecht**

The knowledge and data provided in this publication has been collected as part of the FP6 EU-financed-project QUALITY. It reflects only the authors' views. The EU is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. The user uses the information at his/her sole risk and liability.

## Introduction

This deliverable is part of Workpackage 3. ‘Analysis of the Institutional Context for the project Quality of life in a changing Europe’. Its purpose is to provide the necessary contextualisation for the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data which would be gathered in the Quality project. It builds upon the work already done in the project: Deliverable 1.1. ‘Literature Review. Theoretical Concepts and Methodological Approaches of Quality of Life and Work’ and Deliverable 7.1. ‘Gender Checklist’. The reports in this collection present information about macro level trends in order to interpret research findings on the meso level (that of the companies under investigation) and the micro level (the values and lifestyles of individual employees). Other reports will examine existing data sources on objective and subjective indicators for the quality of life (D 1.2.) and offer comparative cross-national analysis (D 1.3.). Here we focus on the institutional framework in terms of resources and challenges in front of the quality of life in each partner country involved in the Quality team. The concrete objectives of this exercise were:

- To map current socio-economic and demographic trends concerning changes in work, employment patterns, institutional structures and practices of human resources management, family life, community and leisure, with an expected impact on the quality of life;
- To examine trends in public policies regarding employment and family life related to work-life balance;
- To get insight into the way different policy regimes stimulate or restrain quality of life.

Each report presents the major concerns and opportunities for the quality of life in the national context and makes an attempt to evaluate the impact of the national policy regime (the combination of social rights and services delivered by the state, the market and the family) on the quality of work and the quality of life. The time frame of the analysis is the last ten years. Where relevant, reports refer to major policy and economic changes in a longer time frame, as is the case of the two post-communist countries Bulgaria and Hungary which explore employment, demographic and policy trends since the regime change in 1989. Gender, as well as class (social status) and age (life course), act as the main cross cutting factors in the analysis.

The national reports made use of the following main sources of information:

- statistical data provided by the national statistical offices, Eurostat or other agencies;
- official documents of the national governments, programmes and reports of various ministries and non-governmental organisations;
- research reports and academic publications of national and international sociological agencies, research centres and universities;
- reviews of public debates in the media concerning quality of life and the policy measures deemed necessary to address the challenges;
- consultations with stakeholders and experts from the academia, policy makers and practitioners in the partner countries.

All national reports have similar structure in order to ease the task of international comparison which will be addressed in the next stage in Deliverable D 3.2. ‘Combined comparative report on socio-economic trends and welfare policies in the partner countries’. The reports’ introduction addresses the strategic

topics of national academic and policy debates about quality of life and most pressing issues in each country. The first chapter analyses significant trends in the economic activity patterns and population developments from the mid 1990s to the present and the prospects for the near future. The issues covered are activity rates by gender, age and education, patterns of employment, self-employment and flexible work, unemployment, trends in retirement, disability, sickness, family transitions and fertility rates, diversity of family forms and trends in social inequalities. The second chapter explores the employment policies in the country and elaborates on the patterns of social protection the state is providing for its citizens. Discussed are labour market, unemployment and self-employment policies, programmes for flexibility of work, measures for life long learning and safety at work, wage policies and the practices of social dialogue and their impact on the quality of work. The third chapter focuses on the trends in family policies and the kinds of provisions there are for maternity, paternity and parental leaves. This section of the reports examines the models of care policies (primarily for children but also for other dependents) and family friendly measures offered by the state, employers, community and wider families. It also includes a brief presentation of the significance attached to trends and challenges in health, housing, and leisure policies and policies for the safety in the community and society as a whole, and how these affect the wellbeing of citizens. The conclusion contains the authors' evaluation of the influence of policy interventions (current and in the past ten years) on the quality of life and quality of work and the prospects for the future.

The national reports in this collection represent countries selected before the start of the project with the understanding that they correspond to the main policy regimes. Thus Finland and Sweden have social democratic welfare states, the Netherlands and Germany stand for the corporatist regime, the UK represents the liberal regime and Portugal – the sub-protective regime. Hungary and Bulgaria are post-communist countries moving away from the centralized one-party regimes and are currently combining elements from all the four models above. The ongoing changes in their policy systems make it unclear which welfare regime they are moving toward. However, as the reports attest to, transformations are underway in all other countries under the influence of demographic and economic changes, new technologies and globalisation. Which model of citizenship best provides for the quality of work and life is to be further explored in the course of the study.

Siyka Kovacheva,  
Quality partner responsible for WP 3

# Tables of Contents: United Kingdom

Introduction .....	3
Tables of Contents: United Kingdom.....	5
Executive Summary.....	6
1. Challenges and trends.....	6
2. Policy responses .....	7
3. The main advantages of UK national policies promoting higher quality of life.....	10
4. The gaps and challenges .....	10
Conclusion.....	11
Introduction.....	12
1. Employment and demographic trends.....	15
1.1 Economic activity rates.....	15
1.2 Employment and unemployment rates in the UK.....	15
1.3 Low wage jobs and job security.....	16
1.4 Women in the labour market.....	17
1.5 Part-time work and flexible working arrangements .....	17
1.6 Working Hours .....	18
1.7 Self-employment.....	18
1.8 Retirement/Pension issues.....	18
1.9 Health .....	19
1.10 Family formation and diversity.....	19
1.11 Social Inequalities .....	19
1.12 The gender pay gap: gender and poverty.....	20
1.13 Ethnic communities in the UK.....	20
2. Employment policies .....	21
2.1 Labour market policy in the UK.....	21
2.2 Wage policy.....	22
2.3. Flexible working policies .....	22
2.4 Social dialogue/unions.....	23
2.5 Quality of working life: a hot topic? .....	24
2.6 Health and safety at work.....	24
3. Family policies.....	25
3.1 Model of family policies in the UK .....	25
3.2 State provision for families.....	25
3.3 Housing .....	26
3.4 Leisure .....	27
3.5 Safety in society and the community .....	28
3.6 Health policy.....	29
3.7 Education .....	29
Conclusions.....	30
Tables and figures .....	33
References .....	43

## Executive Summary

Quality of life is a complex concept articulated in a number of ways. This complexity and diversity of definitions is reflected in research on quality of life in Britain and in the institutional context. This report focuses primarily on societal conceptualisations of quality of life, but also considers individual indicators in some sections.

### 1. Challenges and trends

#### 1.1 Demographic trends

The population is ageing in Britain as elsewhere in Europe, with an increase in the population over 65, due to continue over the next decades, and a corresponding decline in the proportion of the population aged 16 and under. The ageing population and a desire to reduce the social burden of pensions has made retirement and pensions key political issues. It also raises issues relating to the sustainability of a viable workforce, the importance of lifelong learning and the care for sick adult and elderly family members. Women are having children later. Those aged 30-34 have now become the age group with the highest rate of fertility. This trend exists alongside high rates of teenage pregnancy amongst women from less privileged households, indicating an increasing polarisation of fertility rates between social classes. Whilst household sizes have been decreasing, there is considerable variation between ethnic groups.

#### 1.2 Employment trends and the labour market

There are currently high levels of employment and low unemployment rates overall but this masks considerable diversity of experience. The last decade has seen a rise in the number of women in employment, though a significant proportion of female employment is part time. This is often constructed as “choice” made by mothers or parents, but this is in the context of limited affordable childcare facilities, long working hours in many jobs, especially among fathers (often exacerbated by long commutes to work) and a growing intensification of work. Current legislation continues to present barriers for trade union recognition and collective agreements. A consequence is that union membership is weakest amongst low paid workers, (the majority of whom are women). For example the hotel and catering industry in which over 50% of staff are low paid has just 5% union membership. Retail is the largest low pay sector but only 11% of sales staff belong to a union. The European working time directive, which allows for a maximum 48 hour week, comes with an opt out provision in the UK and British men, and also women working full time, work the longest hours in Europe. The labour market is highly segregated by gender, contributing to a persistent gender wage gap. Much of the expansion of employment has been in low waged jobs and this too is gendered. The fastest growing occupations in the 1990s were in the caring sector and in sectors linked to the knowledge economy. At the same time the decline in the manufacturing has been associated with the disappearance of relatively well paid and comparatively secure jobs for men in some areas of the UK and has therefore increased the importance of women’s earnings for families

#### 1.3 A polarised society

Britain is a multi-cultural, heterogeneous and increasingly polarised society. There is a high level of social inequality with disparity between the richest and poorest members of society in terms of rates of employment, unemployment, housing, and health and well-being. Social inequalities based on gender, social class, ethnicity in some cases, and especially educational attainments are also related to level of

access to employment and “good” jobs. Educational attainment is a key factor in determining earning potential as well as the likelihood of being in employment. Social and economic background strongly influences educational attainment. Demographic conditions such as the high incidence of lone parent households are key factors in relation to poverty in the UK. This explains to some extent the high levels of child poverty in the UK. There are also significant differences in inequalities among different ethnic groups Black Caribbeans are amongst the most disadvantaged group in the UK, with the lowest level of educational attainment, due to a great extent on their low socio-economic status. Social background is also a key determinant of health and longevity in the UK. The gap in life expectancy at birth between those who work in professional occupations and unskilled manual workers has been widening for some time, particularly for men. The gap between the work rich and work poor (households with too much paid work and insufficient time for family leisure and other activities and vice versa) and other forms of social polarisation are significant contemporary challenges to overall quality of life in Britain. Housing is a major issue in the UK due to high demand, a reduced stock of social housing and high house prices. There is also a generational equity issues with problems faced by younger cohorts particularly those entering the labour market, saddled with large student loans which are increasing and prohibitive housing costs and a North-South divide in housing prices, limiting mobility

#### **1.4 Social exclusion**

For those who are “work-poor” social exclusion is a major challenge as inequality in health which is one of the consequences of the poverty experienced by the work-poor. There is much discussion about access to health care in a context of major health service reform and to education and training. Social exclusion exists in different forms in the UK, again a reflection of the multi-cultural, heterogeneous nature of contemporary UK society. Ghettoisation of marginalised, ‘underserved’ ethnic communities is a particular concern. Youth unemployment rates of some ethnic communities are particularly high. This has important implications for integration, the lack of which can lead to social tension amongst different underprivileged groups and increasing alienation from wider society as a whole for some communities,

#### **1.5 Concerns about “work-life balance”**

Especially for the “work rich”, work-life balance issues, work intensification, workplace stress, sickness rates and time poverty, especially shortage of time for children, are all considered major issues debated at policy levels and in general social discourses, in the media and elsewhere.

#### **1.6 Crime and security**

Evidence suggests a significant decrease in the risk of being in victim crime over the past decade, although this is not always perceived to be the case, particularly with the growth of a “yob” culture in some areas, and concerns about terrorism more broadly.

## **2. Policy responses**

### **2.1 Policy responses: a rights and responsibilities agenda to address social exclusion**

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was set up shortly after Labour came to power in 1997 to deal not only with the consequences of poverty and social exclusion but also to deal with factors that encourage the persistence of poverty amongst target groups. Policy responses to these challenges are made within the Neo liberal market agenda and emphasis on rights and responsibilities. Government policy is to expand employment, getting people off welfare benefits and into work, targeting lone mothers, the disabled and

other groups with weak labour market attachment. Objectives include, enhancing competitiveness and economic growth as well as combating social exclusion. Policies on lone mothers reflect a substantial change in gender attitudes as previous governments were ambivalent about maternal employment, regarded childcare as a private concern and were reluctant to “interfere” in families by helping mothers to participate in the labour force. The National Childcare Strategy was introduced in 1998 and has overseen an increase in private provision of childcare alongside a reduction in public childcare places. However, this has led to a polarisation between lone parents and low income families using the residual public provision on the one hand and high-quality market-based care for higher earners. There has also been an expansion of school-based out of hours clubs for before and after school and holidays.

The minimum wage was reintroduced in 1997 and has improved the relative position of the lowest earners, including part-time workers, but has had little impact on the gap between the highest and lowest paid. Disability discrimination law also addresses a source of social exclusion while a new age discrimination law and plans to raise the retirement have begun to address the problems associated with the ageing population.

## **2.2 Low level of employment regulation**

The European working time directive, which allows for a maximum 48 hour week, comes with an opt out provision in the UK and British men, and also women working full time work the longest hours in Europe. However, less rigid labour market regulations than in many other European countries make permanent contracts less risky for UK employers. Consequently there has been a decline in temporary working contracts since the late 1990s. Nevertheless, employers find other ways to transfer risk to workers. There has been an increase in contracting out to agencies and a rise in self employment partly related to the trend for employers to encourage transfer from employee to self-employed consultants in some sectors.

## **2.3 A focus on “work-life balance”**

Another employment policy focus is on what government terms “work-life balance”. Government has taken a two pronged approach: building a statutory minimum framework of rights while using a business case argument, to encourage employers to develop voluntary work-life policies. The Work and Families Act 2006, has resulted in: increases in maternity leave; enhanced leave entitlements for fathers and a forthcoming extension of the existing right to request flexible working currently available to parents of children under the age of 6, or for a disabled child, 18), to carers of adults. Childcare is addressed but provisions remain limited and costs are high.

Government has also attempted to address the long hours culture in Britain by means of a “work-life balance” campaign with the aim of encouraging employers to introduce flexible working practices and to convince employers that there were economic gains to be had from flexible working. The campaign focused on long-hours culture, sectors with acute problems associated with lack of work-life balance and providing guidance to employers and employees. This included a Challenge Fund to funding consultants to work with selected employers on work-life balance issues and flexible working initiatives.

## **2.4 Social dialogue/unions**

Trade union density declined during most of the 1990s. However this trend has been reversed to some extent in recent years. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has declared raising the quality of working life

as one of its objectives. A key part of this agenda is the campaign around work-life balance and the related issue of long working hours in the UK. The TUC has been particularly vocal about the refusal of the government to end the opt-out of the European Union Working-Time Directive. It has worked in partnership with the government on its work-life balance campaign and has also tried to get the employers on board by stressing the economic benefits of flexible working practices.

## **2.5 Family policy**

The current government's family policies are the product of a complex interaction between gender equality concerns and a desire to boost activity rates amongst target populations which is in turn conditioned by the commitment to tackle dependency culture and the insistence that rights must be accompanied by obligations, including the obligation to engage in paid work. Whilst demographic concerns certainly provide some of the background for government policy, pro-natalism is not explicitly promoted in the UK. The main initiatives to support parents have been tied to paid employment of women. However, some initiatives have targeted children deemed "at risk", such as the Sure Start Scheme which provides some childcare support and activities in deprived areas, The government has pledged to halve child poverty by 2010 as part of its aim of eradicating it by 2020.

## **2.6 Health policy**

The government has implemented a dual agenda of encouraging individual responsibility in health alongside a modernisation programme which among other things emphasises increasing choice for the patient. Central to the modernisation programme is the increased role of market mechanisms and private sector involvement in the NHS via contracting out of services and the establishment of Foundation hospitals in 2003 outside the control of the Strategic Health Authorities.. Individual responsibility has been enhanced via initiatives such as NHS Direct; a telephone service which allows the public to contact a nurse-led helpline as a first port of call for minor health issues as a way of both alleviating pressure on general practitioners and encouraging people to be more responsible themselves for their health. Its internet counterpart contains an interactive self-diagnosis service. Often critiqued by its opponents for being a "nanny state" the government has introduced a number of measures to encourage people to exercise responsibility as well as rights in relation to health. and health-campaigns to combat specific health issues, as well as laws on smoking,

## **2.7 Education**

A particular objective of current government policy has also been investment in education and the goal of quality education for all. National debate about the state of education and learning in the UK has been intense for some years now, with both employer representatives and higher education bodies raising the issue of lack of core skills and questioning the quality of education and qualifications. Government response has been targeted "failed" schools by promoting public/private partnerships. Another feature of education policy in recent years has been the emphasis on life long learning initiatives - to retain skilled/knowledge jobs within the UK in a global economy.

## **2.8 Housing issues, crime and security**

The government is also addressing major issues of housing problems, crime and security, health and education - all of which are related to quality of life and social inequalities. One of New Labour's major innovations in tackling "crime" has been the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). These were introduced in 1993 and extended in 2003 with the aim of tackling nuisance behaviour in

neighbourhoods. Counter-terrorism measures have been introduced via the 2000 Terrorism Act and the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001. These have been controversial measures leading to highly charged political debate about the undermining of civil liberties and the justice system.

## **2.9 An emerging sustainable development agenda**

A recent trend is for quality of life to be increasingly discussed in terms of sustainable development. In 1999 the government published a baseline assessment, which looked in detail at a core set of 147 indicators of quality of life and sustainable development for the UK, and established benchmarks against which future progress could be measured. This includes health and wellbeing, community and also environmental indicators

## **3. The main advantages of UK national policies promoting higher quality of life**

Policies to get more people into work, have resulted in rising employment rates, especially among groups considered to be disadvantaged in the labour market. However, less rigid labour market regulations in the UK than in many other European countries make permanent contracts less risky for UK employers and has reduced the prevalence of temporary jobs. Nevertheless some jobs are endangered by current contexts - for example greater use of the internet makes call centres less viable and remaining jobs are often outsourced to countries with cheaper labour costs - creating insecurity for some. For now, enough new jobs are created to offset these losses. Attention has been drawn to “work-life balance” issues-especially long hours culture and flexible working arrangements appear to be becoming more common, encouraged by government policy. Flexible working arrangements are still regarded as primarily for women, especially mothers, though there is some focus on fathers too and some evidence of shifts in gender norms

The UK total fertility rate is increasing, with the 2005 fertility rate reaching its highest since 1992, with an average number of 1.8 children per woman in England and Wales. It is possible that government policy to promote equality and retain human capital by facilitating combining work with parenthood may be encouraging more births. There is also growing awareness of issues raised by the ageing population and early initiatives to address these. The government has taken a number of steps to enhance quality of life by reducing social exclusion and poverty, especially child poverty, both through employment policies and a number of direct initiatives, and the proportion of children living in low income households has declined. Recent developments have also encouraged easier access to health information, more awareness of some issues. Increasing attention is also being paid to environmental issues. The government’s sustainable development agenda raises important issues about health and well being and sustainable communities. Some people are extending this debate by questioning the social sustainability of long working hours and intensified workloads

## **4. The gaps and challenges**

Despite the growth in “good jobs” some of the growth in employment has been in low wage jobs which are often difficult to sustain or even unfeasible, especially in the light of high childcare costs and, in some areas, high costs of housing and transport. Thus policies to increase employment rates have potentially enhanced quality of life for some more than others. Labour market disadvantage continues especially among those with few qualifications – reinforcing social inequalities.

The gendered labour market and wage gap persists and is not helped by childcare costs that are among the highest in Europe while state-provided care remains limited. The negative aspects of part time work, prevalent among women also need to be addressed. Although opportunities for flexible working arrangements appear to have increased, working hours of full-time employees remain the longest in Europe, workloads have intensified and there remains an implementation gap between policies to address flexibility or work-life balance and actual practice. The impact of trends such as outsourcing and growing rate of self employment has important legal implications for rights and benefits of workers and employer responsibility. More focus is needed on work-related health, on and on the health needs of recent immigrants. Pensions remain a big issue for the future, with predictions that future cohorts of pensioners will be significantly poorer than current cohorts.

## Conclusion

The UK in the opening decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a nation characterised by the heterogeneous nature of its population and corresponding life experiences. Whilst unemployment is no longer the concern it was in previous decades, quality of working life varies considerably between the different social classes. However, even for those highly educated and skilled sections of the population who are more likely to be in “good jobs”, high salaries and generous benefits are undermined to some extent by the long-hours and intensive work culture of the UK. Younger generations entering into well-paid, professional employment have the additional burden of increasingly excessive debts arising from student loans and mortgages. Other less skilled young workers are likely to find themselves trapped in low-paid employment. Older workers have different concerns and issues: work-life balance issues arising from caring for children and/or older relatives; saving for children’s higher education and/or retirement. In addition there are challenges arising from marginalised communities which suffer from high unemployment rates, alongside, for some communities, high female labour market inactivity rates.

Government policy has focused on support for the most vulnerable alongside promoting personal responsibility and active labour market policies. The government has also promoted private sector involvement in public service delivery which is likely to lead to differential quality of public service for the different sectors of society, as choice is exercised via ability to pay more for better services such as health care, education and future financial security.

Fear about the future has shifted from worries about employment in the 1980s to worries about house prices, education, pensions, and more global worries about environment and world events impacting on the UK in the context of globalisation. For some sections of the population, more immediate day-to-day concerns arising from living in deprived areas dominate future fears. There are also concerns about multiculturalism in the current geo-political climate and about threats to national identity and the unity of the nation. On the other hand members of ethnic communities in the UK fear for their future in a society which appears to be increasingly hostile to them.

Contemporary issues and challenges related to quality of life are experienced in very different ways in the UK, depending on social class, gender, ethnicity and generational cohort, thus illustrating the heterogeneous nature of contemporary UK society.

## Introduction

Quality of life is a complex concept articulated in a number of ways in Britain (See UK National Literature Review Report). Approaches include those based on social indicators of a “good society” and more recently a focus on individual indicators. These include positive indicators such as happiness as well as absence of negative indicators such as stress and ill health which are growing concerns in the context of contemporary intensified ways of working and the pressures of modern life. Some definitions focus on people having “choice” while others focus on capabilities which denotes not only what people do, but what they are “free to do” (Lewis and Giullari, 2005). This complexity and diversity of definitions is reflected in research on quality of life in Britain and in the institutional context. This report focuses primarily on societal conceptualisations of quality of life, but also considers individual indicators in some sections.

Britain is a multi-cultural, heterogeneous and increasingly polarised society. There are currently high levels of employment and low unemployment rates overall but this masks considerable diversity of experience. There is also a high level of social inequality with disparity between the richest and poorest members of society in terms of rates of employment, unemployment and health. Significant demographic characteristics include later age at birth of first child, relatively high numbers of lone parents as well as dual earner families, and an ageing population. The main topics of national academic and policy debates about quality of life and most pressing issues in the country include work-life balance<sup>1</sup> issues for those in work and ongoing social disadvantage, inequalities and social exclusion. Health inequality is a major quality of life concern, with bad diet and lifestyle habits affecting the most disadvantaged but also affecting more prosperous sections of the working population due to stress in the workplace. Dual earner households are increasingly seen as time poor which has a knock-on effect on children’s health.

The UK is characterised by a neo-liberal welfare state regime, also described as corporatist. The Labour government, which came to power in 1997, pursues a neo-liberal market agenda on the basis of Third Way politics of rights and responsibilities. It addresses quality of life issues primarily via a focus on employment, and an agenda of combating social exclusions with an emerging sustainable development agenda.

Government policy is to expand employment, getting people off welfare benefits and into work, targeting lone mothers and other groups with weak labour market attachment. Objectives include, enhancing competitiveness and economic growth as well as combating social exclusion. Policies reflect a substantial change in gender attitudes as previous governments were ambivalent about maternal employment, regarded childcare as a private concern and were reluctant to “interfere” in families by helping mothers to participate in the labour force. Now lone mothers in particular are specifically encouraged by the state to

---

<sup>1</sup> Work-life balance is the term widely used in the UK, by government, within organisations and in the media. However it has been critiqued as oversimplifying the complex issues involved and obscuring more fundamental problems. (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006; Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, forthcoming)

seek employment and other policies have been developed to support “work-life balance” more widely. Childcare is seen as more of a shared responsibility between family and state than previously, but childcare costs are among the highest in Europe and state-provided care remains limited.

Another employment policy focus is on “work-life balance”. Government has taken a two pronged approach: building a statutory minimum framework of rights while using a business case argument, to encourage employers to develop voluntary work-life policies. A steady stream of government initiatives to support lone mothers and mothers in low income households into paid work has occurred alongside attempts to stimulate affordable child care and enhancements of maternity leave. Recent emphasis has also been placed on the importance of father care involvement, with measures such as the introduction of two weeks’ paid paternity leave and unpaid parental leave as well as attempts to increase the financial support of absent fathers for their children, in line with the rights and responsibilities approach. The Work and Families Act 2006, has resulted in: increases in maternity leave; right of fathers to take up part of the maternity leave as paid paternity leave; and an extension of the right to request flexible working currently available to parents of children under the age of 6, or for a disabled child, 18), to carers of adults (effective from April 2007)), with further extensions under consideration. Government has also attempted to address the long hours culture in Britain by means of a “work-life balance” campaign. The government is however, subject to conflicting agendas. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) would like to see more regulation on working time while the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is hostile to further regulation. Nevertheless “work-life balance” is now a hot topic in UK organisations with substantial developments in related HR policies, although there remains an implementation gap between employer policies and actual practice.

The government is also addressing major issues of housing problems, crime and security health and education - all of which are related to quality of life and social inequalities. Often critiqued by its opponents for being a “nanny state” the government has introduced a number of measures to encourage people to exercise responsibility as well as rights in relation to health, for example.

The last decade has seen a rise in the number of women in employment, though a significant proportion of female employment is in part time employment. This is often constructed as “choice” made by mothers or parents, but this is in the context of limited childcare facilities, long working hours in many jobs, especially among fathers (often exacerbated by long commutes to work) and a growing intensification of work (Green, 2002). The European working time directive, which allows for a maximum 48 hour week, comes with an opt out provision in the UK and British men, and also women working full time, work the longest hours in Europe. The labour market is highly segregated by gender, contributing to a persistent gender wage gap. Much of the expansion of employment has been in low waged jobs and this too is gendered. The fastest growing occupations in the 1990s were in the caring sector in which women are over represented, and in sectors linked to the knowledge economy, such as professional and managerial jobs where men are more prevalent. At the same time the decline in the manufacturing has been associated with the disappearance of relatively well paid and comparatively secure jobs for men in some areas of the UK and has therefore increased the importance of women’s earnings for families. Social inequalities are not, however, only based on gender. Social class and especially educational attainments are also related to level of access to employment and “good” jobs.

Less rigid labour market regulations than in many other European countries make permanent contracts less risky for UK employers. There has been a decline in temporary working contracts since the late 1990s. However, employers find other ways to transfer risk to workers. There has been an increase in contracting out to agencies and a rise in self employment partly related to the trend for employers to encourage transfer from employee to self employed consultants in some sectors.

A recent trend is for quality of life to be increasingly discussed in terms of sustainable development. In 1999 the government published a baseline assessment, which looked in detail at a core set of 147 indicators of quality of life and sustainable development for the UK, and established benchmarks against which future progress could be measured. This includes health and wellbeing, community and also environmental indicators ([www.sustainable-development.gov.uk](http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk)).

# 1. Employment and demographic trends

## 1.1 Economic activity rates

During the course of the past decade overall economic activity rates in the UK have remained relatively stable, at around 78%. However, activity rates for different population groups have undergone some significant changes. One important trend is the increase in the activity rate of women, alongside the decline in the male activity rate. (See Tables 1.1 and 1.2). The female activity rate has increased from 70.9% in 1995 to 73.4% in 2005 as more women with children have come into the labour force, although women are more likely to work part time. Activity rates also differ significantly by age: for women the highest rates are for the 35-49 year old age cohort (78% in 2004), whilst for men it is the 25-34 year old age group (with an activity rate of 92% in 2004). (Office for National Statistics (ONS), Labour Force Statistics 2004). Activity rates of young people are amongst the lowest of the working age population (See Table 1.3), due mainly to the rise in the number of young people in post-compulsory education.

Some groups in the UK have high rates of economic inactivity: those looking after families, students and the long-term sick or disabled. The increase in the economically inactive that occurred from 1999 to 2004 was due in the main to increasing numbers of students but also to growing numbers of long term sick. Since the late 1990's the number of long-term sick has hovered above the 2 million mark, roughly 6% of the working age population<sup>2</sup>. The government has introduced controversial initiatives to lower this number. Economic inactivity rates also differ considerably between and within and among ethnic groups. The relative economic inactivity among certain ethnic groups is discussed later in this report.

## 1.2 Employment and unemployment rates in the UK

The employment rate in the UK ranks amongst the highest in the Europe Union. Figures for the number of people in employment for the first quarter of 2006 were the highest since Labour Force Statistics began: 28.94 million, representing an employment rate<sup>3</sup> of 74.7%. (ONS, 2006). Over the past decade overall employment rates have been increasing (from 68.7% in 1995), including employment rates for specific groups considered to be disadvantaged in the labour market, such as those nearing retirement age, minority ethnic groups, lone parents, disabled people and those with low skills (See Table 1.4). The increase in the employment rate for these groups has in some cases been greater than for the working-age population in general (DTI2005). For example, the employment rate for lone parents increased by 12% points from 42% to 54% between 1994 and 2004. (Social Trends 35 2005a)

Despite this, labour market disadvantage continues to be an influential factor in the pattern of employment rates in the UK. For example, Table 1.5 shows the extent of the gap in unemployment between the highest and the lowest qualified for 2005, with the highest qualified registering an employment rate of 88% against an employment rate 48% for those with no qualifications. The gap is

---

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1012>

<sup>3</sup> Among people aged 16-59(W)/64(M), Source ONS, Labour Force Statistics 2004

even higher for women; the employment rate for women with no qualifications was 42% in 2005, against 87% for women with a degree or equivalent and 71% for women with GCSE grades A\* to C or equivalent. Mothers with no qualifications appear to weigh up the cost-benefit of staying at home against working in low paid jobs, especially given the costs of childcare. This is an issue that the current government has been determined to address (see Section Two). Other socio-economic factors such as ethnicity are also related to employment rates (see 1.11 below).

There has been a significant decrease in unemployment since the mid-1990s and the UK now has one of the lowest rates of unemployment in Europe, a reverse of the situation in the 1980s. The last peak in unemployment was in 1993 (Social Trends, 35 2005a). Table 1.6 shows the decrease in total numbers unemployed since the mid-1990. Women have a lower unemployment rate (4.3% in 2001) than men (5.3%). Persistently high unemployment (including long-term unemployment) is still a problem both in terms of the socially disadvantaged groups (see below) and particular localities/neighbourhoods. Unemployment is higher amongst young people than older people and there are significant regional variations.

Low employment rates combined with high unemployment persist amongst some of the most disadvantaged groups in the UK. In 2005, there were 2.99 million workless households in the UK, representing 15.9% of all working age households. (ONS, 2006) They have been labelled the work-poor and time rich, in contrast with families with two earners working very long hours who are work rich and time poor (Brannen and Moss, 1998). The rate of employment participation for women with unemployed partners is low and has not increased to any extent over the last decade, standing at approximately 30%. This is lower than the employment rate of lone mothers (McDowell, 2005), emphasising the structural nature of unemployment amongst parts of the population.

### **1.3 Low wage jobs and job security**

The increase in the employment rate has to some extent been driven by what some commentators term “bad jobs” (McGovern et al, 2004). Low-waged employment accounts for some of the new jobs that have been created in recent years, particularly for disadvantaged employees (McDowell, 2005, Toynbee, 2003). However, according to government sources, the share of low paid jobs has declined since 1998. (DII, 2005). Even so, low wage employment continues to present a challenge to labour market policy in the UK, given the lack of financial incentive for some to take up low paid positions. The government has addressed this through a mixture of tightening the criteria for unemployment benefit and increasing benefits for low-paid workers (see Section 2). In 2005, 327,000 jobs were paid below the minimum wage, or 1.3% of all jobs in the labour market (for employees aged 22 and over, the minimum wage is GBP 4.85 per hour). People in part-time work were two and a half-times more likely to be paid less than the minimum wage, and, correspondingly, women were more like to fall below the minimum wage (ONS, 2005). The typical employee profile for low paid jobs are white women and ethnic minority men. (EOC, 2006)

Less rigid labour market regulations in the UK make permanent contracts less risky for UK employers than in other European countries Both government and trade union sources point to the decline in temporary working contracts since the late 1990s, following a peak in 1997 (see Table 1.9). Temporary workers account for 5.5% of all employees, the majority of these being on fixed-term contracts. Within

the category of temporary employment, agency work increased sharply from 1998 to 2002 - from 7% to 18%, (Social Trends 35 2005a). Fifty two per cent of temporary workers report that they choose temping for “positive reasons” (increased flexibility, better pay, gaining work experience), whilst the proportion of temporary workers unable to find a permanent job has fallen from more than to fifths in the mid-1990s to one-quarter. (DTI, 2005). ONS puts the percentage of temporary workers not wanting a temporary job at 30%, whilst 25% were unable to find permanent work (Social Trends, 35,DTI, 2005). Table 1.11 demonstrates the decline in the number of temporary workers unable to find permanent employment since 1995. Since 1997, the majority of new jobs have been permanent (TUC, 2006). Employees in some sectors such as finance and IT do experience some job insecurity due to restructuring and reorganisations (see Transitions, [www.workifereasearch.org/transitions](http://www.workifereasearch.org/transitions); Lewis and Smithson, 2006) though in the current buoyant labour market, they are unlikely to be unemployed for long. Job retention is higher in the public sector than in the private sector and the proportion of involuntary job separations has declined over the last decade (see Table 1.7)

## 1.4 Women in the labour market

The past decade has seen a continuous improvement in the labour market position of women in terms of both labour market participation and employment rates, with 1 million more economically active women in the UK over the ten-year period from 1991-2001. (Source: Labour Force Statistics) However, women continue to be concentrated in a narrow range of occupations. Over 60% of women work in 10 out of 77 recognised occupations. Thus career paths of men and women continue to differ considerably with a quarter of female employees in administrative or secretarial work, though the proportions of men and women in associate professional and technical occupations are similar (though this category includes nurses as well as IT professionals and technicians, which means that gender segregation will be hidden). Despite the high rates of women in the workforce, men are twice as likely as women to be managers and senior officials. (Source: Labour Force Statistics Spring 2003).

## 1.5 Part-time work and flexible working arrangements

The UK has high rates of part-time employment for women: over two-fifths of women workers work part-time, 60% of whom are women with children (McDowell, 2005), whilst only 9% of men work part-time, 42% of women employees are on part-time contracts (EOC, 2006). Part-time work is often viewed as a lifestyle choice rather than being imposed on employees in the absence of full-time alternatives, with women “choosing” part-time work in order to combine paid employment with parenting responsibilities. Other carers may also “choose” to or have to work part-time. Only 8% of part-timers say they are do so due to unavailability of full-time work, down from 13-14% in the mid-90s. (DTI, 2005). However, the statistics may hide a different reality whereby work intensification, high demands, especially on white collar, middle management employees leads to a workplace culture which, combined with the tradition of part time work for mothers and lack of public childcare provision makes full-time employment less feasible for some mothers than in other countries. The high cost of childcare also has an effect on labour market choices following the transition to motherhood, reducing capacity to “choose” a range of work and family strategies. Flexible working arrangements are becoming more common, encouraged by government policy. In 2004, around one fifth of full-time employees and one quarter of part-time employees had access, (on paper if not in practice) to some form of flexible working was (see Table 1.8), flexible working hours being the most common. Comparison of Workplace and Employment Relations

Survey (WERS) 1998 and WERS 2004 data indicates that provision of work-life policies has increased. The most common options perceived available by employees are flexitime, reducing working hours and increasing working hours. In terms of childcare however only five percent of employees perceive that childcare vouchers or financial help with childcare is available to them. Two percent of establishments have nurseries linked to the workplace. (Nadeem and Metcalf, forthcoming).

## 1.6 Working Hours

According to the TUC (Trades Union Congress), white collar workers have suffered a significant increase in working hours. Government sources however paint a different picture, pointing to the impact of the European Working Time Directive in reducing the proportion of full-time employees working longer than 48 hours by one-fifth (DTI, 2006), and the increase in the number of people working 16-45 hours. Men work on average 39 hours compared with 33.6 for women. However, long working hours are still an issue in the UK. According to ONS figures for 2004, 32% of men work more than 45 hours a week, whilst the figure is 10% for women. Long working hours appear to be concentrated in certain occupations (See Table 1.12). Forty eight per cent of male manager and senior officials work more than 45 hours. Twenty three per cent of women in this position also work more than 45 hours a week. Process plant and machine operatives also have a high percentage of employees working long hours, although this may be because overtime tends to be highly paid for these groups, unlike most professions in which overtime is often unpaid.

## 1.7 Self-employment

In recent years self-employment has been rising. Changes to the tax system have encouraged self-employment but there are other reasons beyond government policy that have driven this increase, in particular the increased incidence of transition from employee to self-employed consultant in some sectors. For example, the percentage of self-employed people working in banking, insurance and finance rose by 4% for men and 5% for women between 1994 and 2005. (Source: Social Trends 35 2005a) In 2004, 3.6 million people were classified as self-employed, or 13% of all those in employment. Over one-third of self-employed men work in the construction industry, whilst one quarter of self-employed women work in “other services” – community, social and personal services. (Social Trends 35 2005a).

## 1.8 Retirement/Pension issues

The proportion of the population over 65 has been increasing and stood at 13% in 2004. Within this group the proportion over 85 has reached 12%. This trend is due to continue over the next decades. Parallel to this, the proportion of the population aged 16 and under has been declining, standing at 19% in 2004. (Mid-year population estimates, ONS 2006). The ageing population of the UK, and a desire to reduce the social burden of pensions has made retirement and pensions key political issues. Public sector workers this year staged their biggest ever strike to defend their final salary pension scheme, currently under attack. The government recently passed a law raising the state pension age for men and women to 66 in 2024, 67 in 2034 and 68 in 2044, whilst cutting the number of years to qualify for the state pension from 39 to 30 (this is intended to take account of the interruptions to years of service due to childcare responsibilities). To compensate for the increase in the state pension age, a more generous pension will be introduced and will be linked to earnings rather than prices.

## 1.9 Health

Social background is a key determinant of health and longevity in the UK. The gap in life expectancy at birth between those who work in professional occupations and unskilled manual workers has been widening for some time, particularly for men, reaching 7.5 years at the end of the 1990s ([www.sustainable-development.gov.uk](http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk)) with respiratory diseases being five and a half times more likely to be the cause of death for male manual workers than professional men. (ONS, Trends in life expectancy by social class 1972 – 2001). The 2001 Census found that people in routine occupations had the worst self-reported health amongst those in employment, with those not in employment registering the worst overall.<sup>4</sup> Health is also a regional issue with some parts of the UK experiencing much higher rates of health-related problems than others. In some respects there is a North-South divide in terms of the nation's health.

## 1.10 Family formation and diversity

**a) Diverse family forms:** Household and family formation have been undergoing significant changes in the UK, marked most notably by a trend to smaller households alongside a corresponding increase in the number of households. The number of lone parent families is also increasing: in Spring 2005 nearly one in four children were in lone parent families. (See Tables 1.13 and 1.14). There is also a growth in reconstituted families as a result of divorce and remarriage

**b) Fertility issues:** Women are having children later. Women aged 30-34 have now become the age group with the highest rate of fertility (Social Trends 2006). This trend exists alongside high rates of teenage pregnancy (See Table 1.16), indicating the social polarisation that exists in the UK. The UK total fertility rate is increasing, with the 2005 fertility rate reaching its highest since 1992, with an average number of 1.8 children per woman in England and Wales. (See Table 1.15). It is possible that government policy to promote equality and retain human capital by facilitating combining work with parenthood may be encouraging more births. Household size differs according to ethnic group, ranging from an average of 4.5 members per household for the Bangladeshi community to 2.1 for White Irish households.

## 1.11 Social Inequalities

The UK has a relatively high level of social inequality in comparison with other European countries. There have been significant increases in the Gini coefficient of income inequality from the mid-1990s to 2001. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, between 1997 and 2003 the UK Gini coefficient rose by about 1 percentage point between 1997 and 2003. However inequality has since declined to 1997 levels. 2005 World Bank data on inequality shows the UK with a Gini coefficient of 36%.<sup>5</sup>

Labour market disadvantage is an important aspect of social inequality. Educational attainment is a key factor in determining earning potential as well as the likelihood of being in employment. Employees with no formal qualifications receive 0.65/.066% of the median wage of all employees, a figure that has remained stable since the mid-1990s. Social and economic background strongly influences educational attainment (Youth Cohort Study, Department for Education and Skills, 2006). Dickens and Ellwood (2001) identify demographic conditions such as the high incidence of lone parent households as key

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/census2001.asp>

<sup>5</sup> See <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/indicators.cfm?x=148&y=1&z=1>

factors in relation to poverty in the UK. This also explains to some extent the high levels of child poverty in the UK.

## 1.12 The gender pay gap: gender and poverty

The UK has one of the largest gender pay gaps among the EU-15 states (Eurofound, 2006). With little change since the mid-1990s, the full-time gender pay gap was 18% in 2003, whilst the female part-time/male full-time pay gap has hardly moved in 3 decades, at 40% (Oslen and Walby, 2004). The full time pay gap declined further over the next two years to 17.1%.<sup>6</sup> The gendered division of labour engenders lifetime differences in men and women's individual income (EOC, 2005). Many more women receive income support<sup>7</sup> than men as a result of working in low-paid, part-time employment and receive a higher proportion of their income from statutory benefits (mainly child benefit and lone parent support). Income inequality during the core economically active years leads to income inequality in later years given the current structure of pensions. Subsequently the gender income gap in retirement is very high: 47% (EOC, 2006).

## 1.13 Ethnic communities in the UK

In 2001, the ethnic population of the UK was 4.6 million, representing 8.1% of the population. The largest group are Indians, followed by Pakistani, Black Caribbeans, Black Africans, Bangladeshis and Chinese. Most ethnic groups tend to have a younger population profile than the white British population and higher fertility rates, in part due to different cultural norms. Economic inactivity rates of women from some ethnic communities are high, again reflecting cultural norms though perhaps also due to the low level of educational attainment of women in the most disadvantaged communities, making employment financially unattractive. However, religious and cultural norms also affect the employment activity rates of women. An ONS study based on statistical data from the Labour Force Survey from 1992 to 2002 found that among ethnic minority women, black women tended to continue in full-time employment throughout family formation compared with white and Indian women who were more likely to work part time (ONS, 2004). Black Caribbeans are amongst the most disadvantaged group in the UK, with the lowest level of educational attainment, due to a great extent on their low socio-economic status.

---

<sup>6</sup> This figure is derived from the mean hourly rates, the median pay gap for full-time work is now at 13%. Source ONS. Labour Force Statistics. Also see [http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/pay/pay\\_facts.htm](http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/pay/pay_facts.htm)

<sup>7</sup> Income support is a benefit paid to people who work less than 16 hours a week and are on a low income.

## 2. Employment policies

### 2.1 Labour market policy in the UK

Labour market reform in the 1990's focused primarily on active labour market programmes shifting the emphasis from social protection (benefit) to one of individual responsibility to be receptive to labour market demands (including taking low-paid employment). This period saw radical cuts in unemployment benefits. The Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) introduced in 1996 combined financial reductions in benefits with an obligation to be available for any type of employment. Since coming into power in 1997, the Labour Government has pursued labour market policies based on tax credit and in-work benefits alongside job search programmes, using a mix of welfare and active labour market policies, with the aim of enhancing economic activity rates by “making work pay” (McDowell, 2005), targeting in particular low-income families and low-skilled workers with weak labour market attachment.

In some respects there have been contradictory evolutions in the tax and benefit system. On the one hand there has been a move toward an individual worker status (e.g. changes to the married couple's tax allowance) whilst on the other hand the tax credit system, the Working Family Tax Credit (WFTC) is based on household units, a means-tested credit based on household income. These different evolutions reflect a certain amount of polarisation in the UK, particularly with regards to women's employment: a growing financial independence for women via their participation in the labour market alongside a sector of women from disadvantaged groups dependent on the state. The WFTC was conceived specifically to encourage the labour market attachment of lone mothers and mothers of young children by increasing the credit payable for younger children, and is applicable to lone parents and couples where both work more than 16 hours per week. (Blundell and Meghir, 2002). Low-earning childless households are also provided with incentives to enter and stay in the labour market by the Family Tax Credit side of the WFTC. Policy has certainly made an impact with, for example 200, 000 lone parents entering employment between 1997 and 2004, representing 53% of lone parents (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004).

A large proportion of youth are economically inactive yet not in education so employment policy has also been targeted at youth. The New Deal for Young People<sup>8</sup> introduced in 1998, is aimed at 18-25 year olds who have been unemployed for 6 months or more. Refusal to participate in the programme risks loss of benefits.

Given the government's attachment to the idea that all adults should be economically active (McDowell, 2005), childcare is a key part of labour market policy, so much so that the government's strategy for expanding childcare now falls under the auspices of the Department of Work and Pensions, rather than the Department of Education and Skills as was previously the case - highlighting the way in which childcare has moved into the labour market arena and reflecting a commitment to bring more women into the workforce. Whether this is driven by equality concerns or economic ones is open to question. The

---

<sup>8</sup> The New Deal for Young People is a compulsory employment training programme aimed at making unemployed youth more employable through skills training and help with job seeking.

National Childcare Strategy was introduced in 1998 and has overseen an increase in private provision of childcare alongside a reduction in public childcare places. According to McDowell (2005), this has led to a polarisation between sole parents and low income families using the residual public provision and high-quality market-based care for higher earners. There has also been an expansion of school-based out of hours clubs for before and after school and holidays.

Disability discrimination law also addresses a source of social exclusion and employment policy is also beginning to address the ageing population, by new age discrimination law, and by plans to raise the retirement age.

## 2.2 Wage policy

The minimum wage was reintroduced in 1997 and has improved the relative position of the lowest earners, including part-time workers, but has had little impact on the gap between the highest and lowest paid. (TUC, Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2005). Public sector pay is an issue. The government has recently announced that public sector pay rises will be considerably restrained this year, a factor that can cause hardship particularly in regions with high housing costs (see section 3.3).

## 2.3 Flexible working policies

In 2000, the government launched its “work-life balance” campaign with the aim of encouraging employers to introduce flexible working practices and to convince employers that there were economic gains to be had from flexible working. The campaign focused on long-hours culture, sectors with acute problems associated with lack of work-life balance and providing guidance to employers and employees. To this end the Department of Trade and Industry set up a dedicated website and the guidance covered areas such as leave arrangements, flexible working arrangements such as home-working and job-sharing), childcare support and training for returning employees. The DTI also provided funding for 400 organisations to provide consultancy services on work-life balance and provides examples of “good practice” on its website.

In 2002, the government introduced legislation to allow parents of children under six (or 18 in the case of a disabled child) the right to request flexible working patterns. The Work and Families Act 2006, resulted in an extension of the right to request flexible working to carers of adults (effective from April 2007). There is also consideration of extending the age of the youngest child for this right to request flexible working. (see <http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/workandfamilies/index.html>). However there is no legal obligation for employers to respond positively to such requests.. A recent DTI study (Holt and Grainger (2005), found that 77% of parents of children under the age of six said that work-life balance was an important factor in deciding whether to apply for a new job, and both men and women showed a preference for flexible working over other benefits. However, while some studies suggest an increase in flexible working policies it should be noted that even when voluntary employer policies are in place there is often an implementation gap between policy and practice (Smithson et al, 2005; Lewis and Smithson, 2006).

## 2.4 Social dialogue/unions

Trade union density declined during most of the 1990s. However this trend has been reversed to some extent in recent years. Union density for women has begun to outstrip that of men and accounts for the slight increase in union membership since 2004. In autumn 2005, overall union density stood at 29%, with men's union density continuing to decline to just over 28% compared to 30% for women. Workers over 35 are more likely to be unionised. Regional/national disparities also exist with a density rate of 40.4% for employees in Northern Ireland compared to 27.9% in England. Whilst collective agreements have declined, since the arrival of New Labour, unions have been vocal in campaigning for changes in legislation to improve working conditions.

The TUC has declared raising the quality of working life as one of its objectives. A key part of this agenda is the campaign around work-life balance and the related issue of long working hours in the UK. The TUC has been particularly vocal about the refusal of the government to end the opt-out of the European Union Working-Time Directive. On a more collaborative vein, the TUC has worked in partnership with the government on its work-life balance campaign and has also tried to get the employers on board by stressing the economic benefits of flexible working practices. The TUC's campaign addresses all employees and not just parents and focuses on workplace practice as well as policy.

The CBI has also collaborated with the government and the TUC in producing a report on tackling long hours and reforming working patterns.<sup>9</sup> However, unsurprisingly, there are fundamental differences between the approaches taken by the labour movement and the employers with regards to improving work and work-life balance. The CBI is hostile to further regulation and would like to restrict state intervention in the workplace on these issues to guidelines and "best practices". The TUC on the other hand campaigns not only to improve workplace culture and practice but also to change legislation (in particular on working time).

Some of the larger union federations are taking up the issue of quality of working life. Amicus, a white collar workers union, has published a brochure entitled "Good Work", in which it outlines the key elements which constitute a quality working environment (Amicus, 2006): a safe and healthy workplace; control over the working environment; fairness and dignity at work and a trade union voice.

Dissatisfaction at work is identified as a factor affecting well-being. Findings from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS, 2004) demonstrates that satisfaction at work varies according to different work dimensions, with satisfaction lowest with regards to lack of involvement in decision making and pay and concludes that "improving the quality of people's working lives not only enhances individuals' personal well-being but it can lead to better, more successful organisations". Case studies have led to similar conclusions (Lewis and Cooper, 2006).

## 2.5 Quality of working life: a hot topic?

The DTI organised a conference in 2003 entitled “Improving life at work”, in which the long hours culture and flexible working were key issues. Despite activities of this kind, some sections of the governing party are dissatisfied with the lack of progress on improving quality of work. A recent “thinkpiece” by a democratic left think tank composed mainly of disaffected New Labour figureheads and policy advisors, criticised the way quality of work as a global concept is excluded from the political agenda, arguing that since work is such a key aspect of our lives, quality of work should be a priority and that the role of government is to make a “genuine difference to people’s working lives” (Compass, 2006). Despite the growth in high-skilled “good jobs”, the parallel growth in “bad jobs” – with a corresponding perceived decline in quality of working life – has led to a “hour glass” labour market (implying a deepening polarisation). The role of the state in promoting quality employment is emphasised, and one way to achieve this is to implement European social policy, in particular the working time directive. This is an example of how debate about quality of working life interlinks with divisions on the UK’s relation to Europe. The document also points out the contradiction between governmental rhetoric about work-life balance and the rejection of a limitation of the maximum hours that can be worked. Others point to contradictions in government labour policy which focuses on getting more of the working age population into work whilst at the same time campaigning for more parental involvement as well as citizenship via volunteering and community work. (McDowell, 2005; Lewis and Smithson et al 2006)

Debates about quality of work are therefore inevitably related to issues not only of the individual work-life interface but also of wider societal questions regarding the amount of time employees can devote to desirable obligations as citizens in a “caring” society. Notably the current leader of the opposition Conservative party is also stressing the importance of well being and not just GDP as a sign of a healthy society – an unusual stance from one of that political persuasion.

## 2.6 Health and safety at work

According to the Work Foundation, a number of factors are contributing to work-related health problems: insecurity, monotony and repetition, a lack of autonomy, control and “task-discretion” ([www.theworkfoundation.com](http://www.theworkfoundation.com)). Long working hours are an issue for health and safety, especially stress (Sparks et al, 1997; Burchell et al, 2001) particularly so for certain occupations, whilst some industries ( e.g. the construction industry ) are regularly criticised by union federations for using unqualified labour and flouting labour legislation. Unions are concerned about the “social gradient” in health, with workers in lower status jobs experiencing worse health and lower life expectancy than workers in higher status jobs (Amicus, Good Work). Although factors outside of work contribute to this, job dissatisfaction and intensification of work will affect health.

## 3. Family policies

### 3.1 Model of family policies in the UK

The male breadwinner and female carer family model of post world war Britain has traditionally been reflected in a welfare state constructed around the existence of male head of household engaged in paid work thus securing him certain rights in the public sphere via a national insurance system based on earnings. The provision of care on the other hand has been considered a private issue. Benefits for the mother existed via the father's paid employment. This model however has been considerably strained by demographic changes during the second half of the last century. The election of New Labour in 1997, led to changes to the welfare regime with more emphasis placed on the autonomy of individuals within households, particularly with regards to the right to access paid work (Finch, 2005).

The current government's family policies are the product of a complex interaction between gender equality concerns and a desire to boost activity rates amongst target populations which is in turn conditioned by the commitment to tackle dependency culture and the insistence that rights must be accompanied by obligations, including the obligation to engage in paid work. Whilst demographic concerns certainly provide some of the background for government policy, pro-natalism is not explicitly promoted in the UK.

Consequently, family policy has significantly evolved since 1997 to take into account the need to facilitate the participation of women with children in the labour market. There was an important shift in childcare ideology from a purely private sphere to one that now poses childcare in terms of a more shared responsibility between families and the state. Numerous initiatives have been developed at state level to complement the caring responsibilities of parents, or more precisely mothers. In keeping with the rights and obligations theme, the government has also placed an increasing emphasis on the role of fathers in the family, by both maintaining the previous government's attempts to oblige absent fathers to support their biological children and by extending the rights of absent fathers (Finch, 2005).

In the main, initiatives to support parents have been tied to paid employment of women, and have involved both extra-familial care ("defamiliarisation" of care according to Finch, 2005) and "refamiliarisation" of care" (Finch, 2005), in the form of leaves available to parents. However, some initiatives have targeted children deemed "at risk", such as the Sure Start Scheme which provides some childcare support and activities in deprived areas. The government has pledged to halve child poverty by 2010 as part of its aim of eradicating it by 2020. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was set up shortly after Labour came to power in 1997 to deal not only with the consequences of poverty and social exclusion but also to deal with factors that encourage the persistence of poverty amongst target groups.

### 3.2 State provision for families

#### 3.2.1 Childcare

Public funding for childcare is limited though it has improved significantly since the 1990s. The increased participation of women in the workforce led to a demand in childcare but this was provided mainly by the

private sector. The Government's goal outlined in their National Childcare Strategy in the late 1990s was to expand childcare by increased investment, make childcare more affordable and raise the quality of childcare. The cost of child care, particularly pre-school care remains an issue. Whilst a tax credit system has helped some families, the average credit amounts to less than a third the total costs (Day-care Trust, 2003). This may be one of the reasons why, despite these developments, informal care by family and friends accounts for a significant amount of childcare. Under the Childcare Act 2006 Local Authorities will review the childcare that they fund as well as private and voluntary provision of childcare. This is supposed to be done in consultation with parents. Alongside pre-school provided by day nurseries and registered childminders, out-of school clubs during term times and holiday schemes during the school holidays have been introduced and expanded to allow dual-earner or single parent families accommodate their working hours.

### **3.2.2 Leave entitlements**

Maternity leaves and payments have been considerably extended since New Labour came to power. In April 2003, statutory maternity leave was increased from 18 to 26 paid weeks, regardless of length of employment, with an additional 26 unpaid weeks if employed for 26 weeks' continuous employment by the beginning of the 14th week before the expected week of childbirth. The amount paid is 90 per cent of earnings for the first 6 weeks and a flat rate for the final 20 weeks which was increased from £75 a week to £100 a week. In addition, in keeping with EC directives, paternity leave has been introduced. Unpaid parental leave up to the child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday was introduced in 1999 and was increased from 13 to 18 weeks in 2002. However it has been taken in blocks which has caused problems and was the subject of a court case involving the rail union (RMT).

### **3.2.3 Flexible working and the family**

As discussed in 2.3, the government has also introduced rights for parents of children under six to request flexible working as part of its work-life balance initiative. As yet such initiatives have benefited working mothers more than working fathers (Lewis and Smithson, 2006). The Work and Families Act 2006, plans for fathers to be able to take up part of maternity leave as paid parental leave. Whilst the government has also couched its policy in terms of a more equal division of labour in the household with fathers being more involved (something which some high profile politicians have recently personally taken up), the immediate goal of government policy is to ease the participation of mothers in the labour market.

## **3.3 Housing**

Housing is a major issue in the UK due to high demand, a reduced stock of social housing and high house prices. There is also a generational equity issues with problems faced by younger cohorts particularly those entering the labour market, saddled with large student loans which are increasing and prohibitive housing costs and a North-South divide in housing prices, limiting mobility. Since the 1980s, social housing policy has undergone considerable change; tenants have been encouraged through "right-to-buy" schemes to buy their social accommodation at highly competitive rates, whilst large scale transfer of social housing away from local authorities has led to the expansion of other types of ownership and management bodies. Since the 1990s more than 650 000 local authority homes have been bought by their tenants. (ONS, 2005) At the same time the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation in England rose from just over 40 000 in 1995/6 to 137, 000 in 2003/4. (ONS, 2005).

Failure of housing supply to meet demand led to the Sustainable Communities Plan in England of 2003 and other regional plans in Wales and Scotland to establish an action programme to improve housing. This has involved identifying areas when new, affordable housing can be built. A key issue in the South East is how to tackle accommodation needs of key public sector workers, whose salaries are not sufficient to meet the increased cost of housing. A variety of schemes have been developed to deal with this including low cost and subsidised and part ownership schemes to help these workers onto the “property ladder”. In other parts of the UK, low demand for housing has led to “ghost” areas of quasi-abandoned streets/neighbourhoods and inadequate facilities for the remaining occupiers. These have been targeted by renewal programmes which have also targeted housing problems in rural areas, with planned increases in housing stock as well as measures to allow local authorities to limit the resale of ex-social housing to local people only.

Lack of housing in some areas has proven to be a major political issue in local elections with far right organisations fuelling fears (unfounded) of immigrants and asylum seekers gaining accommodation at the expense of “local” people. Similar fears have emerged around the number of immigrants arriving, and yet to arrive, from new European states. Some councils have asked for extra central government funding to cope with increased demand in housing following recent waves of immigration.

### 3.4 Leisure

Sport is a major source of leisure in the UK, though this includes watching sport as well as participating in it. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport chairs a “Sports Cabinet” which identifies priorities for sport. The government has set itself the objective of increasing the physical activity of the population. This is partly driven by public health concerns surrounding obesity, particularly amongst children. The 2012 Olympics which will be held in London will inevitably generate further initiatives for sport in the UK. One of the issues already in the public arena is the lack of facilities for training potential Olympic athletes. This debate interlinks with debates about the national curriculum in schools in the UK which has been criticised for being too narrow and not allowing enough space for extra-curriculum activities such as sport and music/art. The practice of selling off of school sports fields to raise funds for schools is also an issue. The government hopes that initiatives involving private partnerships in funding sporting facilities, in particular via “Academies<sup>10</sup>” specialising in sport will improve sport facilities in schools.

The government has also tried to improve access to cultural events. In 2001, free entry to all national museums and galleries was introduced, resulting in an increase in visitors of 72% over the following 2 years. Another recent government initiative has been the planned introduction of Las Vegas type casinos. This has met with much criticism, however the government has insisted that such casinos will play an important role both in terms of improving leisure facilities and local economic regeneration. The impact of leisure in various guises on well-being has been highlighted in research by both national, regional and local government. However, leisure is highly gendered, with women having less free time to pursue non family related activities (Kaye, 2001)

---

<sup>10</sup> Academies are controversial private-public partnerships in education through which local businesses/religious bodies take over the running of schools from local authorities. They often specialise in specific subjects such as art, sport, languages and technology.

## 3.5 Safety in society and the community

### 3.5.1 Crime and security

Issues surrounding crime and security are rarely out of the headlines in the UK. Labour governments have traditionally been associated with being “soft on crime”. This changed when New Labour came to power. Blair’s slogan “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime” was an attempt to straddle two sides of the crime and security debate. However the government has been criticised by its one-sided approach to crime by emphasising criminal justice over social justice.<sup>11</sup>

The British Crime Survey covering England and Wales<sup>12</sup> has shown that there has been a significant decrease in the risk of being in victim crime over the past decade, from 40% in 1995 to 26% in 2003/04. Similar surveys in Scotland and Northern Ireland estimate the risk of being a victim of crime at 20%, again a reduction since earlier surveys. Official figures also paint a positive picture of the government’s record on crime. Crime in England and Wales 2004/5 highlights in particular the halving of vehicle and burglary crime since the mid-1990s and the reduction in violent crime by 43%. Parallel to this there has been a fall in the proportion of people who have a perception of crime increasing, though this is still relatively high (42% think crime is increasing in their local area, and 61% nationally). (Home Office, 2005) These figures however mask other, less palatable statistics. Whilst overall recorded crime has decreased since 2002/3, it has increased since 1995 by 9%.

One of New Labour’s major innovations in tackling “crime” has been the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). These were introduced in 1993 and extended in 2003 with the aim of tackling nuisance behaviour in neighbourhoods in the context of media hype surrounding “yobs”, typified by teenage boys wearing hoods (otherwise known as hoodies). ASBOs cover a wide range of behaviour such as: harassment, intimidation, graffiti, vandalism, drunkenness, begging and litter-dropping. Those issued with ASBOs are prohibited from committing their offence or excluded from certain zones for a minimum of two years. Parenting orders were also included in the 2003 Act, in keeping with New Labour’s emphasis on individual responsibility as a precondition to accessing rights.

The Criminal Justice Intervention Programme is designed to tackle the relationship between illegal drug use and crime by bringing together criminal justice and treatment agencies to find individual solutions for those who use crime to fund their drug consumption. At the same time there has been a relaxing of the laws surrounding cannabis use with the maximum sentence being reduced. Despite debates about the legalisation of soft drugs this has not happened.

### 3.5.2 Terrorism

Since 2001, terrorism and state responses to terrorism has become a major political issue and has increased in importance since the London Undergrounds attacks in July, 2005. Counter-terrorism measures have been introduced via the 2000 Terrorism Act and the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Crime and

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/rel/ccjs/taking-crime-seriously-2006.doc>

<sup>12</sup> The BCS is supposed to give a more accurate picture of crime since it is based on the actual experience of respondents and therefore includes crime that is unrecorded.

Security Act 2001. These have been controversial measures leading to highly charged political debate about the undermining of civil liberties and the justice system. The death of an innocent commuter at the hands of the police and the night raids on families in areas with a high Muslim concentration has further polarised opinion.

### 3.6 Health policy

Health policy in the UK has developed quite considerably since the 1990s. The government has implemented a dual agenda of encouraging individual responsibility in health alongside a modernisation programme which among other things emphasises increasing choice for the patient (an end to the “one size fits all” service provided by the National Health Service-NHS - since its introduction in 1948). Central to the modernisation programme is the increased role of market mechanisms and private sector involvement in the NHS via contracting out of services and the establishment of Foundation hospitals in 2003 outside the control of the Strategic Health Authorities. One of the government’s aims, linked to the rhetoric of patient choice, is to allow patients to more freely chose their place of treatment and be able to pay for superior or enhanced treatments. Critics say that this is opening the door to a two-tier health system and undermines the principles on which the NHS was established; that of equal, free access to all.

Individual responsibility has been enhanced via initiatives such as NHS Direct which was launched in England in 1998. This telephone service allows the public to contact a nurse-led helpline as a first port of call for minor health issues as a way of both alleviating pressure on general practitioners and encouraging people to be more responsible themselves for their health. Its internet counterpart contains an interactive self-diagnosis service. NHS direct exists in England and Wales. The proposed replacement of paper records by electronic versions by 2010 which will be accessible by a variety of health specialists and eventually by the patients is also promoted as enabling patients to be more involved in making decisions about their medical treatment.

Public health is a big issue in the UK. Obesity, the rise in alcohol-related illness linked to a binge drinking culture amongst young people, smoking, poor diet, the rise in sexually transmitted diseases amongst youth are all concerns that the government claims to want to address. There are plans to ban smoking in public places. The debate around this was relatively polarised. Eating habits have been under sustained attack over the past year or so, particularly with regards to the quality of school dinners. After a highly publicised campaign by a major celebrity chef, the government has taken on board the need to improve school meals and ban junk foods from school menus. Policy surrounding alcohol abuse is less straightforward, given the recent introduction of longer licensing hours. However it has been argued that this will reduce binge drinking by bringing drinking habits more in line with continental Europe.

### 3.7 Education

A particular objective of current government policy has also been investment in education and the goal of quality education for all, which has implications for quality of life. Improvements in public examination results and growth in the numbers of students achieving the highest grades have received a mixed reception. While government see this as evidence of improved education, others particularly in the media, construct this as a lowering of standards. Another feature of education policy in recent years has been the

emphasis on life long learning initiatives - to retain skilled/knowledge jobs within the UK in a global economy.

## Conclusions

Quality of life of citizens in Britain is considered to be a responsibility of both individuals (or families) and the state, within the rights and responsibilities agenda of the Labour government. Hence policy initiatives aimed at enhancing well being and quality of life have largely aimed to help people to help themselves, discouraging dependence on the state. The influence of policy interventions (current and in the past ten years) on the quality of life and quality of work have been complex: there have been many positive trends, but often policies enhance quality of life for some sectors of the population and not others, or are doubled edged in their impact.

At the macro level, well being and quality of life can be enhanced by high levels of employment, minimising the stress associated with unemployment. Policies to get more people into work, have resulted in rising employment rates, especially among groups considered to be disadvantaged in the labour market. Nevertheless, despite the growth in “good jobs” some of the growth in employment has been in low wage jobs which are often difficult to sustain or even unfeasible, especially in the light of high childcare costs and, in some areas, high costs of housing and transport. Thus policies to increase employment rates have potentially enhanced quality of life for some more than others. Labour market disadvantage continues especially among those with few qualifications – reinforcing social inequalities and polarisation between different sectors of society.

At the individual level job insecurity can be a source of stress, challenging quality of life (Burchell, Ladipo, and Wilkinson, (2001). However, less rigid labour market regulations in the UK than in many other European countries make permanent contracts less risky for UK employers and has reduced the prevalence of temporary jobs. Nevertheless some jobs are endangered by current contexts - for example greater use of the internet makes call centres less viable and remaining jobs are often outsourced to countries with cheaper labour costs - creating insecurity for some. For now, enough new jobs are created to offset these losses.

There are ongoing and new sources of both satisfaction and stress associated with many contemporary jobs in Britain. On the positive side many new jobs, especially in the knowledge economy, are highly satisfying, stimulating and absorbing. (Lewis 2001) On the other hand long working hours and the intensification and speeding up of work can challenge well being of individual workers and families. Technology, enables people in certain types of jobs to vary where and when they work and this enhances flexibility to manage work and family demands, but it can lead to a blurring of work-non work boundaries (Lewis and Smithson, 2006; Sullivan and Lewis, 2001). Far from the rise in leisure that was once predicted from the technological revolution, many people in Britain across the occupational spectrum, are now working longer and more intensively than ever. It has even been suggested that the apparent “free choice” made by many people in jobs at the upper end of the occupational scale to spend increasing lengths of time in employment related activities, beyond the time for which they are remunerated and obligated, together with the apparent enjoyment of much knowledge work, contribute to a situation in which work is becoming indistinguishable from leisure (Lewis, 2001). However this overlooks the intensification of workloads and the impact of technology, for example email, which stretches the boundaries of work.

It is these sorts of concerns about the impact of current ways of working that have fuelled the interest in “work-life balance” which is discussed and addressed; by government, trade unions, in organisations and in the media. The work life balance campaign has encouraged a greater focus on flexible working arrangements, associated with greater ease in managing work and non work responsibilities, particularly for women - though workplace cultures still constrain most men and many women from taking up policies (Lewis, 2001). The double-edged nature of flexible working arrangements are also evident - in some cases providing flexibility for people to work harder (Purcell, Lewis and Smithson, 2005). A limitation of the work-life balance campaign is that it tends to encourage short term, quick fixes, such as policies without going far enough to pursue systemic changes in organisation (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006).

Initiatives to enhance women’s labour force participation and the growing emphasis on flexible working arrangements and “work-life balance” have contributed to growing rates of female employment. In particular, the prevalence of part time work makes it easier for some women to continue working after they have children, although at a financial cost that affects women’s life time earnings. Multiple roles in work and family can contribute to quality of life by providing multiple sources of satisfaction and well being (Barnett, 1998; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002 ), particularly if there is good support for these roles, both through a relatively equitable division of labour in the home and support in the workplace. There is some evidence that fathers’ roles are changing (O’Brien, 2005; Burgess, 1998) but paternal involvement still tends to be restricted by workplace expectations (Lewis, 2001) and in the main, women continue to undertake the greater share of family care and domestic tasks and to take up family related leaves (Devon and Moss, 2002; DTI, 2004). Moreover, despite changing policies on and attitudes to childcare, the availability and costs remain an issue for many parents, especially mothers. The increase in private provision of childcare alongside a reduction in public childcare places has also contributed to a polarisation, in this case between lone parents and low income families on the one hand using the residual public provision and other families using private childcare (Dowling, 2005).

This period has also seen an intensification of parenting (Lewis and Smithson, 2006) as parents are expected to give more time to childcare and also provide more material things in a context of growing consumerism. This is not helped by contradictions in government labour policy which focuses on getting more of the working age population into work and retains the right for employees to opt out of the Working Time Directive, whilst at the same time campaigning for more parental involvement as well as citizenship via volunteering and community work. (McDowell, 2005; Lewis and Smithson et al, 2006)

The government has taken a number of steps to enhance quality of life by reducing social exclusion and poverty, especially child poverty, both through employment policies and a number of direct initiatives, and the proportion of children living in low income households has declined. Nevertheless a number of social problems and quality of life concerns remain. These include issues of crime and security, inequalities in health and specific health problems, all of which are being addressed by government with varying degrees of success. There are also a number of life course issues, for example concerns about smoking alcohol and drug taking among young people. The ageing population, retirement and pension issues and quality of life in later years remain major challenges for the future and much more attention will be needed to these issues

Increasing attention is also being paid to environmental issues. The government's sustainable development agenda raises important issues about health and well being and sustainable communities. Some people are extending this debate by questioning the social sustainability of long working hours and intensified workloads ( Gambles et al, 2006; Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, in press; Webster, 2004 ), and relating this to a questioning of the economic determinism associated with neo liberal capitalism. Layard (2006 ) for example points out that greater affluence beyond a certain threshold, is not associated with greater happiness.

Fear about the future is shifting from worries about employment in the 1980s to worries about pensions, and more global worries about environment and world events impacting on the UK in the context of globalisation. There are also concerns about multi-culturalism in the current geo-political climate and about threats to national identity and the unity of the nation. Finally, it should be noted that the issues raised above concern the traditional working and middle class sectors of the UK. Recent immigrant communities will have other quality of life concerns. For example, "bad jobs" are likely to be more acceptable to immigrant communities, who traditionally work hard to get on in the host community.

Tables for Section 1 Employment and demographic trends

**Table 1.1**

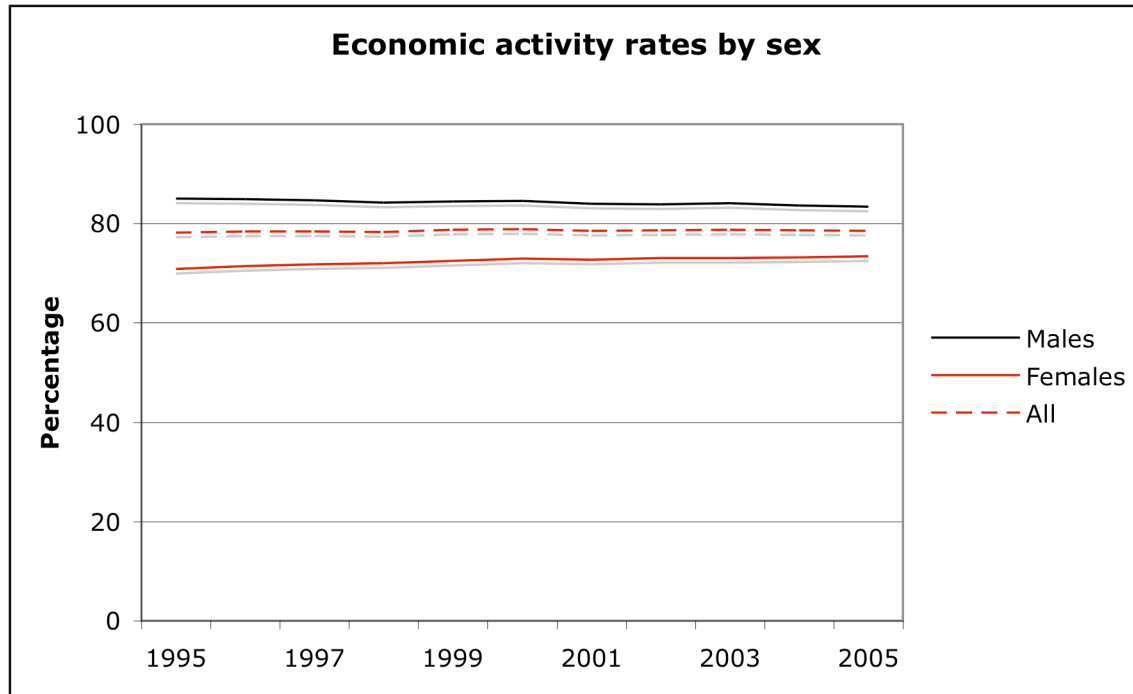
**Economic activity rates:<sup>1</sup> by sex**

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Males	Females	All
1995	85.0	70.9	78.2
1996	84.9	71.4	78.4
1997	84.7	71.8	78.4
1998	84.2	72.0	78.3
1999	84.4	72.5	78.7
2000	84.6	72.9	78.9
2001	84.0	72.7	78.5
2002	83.9	73.0	78.6
2003	84.1	73.0	78.7
2004	83.6	73.2	78.6
2005	83.4	73.4	78.5

*1 At spring each year. Males aged 16 to 64, females aged 16 to 59. The percentage of the population that is in the labour force. Data are seasonally adjusted and have been adjusted in line with population estimates published in autumn 2004. See Appendix, Part 4: LFS reweighting, and Historical LFS-consistent time series.*

**Source:** Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

**Table 1.2**



**Table 1.3**

**Economic activity status of young people:<sup>1</sup> by whether in full-time education, 2004<sup>2</sup>**

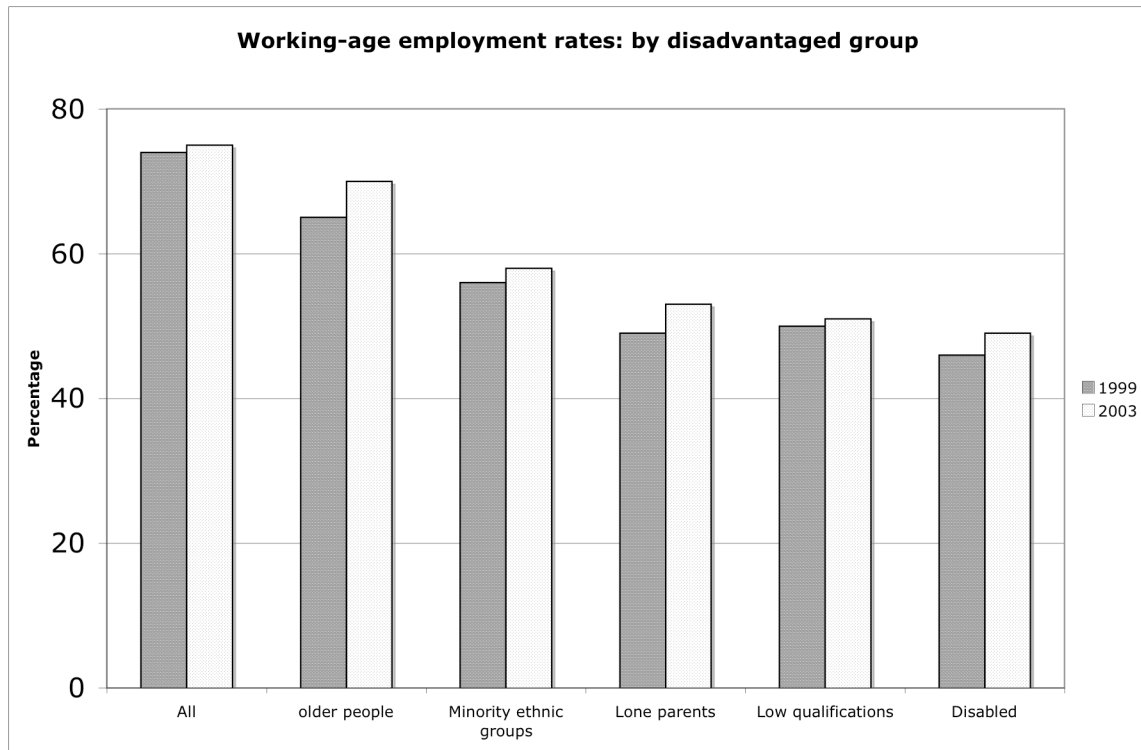
United Kingdom					Percentages
	In full-time education		Not in full-time education		All
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
<b>Economically active</b>					
In employment	35	43	80	70	61
Unemployed	6	7	11	8	8
All economically active	41	50	91	78	70
<b>Economically inactive</b>	59	50	9	22	30
All (=100%) (millions)	1.3	1.3	2.1	2.1	6.8

<sup>1</sup> Aged 16 to 24.

<sup>2</sup> At spring. Data are seasonally adjusted and have been adjusted in line with population estimates published in autumn 2004. See Appendix, Part 4: LFS reweighting.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

**Table 1.4**



Employment rates for working age people: men aged 16 to 64 and women aged 16 to 59  
 Source: Department of Work and Pensions, HM Treasury from Labour Force Survey

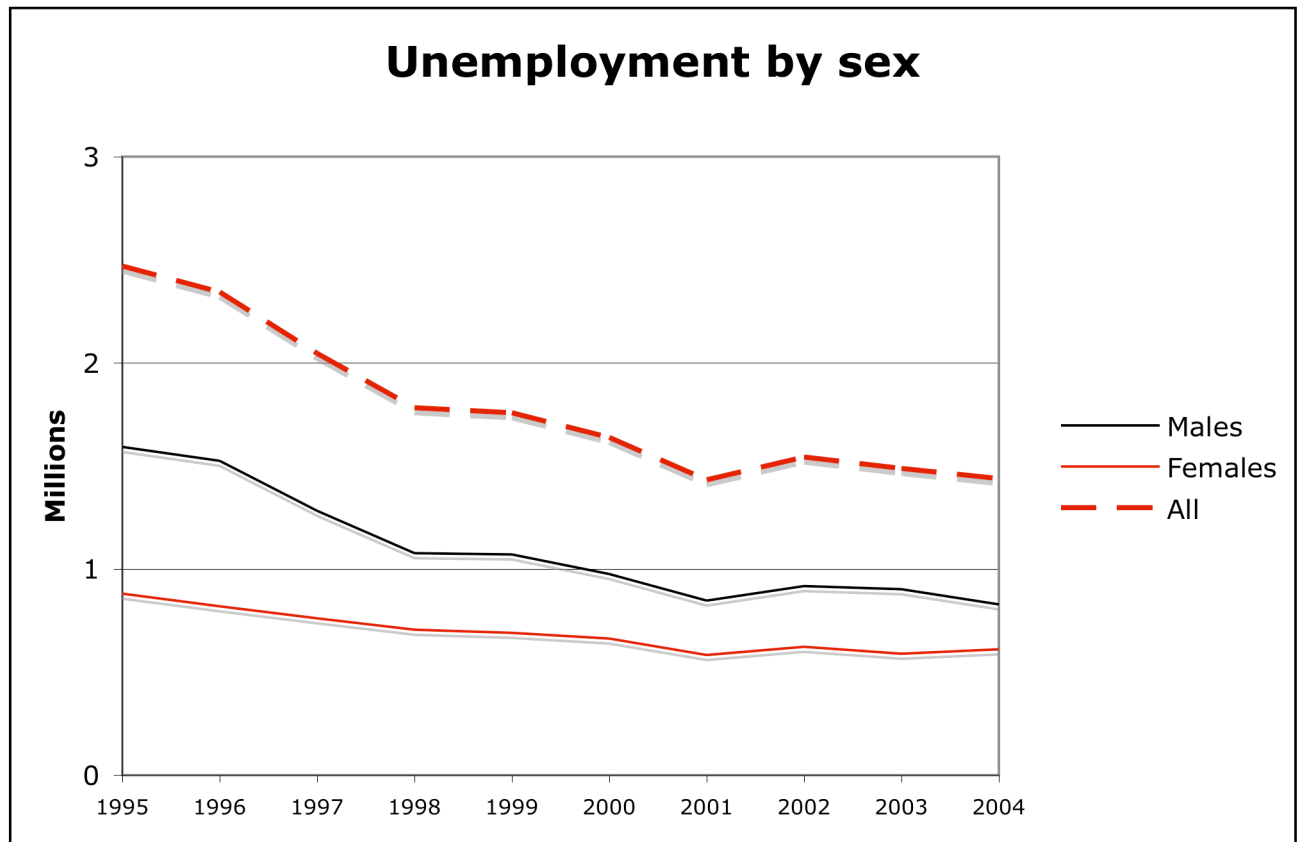
**Table 1.5 Employment rate<sup>1</sup> by sex and highest qualification, 2005<sup>2</sup>**

	Percentages		
	Men	Women	All
Degree or equivalent	89	87	88
Higher education	87	84	85
GCE A level or equivalent	81	73	77
Trade apprentice	83	73	77
GSCE grades A* to C or equivalent	79	71	75
Qualifications at NVQ level 1 and below	75	63	69
Other qualifications – level unknown	78	64	72
No qualifications	54	42	48
All	79	70	74

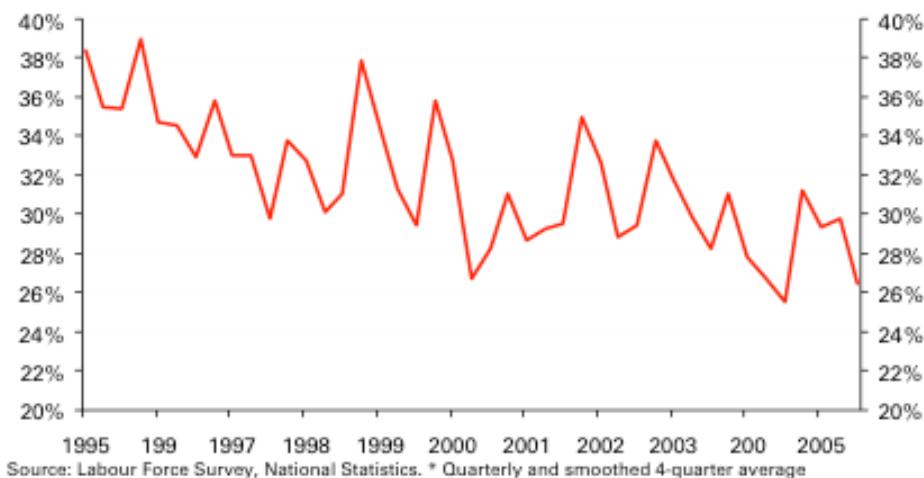
1. The percentage of the working-age population in employment. Men aged 16 to 64, women aged 16-59

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

**Table 1.6**



**Table 1.7 Percentage of employee job separations that are involuntary**



**Table 1.8**

**Employees with flexible working patterns:<sup>1</sup> by sex, 2004<sup>2</sup>**

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Males	Females	All employees
<b>Full-time employees</b>			
Flexible working hours	9.2	14.6	11.3
Annualised working hours	5.0	4.8	4.9
Four and a half day week	1.5	0.7	1.2
Term-time working	1.2	5.5	2.8
Nine day fortnight	0.3	0.3	0.3
Any flexible working pattern <sup>3</sup>	17.4	26.2	20.7
<b>Part-time employees</b>			
Flexible working hours	5.3	8.1	7.6
Annualised working hours	3.1	4.3	4.0
Term-time working	4.2	11.2	9.9
Job sharing	1.0	2.7	2.4
Any flexible working pattern <sup>3</sup>	15.0	27.0	24.7

*1 Percentages are based on totals which exclude people who did not state whether or not they had a flexible working arrangement. Respondents could give more than one answer.*

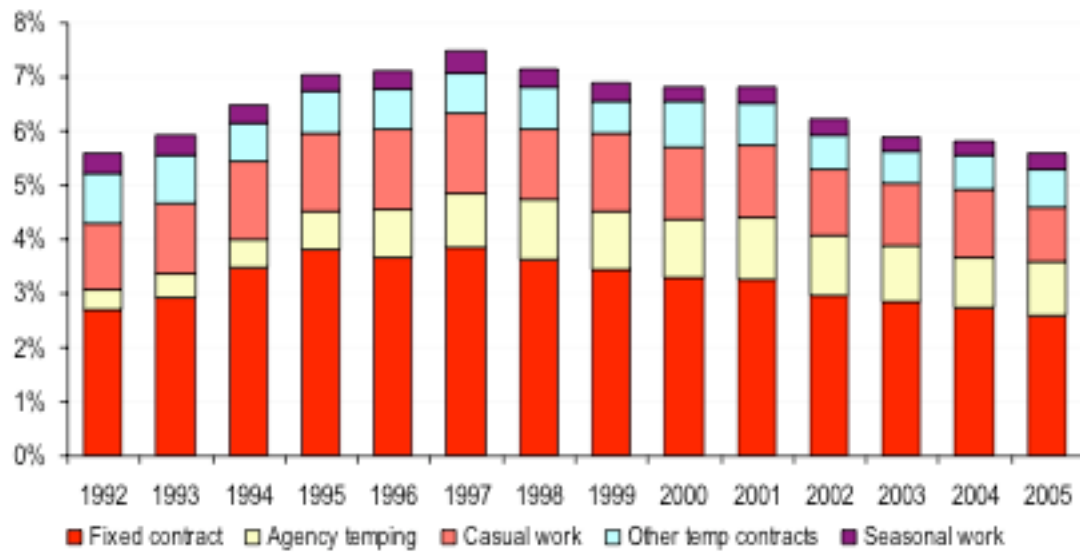
*2 At spring. People aged 16 and over. Data are not seasonally adjusted and have been adjusted in line with population estimates published in spring 2003. See Appendix, Part 4: LFS reweighting.*

*3 Includes other categories of flexible working not separately identified.*

**Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics**

**Table 1.9**

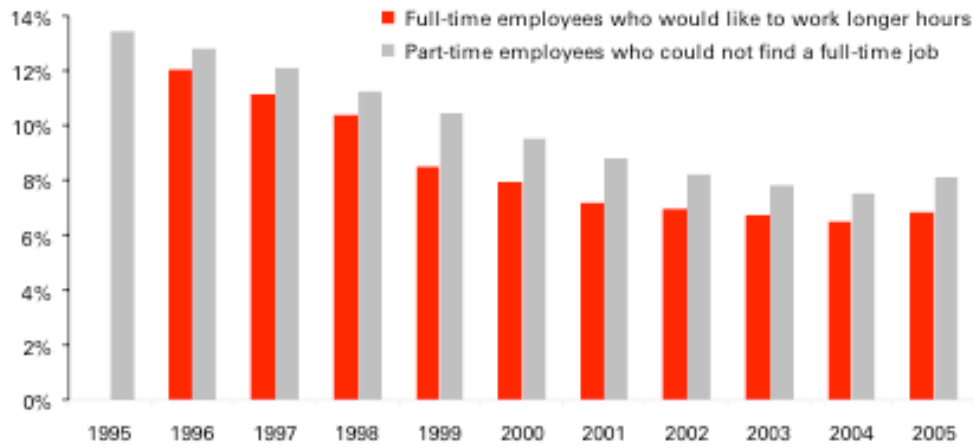
**Temporary employment as a percentage of all employees**



Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics, spring quarters

Table 1.10

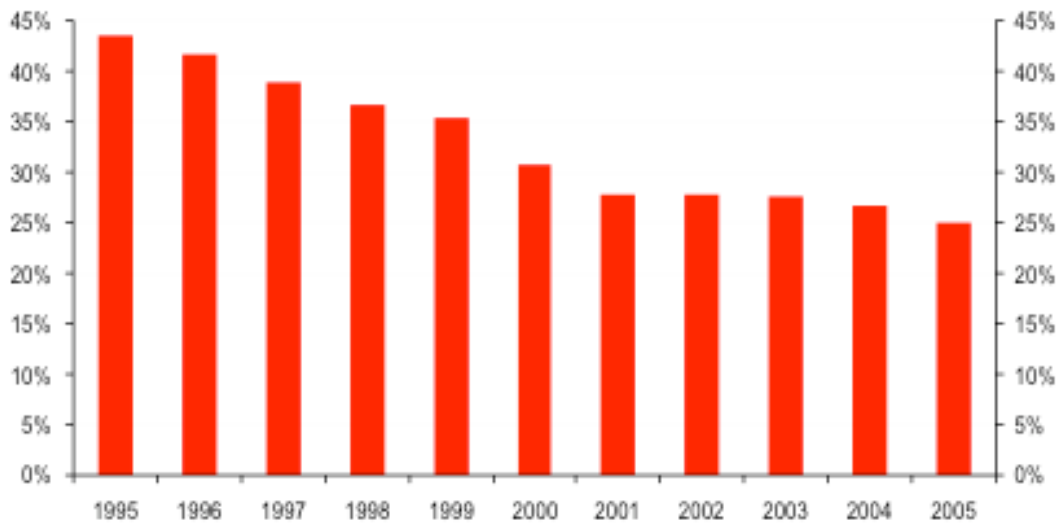
Employees who would like longer working hours\*



Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics. Question on full-timers is only available from 1996.  
\* Percentage of part-time employees who say they're working part-time because they could not find a full-time job, and full-time employees of working age who would like to work longer hours.

Table 1.11

Temporary employees who could not find a permanent job\*



Source: Labour Force Survey, National Statistics, spring quarters. \*Percentage of temporary employees who say they are working in a temporary job because they cannot find a permanent job

**Table 1.12****Usual hours worked: by sex and occupation,<sup>1</sup> 2004<sup>2</sup>**

United Kingdom	Percentages			
	Males		Females	
	Less than 16 hours	Over 45 hours	Less than 16 hours	Over 45 hours
Managers and senior officials	2	48	5	23
Professional	3	33	8	27
Associate professional and technical	3	27	7	9
Administrative and secretarial	5	10	11	3
Skilled trades	1	33	10	11
Personal service	10	15	14	7
Sales and customer service	19	13	26	2
Process, plant and machine operatives	1	39	7	10
Elementary	11	21	39	4
All occupations	4	32	15	10

*1 People aged 16 and over in employment. Time rounded to the nearest hour respondents worked on their main job.*

*2 At spring. Data are not seasonally adjusted and have been adjusted in line with population estimates published in spring 2003. See Appendix, Part 4: LFS reweighting.*

**Table 1.13****Households:<sup>1</sup> by size**

Great Britain	Percentages				
	1971	1981	1991	2001 <sup>2</sup>	2004 <sup>2</sup>
One person	18	22	27	29	29
Two people	32	32	34	35	35
Three people	19	17	16	16	16
Four people	17	18	16	14	14
Five people	8	7	5	5	5
Six or more people	6	4	2	2	2
All households (=100%) (millions)	18.6	20.2	22.4	23.8	24.1
Average household size (number of people)	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.4

*1 See Appendix, Part 2: Households.*

*2 At spring. See Appendix, Part 4: LFS reweighting.*

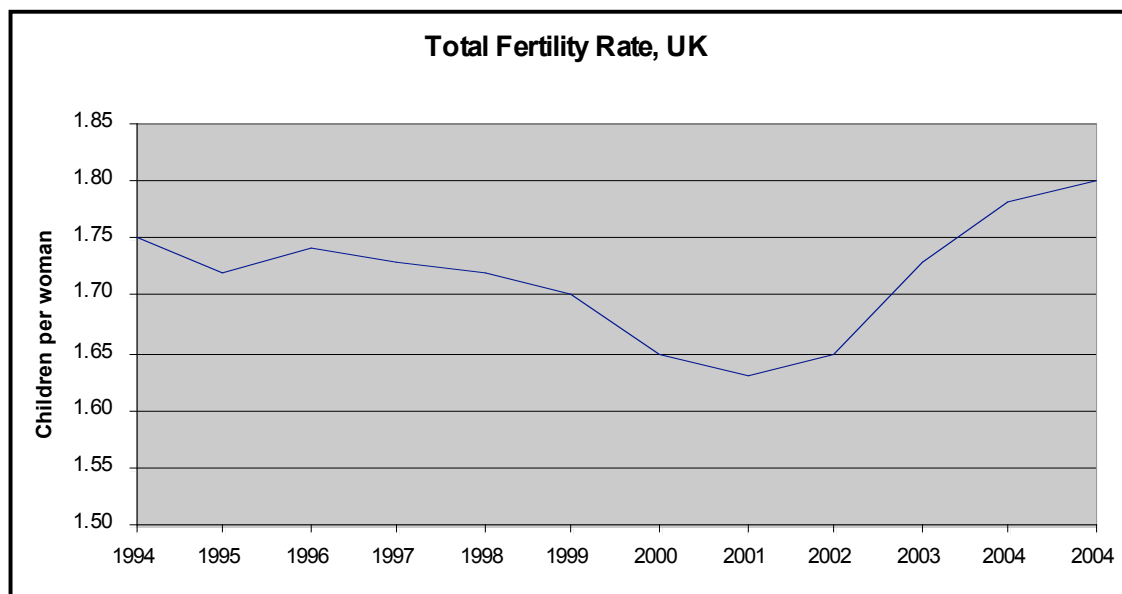
**Source: Census, Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics**

**Table 1.14**  
**Households:<sup>1</sup> by type of household and family**

	Percentages				
	1971	1981	1991	2001 <sup>2</sup>	2004 <sup>2</sup>
<b>One person</b>					
Under state pension age	6	8	11	14	14
Over state pension age	12	14	16	15	15
<b>One family households</b>					
Couple <sup>3</sup>					
No children	27	26	28	29	29
1–2 dependent children <sup>4</sup>	26	25	20	19	18
3 or more dependent children <sup>4</sup>	9	6	5	4	4
Non-dependent children only	8	8	8	6	6
Lone parent <sup>3</sup>					
Dependent children <sup>4</sup>	3	5	6	7	7
Non-dependent children only	4	4	4	3	3
<b>Two or more unrelated adults</b>	4	5	3	3	3
<b>Multi-family households</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>All households (=100%) (millions)</b>	18.6	20.2	22.4	23.8	24.1

Source: Office for National Statistics

**Table 1.15**



Source: Office for National Statistics

**Table 1.16**  
**Teenage conceptions:<sup>1</sup> by age at conception and outcome, 2002**

**England & Wales**

	Number of conceptions		Rates per 1,000 females <sup>2</sup>	
	Leading to maternities	Leading to abortions	Leading to maternities	Leading to abortions
Under 14	149	241	0.4	0.7
14	719	1,139	2.1	3.4
15	2,629	2,998	8.0	9.1
All aged under 16	3,497	4,378	3.5	4.4
16	7,283	6,192	22.4	19.1
17	12,162	8,439	37.3	25.9
18	16,314	9,596	51.6	30.3
19	19,084	10,162	61.1	32.5
All aged under 20	58,340	38,767	36.3	24.1

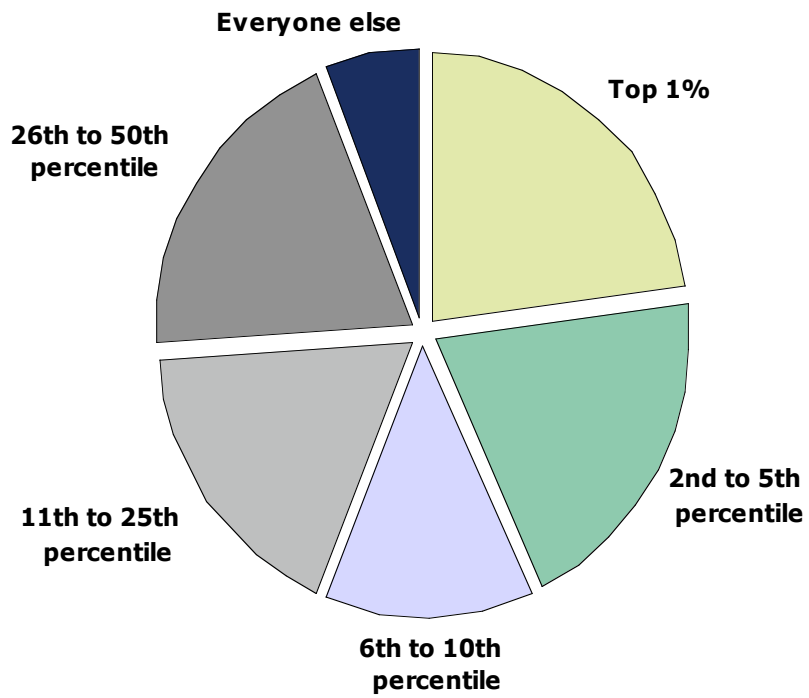
*1 See Appendix, Part 2: Conceptions.*

*2 Rates for females aged under 14, under 16 and under 20 are based on the population of females aged 13, 13–15, and 15–19 respectively.*

*Source> Office for National Statistics*

Figure 1.1: Source ESRC based on data from Social Trends, 2005

## Distribution of Wealth, UK 2002



## References

- Amicus (2006), *Good Work*, Bromley: Amicus
- Barnett, R.C. (1998), Towards a review and reconceptualization of the work/family literature *Genetic, Social and General Psychology Monographs*, 24 125-182
- Blundell, R. and Meghir, C. (2002), Active labour market policy vs employment tax credits: Lessons from recent UK reforms, Working Paper 2002:1, IFAU: Institute for Labour Market Policy Evaluation
- Brannen, J. and Moss, P. (1998), The polarization and intensification of parental employment in Britain: consequences for children families and the community, *Community Work and Family*, Vol. 1:3
- Burchell, B. J., D. Ladipo, and F. Wilkinson, Eds. (2001). [Job Insecurity and Work Intensification](#). London, Routledge.
- Burgess, A. (1998) *Fatherhood Reclaimed*, London: Vermillion
- Curry, C. and O'Connell, A. (2006), Gender and Poverty in Britain, Equal Opportunities Commission
- Department for Education and Skills (2005) Youth Cohort Study: The Activities and Experiences of 16 Year Olds: England and Wales 2004 London: DES
- Department for Work and Pensions, (2006), Households Below Average Income, 2004/5, London
- Department of Trade and Industry (2005), *How Have Employees Fared? Recent UK Trends*, Employment Relations Research Series No.56, London: DTI
- Devon, F., and Moss, P. (2002) 'Leave arrangements for parents: overview and future outlook' in *Community, Work and Family* 5 (3) 237-256
- Dickens, R and DT Ellwood (2001) "Whither poverty in Great Britain and the United States? The determinants of changing poverty and whether work will work", Working Paper 8253, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA
- DTI (2004) *Balancing Work and Family Life: Enhancing Choice and Support for Parents*, Norwich: HMSO
- Equal Opportunities Commission (2006), *Facts About Women and Men in Great Britain*, EOC
- Eurofound (2005), *Annual Review of Working Conditions in the EU: 2004-2005*
- [http://www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/reports/EU0502AR01/EU0502AR01\\_5.htm](http://www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/reports/EU0502AR01/EU0502AR01_5.htm)
- Fagani, J. Houriet-Ségard, G. and Bédouin, S. (2004) *Transitions Research Report #1, Context Mapping, for the EU Framework 5 funded study, "Gender, parenthood and the changing European Workplace"*, Manchester Metropolitan University: Research Institute for Health and Social Change
- Finch, N., *Family Policy in the UK* UK working paper for the project WELFARE POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILY CHANGE.
- <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/summs/welempfc.htm>
- Förster, M and Mira d'Ercole, M (2005), *Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries in the Second Half of the 1990s*, OECD, Employment and Migration Working Paper, No.22
- Gambles, R, Lewis, S. and Rapoport, R (2006). *The Myth of Work-Life Balance. The Challenge of our Time. Men, Women, and Societies.*: Wiley

- Green, F. (2002), Why Has Work Effort Become More Intense?, University of Kent Discussion Papers in Economics, Department of Economics, University of Kent
- Home Office (2005), Crime in England and Wales 2004/2005 London: ONS
- Layard, R. (2006), Happiness and public policy: A Challenge to the Profession, *The Economic Journal*, 116, March
- Lewis, S 2001 Restructuring workplace cultures: the ultimate work-family challenge? *Women in Management Review* 16, 1, 21-29
- Lewis, S and Cooper, C.L. (2006) 2005 Work – Life Integration. Case Studies of *Organisational Change*. Wiley
- Lewis, S Gambles, R and Rapoport, R The Constraints of a ‘Work-Life Balance’ Approach: An International Perspective (in press) *International Journal of Human Resource Management*
- Lindsay, C. and Macauley, C. (2004), Growth in self-employment in the UK: Further investigation into the causes of the increase in self-employment in the UK since 2002, in Labour Market Trends, Vol. 112, No.10, London: ONS
- Lyon, N. Barnes, M. and Sweiry, D. (2006) *Families with children in Britain: Findings from the 2004 Families and Children Study (FACS)*, DWP Research Report No. 340, Leeds: Corporate Document Services.
- Macauley, C. (2003), *Changes to self-employment in the UK 2002-2004*, in Labour Market Trends, Vol.111, No.12, London:ONS
- McDowell, L. (2005). Love, Money and Gender Divisions of Labour: some critical reflections on the welfare-to-work policies in the UK, *Journal of Economic Geography*, Vol. 5, Issue 3
- Moss, P (2003) Beyond caring: The case for reforming the childcare and early years workforce The Daycare Trust
- O’Brien, M. (2005) *Shared Caring: bringing fathers into the frame*, London: Equal Opportunities Commission, Working Paper Series No. 18
- Office for National Statistics, *2001 Census*, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/SearchRes.asp?term=2001+census&x=17&y=12>
- Office for National Statistics, *Trends in life expectancy by social class 1972 – 2001*, see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Product.asp?vlnk=8460>
- Office for National Statistics (2002), *Labour Market Trends Vol. 110*, No. 12, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2003), *Labour Market Trends Vol. 111*, No. 12, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2004a), *Labour Market Trends Vol. 112*, No. 10, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2004a), *Labour Market Trends Vol. 112*, No. 12, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2004b), *Mid-year population Estimates*, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2005a), *Social Trends 35*, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2005b), *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2005c) UK 2005: The Official Yearbook of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, London: ONS
- Office for National Statistics (2006), *Social Trends 36*, London: ONS
- Olsen, W. and Walby, S. (2004), *Modelling Gender Pay Gaps*, Equal Opportunities Commission
- Ruderman, M. N., Ohlott, P. J., Panzer, K., & King, S. N., (2002) Benefits of multiple roles for managerial women, *Academy of Management Journal*, 45, 369-386
- Smithson, J., Lewis, S. and Purcell, C. (2005), *National Report on Interview Study*, For for the EU Framework 5 funded study, “Gender, parenthood and the changing European Workplace”, Manchester Metropolitan University: Research Institute for Health and Social Change

- Sparks, K., C. Cooper, Y. Fried, and A. Shirom. (1997). “The Effects of Hours of Work on Health: A Meta-Analytic Review.” *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 70(Part 4): 391-408.
- Toynbee, P. (2003), *Hardwork: Life in Low-Pay Britain*, London: Bloomsbury
- TUC (2005) *Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, [http://www.tuc.org.uk/work\\_life/index.cfm?mins=475](http://www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/index.cfm?mins=475)
- Vogel, J. (2003), *The Labour Market*, *Social Indicators Research* 64: 349-372
- Work Foundation, *Healthy Work: Productive Workplaces*, [www.theworkfoundation.com](http://www.theworkfoundation.com)