



Dr Jackie Longworth

Chair at Fair Play South West, The Women's Equality Network

jackielongworth@blueyonder.co.uk

Introduction

Detailed analysis of ONS published data on pay and hours worked disaggregated by gender shows that when a woman experiences a 'gender pay gap' the extent will depend on her occupation, whether she works full or part-time, her age and where she lives (ONS, 2014; Longworth, forthcoming).

The gender pay gap is thus found to be a series of different gaps between the pay of women and men. They occur within occupations as well as between occupations, though occupational segregation has the bigger effect. The gaps tend to be higher both for higher paid occupations and at the higher pay end of pay distributions within occupations; the focus on median pay as the headline measure hides the latter effect, as shown, for example, by Figure 1.

Figure 1: Distribution of gross hourly pay in the UK



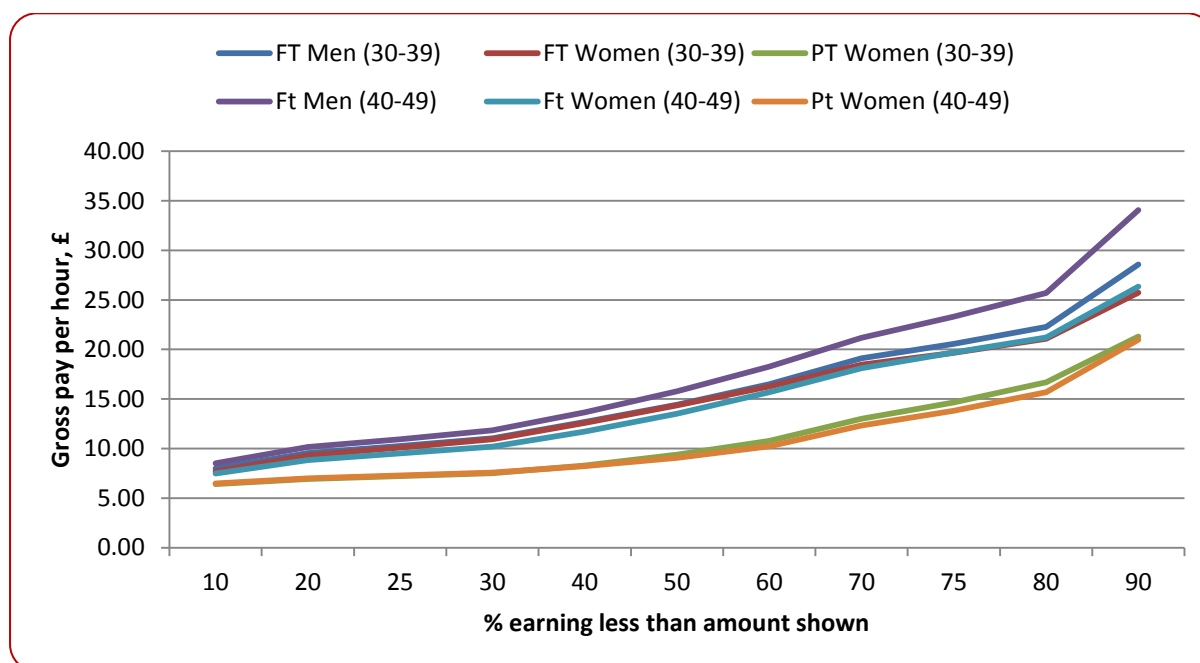
Source: ONS (2014)



The pay gaps for women working part-time are much higher than those for women working full-time when compared with full-time men. Women tend to move out of full-time employment in their 30s, some into part-time employment and some out of the labour market for a time.

Those moving into part-time work almost always do so into lower paid occupations. The number of women working full-time increases again in their 40s but there is evidence that they do so into the lower paid occupations which offer flexible working hours. The result is that the overall pay gaps for full-time women increase for the age range 40 to 49 years as summarised in Figure 2.

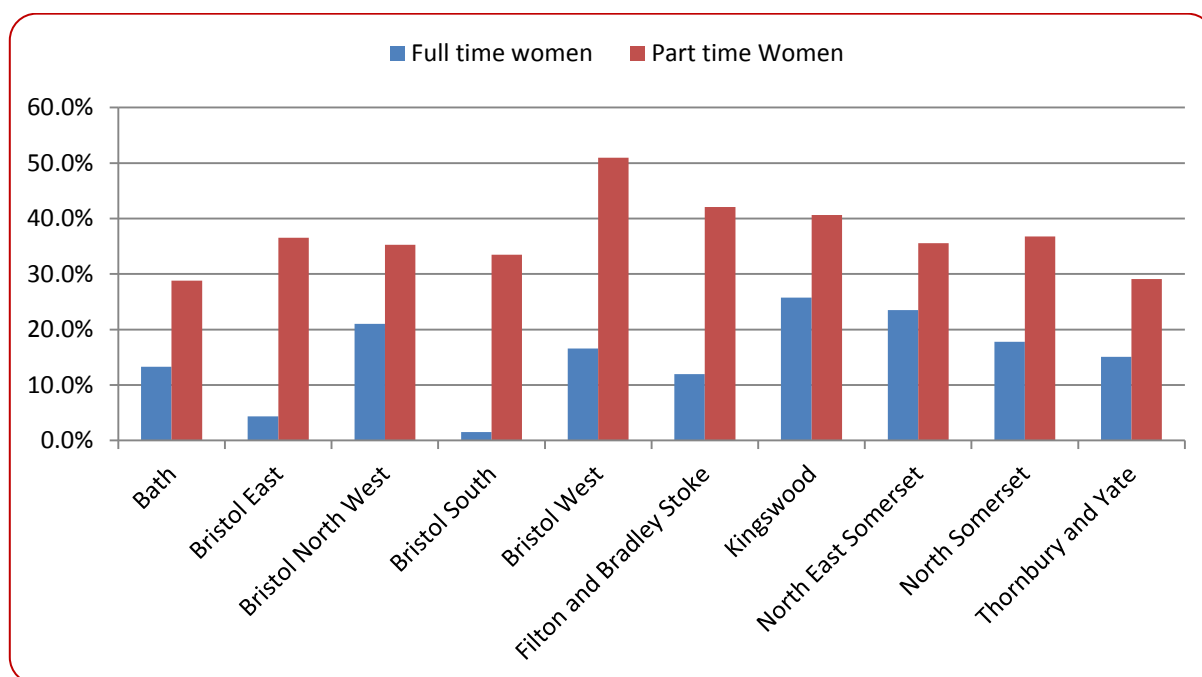
Figure 2: UK wide pay distributions between ages 30 years and 50 years



Source: ONS (2014)

The pay gaps for women living in the area covered by the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) are at the high end of the range across the south west region. More significantly they vary quite markedly between the constituencies within the area as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Median gross hourly pay gaps with full-time men in the West of England LEP area



Source: ONS (2014)

To understand the causes of pay gaps it is, therefore, necessary to understand both the factors which impact pay within occupations and those which cause women to move between occupations at certain times in their lives. It is also necessary to understand how where people live affects their choices. To do this, numerical data and statistics need to be supplemented with local qualitative information gathered from surveys and consultations with women and women's organisations. A range of women's organisations, including Fair Play South West¹, have collected this intelligence. Here some of these factors are examined, bringing together qualitative intelligence (Bennet and Daly, 2014; Fawcett Society, 2014, 2016; Gingerbread, 2014; Mumsnet, 2016; NCT, 2014; Stewart and Bivand, 2016; Women's Budget Group, 2015) and the quantitative analysis above. This article focuses on those factors which potentially affect local policy and action.

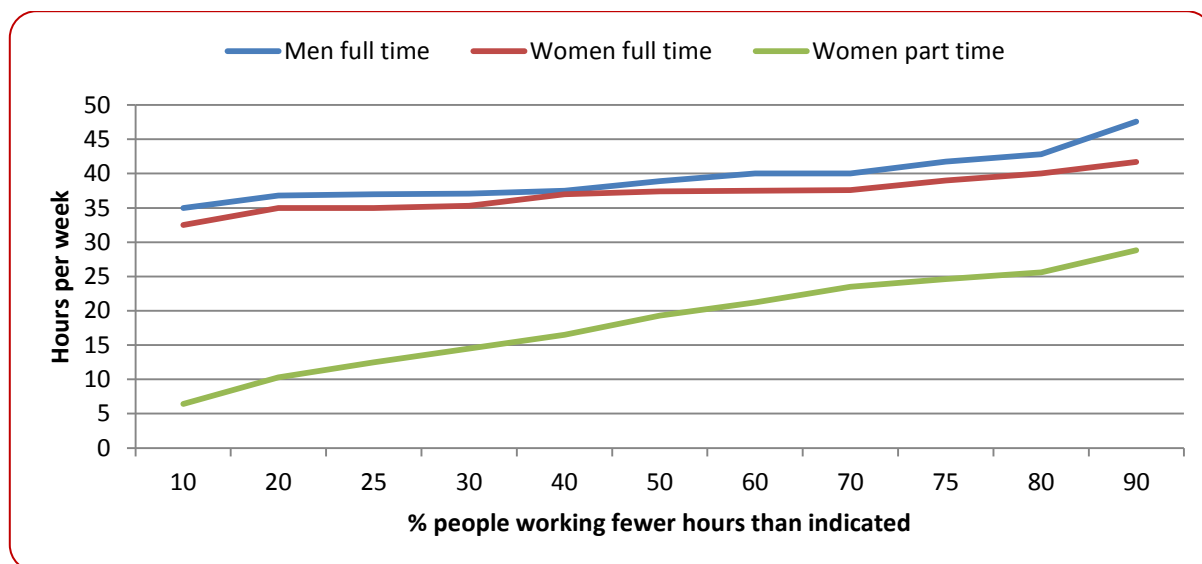
Inadequate flexible work options

It is well established that a significant proportion of care for young children, the elderly infirm and other vulnerable adults is provided unpaid by women who also need and/or want to have paid employment and careers. This inevitably means that women with caring responsibilities need employment to be within reasonable commuting time from home, school or childcare providers and that the hours worked can be chosen flexibly.

¹ Fair Play South West is the Women's Equality Network for the south west of England (www.fairplaysouthwest.org.uk). It gathers intelligence largely through running open events, and also surveying its members on responses to public consultations.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) defines full-time work as 30 hours or more per week and on that basis, in some occupations and/or at some ages, more than 50 per cent of women work part-time. Additionally, even those women working full-time on this definition tend to work fewer hours than is typical for full-time men because of this need for flexibility.

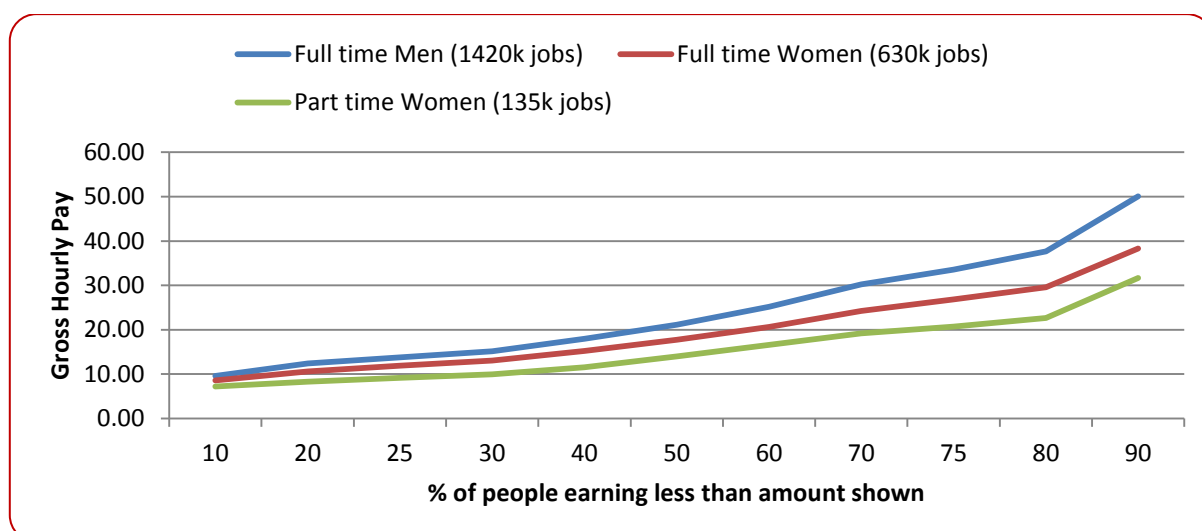
Figure 4: Hours worked per week, including paid overtime



Source: ONS (2014)

There is no doubt that people who are able to work fewer hours tend to earn less per hour than those able to work more hours and this applies within occupations (with few exceptions) as well as between them.

Figure 5: Distribution of pay for managers, directors and senior officials



Source: ONS (2014)

Much of the discrepancy between part-time and full-time pay rates results from discrimination and prejudice. There continues to be a view amongst managers and some peers that those who cannot put in the hours are less committed and less valuable than those who do. Indeed the term 'part-timer' is still often used in a derogatory way. Employers need to recognise and eliminate these biases and to advertise all jobs as available for flexible working at the same hourly rate regardless of hours worked.

The variation in availability of flexible working is starker between occupations, with higher paying occupations less likely to employ people on contracts with fewer hours. This means that when women become carers they find themselves not only having to reduce their hours of paid employment but also having to move to lower paid occupations in order to do it. Add to this their need to work locally and the uneven geographical distribution of the higher paid sectors and it is easy to see how many women end up in low paid jobs as they reach their 30s and 40s. The evidence is that their careers rarely recover even when they subsequently can return to full-time paid employment. The solution here is not only that all jobs should be advertised as available for flexible working but much greater consideration of women's needs should be given in planning and transport policy-making and implementation. Women have less access to private transport than do men and are less able to undertake long commutes involving multiple journeys (for example, via childcare or school drop-off) on public transport not designed with them in mind.

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The childcare conundrum

Many women would like to work more hours but are unable to access adequate childcare arrangements. To be 'adequate' childcare needs to be of high quality, conveniently located and affordable. The extension of the right to 'free' childcare for 30 hours a week for some children will be welcomed when it is rolled out from September 2016. However, the following points emerge from voluntary sector consultations with women and childcare providers:

- 1) 'Free' childcare is frequently not free because providers find the sum they receive from local authorities does not cover costs fully. This is partly because some authorities cream off some of what they receive for childcare before passing it on to providers. It is also the case that the basic subsidy from government is meagre and would not cover decent pay for childcare workers. The result is that some providers charge a top-up fee for 'free' places and others charge higher fees to those who

don't qualify for free childcare. Realistically 'free' childcare should be re-labelled 'subsidised'.

- 2) The response of some providers to low fees is to cease contracting with local authorities altogether. It is clear that at 15 hours per week the demand for places already outstrips supply and there is no clear mechanism for ensuring that an increased demand can be met. Local authorities are given a role in making sure provision is adequate but not the funding to do it and with further expected cuts in government grants this is set to worsen. The result is that many women cannot find local childcare even if they could afford it. This is a consequence of funding demand rather than supply.
- 3) The hours of childcare available, whether subsidised or not, are not usually enough to enable women to move into full-time work because they don't allow for travelling time. Given the poor availability of flexible working options in higher paid jobs this means that many women are stuck in low paid work even with subsidised childcare. With the current approach increasing funding for childcare is not going to make much impact on gender pay gaps.
- 4) Many women worry that the quality of available childcare is not as good as they would wish for their children. This is not surprising given the very poor pay of childcare workers which leads to high turnover and inexperienced workers. Providers thus face a conundrum; if they pay a decent wage they have to charge higher fees, which are unaffordable for many women.

Whilst many of these issues require action by national government there is much that employers and local authorities could do in the meantime. For example, employers could

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subsidise childcare provision close to workplaces, enabling women to travel further to work if necessary to access higher paid work, which could be useful in terms of recruitment and retention. Local authorities could encourage more schools to offer extended hours childcare at reasonable cost.

Inadequate advice and guidance on career and study options

ONS (2014) data confirm that women and men choose different study topics and occupations throughout their lives, and that these choices lead to women being in lower paid jobs. For example, very few women chose engineering as an occupation, though a growing number are choosing other Science, Technical, Engineering and Maths (STEM)

subjects. The drop-out rate from working as an engineer is also higher for women than it is for men. This is one of the highest paying professions for full-time men.

There are many theories on why women make these choices, including the beliefs that such higher paid jobs are 'men's work', that they cannot be combined with caring responsibilities and that they are physical and non-creative (Engineering UK, 2011; IPPR, 2014; WISE, 2015; Papafilippou and Bentley, 2016). There is an important role for advice and guidance providers in countering some of these beliefs, but our consultations suggest that young people nowadays receive almost no careers advice and what there is, to a large extent, reinforces prejudices rather than opening up options. The role of making provision for advice and guidance has been delegated to schools; some of them commission outside experts but many expect teachers to fit it into their busy schedule with almost no support or training. It is also believed that many schools value the A-level/university route more than vocational education and steer their pupils accordingly.

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The support for providers of advice and guidance should include adequate labour market information including potential earnings and employer demand for skills. Employers, too, have a role to play in ensuring that their workplace culture and practices match their claims to be equal opportunities employers; for example, our consultations reveal that many women leave well paid jobs because "I don't want to have to behave like that to get on".

Public Transport not meeting women's needs

Some 30 per cent of women have no access to a car particularly during the working day because either they cannot afford one or the family car is used by their partner for work². Except in London, public transport systems tend to be designed on a 'hub and spoke' model focused on the centres of conurbations. This means that a journey to work via school or childcare drop-off might involve several changes and a long commuting time. Combine this with the fact that high paid jobs are unevenly distributed and it is not surprising that many women seeking work choose a more local, lower paid, job.

Planners, transport authorities and developers need to consider the differing needs of women and men when deciding how to distribute residential and employment space and to ensure that public transport opens up the connections between them.

² For example, see <http://www.poverty.org.uk/75/index.shtml> and <https://citizensandmobility.wordpress.com/european-policy/buses-are-female-cars-are-male/>

Poor recruitment, personal development and promotion practices

The effect of increasing pay gaps with age is exacerbated by the trend for men's pay to increase faster up pay scales than women's whether they are full or part-time and even within occupations. This may be partly another result of having to work flexibly but there is evidence that it is also a result of both unconscious bias (e.g. Prospect, 2015) and discriminatory practices (EHRC, 2009) in recruitment, personal development schemes and selection for promotion.

Some employers have developed good practice in their internal processes to eliminate unconscious bias and recognise the value of different types of contribution to the business or service. However, many have not. Promotion and recruitment processes often rely on the opinions of line managers who have not been trained on how to avoid bias. Traits such as command and control are rewarded whereas cooperation and teamwork are not. Some employers are still not removing personal information from selection applications and interviewees report³ that some are still asking inappropriate questions in interviews. Some appraisal schemes are used to determine pay rises but do not consider personal development. Guidance for employers on how to avoid these and other biases exists (Acas, 2006) but is not well disseminated and implemented. Employers should be encouraged to adopt best practice in their processes.

Multiple disadvantage

Women from BME communities are particularly disadvantaged in accessing well paid employment. The issues above are part of the problem but many women are also disadvantaged by poor language capabilities. Access to English language courses for women whose first language is not English should be improved (Fair Play South West, 2014).

Concluding remarks

The gender pay gap is both a cause and a symptom of women's inequality in the UK economy. It causes inequality when it is due to outright illegal discrimination such that women are being paid less for work of equal economic value. It also causes inequality by creating poverty and limiting women's access to goods and services for themselves and those they care for. It is a symptom of the fact that women are segregated into lower paid jobs despite having similar (or better) qualifications than men. These problems vary by location.

³ <http://home.bt.com/news/features/9-shocking-and-illegal-questions-graduates-have-actually-been-asked-in-job-interviews-11363978250953>

Local employers and public authorities could make a big difference to reducing the pay gap by adopting appropriate strategies in planning, transport and service provision that take the different needs of women into account. Indeed public authorities have a legal duty to do so.

About the author

Dr Jackie Longworth, MBE, is Chair at Fair Play South West, The Women's Equality Network and Vice President at Women's Engineering Society. Jackie is also a member of CESR's Advisory Board.

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