

Moving to Inclusion

Focus on...Gender

A statistical examination of economic
exclusion in the South West of England

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OVERVIEW

- Just over half of the South West's 5.178 million residents are female. The share of women in the population rises at ages 70 and over (Figure 1).
- The main difference in highest qualifications by gender is in the attainment of intermediate level qualifications where men are more likely to have reached Level 3 (or equivalent) than women and women are more likely to have remained at Level 2 (Figure 2).
- A quarter of families with children in the South West are headed by a lone parent (Section 2.4)
- Women will account for almost two-thirds of the increase in the size of the working age population between 2007 and 2013. This is mainly due to changes in the law that will delay the state pension age for women in order to bring it in line with that of men (Table 4).
- At 6% the gender employment gap in the South West is smaller than that for other equality strands. While the gender employment gap closed significantly and steadily in the UK between 1971 and 1993, progress thereafter has been modest and since 2004 has been statistically insignificant.
- The median full-time hourly wage for women in the South West is £2 less than that for men (Table 6).
- Women are less likely to be employed in managerial and professional occupations (Section 3.4), are considerably more likely to work part time (Section 3.4) and more likely to take part in work-related training than men.
- Men and women have similar rates of unemployment although women recorded a larger percentage point increase in their unemployment rate over the year to January to March 2009 than men (Section 4.2).
- Almost 10% of both men and women in the South West are claiming out-of-work benefits but for different reasons (Section 4.3).
- Women are more likely to be economically inactive than men and have different reasons for being so (Table 8).
- The proportion of the employed ethnic minority workforce working in professional and managerial occupations (27%) or working part time (also 27%) is not statistically different to Whites (28%, and 30%) or to ethnic minorities nationally (28%, and 24%). On these blunt measures of job quality at least, there is little evidence to suggest that ethnic minority workers as a whole have poorer labour market outcomes than White workers.
- Almost one-fifth (19%) of part-time workers from an ethnic minority group in the UK are doing so because they could not find full-time work, compared to

9% of White part-time workers. The comparable figures for the South West are 17% and 8%.

- At 27% the percentage of employed ethnic minorities in the UK taking part in job-related training in the last 13 weeks is identical to the rate for the White employed population.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this report

This report is part of a suite of thematic statistical briefings that individually and collectively present a portrait of economic disadvantage in the South West through the lenses of gender, age, disability and ethnicity. The work updates and extends the quantitative element of the 2003 *Moving Towards Inclusion* report and shares the aims and intended audience of its predecessor, that is to “offer as comprehensive a picture as possible of current levels of disadvantage amongst the population of the South West” with the principal aim of ensuring that ESF activity is informed by robust and accessible evidence.

Whilst those involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ESF programmes remain key audiences for this report, it is also hoped that the focus on equality strands and indicators that provide a regional and sub-regional perspective on the work and education equality domains identified in the 2007 Equalities Review will provide a foundation for further work in this emerging area, by quantifying the scale and nature of inequality in the South West as manifested in differences in labour market performance.

1.2 Scope and focus

The 2003 *Moving Towards Inclusion* report provided rich descriptions of the barriers many individuals face to social inclusion. It provided a short history of the social inclusion policy agenda and described some of the problems in defining and researching what it means, or feels like to be excluded. The conceptualizations, barriers and policy issues identified in the 2003 report remain as valid today as they were six years ago and therefore the previous report is commended to those who wish to explore these issues in more detail.

This report, rather, has a quantitative emphasis and its scope and focus is informed to a large extent by the equality strands and domains that make up the Equality Measurement Framework (EMF). The report focuses on the gender, age, disability and ethnicity domains of the EMF. Faith & religion is not included because of the dearth of reliable published labour market data at the regional level – although the Labour Force Survey does collect some information. There is very little information available even at the national level about individuals’ sexual orientation and how this impacts on the extent and nature of labour market participation. Where data allows, attention within these strands has also been paid to more narrowly defined ESF priority groups, with sections on lone parents, older workers and young people at risk

of exclusion as well as black and minority ethnic groups, and people with a disability. The gender section and age section also include an examination of those who do not have Level 2 qualifications.

Given the intended ESF applicability of this report, the focus is solely on the employment and, to a lesser extent, education experiences and outcomes of the working age population, as opposed to the broader dimensions of exclusion and inequity that may impact at younger and older ages. Very broadly therefore the analysis is confined to the productive and valued activities, and education domains of the EMF. Furthermore, data limitations mean it is possible to provide only partial coverage of these two domains due to a lack of regional data. A project setting out the national indicators that will underpin the EMF has yet to set out its prescription, but provisional 'spotlight' national indicators for the productive and value activities domain are: the employment rate, risk of low earnings and the pay gap, horizontal occupational segregation, discrimination in employment and unpaid care and free time. Of these, only the employment rate, the pay gap and the share of managers and professionals in the employed workforce (a measure of horizontal occupational segregation) are readily available from NOMIS. Our analysis supplements these three indicators with indicators of part-time working, job-relating training, unemployment and receipt of out-of-work benefits, economic inactivity and highest qualification.

1.3 Analytical approach

The two issues – exclusion and equity – are explored together within the framework. This is done by describing for each indicator, firstly the rate or level (for example, of the employment rate) *across* equality strands, and secondly, the difference – or gap – in 'performance' on each measures *within* an equality stand. This approach is particularly helpful when making comparisons over time and determining whether an improvement, for example in the employment rate in absolute terms from say 70% to 75%, is accompanied by a narrowing of the 'gap' in employment rates of the 'best' and 'worst' performing groups.

The reliability of labour market data for equality strands at the sub-national and especially the sub-regional level is a serious impediment to drawing firm conclusions about the scale of disadvantage or inequity at the local level. This is because the information used to measure progress against many indicators comes from surveys as opposed to the Census or administrative sources. This means that the estimates – and they are only that – are subject to a margin of error. In conventional statistical terminology this is called a 'confidence interval' and refers to the range of values which includes the unknown 'true' value at any given level of confidence. Usually this is 95%, and means that if the survey was repeated 100 times, the survey estimate would lie within the confidence interval 95 times. Confidence intervals, therefore,

summarize the variability in survey estimates and are important when comparing estimates over time, or between localities or within and across equality strands. Technically speaking, if two confidence intervals overlap, then the difference between the two is not statistically significant. This report contains published confidence intervals to illustrate – for the first time – how the variability of survey estimates restricts what conclusions can be drawn from the data.

2. POPULATION

2.1 Introduction

In this section:

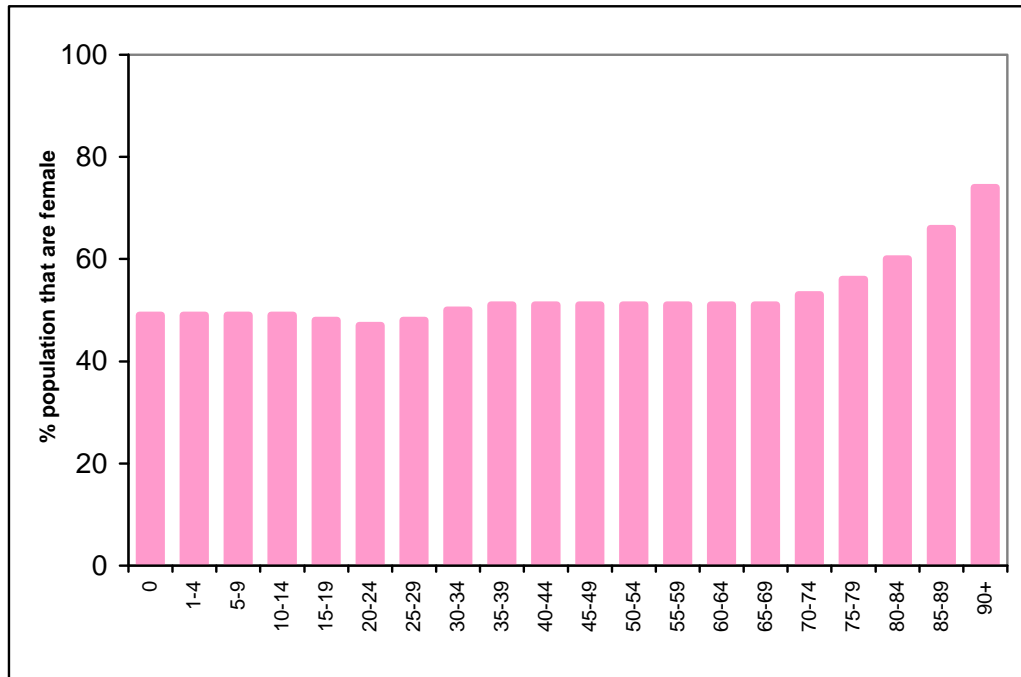
- Age and gender;
- Highest qualification;
- Lone parents;
- Population projections.

2.2 Gender and age

According to Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates¹, there were 5.178 million people living in the South West in 2007 of whom 51% were female. Women account for slightly less than half of the population under 30 but outnumber men thereafter, particularly within the older age groups. Women account for 60% of South West residents aged 80 to 84 and almost three-quarters of residents aged 90 and over. 47% of the working age population are women (Figure 1).

¹ Available from <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15106>

Figure 1: Percentage of the resident population that are female, South West, 2007

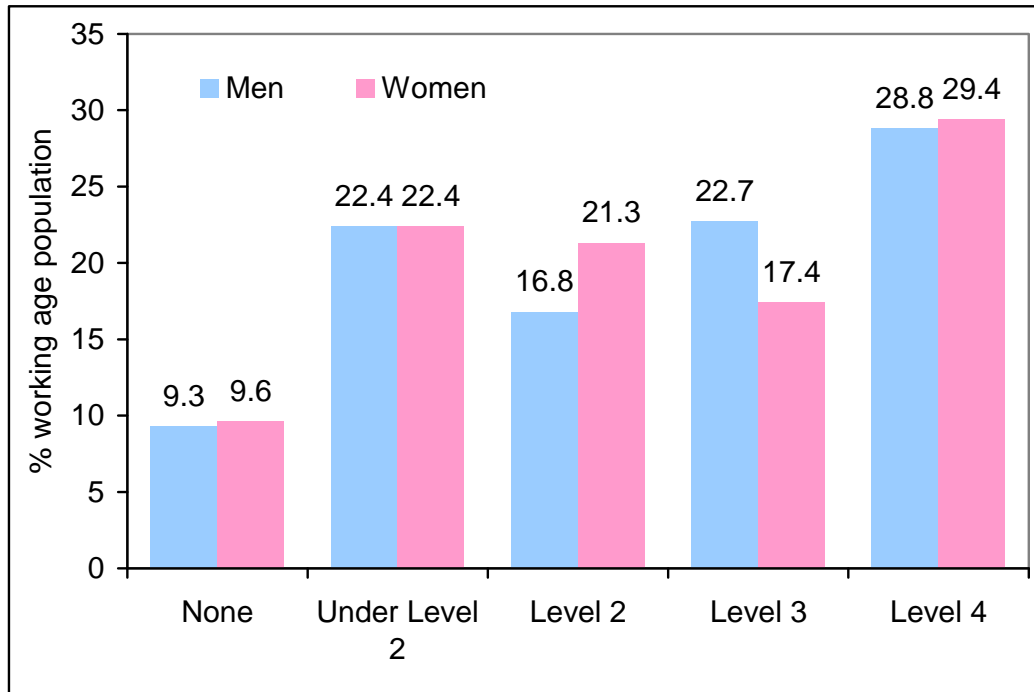


Source: ONS mid-year population estimate

2.3 Gender and highest qualification

Similar proportions of men and women do not have qualifications, are qualified to NVQ Level 1 or have other qualifications ('Under Level 2') or have a degree level qualification or equivalent (Level 4). The main difference by gender is in the attainment of intermediate level qualifications where men are more likely to have reached Level 3 (or equivalent) than women and women are more likely to have remained at Level 2 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Highest qualification by gender, January to December 2007, South West



Source: Annual Population Survey (NOMIS)

2.4 Lone parents

According to the ONS (2007), whilst dated, the census remains “the best source [of statistics] for geographical analysis of the family”. Depending on the nature of the variables involved statistics are available for households and families. In the South West in 2001, there were 167,394 lone parent households, and 188,717 lone parent families. Lone parents accounted for a slightly higher percentage of families (13%, rising to 25% of families with children) than households (8%)². Almost two-thirds (68%) of lone parents have at least one dependent child. This includes children aged under 16 and youths aged 16 to 18 in full-time education (who are living at home). As it is this group that tends to be the focus for government policy, the remainder of this section will also concentrate on the characteristics of lone parents with dependent children.

2.4.1 Age and gender

Nine-out-of-ten lone parents with dependent children are women and, contrary to popular perception, the majority (61%) are aged over 35. Less than one-in-ten lone parents with dependent children are aged under 25 – the same proportion that are aged 50 and over.

² The percentage of lone parent households in the South West is one percentage point higher than average for England and Wales.

Table 1: Age of Household Reference Person by age group, South West

	Dependent children	Non-dependent children	All ages
Under 25	9	0	6
25 to 34	30	0	21
35 to 49	52	18	41
50 and over	9	82	32
All lone parent families (=100)	127,422	61,295	188,717

Source: 2001 Census

2.4.2 *Ethnic origin*

The vast majority (97%) of lone parent households with dependent children are headed by someone of 'white' ethnic origin. This is broadly the same percentage as for all households (98%). The percentage of lone parent households varies considerably by ethnic origin: it is highest for households headed by someone of Black (13%)³ or Mixed (13%)⁴ ethnic origin and lowest for Asian, Chinese and White households (all 5%).

2.4.3 *Religion*

Two-thirds (65%) of lone parent households are Christian households, with the majority of the remainder (26%) with no religion. Lone parent households are therefore slightly less likely than all households to be Christian (the average for all households is 75%). The percentage of households that are lone parent households varies from 3% for Hindu households to 10% for 'other' religious households (the average for all households being 5%). Religions with higher than average percentages of lone parent households are: Buddhist (8%), Muslim (7%), Sikh (6%) and households that did not specify a religion⁵ (6%). Jewish households had a slightly lower percentage of lone parent households than average (4%) and Christian households (being the largest group) had a rate equivalent to all households.

2.4.4 *Marital Status*

Most (59%) of lone parents are divorced or separated although this proportion varies considerably by age (Table 2): from three-quarters (75%) of lone parents aged between 35 and 49 to one-in-twelve (8%) of under 25 year olds. The vast majority of young lone parents (91%) have never married.

³ In particular, Black or Black British 'other' (18%). This group excludes Black Caribbean and Black African.

⁴ In particular, White and Black Caribbean households (21%).

⁵ The question on religion was the only question in the 2001 Census that was voluntary.

Table 2: Marital status of lone parents of dependent children by age of parent, South West, 2001

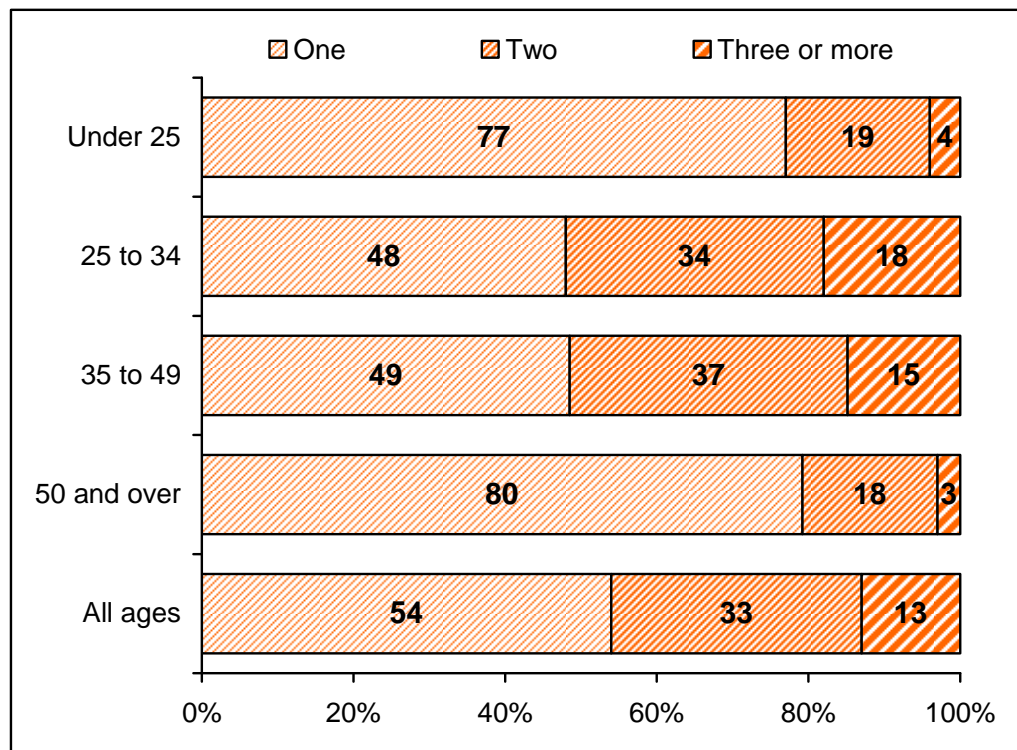
	Under 25	25 to 34	35 to 49	50 and over	All
Single (never married)	91	52	17	7	34
Married or remarried	1	2	3	5	3
Separated or divorced	8	44	75	66	59
Widowed	0	1	5	23	5
All lone parent families (=100)	11,811	38,682	65,951	10,978	127,422

Source: 2001 Census

2.4.5 Size of family and age of youngest child

As might be expected, the number and age of dependent children varies according to the age of the lone parent, with younger parents tending to have fewer, and younger, children than older single parents (Figure 3 and Figure 4). The majority (92%) of lone parents aged under 26 have at least one child aged under five with most (70%) having just one (aged under five).

Figure 3: Number of dependent children by age of lone parent, South West, 2001



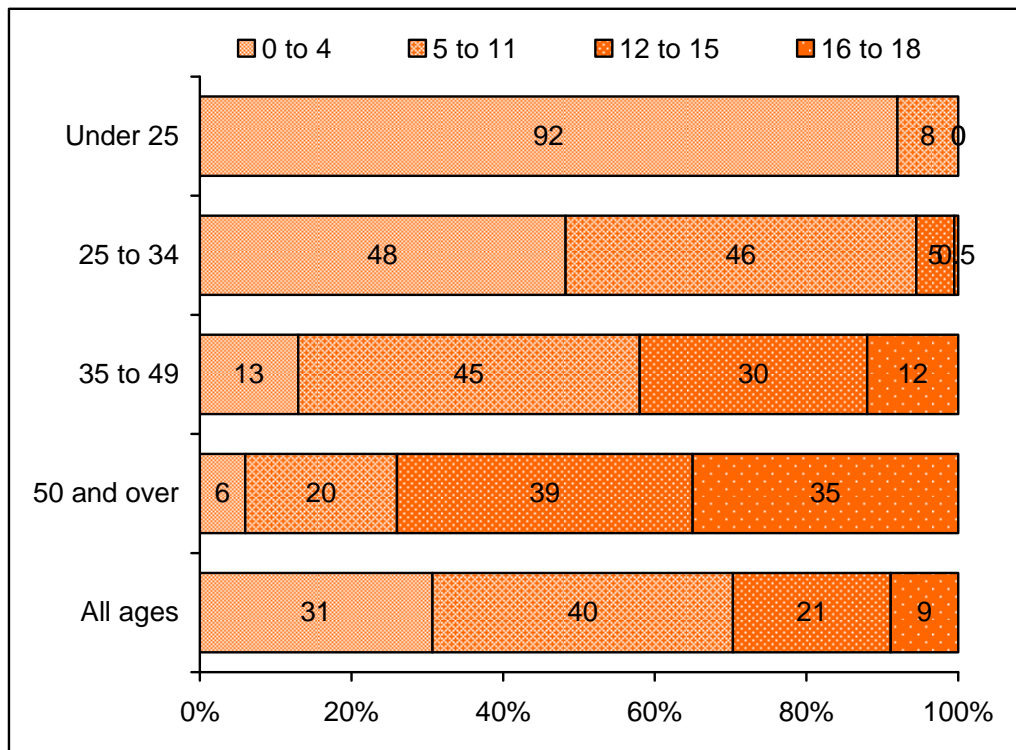
Source: 2001 Census

Lone parent families headed by men or women aged 25 to 34 tend to be reasonably well distributed in terms of family size (Figure 3) but the vast majority have at least one child of primary school age (aged between five and 11). The most common combinations of family size and age of youngest child are: one child aged under five (20%), two children of which at least one is aged under five (17%), one child aged between five and seven (13%) and three or more children with at least one aged under five (11%).

Lone parents aged 35 to 49 have families of a similar size to those aged 25 to 34 (that is, around half have one child, and around one third have two) although few (less than one-in-seven) have children of pre-school age (under five). Parents of this age are more broadly distributed across family sizes and ages than any other age group with the largest percentages having: one child aged between 12 and 15 (18%); two children with the youngest aged between 12 and 15 (11%) and one child aged between 16 and 18 (11%).

The majority (80%) of lone parents aged 50 and over with dependent children have only one child (living at home): one-third (33%) have one (dependent) child aged 16 to 18; and 30% have one child aged between 12 and 15 years.

Figure 4: Age of youngest dependent child by age of lone parent, South West, 2001



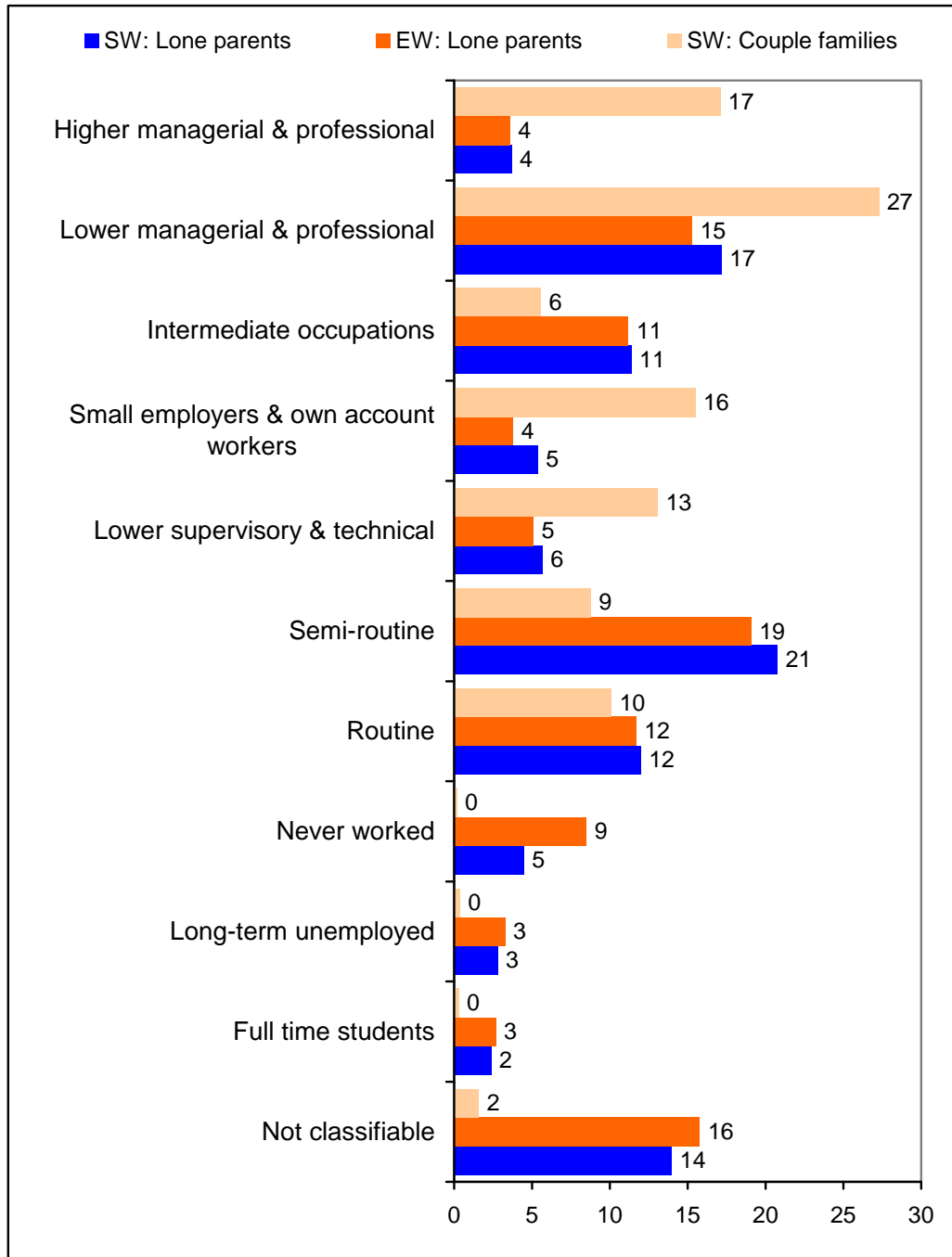
Source: 2001 Census

2.4.6 ***Socio-economic class***

Most (61%) lone parent households in the South West are concentrated in four socio-economic groups: semi-routine, and routine occupations (33%, combined), lower managerial and professional occupations (17%) and intermediate occupations (11%), and are similarly distributed to lone parent households nationally (Figure 5)⁶.

⁶ Although they are, perhaps most notably, less likely than households nationally to have never worked.

Figure 5: NS-SEC⁷ of Household Reference Person by Household Composition, South West (SW) and England & Wales (EW), 2001



Source: 2001 Census

The distribution of lone parents across socio-economic groups contrasts starkly with that of couple parents who tend to be more heavily concentrated in managerial and professional occupations (44%) and self-employment (16%).

⁷ National Statistics – Social Economic Classification

2.5 Population projections

From 2010 the state pension age for women will increase gradually to 65, to equal that of men by 2020. This will marginally increase the percentage of women in the working age population, particularly between the ages of 50 to 65, during this period and reduce their share of residents of state pension age (Table 3).

Table 3: 2004-based population projections by broad age and gender, South West, 2007 to 2013

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2007-2013	
								Level	%
Children (0-15)	920.2	920.3	922.7	926.4	931.3	937.5	942.9	22.7	2.5
Male	471.3	471.2	472.4	474.2	476.7	479.7	482.4	11.1	2.4
Female	448.9	449.1	450.3	452.2	454.6	457.7	460.5	11.6	2.6
	49	49	49	49	49	49	49		
Working age	3103.4	3125.6	3147.5	3174.4	3212.4	3241.9	3274	170.6	5.5
Male	1634.6	1650.3	1664	1676.3	1687.8	1691.4	1697.6	63	3.9
Female	1468.8	1475.3	1483.6	1498.1	1524.6	1550.5	1576.4	107.6	7.3
	47	47	47	47	47	48	48		
State Pension age	1144.6	1171.6	1197	1216.9	1224.7	1239.4	1251.7	107.1	9.4
Male	423.8	435.5	448.3	461.8	475.5	496.2	514.4	90.6	21.4
Female	720.9	736.1	748.7	755.1	749.2	743.1	737.3	16.4	2.3
	63	63	63	62	61	60	59		
TOTAL POULATION	5168.2	5217.4	5267.3	5317.7	5368.4	5418.7	5468.6	300.4	5.8
MALE	2529.6	2557	2584.6	2612.3	2640	2667.4	2694.4	164.8	6.5
FEMALE	2638.6	2660.4	2682.7	2705.4	2728.3	2751.3	2774.2	135.6	5.1
	51	51	51	51	51	51	51		

Source: ONS

3. EMPLOYMENT AND JOB QUALITY

3.1 Introduction

In this section:

- UK employment trends;
- South West employment gap;
- Job quality.

3.2 UK employment trends

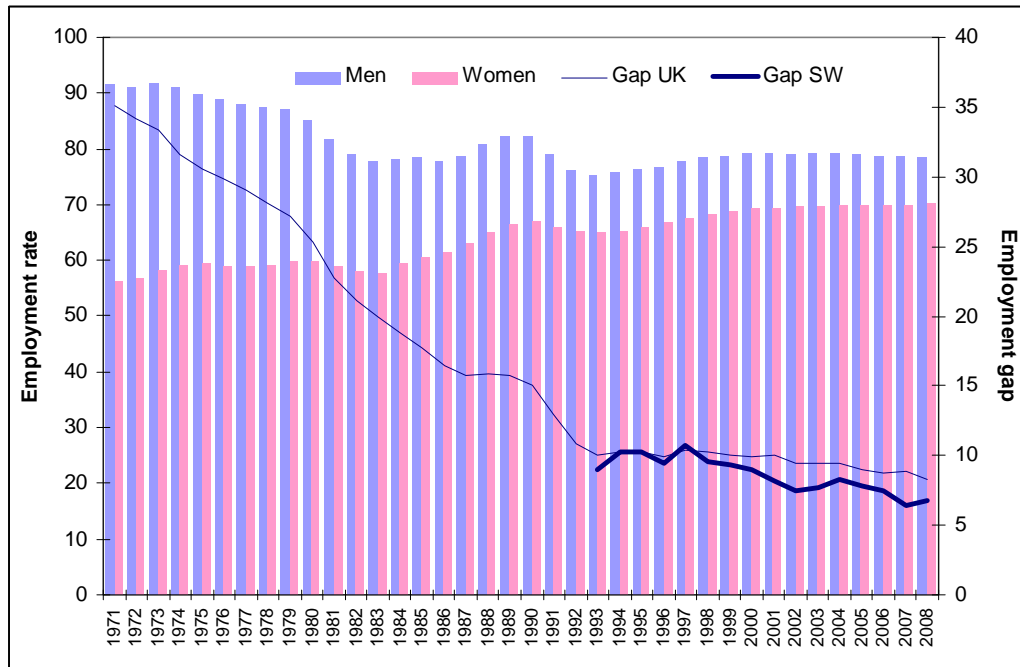
3.2.1 Gender

Increased employment opportunities for women have been a major feature of social and economic life over the past generation⁸. In 1971, only about half of women of working age in the UK had a job (56%) compared to over 90% of men. Almost forty years later, the employment rate of women has increased to 70% although that for men has decreased to 77%. As Figure 6 shows, the most substantial of these changes occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, although the rates have continued to converge albeit slowly since the early 1990s.

The gender employment gap – the difference in the employment rates of men and women – has decreased from 34 percentage points in 1971 to seven percentage points in 2009.

⁸ Berthoud, R. and Blekesaune, M. (2007) Persistent employment disadvantage, DWP Research Report No. 416, Leeds: Corporate Document Services

Figure 6: Employment gap by gender, UK, 1971 to 2008



Source: Labour Force Survey accessed via <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/TSDdownload1.asp>

3.2.2 Lone parents

The picture is more complicated, however, when family structures are introduced into the analysis. Research commissioned for the Equalities Review⁹ claims that ‘it is not women so much as mothers who are disadvantaged’. This is because whilst men’s employment rates (nationally) are not very sensitive to fatherhood, women’s rates are very sensitive to motherhood (Table 4). It concludes, therefore, that women’s ‘disadvantage’ relative to men’s in terms of participation in paid work, “is not just a gender issue; nor is it just a family issue. It is a gender-and-family issue”.

Figure 6 clearly illustrates two broad trends: the steady expansion in female participation in work - contrasting with falling participation of men - during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s; and the marginal increase in both thereafter. Most of the erosion in the employment gap between men and women occurred before the 1990s recession and there has been little change since then. The employment gap between men and women is only slightly affected by other observed differences in characteristics¹⁰.

⁹ Berthoud, R. and Blekesaune, M. (2007), Persistent Employment Disadvantage. Report for the Equalities Review.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Table 4: Employment rate and penalties by family status, Great Britain, 2000-2003

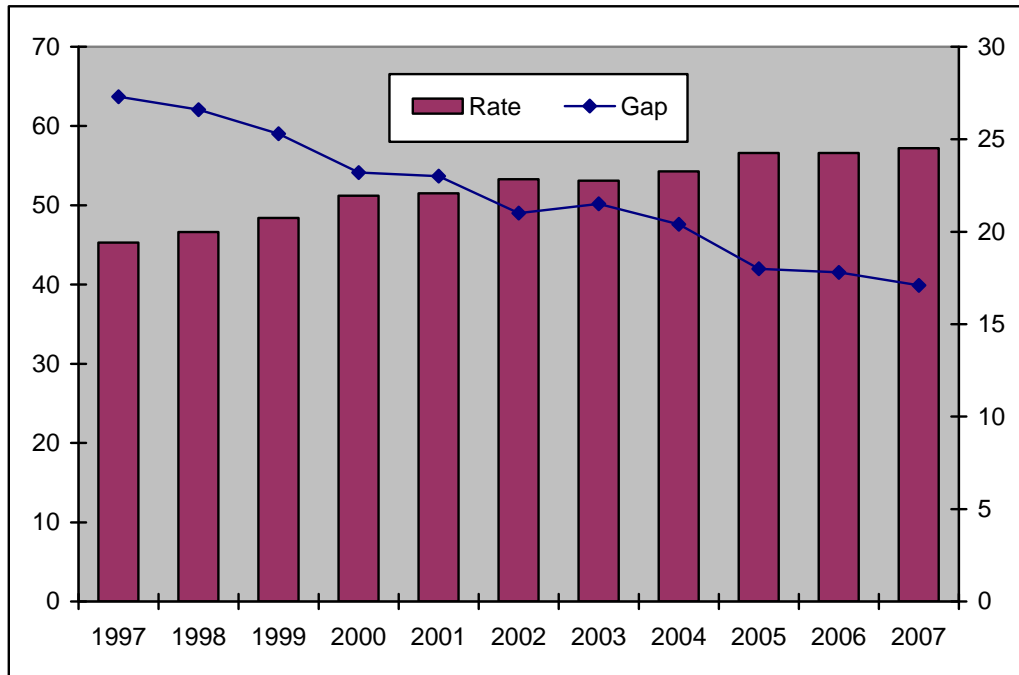
	Employment rate, %	Employment penalty
Partnered man	89	0
Singe man	78	13
Single woman, no children	76	14
Partnered woman, no children	70	18
Partnered women with children 11 plus	70	25
Lone parent with children 11 plus	65	29
Partnered woman with children under 11	54	45
Lone parent with children under 11	45	49

Source: Berthoud and Blekesaune (2007)¹¹

Thus, although partnered women are somewhat disadvantaged with respect to partnered men, single women are not disadvantaged with respect to single men – as long as children are left out of the equation. In 2007, 57% of lone parents in Great Britain were in work, up from 45% ten years earlier.

¹¹ Berthoud, R. and Blekesaune, M. (2007), Persistent Employment Disadvantage. Report for the Equalities Review.

Figure 7: Lone Parent¹ Employment rate and employment rate gap, Great Britain, 1997 to 2007



¹ Lone parents of working age with dependent children aged 0-18 years

Source: Labour Force Survey quoted in *Opportunity for All*
 (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/opportunityforall2007.pdf>)

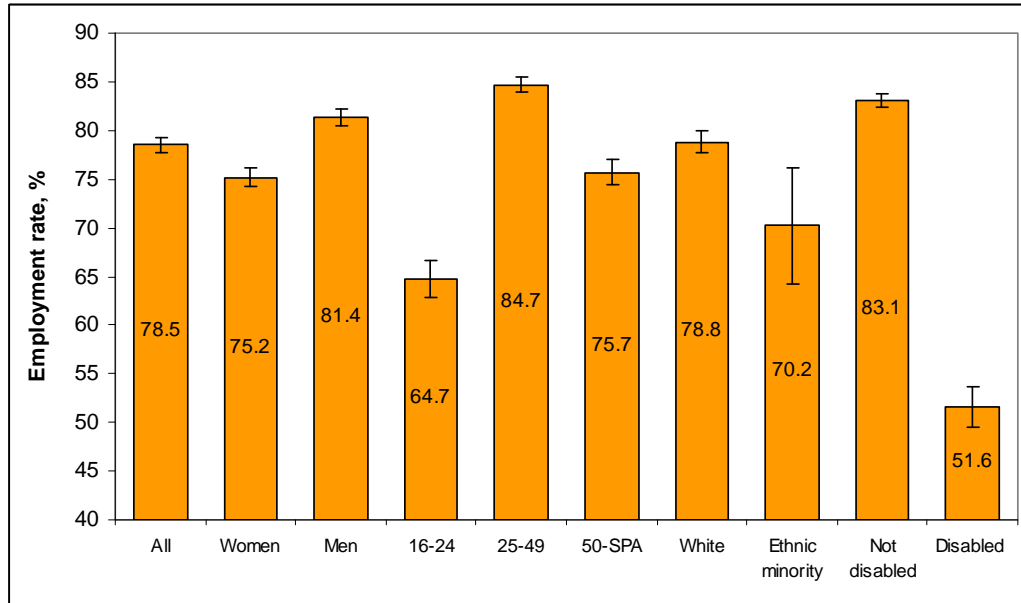
3.3 South West employment gap

3.3.1 Current position

Latest Annual Population Survey (APS) estimates for September 2007 to October 2008 put the employment rate for women of working age in the South West at 75.2%, just over six percentage points lower than the regional employment rate for men (Figure 8) but five percentage points higher than the UK employment rate for women (Figure 9).

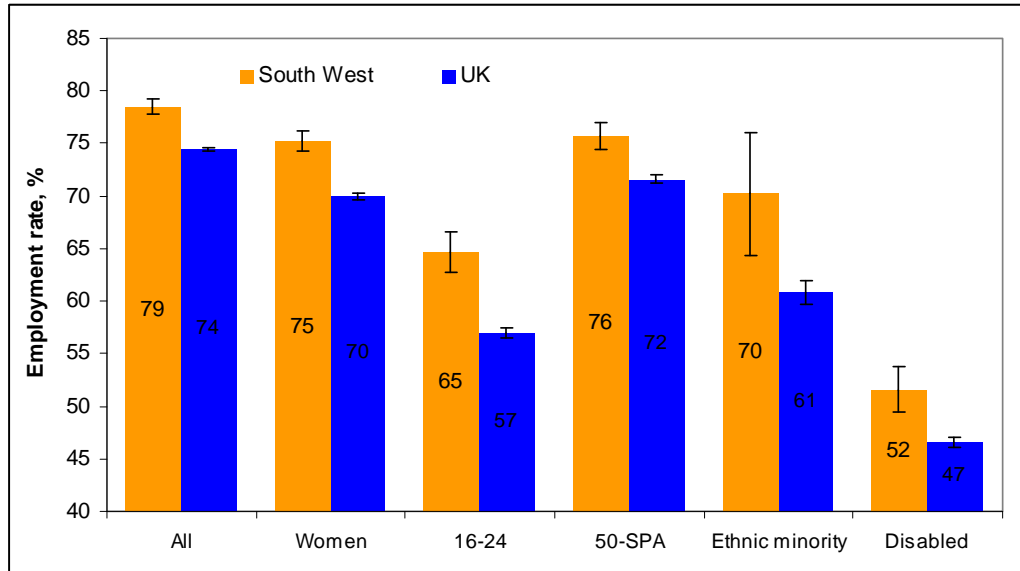
The APS estimates suggest that the gender employment gap in the South West is narrower than both other disadvantaged groups in the region (Table 5) and women nationally (Figure 10) although both these results are not statistically significant since the estimates fall within an overlapping confidence interval.

Figure 8: Employment rate by selected population groups, September 2007 to October 2008, South West



Source: Annual Population Survey

Figure 9: Employment rate by selected disadvantaged group, September 2007 to October 2008, South West and United Kingdom



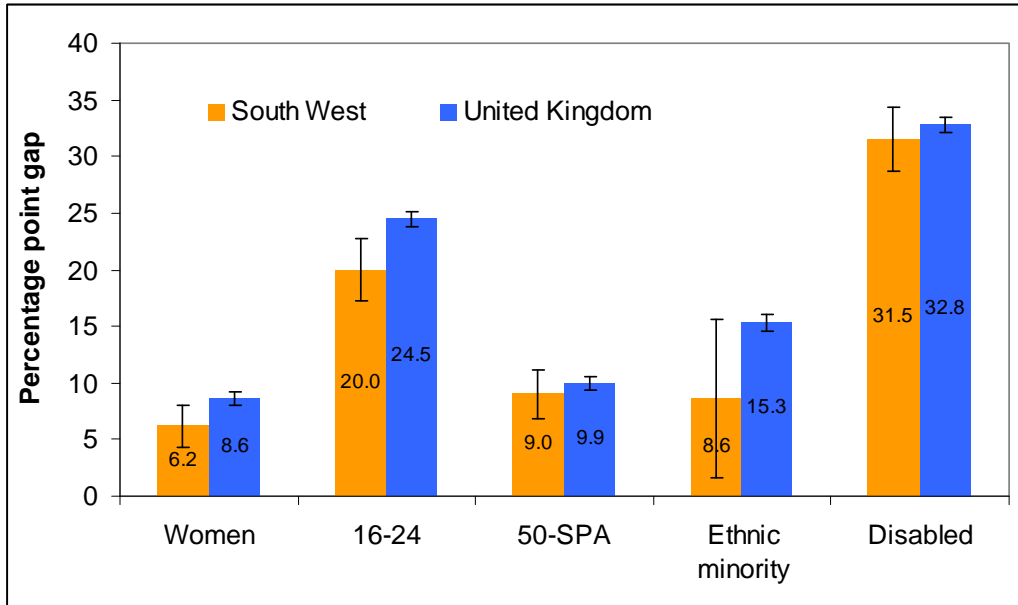
Source: Annual Population Survey

Table 5: Employment gap by selected disadvantaged group, September 2007 to October 2008, South West

	Percentage points	
	Estimate	Range
Women	6.2	4.3 to 8.1
16-24	20.0	17.3 to 22.7
50-SPA	9.0	6.9 to 11.1
Ethnic minority	8.6	1.6 to 15.6
Disabled	31.5	28.7 to 34.3

Source: Annual Population Survey

Figure 10: Employment gap by selected disadvantaged group, September 2007 to October 2008, South West

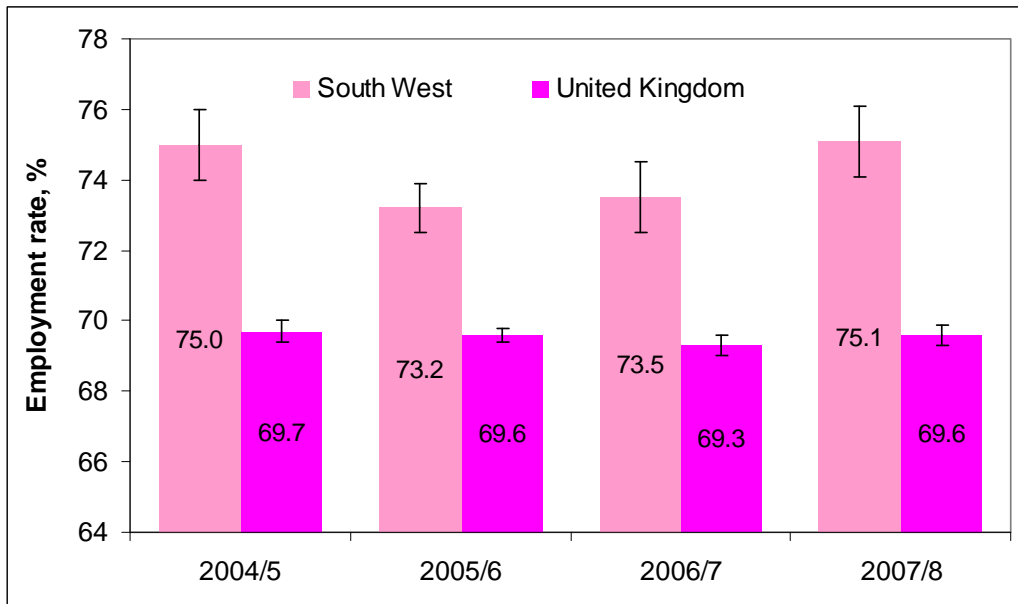


Source: Annual Population Survey

3.3.2 Trends

There has been very little movement in terms of improvements in the employment rate of women in the South West, a trend replicated in the UK (Figure 11).

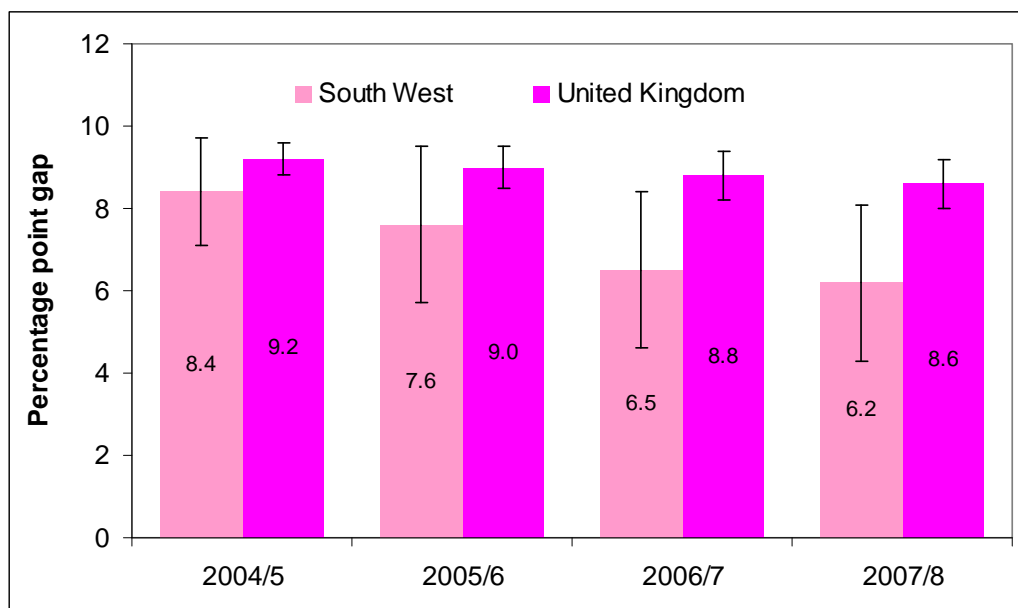
Figure 11: Female working age employment rate, October to September, 2004 to 2008, South West and United Kingdom



Source: Annual Population Survey

The point estimates suggest that the gender employment rate gap is reducing over time but it is impossible to conclude this with statistical certainty even for the UK (Figure 12). The gender employment gap appears to be lower in the South West than the UK and is closing faster, although, again, these are not statistically significant results.

Figure 12: Female working age employment gap, October to September, 2004 to 2008, South West and United Kingdom



Source: Annual Population Survey

3.4 Job quality

3.4.1 Pay gap

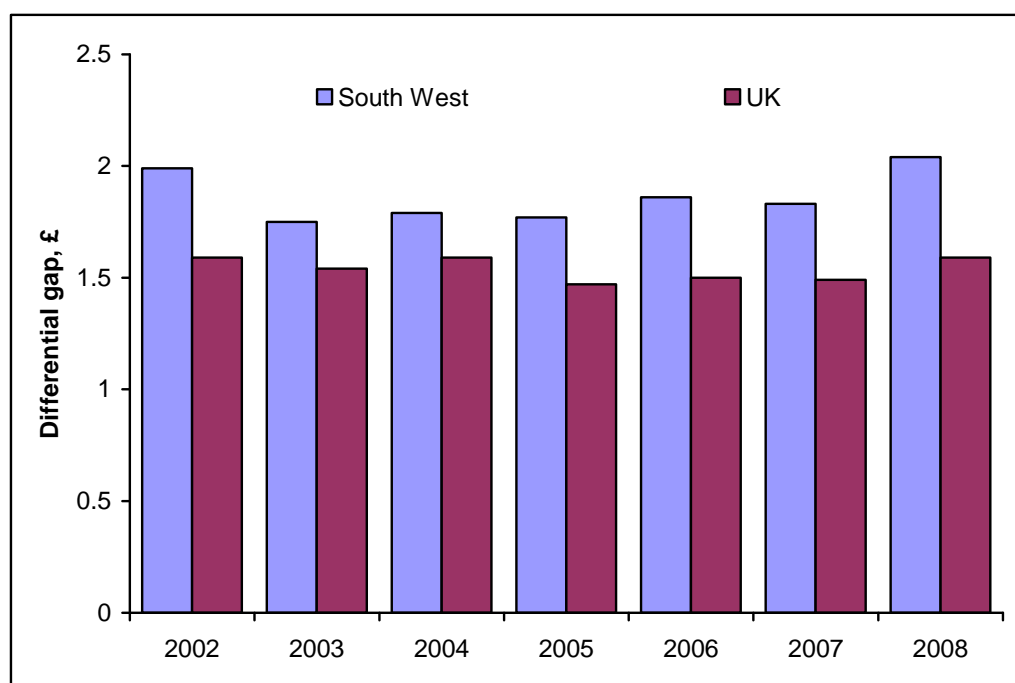
According to the Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings, the median hourly wage rate for full-time workers excluding overtime in the South West is £11.02. This is 85 pence (or 7%) lower than the UK average. Women living – but not necessarily working – in the South West who work full time earn around £2 an hour less than men working similar hours, a larger gender pay gap than is evident nationally (Table 6). The gender pay gap has changed little in recent years (Figure 13) with the most recent trend data showing a slight widening of the gap in the South West and the UK between 2007 and 2008.

Table 6: Median full-time hourly wage rate excluding overtime by gender, 2008, South West and United Kingdom, £

	South West		United Kingdom	
	Estimate	Range	Estimate	Range
Men	11.97	11.78 to 12.26	12.50	12.48 to 12.53
Women	9.93	9.75 to 10.11	10.91	10.87 to 10.95
All	11.02	10.89 to 11.15	11.87	11.85 to 11.89
Gap	2.04	-	1.59	

Source: Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings

Figure 13: Differential gap in hourly wage rates between men and women, South West and United Kingdom, 2002 to 2008



Source: Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings

3.4.2 Employment in higher level occupations

More than one-quarter (28%) of the regional and UK workforce are employed in managerial and professional occupations (September 2007 to October 2008). Men are considerably more likely to be employed in these higher status and higher skilled jobs than women: in the South West one-third (33%) of men and less than one-quarter (23%) of women are employed in these occupations. The regional gap of 10 percentage points is one percentage point narrower than the UK average.

3.4.3 Part-time working

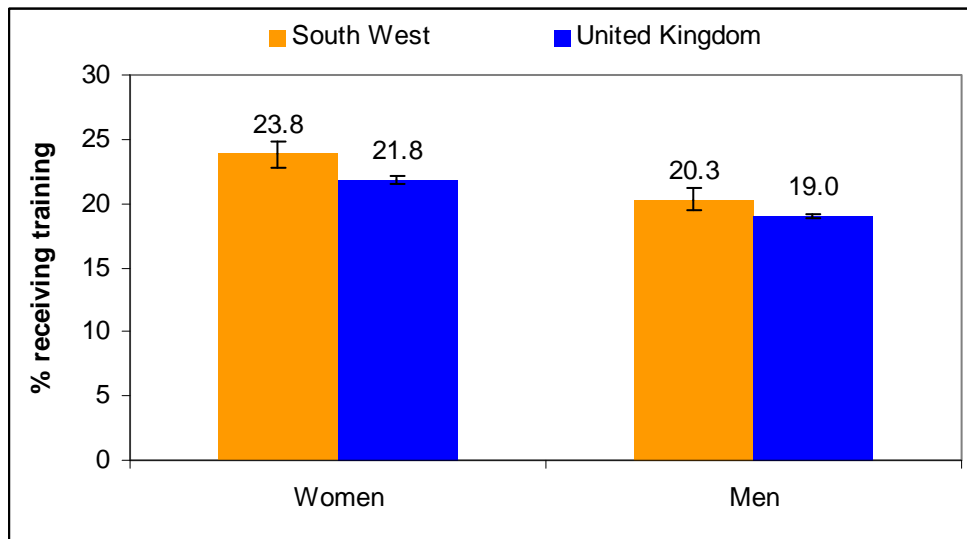
Just over half (51%) of working women aged 16 and over in the South West were working part-time during September 2007-October 2008 compared to 14% of men in the region and 45% of women in the UK.

Women part-time workers are considerably less likely than their male counterparts to want to work full-time¹² and are less likely to be working part-time because they could not find full time work: 12% of male part-time workers are working reduced hours because they could not find full-time work compared to 7% of women.

3.4.4 Job-related training

Women are more likely to take part in work-related training than men and both men and women have higher rates of participation in training than the UK average (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Participation in job-related training in the last 13 weeks by gender, September 2007 to October 2008, South West and United Kingdom



Source: Annual Population Survey (NOMIS)

¹² 80% of female part-time workers in the South West did not want to work full time in September 2007 to October 2008. This compared to 56% of men.

4. WORKLESSNESS

4.1 Introduction

In this section:

- Unemployment;
- Out of work benefits;
- Economic inactivity.

4.2 Unemployment

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of unemployment, 157,000 South West residents were looking for work during January to March 2009 - up 59,000 on the same period last year. Men account for a slightly larger share of the unemployed (58,000 residents) than women (72,000 residents) although unemployment levels are rising faster among women (52%) than men (47%) over the last year.

The unemployment rate¹³ in the South West currently stands at 5.8% for men and 5.7% for women with the rate rising fastest amongst the latter. The female unemployment rate increased by 2.4 percentage points over the last year compared to 1.8 percentage points for men. Despite this rapid growth, the unemployment rate for both men and women remains below the UK averages (7.8% for men and 6.1% for women).

4.3 Out-of-work benefits

Women account for less than half (47%) of the 300,000 people of working age that are claiming out-of-work benefits in the South West. The proportion of the region's working age population claiming these benefits – which comprises Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefits (IB), lone parent benefits and other income-related benefits - is 9.6% for men and 9.5% for women, compared to 11.9% for both men and women in Great Britain.

While men and women are equally likely to claim out-of-work benefits, they are not equally likely to claim specific benefits. For example, the majority of men are

¹³ Percentage of the economically active population aged 16 and over who are ILO unemployed.

claiming IB (71%) with most of the remainder claiming JSA (21%). While IB is also the most commonly claimed out-of-work benefit for women (accounting for 57% of female benefit claimants), most of the remainder (31%) claim Lone Parent benefits. Women account for:

- 95% of those claiming lone parent benefits;
- 28% of JSA claims;
- 41% of IB claimants
- 26% of other income-related benefit claims.

Table 7: Working age client group benefit claimants by gender and type of out-of-work benefit, August 2008, South West

	Men	Women	Total
Jobseekers Allowance	33,350	13,220	46,570
Incapacity Benefits	112,370	79,190	191,560
Lone parent	2,260	43,720	45,980
Others on income-related benefit	9,200	3,230	12,430
All out-of-work benefits	157,180	139,360	296,540

The number of people claiming out-of-work benefits has not changed substantially over the last five years, although numbers are slightly up on August 2007 figures for men and women (3% for men and less than one-fifth of one% for women).

4.4 Economic inactivity

Just over half a million South West residents of working age (17% of the total) are economically inactive (January to March 2009). This category includes students, those who are looking after a home or family, the temporarily or long-term sick, early retirees and those who are not working or looking for work for some other reason. Women are more likely to be economically inactive than men (20% compared to 14%) and comprise the majority (57%) of the economically inactive population.

The number of economically inactive women fell by 20,000 during the 12 months to January to March 2009 despite an 8,000 rise in the female population of this age. This reduced the female economically inactive rate by 1.4 percentage points over the period, whereas the rate for men remained unchanged.

Most economically inactive men (65%) and women (62%) of working age are retired (Table 8). Beyond this, women are eight times more likely than men to cite looking

after a home or family as a reason for economic inactivity than men (16% compared to 2%) and men are almost twice as likely than women to be students (11% compared to 7%) or be sick or disabled (16% compared to 9%).

Table 8: Reasons for economic inactivity among the working age population by gender, September 2007 to October 2008, South West

	Men	Women	Total
Student	70,600	65,400	136,100
Looking after home or family	14,500	147,200	161,700
Sick or disabled	99,500	84,000	183,500
Retired	404,200	572,200	976,400
Other	28,300	48,700	77,000
Total	617,200	917,500	1,534,700
<i>Wants to work (%)</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Does not want to work (%)</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>89</i>

Source: Annual Population Survey (UK Data Archive)