



What Open Data Tells Us About Gender and the Workforce

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In May, [the Financial Times](#) ran an article on one couple's experiment to track the division of labour. It showed, on a micro level, that the division of household labour leaned a lot more on the side of the writer's girlfriend than it did for him, despite her "working away from the home" (and thus, potentially, logging a lot more in terms of travel time). The writer found that the information matched a report released by the ONS in January 2018, which showed that men enjoy five hours more [leisure time per week than women](#).

But what do bigger datasets say?

The latest data available on labour and gender is from the 2017-2018 annual population survey and annual workforce survey. The next version is likely to come out in October, so it will be interesting to see how it has changed – however, from the data available right now, it would appear that part-time and full-time work is definitely divided along the lines of gender in the East Midlands:

Among those aged 16-64, males represented 64% of all full-time employees, compared to only 36% women. Meanwhile, only 21% of all part-time employees were male, and 79% were female in the East Midlands.

Looking at more granular data, the starkest differences were among those aged 25-49, where women represented 87% of all part-time workers. Among full-time workers of the same age bracket, the division was 64:36 male to female.

The closest to equal representation the two genders got was in part time work among those aged 16-19: it would appear that young men represented 47% of the total part-time population, compared to 53% of young women.



annual population survey - workplace analysis

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date Oct 2017-Sep 2018
confidence 95% confidence interval (+/-)

Cell	gor:East Midlands		Total	Males %	Females %
	Males	Females			
Aged 16 - 19 : Full-time	18,800	8,600	27,400	69%	31%
Aged 16 - 19 : Part-time	24,200	27,400	51,600	47%	53%
Aged 20 - 24 : Full-time	84,600	59,100	143,700	59%	41%
Aged 20 - 24 : Part-time	16,500	30,500	47,000	35%	65%
Aged 25 - 49 : Full-time	585,100	328,000	913,000	64%	36%
Aged 25 - 49 : Part-time	35,800	232,500	268,300	13%	87%
Aged 50 + : Full-time	304,900	154,900	459,900	66%	34%
Aged 50 + : Part-time	77,700	176,100	253,800	31%	69%
Aged 16 - 64 : Full-time	974,800	544,700	1,519,500	64%	36%
Aged 16 - 64 : Part-time	118,600	439,000	557,600	21%	79%

What might the reasons for this divide be? In an ideal world, would those percentages not be 50-50 across all age groups?

The data on economic inactivity might provide some relevant context.

According to the [annual workplace survey](#), the most common reason for men in the East Midlands to be unemployed was because they were students or because they were dealing with a long-term illness. This was true both for those who were active jobseekers and those who were economically inactive. This was especially true for men aged 25-49 – while a small percentage of them was unemployed because they were looking after their family or home, a total of 57% of the men in the age bracket were unemployed because of a long-term illness.

The same survey paints a very different picture for women in the East Midlands.

For a start, the combined number of economically inactive and unemployed women in the East Midlands was higher than that for men: 393300 to 239700, around 64% more.

The majority of women in that number were economically inactive, meaning they neither had a job nor were looking for one.



31% of the women who were economically inactive gave the reason “looking after family/home”, with the most represented group being that of the 25-49 year olds.

Similarly, the biggest group of women who was looking for work was that of 25-49 year olds who had previously been looking after the family or home.

Long-term illness was also listed as a common reason for women to be out of work, particularly for those aged 50 and over. In fact, it was listed more often than being a student or even being retired. However, looking after a household was markedly higher than either of those reasons, making it the most common reason for women not to take part in the traditional labour market.

Another interesting statistic that seems to emerge from the data: while men listed early retirement as reasons for not wanting a job in the East Midlands, women never did the same. In fact, among jobseekers, women who were seeking work after an early retirement outnumbered the men by 1700 in 2018. What this shows is that, while men in this region were able to retire early (and stay retired), women in the same position found themselves trying to come back into work.

What might the reasons for this be? Without more in-depth research, it is only possible to speculate. However, the data does show that women in the East Midlands are more likely than not to be looking after the home or family, thus increasing the likelihood that a gendered division of labour exists. More to the point, it would appear that women who do work are likely to work for longer and for a smaller reward ([the average hourly salary for female part-time workers being £12.04 to men's £13.75](#)) Assuming a person works consistent 20-hour weeks (and excluding holidays), this adds up to a difference of £78,796 over that person's working life. This does not take into account any other events that might impact that person's working life, such as illness, pregnancy, redundancy, slow weeks, changes in zero-hour contracts, or family matters. It is also excluding of tax, which, depending on how that person is registered, might be higher or lower.

What this shows is a need to rethink how we view data on the gendered division of labour. The factors that need to be taken into account are not limited to hours spent cleaning or shopping on a particular week – it is all the work that is being done, and not done, the working hours lost, and the impact of economic uncertainty on the health and wellbeing of the population as a whole.