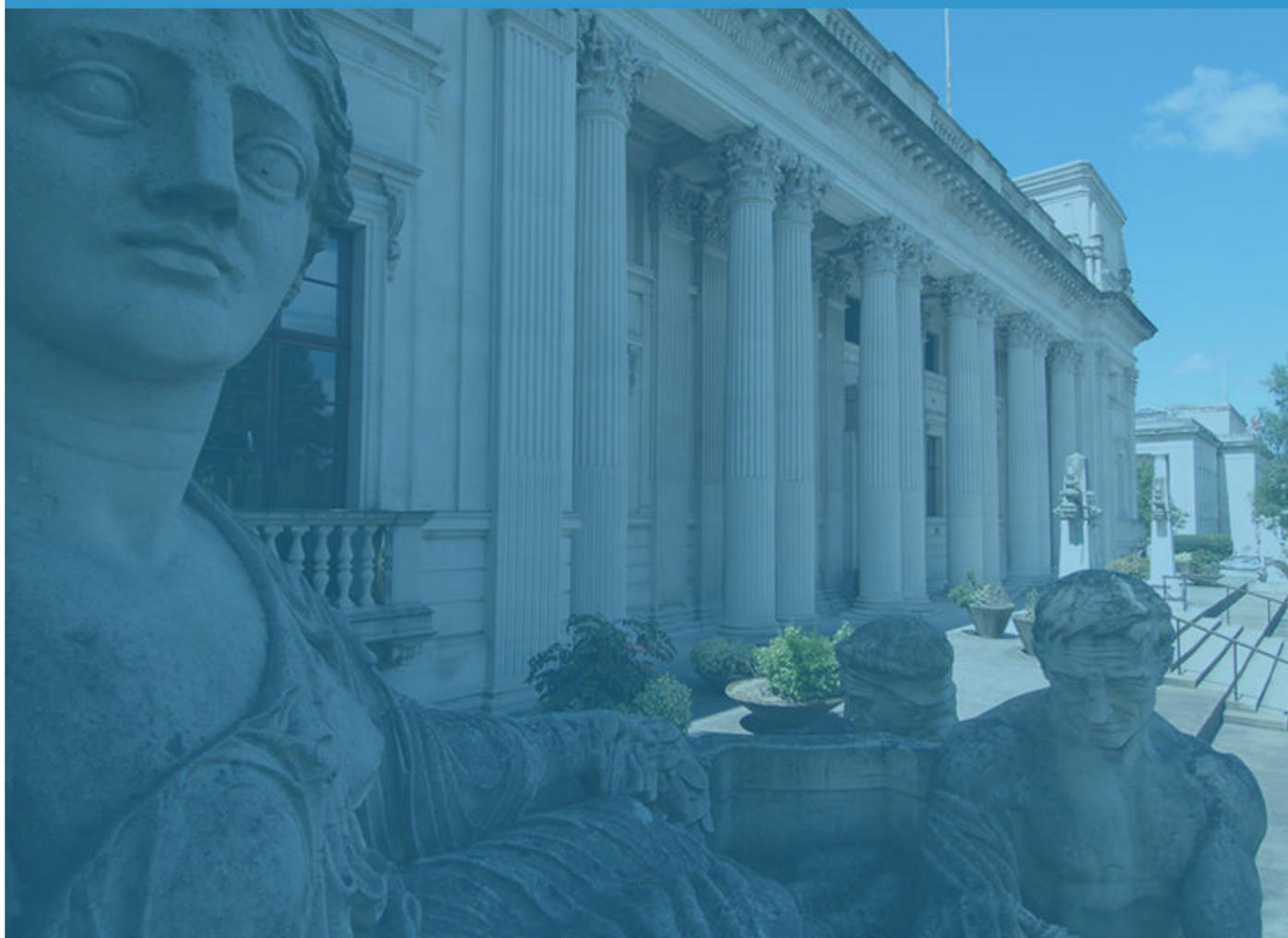


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Working Paper 142: Involuntary Part-time Workers in Britain: Evidence from the Labour Force Survey

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ISBN: 978-1-908469-01-4



## **Involuntary Part-time Workers in Britain: Evidence from the Labour Force Survey**

### **ABSTRACT**

Part-time work is widely considered functional for the economy, with both benign and detrimental implications for employees. However, specific analyses of involuntary part-timing in Britain are surprisingly absent from the flexibility debate; and workers in such positions remain largely under-researched. This article explores the relation of involuntary part-time work to demographic and work-related circumstances, hoping to provide a contribution to the examination of working patterns in the UK. We analyse Labour Force Survey data, using logistic regression modelling to identify the segments of workers filling part-time jobs involuntarily. The results suggest that being couple with dependant children considerably reduces the likelihood of involuntariness among female part-timers whereas it has an opposed effect on their male counterparts. Lower educational and occupational levels, on the other hand, imply a higher likelihood of involuntariness across both sexes.

### **KEY WORDS**

Involuntary part-time work / gender / voluntary / recession / precarious work

## Introduction

Earlier sociological studies on part-time jobs occasionally focused on the benefits of such works for employees (see for example, Hakim 1997; Massey 1995; Siltanen 1994). According to Warren and Walters (1998), this was largely because of a theoretical dichotomisation between men and women with a homogenised imagination of each sex. In particular, women in part-time jobs were essentially perceived as 'family-oriented employees with little expectations from work' (Siltanen 1994: 188). In line with this, Hakim (1997: 45) influentially argued that part-time jobs were typically chosen voluntarily by the majority of women for the sake of 'marriage career'. Within economic sociology, scholars like Luttwak (1998) also stretched the claims over the potentials of part-time employment toward better pay and job opportunities through an increased productivity.

However, optimistic expectations were dismissed as a 'myth' by more guarded approaches on the basis of empirical research findings (Walsh 1999: 179). Critical discussants were of the view that part-time jobs, along with flexible work in general, have paved the way for a 'secondary' (Field 1989) or 'two-tier' labour market (Pollert 1999) in order to facilitate 'flexploitation' (Gray 2004). In this genre, part-time jobs were associated with occupational downgrading since, for example, they suppressed earnings (Connolly and Gregory 2008) and restricted access to training opportunities (Mumford and Smithy 2008). Concerns have also been raised over discriminatory promotion practices, poor workplace support and the intensification of work-load (McDonald *et al.* 2009). In the specific case of casual jobs, Green *et al.* (2010) observed that the quality of casual part-time jobs ranked below that of full-time casual jobs, especially for the lack of job security and regular patterns in working hours.

Debates on part-time work have historically helped elaborate variations in such jobs. Although the status of employees in part-time jobs had been long attributed to educational attainments (Tilly 1992), a greater recognition of variations in part-time jobs on the basis of systematic research findings came to the scene later. It was evidenced, for example, that woman part-timers with young children have more job satisfaction than men owing to a better work-life balance (Bonney 2005;

Booth and Ours 2009; Walsh 2007). However, women in part-time jobs also had less access to family support benefits (Zeytinoglu *et al.* 2010) and work-related benefits (Young 2010), compared to men in part-time jobs. As Webber & Williams (2008) suggested, the question concerning whether part-time work had benign or detrimental outcomes for women had to be taken with a number of factors such as work location, work schedules, occupations and pathway to part-time work. In this sense, specific attention was paid to the women re-entering the labour market after maternity leave through part-time jobs with restricted opportunities to have a successful career development (Connolly and Gregory 2009). Women part-time managers (Durbin and Tomlinson 2010) and police officers (Dick 2010), for example, were cited for constrained promotion prospects. Nurses in such positions were also reported to have been peculiarly stereotyped because of the so-called frailty of their work ethic whilst failing to show full commitment to the profession (Davey *et al.* 2005).

Variations in part-time jobs were further related to work-place characteristics such as industries and establishment size. Millar *et al.* (2006) documented that public administration, education, health, distribution hotels and restaurants had become a bastion for part-time workers because of industrial segregation. In the food industry, for example, McKie *et al.* (2009) found out that both male and female part-time workers were virtually deprived of having a say in the management of their working hours. Such an observation in the hugely variegated establishments of the food industry in terms of their sizes echoed earlier attempts to differentiate the applications of part-time employment in smaller and larger companies. For this, a catalogue of disadvantages that part-time employees had encountered in small and medium-sized food companies was compiled (Dex and Scheibl 2001). The dearth of autonomy in determining time schedules was referred to as an issue among part-time working students as well (Richardson *et al.* 2009). In addition, part-time employees in low-paid jobs were viewed as precarious workers for having less desirable experiences than their counterparts in high-rank occupations (Batt *et al.* 2010; Pape 2008). Empirical findings on these variations in part-time jobs have nurtured debates on 'involuntary part-time' work.

## Involuntary Part-time Work

Differences between a 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' status in the labour market have been long disputed. In the case of unemployment, for instance, Ashenfelter (1978) had argued that unemployment was not necessarily an undesirable situation, especially if wages and working conditions were more discouraging than unemployment benefits. The word 'voluntary' has also become a major component of working lives with the recent rise of 'voluntary sector' (Cunningham 2008). However, critiques contested that voluntary sector had constituted an undesirable passage to low pay works with miscellaneous disadvantages (Taylor 2004).

As for involuntary part-time work, Bednarzik (1976) had specified that an individual employed part-time involuntarily is one who would prefer to work full-time but has been unable to obtain full-time employment. Even so, such a definition should be treated with caution. As Stratton (1994: 95) noted, it fails, for example, to determine the part-timers who would not 'readily accept a full-time job at the going full-time market wage for someone with their skills, in lieu of the part-time employment in which they were currently engaged'. As in the case of 'voluntary unemployment', this suggests that full-time employment at a lower wage may be available but is unacceptable.

Further, empirical definitions may miss potentially involuntary part-timers among those who state various reasons for working part-time without making an explicit reference to being involuntary: In 2009, for example, 15% part-timers in Britain reported that they worked in such jobs since they were students or at school. A sizeable proportion of them (27%) cited looking after children. This figure increases to almost 30% with those who are looking after ill or disabled people. Roughly 15% of participants also specified no reason, although circa one-in-four said that they did not want full-time jobs (LFS 2009). One should keep in mind that the boundaries between 'involuntariness' and 'voluntariness' are blurred, especially among women since their work preferences may involve some compromises on domestic fronts (Woodfield 2007) because of, for example, the cost of child-care (Forry and Hofferth 2011). Despite such limitations, the concept of 'involuntary part-time work' is regarded as an operable tool among academics and policy makers (Caputo and Cianni 2001; OECD 2010; Zeytinoglu *et al.* 2010).

On the basis of being unable to find full-time jobs, OECD (2010) has reported a general upward trend in involuntary part-time work across member countries. In the US in particular, a rapid expansion in involuntary part-time work (over five million between 2006 and 2009) urged the Federal Reserve Bank to 'warn' the Bureau of Labour Statistics over the 'deficiencies' of unemployment indicators (Lee and Mowry 2009). Specific research into involuntary part-timing remains limited to a few historical investigations across developed countries. Such studies tried to shed light on structural and individual dynamics, as well as implications, of involuntary part-time work. After the rise of involuntary part-timers to 16 million amidst the economic downturn of early 1970s, Bednarzik (1976) singled out education and skills as the key predictors in the USA. In the end of the 1980s, Leppel and Clain (1988) also added the presence of dependent children into this equation.

Later, Caputo and Cianni (2001) referred to the strength of marriage and working in the private sector in reducing the likelihood of involuntary part-timing among US women, as opposed to the counter effect of longer-term unemployment. In Canada, Schellenberg (1995) evidenced that involuntary part-time workers were less likely to organise, and this was linked to the restricted access of such workers to fringe benefits. Through the analysis of Australian case, Walsh (1999) also illustrated that secondary income earner status, having younger children and age run counter to involuntariness among female part-time workers –albeit education was not firmly relevant. Further findings suggested that involuntary part-timing boosted Australian women's intentions to leave their jobs by undermining job satisfaction and motivation.

Against the limitedness of international research into involuntary part-timing, there is a lack of systematic research in the UK: A comparative study among the EU countries at the turn of the last century had shown that only a minority of part-timers in the UK (just above one-in-ten) were working in part-time jobs involuntarily, compared to circa 16% EU average (Rubery 1998). However, when the economic recession started to unfold a decade later, observers noted that Britain had begun to overtake countries like Denmark and France (Gash 2008). By the final quarter of 2009, the proportion of involuntary workers among part-timers increased to roughly 15% (LFS 2009). For more accurate comparisons, one

should also remember the prominence of part-time employment in Britain: Over one quarter of employees across the British labour market are employed on part-time contracts (LFS 2009) whereas the average figure is below 18%, for example, among the G7 countries (OECD 2010). Observers predict further pressures on full-time job prospects, and hence, upward trends in part-time jobs amid the expected cuts in public spending, and redundancies from both public and private sector companies (Hogarth *et al.* 2009). From a functionalist point of view, involuntary part-time work is considered by policy makers to be a trade-off with gaining access to work or retention at the times of tight job markets. Even so, the surge in involuntary part-time jobs caused concerns among trade unions; and the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, Brendan Barber warned the government about the difficulties of finding full-time jobs (Barber 2009). Such a move concurred with the calls for a revision of trade union interventions in work-life balance (Gregory and Milner 2009; Rigby and Smith 2010).

Because of the lack of systematic research into involuntary part-timing in the UK, we will explore main socio-economic correlates which were related to involuntary part-timing by the international literature as discussed above. It seems to be possible to sum up these variables under three broader categories: demographic profiles including household types and age; work-place characteristics in terms of industries, public/private sectors and establishment size; and finally work-status indicators including educational attainments and occupations.

However, we will also advance a specific analysis of the relationship between gender and involuntary part-timing in order to rectify the absence of men/women comparisons not only in the UK but also in the international literature. This is particularly important in the case of Britain since part-time employment is more gendered compared to other developed economies: over 45% of British women are in part-time jobs whereas the average is one in four among the G7 countries (OECD 2010). Further, the involuntariness of part-timers is highly gendered, but in a contrary way: although one in ten female part-timers is involuntary, the figure is over one-quarter for male part-timers (LFS 2009). The gender gap, together with overall involuntariness, started to increase since the beginning of recession: male part-timers' involuntariness was, for example, below 16% in 2007 when the figure

was 8% for women (LFS 2007). In the light of all the issues highlighted so far, we formulated our hypothesis as follows:

*Involuntariness among part-timers is affected by a combination of demographic profiles, work-place characteristics and work-status with varying degree of influence on men and women. In particular, work-status indicators are in an inverse relationship with involuntariness.*

## **Methods**

### Data

Data is analysed from the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS), a large household-based survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics between October and December 2009. The LFS deploys a multi-stage sampling design to achieve a probability sample of households and individuals in Britain in order to explore the labour market status of employees in general and part-time employees who could not find full-time jobs, in particular (ONS 2009).

The major data collection instruments were face to face and telephone interviews with a small amount of postal surveys. Research is conducted with a worker or the representative of sample households on behalf of the workers investigated (proxy interview). Participants answered questions with their own descriptions of work activities as part-time or full-time jobs. A total of 114,194 questionnaires were filled. The LFS achieved a response rate of 86%. Such a response rate is common for labour force surveys due to the burdens of questionnaire completion (ONS 2009). However, non-response is only a source of bias to the extent that those who respond are different from those who do not with respect to characteristics of interest. Various studies have shown that non-responders in surveys cannot be identifiable according to any socio-demographic factor indicating that any biases introduced by nonresponse are not strongly related to commonly used explanatory variables (Chatzitheochari and Arber 2009). We employ the individual level ungrossed-weight which corrects for non-response.

*Dependent variable: being unable to find a full-time job*

Labour Force Survey asks participants about the reasons for working part-time, referring to main job activities of employees, self-employed and unpaid family workers. A set of standard labels were produced for the variable which are being student, ill/disabled, looking after children/disables, not wanting to work full-time, could not find a full-time job and other. For the specific purpose of this paper, we have selected those who are working in part-time jobs since they could not find full-time jobs.

Three limitations should be borne in mind regarding our dependent variable of involuntary part-time work. First, in the late 1970s, the official definition of part-time work based on working hours had been abandoned in the UK because of a perceived bias generated by the arbitrary determination of hours, although this practice is still common in some other countries such as US (Lee and Mowry 2009). Part-time work is currently based on the self-definitions of participants in LFS. Therefore there is no consistency across the sample .

The second limitation is that it is not possible to pin down how hard people had sought full-time jobs before taking up their existing part-time jobs. Nor does LFS investigate what sort of priorities the sample had in terms of the assessment of possible full-time jobs, if at all. This is particularly important in a recessionary economy in which people might adjust their expectations from their jobs to tighter jobs markets. Finally, interviewers accept the first reason that applies, and hence, it is not possible to isolate those who are doing part-time jobs only due to inability to find full-time jobs (ONS 2009).

*Independent variables*

In broader terms, the models developed in this study control the relation of involuntary part-time work to previously highlighted three categories: demographic profiles, workplace characteristics and work-status nominators.

Among the demographic variables, household type refers to the presence, or absence, of spouse/partner and dependent children (younger than 19 years old). The second demographic variable, age is measured by recoding working age

population (from 16 to 64 years old) into four brackets in line with common practices (Blanden and Machin 2003), whilst excluding those over 64 years old due to small sample size.

Workplace characteristics (as well as work-status variables) refer to main jobs. The industry variable is based on the standard international classification of industries, SIC-2005 at two-digit level (i.e. 'industry sectors'). Industry as opposed to services refers to mining and quarrying; manufacturing; electricity, gas, air conditioner supply; water supply, sewerage, waste and construction. Due to small sample size, however, we excluded agriculture, forestry and fishing, whilst collapsing public administration, education and health together within the service sector as well as omitting transport and communication from the model for women. The second variable within workplace characteristics is a dichotomous variable of respondents' self-report as to whether they work in the public or private sector. The third variable in this group, establishment size refers to the number of employees reported by respondents, and it is collapsed into three bands in accordance with conventional brackets: small (<25), medium (25-249) and large (=250) companies (Forth *et al.* 2005).

Among work-status nominators, the variable concerning education is based on the highest qualification obtained, with five main categories from 'no qualification' to 'degree or equivalent'. The other work-status nominator, occupation is derived from the standard international classification of occupations, SOC-2005 at one-digit major level. Skilled trade occupations, process, plant and machine operatives, however, are excluded from the analyses for women due to small sample size.

#### *Analytical technique*

The analysis uses logistic regression, which is widely employed when modelling binary outcomes and for predicting the probability of an event. The dependent dichotomous variable is whether or not the reason for working in a part-time is being unable to find a full-time job (involuntary part-time work). The binary response is yes/no. The logistic models predict the probability of working in a part-time job for not being able to find a full-time job.

Separate and joint logistic regression models are specified for male and female part-timers in order to examine the differential effects of demographic and work-related circumstances on men's and women's involuntary part-time work. Statistical tests enable assessment of the significance of the inclusion of an explanatory variable in the model.

In logistic models, independent variables are successively added to the model in sequential blocks, which allows observation of changes in the predictors' relationship to the outcome variable and assessment of the relative importance of each predictor in the model. These blocks are made up of the three broader categories of independent variables: demographic profiles (household types and age), work-place characteristics (industry, public/private sectors and establishment size), and finally work-status variables (educational attainments and occupations). Neither the order of variables within the blocks nor that of blocks within the models makes a significant difference on the results. However, using household types for Model 1 and then adding work-place characteristics to Model 2 proved better than other combinations for the goodness of fit.

## **Results**

### Descriptives

Table I presents chi-square results for the variations between male and female part-timers' involuntariness by demographic, workplace and work-status indicators. Single parenthood with dependent children implies less involuntariness for female part-timers than men (10% and 20%, respectively). Without dependent children, gender difference diminishes among single part-timers in relative terms despite an overall increase in involuntariness (circa 23% of women and 33% of men). When age is considered, it is possible to say that gender difference, together with male part-timers' involuntariness, reaches the highest level in certain age groups (45% of male part-timers aged from 25 to 34 years old, for example, are involuntary compared to less than 12% of female part-timers).

**Table I: Involuntariness among part-timers**

	Men		Women	
	N <sup>†</sup>	% <sup>‡</sup>	N <sup>†</sup>	% <sup>‡</sup>
<b>Demographic Profiles</b>				
<i>Household type</i>				
Single with dep. child	104	19.3	234	9.8***
Single without dep. child	335	33.4	410	23.7***
Couple with dep. child	148	37.4	155	4.4***
Couple without dep. child	144	13.6	261	9.6***
<i>Age bands</i>				
16-24	189	22.8	218	17.3***
25-34	134	45.2	179	11.9***
35-49	210	42.5	357	8.7***
50-64	177	20.0	292	9.6***
65+	21	4.4	14	2.6
<b>Workplace Characteristics</b>				
<i>Sector</i>				
Private sector	640	26.0	745	11.1***
Public Sector	86	19.7	312	9.2***
<i>Industries</i>				
Industry	83	26.1	40	7.4***
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	281	28.3	328	12.3***
Transport and communication	87	30.6	21	7.3
Banking and finance	107	24.8	131	9.6***
Public administration, education and health	108	18.7	433	9.6***
<i>Establishment Size</i>				
Small	333	29.4	508	12.3***
Medium	157	21.7	332	10.7***
Large	59	20.1	104	6.4***
<b>Work-status variables</b>				
<i>Education</i>				
Degree or equivalent	124	20.1	182	10.1***
Higher education	47	20.7	94	7.9***
GCE A Level or equiv	154	19.2	176	8.5***
GCSE grades A-C or equiv	161	28.4	286	10.0***
No qualification	102	32.8	152	15.8***
<i>Occupations</i>				
Managers, Senior Officials & Professional occupations	65	11.0	93	6.4***
Associate Professional, Technical	73	22.8	74	6.0***
Administrative & Secretarial Services	32	21.8	126	6.5***
Skilled Trades Occupations	79	31.0	23	11.2***
Personal Service	35	21.5	234	13.4***
Sales and Customer Service	114	26.0	212	12.9***
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	92	34.9	6	5.4
Elementary Occupations	241	31.8	292	16.2***

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$

<sup>†</sup> : Number of involuntary part-timers

<sup>‡</sup>: Involuntary part-timers as % of all part-timers in each category

Source: LFS Autumn 2009, weighted

As for workplace characteristics (sectors, industries and establishment size), private companies accommodate higher proportions of involuntariness among male part-timers (26%) than female part-timers (11%). To a slightly lesser extent, gender disparity is evident in the public sector as well, circa 20% and 9%, respectively (as in the case of public administration, education and health, in particular). 'Industry', however, widens gender disparity as 26% involuntariness

among male part-timers contrasts circa 8% for females. Women part-timers reported the highest level of their involuntariness in distribution, hotels and restaurants (12%), but this was also lower than the proportion for males, over 28%. These figures largely remain unchanged when small companies are taken alone in order to see the differences on the basis of establishment size. In large companies, on the other hand, gender disparity becomes more than tripled despite a general decline in involuntariness, 20% of male and just above 6% of female part-timers.

Finally, let's have a look at the variations in gender gap by work-status variables, educational attainments and occupational categories. Around 10% of degree holding female part-timers reported involuntariness but the proportion is double for male part-timers. Gender gap remains essentially the same among part-timers with lower educational attainments, although the proportions go up –by 50%, for example, among part-timers with no qualification. This pattern largely applies to occupational ranks as well: Just above 6% of female part-timers in managerial, senior official and professional positions reported involuntariness, although the proportion is again nearly double for male part-timers. Nor is the gender gap substantially different among part-timers in lower occupational categories: over 16% of female and 32% of male part-timers, for example, are involuntary in elementary jobs.

Overall, men show a significantly higher tendency toward involuntariness compared to female part-timers across all demographic and work-related benchmarks used in Table I.

#### Logistic regression models

Both separate and joint logistic regression models to examine the differential effects of demographic and work-related circumstances on men's and women's involuntary part-timing are provided in Table II. For each predictor variable, the last category in bivariate analyses is defined as the reference category.

Model 1 includes demographic profiles in terms of household types and age brackets. Women part-timers with dependent children present a lower probability of involuntariness ( $p < 0.001$ ), especially when they are coupled (OR = 0.23),

whereas single women part-timers without dependent children are more likely to be involuntary (OR = 2.27,  $p < 0.001$ ), compared to coupled women part-timers without dependent children –the reference category (Table II). The odds ratio for male part-timers, on the other hand, is significantly higher only if they are single without dependent children (OR = 1.92,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results reinforce international research findings over the role of a gendered division of domestic labour in the sense that having dependent children reduces female part-timers' involuntariness (Booth and Ours 2009; Leppel and Clain 1988; Walsh 2007) whilst contributing to gender gap.

Model 1 also evidences a significant age effect among both female and male part-timers ( $p = 0.001$ ). The part-timers who are younger than the reference category of 50-64 years old are more likely to become involuntary with the exception of youngest male part-timers in Table II, aged from 16 to 24 years old. By and large, such a situation appears to be in line with international research findings over the role of age in involuntariness (Walsh, 2007).

Model 2 which brings in three aspects of workplace characteristics, public/private sectors, industry and establishment size shows that these variables have a significant effect on involuntariness, especially among male part-timers. In particular, the difference between public and private sectors matter to a limited degree only for male part-timers' involuntariness as it turns out to be higher in the private sector (OR = 1.22,  $p < 0.05$ ). This helps explain the gender gap in terms of involuntariness but the British case diverges from the US experience where the private sector predicts less involuntariness for female part-timers than the public sector (Caputo and Cianni 2001).

As noted earlier, the over-representation of part-time workers in distribution, hotels, restaurants, public administration, education and health has elicited the idea of 'industrial segregation' (Millar *et al.* 2006). In the case of involuntary part-timing, however, although industries in general are strong predictors, this again applies only to men ( $p < 0.001$ ). Transport and commutation (OR = 2.54); banking and finance (OR = 1.56); and industry (OR = 1.71) as opposed to services imply a higher likelihood of involuntariness among male part-timers, compared to the reference category of public administration, education and health. Distribution,

hotels and restaurants (OR = 1.65) can also be added to this list as the bastions of low-pay jobs (Checchi *et al.* 2010). Thus, industrial variations between male and female part-timers' involuntariness emerge as another component of gender gap.

As the last measure used in Model 2 to assess the impact of workplace characteristics, establishment size plays a significant role in terms of the involuntariness of part-timers regardless of gender ( $p < 0.001$ ). Documented among the nominators of less advantageous part-time jobs (Dex and Scheibl 2001), working in smaller companies heightens the likelihood of involuntariness among male (OR = 2.04) and female part-timers (OR = 1.81). Nevertheless, establishment size effects men and women differently since a significantly higher likelihood of involuntariness in medium companies applies to only female part-timers (OR = 1.66).

Model 3 includes work-status indicators to examine how the constraints stemmed from educational attainments and occupations impinge upon the chances of part-timers to find full-time jobs. The model shows that education and occupations are highly explanatory for both male and female part-timers with a varying degree of influence ( $p < 0.001$ ). Male part-timers who have GCE A level or above are less likely to become involuntary compared to those who have no qualification. In other words, lower educational qualifications heighten the likelihood of involuntariness among male part-timers –whilst nominating less advantageous part-time jobs (Tilly 1992). A similar situation is the case among women part-timers as well. These results contrast research findings pointing to the absence of educational affect among Australian female part-timers (Walsh 1999).

Even so, educational influence in Britain also has its own limits since degree holding female part-timers (OR = 0.91) are not significantly different from their counterparts with no qualifications. Such a result may be related to 'glass-ceiling' in the sense that better-educated women are less likely to gain access to high-rank occupations compared to men since, for example, they re-enter the labour market often through part-time jobs after maternity leave, with less opportunities for a successful career development (Connolly and Gregory 2009). Indeed, when female part-timers gain access to high-rank occupations, the likelihood of becoming involuntary becomes smaller for them compared to female part-timers in

lower occupations: Women part-timers in administrative/secretarial services and above occupational categories specified in Table II are less likely to become involuntary compared to those in elementary occupations. This adds a further layer to gender gap in involuntary part-timing.

The difference between educational attainments and occupational ranks in terms of their implications for involuntariness, on the other hand, is more pronounced among male part-timers: Although no qualification or lower qualifications imply more likelihood of involuntariness among male part-timers, as in the case of female part-timers, this applies to only the top occupational category of managerial, senior official and professional occupations (OR = 0.46) in addition to personal services (OR = 0.53,  $p < 0.01$ ) as a middle-rank category . Arguably, such a finding echoes an overall decline in correspondence between education and occupations owing to a long-term inflation in managerial posts and over-qualification (Felstead *et al.* 2007).

It is also worth mentioning that the inclusion of work-status variables eradicated the significant impact of sectors and industries on the likelihood of male part-timers becoming involuntary (see the change in log-likelihood ratio in Table II). In other words, sectoral/industrial variations in male part-timers' involuntariness were essentially a reflection of educational and occupational factors.

**Table II: Involuntariness among part-timers**

	Odds Ratios for All			Odds Ratios for Men			Odds Ratios for Women		
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model I	Model II	Model III
<b>Demographic Profile</b>									
<i>Household Type</i>	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Single with dep. child	0.58***	0.62***	0.65***	0.86	0.76	0.77	0.55***	0.61***	0.62***
Single without dep. child	2.29***	2.38***	2.56***	1.92***	1.69***	1.72***	2.27***	2.51***	2.74***
Couple with dep. child	0.36***	0.38***	0.36***	1.27	1.36	1.40	0.23***	0.26***	0.29***
Couple without dep. child									
<i>Age bands</i>	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
16-24	1.59***	1.45***	1.44***	0.98	1.05	1.09	1.85***	1.66***	1.54***
25-34	2.40***	2.21***	2.26***	2.75***	2.85***	3.32***	2.53***	2.22***	2.30***
35-49	1.96***	1.89***	1.94***	2.62***	2.44***	2.71***	2.05***	2.03***	2.07***
50-64									
<b>Workplace characteristics</b>									
<i>Sector</i>					*				
Private sector					1.22 *				
Public Sector									
<i>Industries</i>		***			***				
Industry		1.18			1.71***				
Distribution, hotels and restaurants		1.31***			1.65***				
Transport and communication		1.85***			2.54***				
Banking and finance		1.19			1.56***				
Public administration, education and health									
<i>Establishment size</i>		***	***		***	***		***	***
Small		1.89***	1.73***		1.89***	2.04***		1.81***	1.56***
Medium		1.51***	1.31***		1.20	1.20		1.66***	1.38***
Large									
<b>Work-status variables</b>									
<i>Education</i>			***			***			***
Degree or equivalent			0.87			0.58***			0.91
Higher education			0.59***			0.37***			0.71 **
GCE A Level or equiv			0.48***			0.49***			0.43***
GCSE grades A-C or equiv			0.66***			0.75			0.63***
No qualification									
<i>Occupations</i>			***			***			***
Managers, Senior Officials & Professional occ.			0.40***			0.46***			0.38***
Associate Professional, Technical			0.38***			0.72			0.29***
Administrative & Secretarial Services			0.43***			1.00			0.45***
Skilled Trades Occupations			1.11			0.61			
Personal Service			0.82			0.53 **			1.01
Sales and Customer Service			0.75			0.80			0.81
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives			1.61***			1.19			
Elementary Occupations									
? df	7	8	8	7	8	8	7	8	8
-2 LLR	9827.6	7455.5	6062.8	3031.8	2020.6	1666.7	6311.7	5077.8	4159.8
? -2LRR		2372.1	1392.7		1011.2	353.9		1233.9	918.0
Significance of ? -2 LRR			***			***			***

Source: LFS Autumn 2009, w eighted

Significance of difference from reference category \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## Conclusions

Taking into account the demographic and work-related circumstances which have been related to involuntary part-timing by the international literature, this article has identified the segments of the British part-time workers who are more likely to be involuntary. In doing so, we sought to rectify the lack of systematic research in this area. In general, through a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic correlates considered, we evidenced that the likelihood of involuntariness among part-timers is affected by a combination of demographic profiles, work-place characteristics and work-status variables.

The ways in which involuntariness is affected by the range of socio-economic factors have implications for academic discussions. Men show a higher tendency toward involuntariness compared to female part-timers across all demographic and work-related benchmarks. Such a result lends support to Hakim (1997) in the sense that women's employment in part-time jobs cannot be confined into a question of coercive gender discrimination at work. The evidence suggests that female part-timers' involuntariness is significantly reduced by the presence of dependent children, especially among couples. Arguably, this can be attributed to both personal choices and a gendered impact of structural factors such as the high cost of child-care (Forry and Hofferth 2011). Therefore, one needs to acknowledge the difficulty with defining 'involuntariness' empirically: It fails to pick up potentially 'involuntary' workers among those who cited miscellaneous reasons for part-time work including domestic responsibilities (Stratton 1994).

Even so, logistic models presented in this study suggest that gender gap is also influenced by the higher proportions of involuntariness among male part-timers in the private sector, industrial companies and low-pay service sectors such as distribution, hotels and restaurants (Checchi *et al.* 2010) as well as professional, technical and administrative occupations. Such a finding should be taken with an increasing share of men in part-time service sector jobs amid the accelerated erosion of traditionally female-dominated administrative and secretarial occupations due to recession (Hogarth *et al.* 2009).

It is important to underline here that, although involuntariness is low among female part-timers compared to male part-timers, involuntary part-timing is not less relevant to women. If anything, a closer scrutiny of LFS (2009) data highlights that involuntary part-timers constitute a slightly higher proportion among all women in employment (3.5%), compared to men (2.5%). This further substantiates concerns over the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market in general as a reflection of their higher representation in part-time jobs (Walsh 2007): We have shown that work-status as measured by educational attainments and occupational ranks negatively correlate with involuntariness for both male and female part-timers. The evidence of relations to lower work-status renders involuntary part-timing an explorable area for the students of precarious employment debates both empirically and conceptually (Anderson 2010; Fitzgerald and Hardy 2010; Kalleberg 2009; Pape 2008).

Involuntary part-timing appears to be at odds with the conventionally high levels of workload in Britain (MacInnes 2005). Despite the detrimental impacts of on-going recession across the British labour market, circa one in four employees preferred less work even with a lower pay in 2009 (LFS 2009). Arguably, it would be a worthwhile exercise for policy makers to consider the possibilities of alleviating such a paradox to certain degree through, for example, target-oriented training programmes for a better matching of jobs and people.

There is a need for further analyses to examine the relationship between involuntary part-timing and potentially important issues which are not included in this study such as commitment, productivity, working hours and earnings. For this purpose, LFS could usefully cover the first two topics whilst reducing missing values in the case of the latter two to reach a reliable sample size. It would also be useful to conduct qualitative research in order to advance in-depth explorations into, for example, the ways in which variations in household types, demographic profiles and educational attainments culturally inform different degrees of involuntariness among male and female part-timers.

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