

THE DETACHED MALE WORKFORCE

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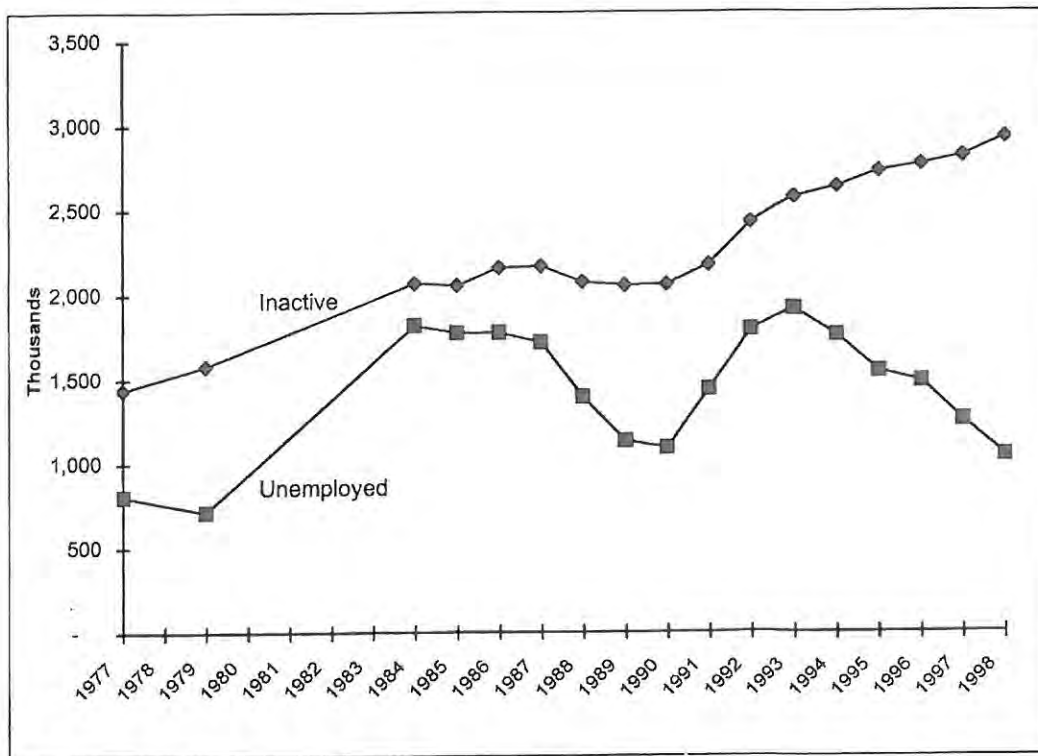
Introduction

One of the most pronounced changes in the UK labour market over the last two decades has been the rise in the number of men without work. This is only partly reflected in recorded unemployment. Indeed, although recorded unemployment among men remains higher than during the 1960s and 70s, by the end of the 1990s it had fallen back to the lowest level for twenty years.

But alongside fluctuating unemployment there has been a large and seemingly inexorable rise in 'economic inactivity' among men of working age. These are men aged between 16 and 64 who are neither employed nor recorded as unemployed. Their emergence as a significant group is novel and outside limited circles has largely gone unnoticed. Yet at the end of the 1990s, inactive men of working age outnumber the recorded unemployed by more than two-to-one.

This paper aims to plug some of the gaps in knowledge about this 'detached male workforce'. It presents the results of a large-scale survey covering factors such as their relationship to the labour market and their financial and household circumstances. A separate report based on the survey focuses on the detached male workforce in rural areas (Beatty and Fothergill 1999a). A further report looks specifically at Incapacity Benefit claimants, who make up the single largest group, and at the possible extent of hidden unemployment (Beatty and Fothergill 1999b). Both these other papers include important elements looking at the differences between localities. The present paper pools all the available data to provide an overall descriptive picture at the national scale.

Figure1: Unemployment and economic inactivity among men of working age, Great Britain 1977-98



Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 1 : Economic inactivity among men by age, Great Britain

Age	1977		1997	
	no.	as % of age group	no.	as % of age group
16-19	573,000	35.1	497,000	35.6
20-24	177,000	9.3	295,000	16.6
25-34	91,000	2.3	300,000	6.6
35-49	110,000	2.3	471,000	8.0
50-64	490,000	10.7	1,252,000	27.7
Total (16-64)	1,440,000	8.6	2,813,000	15.5

Source : Gregg and Wadsworth (1998) from Labour Force Survey

The national context

It is appropriate to begin by considering the national trends in inactivity and unemployment among men, as revealed by official statistics. This description can be brief thanks to three comprehensive analyses already published. The first, by Gregg and Wadsworth (1998), covers the national trends in labour market detachment using Labour Force Survey data. The second, by Campbell (1999), looks specifically at older workers, who represent a disproportionately large share of the total without employment. The third, by Green and Owen (1998), looks at the geographical incidence of non-employment. The purpose here is not to repeat the detailed evidence in these three reports but to set out some of the key points by way of background.

Figure 1 shows the trends in unemployment and inactivity among men between 1975 and 1998. Unemployment - in this case the ILO measure from the Labour Force Survey - has fluctuated with the trade cycle. It rose steeply during the early 1980s, fell during the Lawson boom of the late 1980s, rose again during the early 1990s and has subsequently fallen once more. In spring 1998 the Labour Force Survey recorded 1,044,000 men as unemployed in Great Britain, or 6.8 per cent of the male working age population.

Economic inactivity among men of working age has been much less responsive to the trade cycle. Excepting a brief lull in the late 1980s, inactivity has risen continuously since the 1970s. Over the period as a whole, inactivity among working age men has more than doubled. In spring 1998 the Labour Force Survey recorded 2,925,000 men as inactive, or 16.0 per cent of the male working age population. This is markedly more than the numbers recorded as unemployed, as we noted.

Table 1 shows that the rise in inactivity among men has been skewed towards older age groups. A large number of 16-19 year olds, and to a lesser extent 20-24 year olds, have always been inactive because of extended stays in education.

The big increase in the numbers staying on at school and going into higher education has had surprisingly little impact on the scale of inactivity among these younger groups, largely because so many students now work part-time and are therefore classified as 'economically active'.

At the other end of the age range, however, the number of inactive 50-64 year olds increased by just over three-quarters of a million between 1977 and 1997. The number of inactive 35-49 year olds also rose by more than 350,000. By 1997, more than a quarter of all men aged 50-64 were inactive - ie neither employed nor recorded as unemployed.

Table 2 shows that the rise in inactivity has also been concentrated among the least well qualified. Between 1979 and 1997 inactivity rose among all non-student men, regardless of qualifications, but the biggest increase was among those with no formal educational qualifications. More than a quarter of all men with no qualifications are now inactive.

Table 2 : Economic inactivity among non-student men of working age by qualification, Great Britain

Highest qualification	1979	% inactive	1997
Degree	0.8		7.0
A level or equivalent	1.6		9.0
O level or equivalent	1.5		11.0
CSE or equivalent	1.6		14.4
None	4.9		28.7

Source : Gregg and Wadsworth (1998) from Labour Force Survey

What is also known about inactivity among men is that the incidence varies from area to area. As a general rule, inactivity is concentrated in areas where recorded unemployment is also high. Many of these are urban areas, but places such as the coalfields are also badly affected. Indeed, this has prompted MacKay (1997) to formulate the general rule that "the greater the degree of labour market disadvantage, the less appropriate is unemployment as a measure of labour market slack".

Figures 2 and 3 presents a complex indicator of labour market detachment among 25-64 year old men, for districts across the whole of Great Britain. This combines three sets of figures for men in this age group:

- * Long-term (ie 6 months +) claimant unemployed men, at April 1997
- * Men who gave their economic status as 'retired', 'student' or 'other inactive' in the 1991 Census
- * Men in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or National Insurance credits for incapacity, at August 1996

In the absence of comprehensive, up-to-date Census data, this is the best estimate that can be derived at the local scale of the size of this group of men who share labour market detachment through long-term unemployment or inactivity. In each district the total is expressed as a percentage of the male population aged 25-64, from the 1991 Census.

This map confirms that although labour market detachment among men is widespread it is also skewed towards a small number of localities where detachment is particularly prominent. On this measure there are 37 districts where 30 per cent or more of 25-64 year old men are detached from the labour market, and 174 districts where the level of detachment exceeds 20 per cent. These districts are overwhelmingly concentrated in the traditional industrial areas

Figure 2: Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity among men as a proportion of males aged 25-64, by district, England and Wales, 1996-7

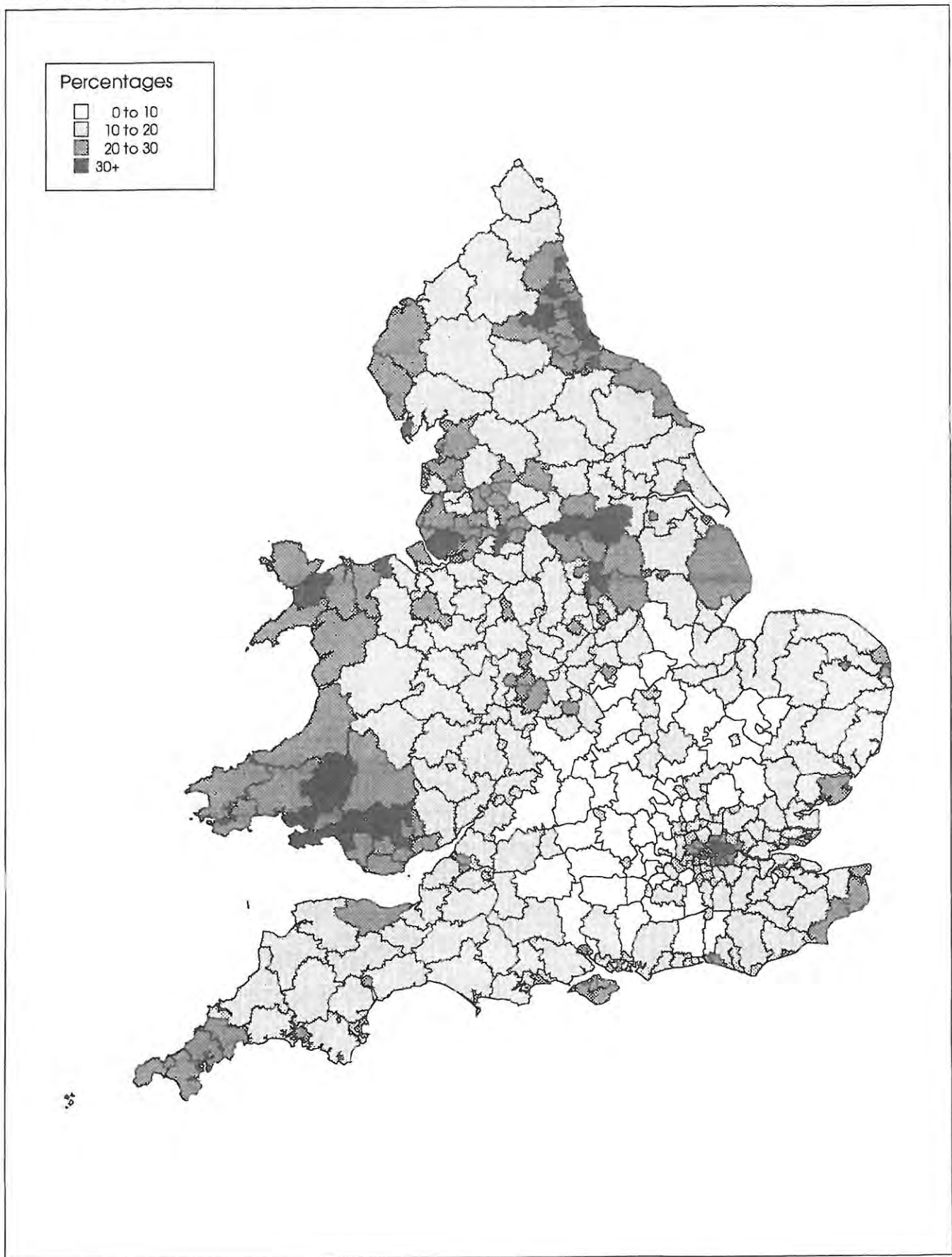
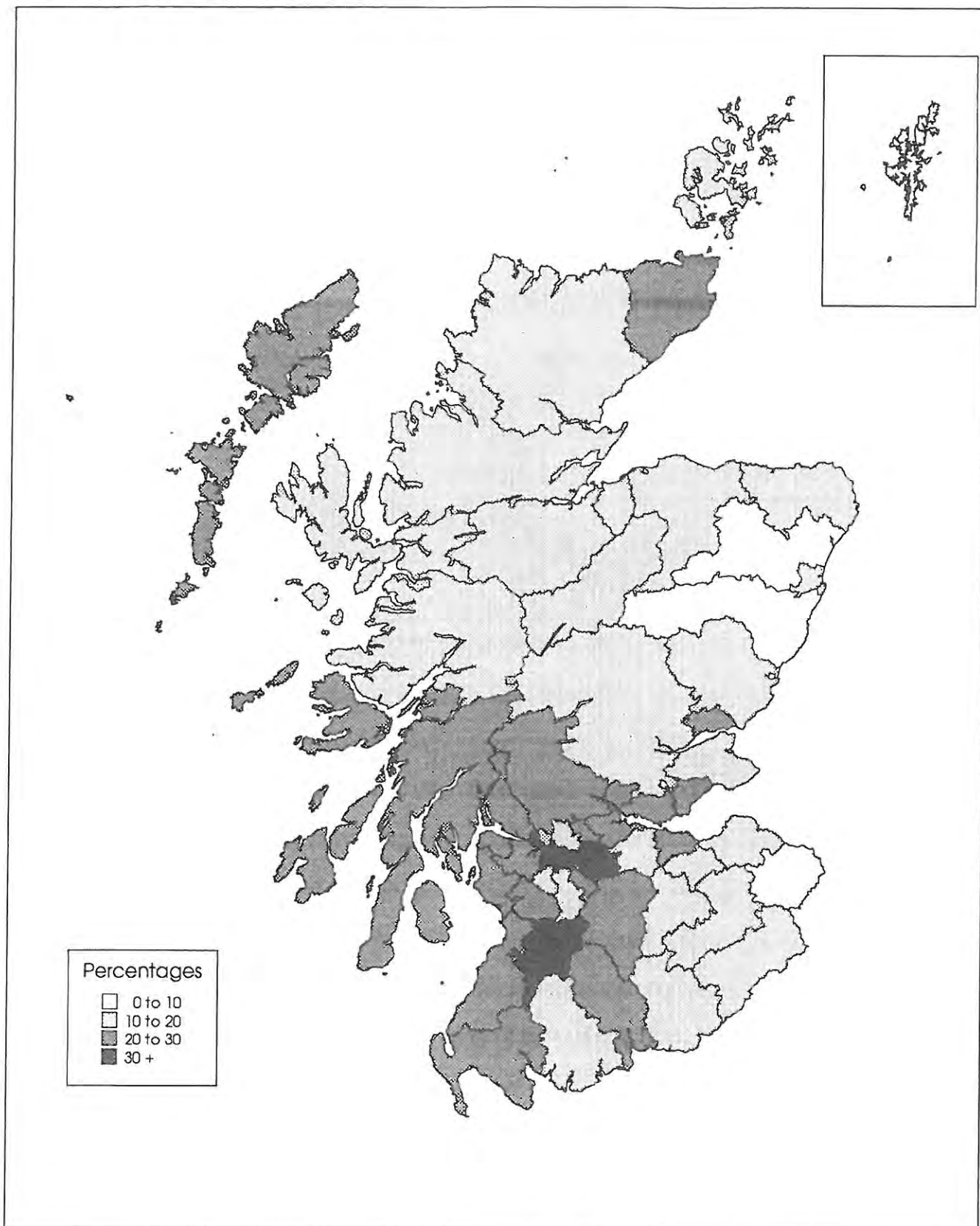


Figure 3: Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity among men, as a proportion of males aged 25-64, Scotland, 1996-7



of Northern England, Central Scotland and South Wales, though a few inner London boroughs also record high levels. Across much of southern and eastern England, outside London, levels of labour market detachment among men are relatively modest.

A new survey

The new evidence presented in this paper is based on a survey carried out by ourselves and colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University. This covered men aged 25-64 who had not had a regular full-time job for most or all of the preceding six months, for whatever reason. This is the group which we refer to here as the 'detached male workforce'. It includes the inactive and the long-term unemployed. It also includes part-time workers on the basis that this type of work is non-traditional for men and may in many cases be a second-best option resulting from a shortage of suitable full-time opportunities. Under 25s were excluded from the survey because non-employment among this group is increasingly complicated by extended stays in education and training.

The survey was carried out in seven localities. Roughly 400 interviews were conducted in each of three towns:

BARNSLEY, in the heart of the former Yorkshire coalfield, an area badly affected by industrial job losses in the 1980s and 90s

CHESTERFIELD, in Derbyshire, which shares some of the industrial job losses found in Barnsley but has a more diverse economic base.

NORTHAMPTON, a county town in the Midlands which enjoyed expansion as a result of New Town status and which has a relatively buoyant local economy.

An extension to cover rural areas was separately funded and added later. Roughly 125 interviews were conducted in each of:

WEST CUMBRIA, as an example of a rural area with a declining industrial base.

NORTH YORKSHIRE, as an example of an upland rural area. (The survey area was within the North York Moors)

NORTH NORFOLK, as an example of a rural economy with an important seaside/tourist component.

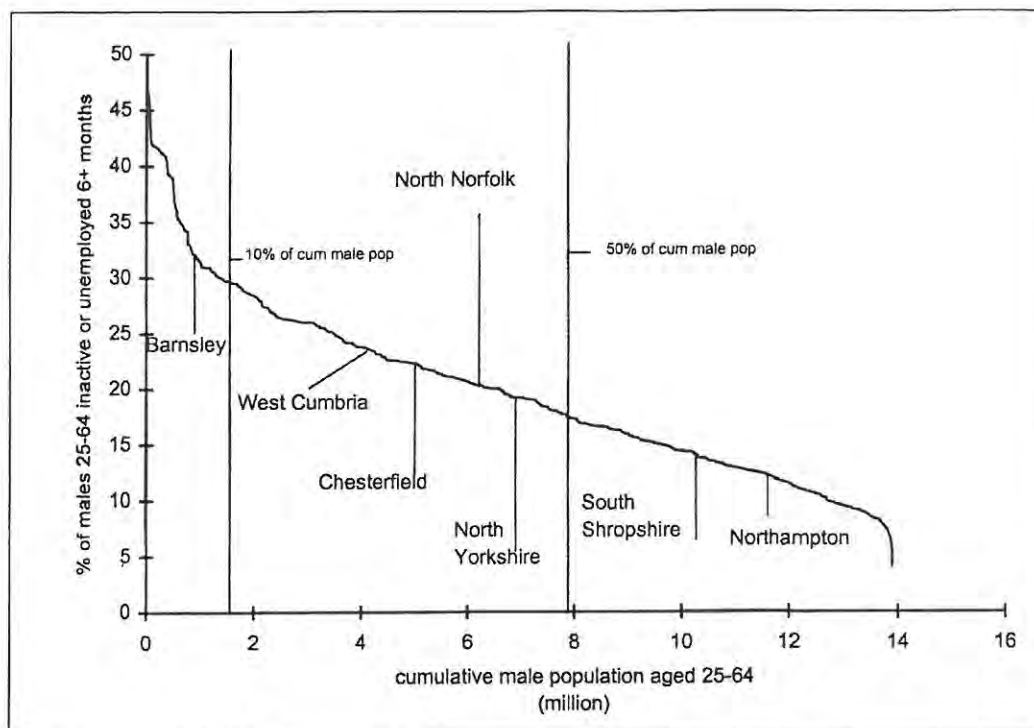
SOUTH SHROPSHIRE, as an example of a lowland rural area.

Figure 4 shows how each of the survey areas ranks in terms of our indicator of labour market detachment, described earlier. Barnsley, Chesterfield and Northampton were chosen as being representative of the top 10 per cent, next 40 per cent, and bottom 50 per cent of districts across Britain. The four rural areas include a range of local conditions.

All the interviews were carried out between the autumn of 1997 and summer of 1998. Within each locality the interviews took place in a representative sample of wards or enumeration districts. All the households within these small areas were initially targeted in a door to door survey carried out by professional interviewers. When there was no reply on the first visit a second call was normally made, often at a different time of day, and in these cases the contact rate normally rose above 75 per cent. A third call was made in a small number of areas where the contact rate after two calls was below 75 per cent. In total more than 30,000 addresses were visited.

Only 3 per cent of households refused outright to participate in the survey. However, in all areas relatively few households contain men within the scope of

Figure 4: Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity among men, by district, 1996-7



the survey - ie men of working age who had been without a full-time job for most or all of the preceding six months. The majority of households, in contrast, contain men in work or over the retirement age, or only women or students. The interviews themselves were carried out using a tightly-structured questionnaire and generally lasted 15-30 minutes. In total, 1,703 interviews were successfully completed.

In this particular paper the results from all seven survey areas are pooled to provide an overall picture. Various weightings of the data from individual areas are possible in order to generate 'national estimates'. However, no single weighting is ideal. In practice, alternative weightings make a modest difference in some cases, especially where there is systematic variation between areas.

Nevertheless, the basic picture revealed by simply pooling all the data is not altered.

Who are they?

The characteristic shared by all the men covered by the survey was a significant degree of detachment from conventional employment, despite being of conventional working age. Within this broad group there is however considerable diversity.

Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the **self-declared status** of the 1,703 survey respondents. Over one-third described themselves as 'long-term sick or

Table 3 : Self-declared status of detached men

	No. of cases	%
Long-term sick or disabled	627	36.8
Unemployed	444	26.1
Retired from paid work altogether	312	18.3
In part-time employment	155	9.1
Full-time carer	74	4.3
Full-time student	31	1.8
Looking after family or home	22	1.3
On government scheme	8	0.5
Other	30	1.8
	1,703	100.0

Source : Survey data

Table 4 : Age of detached men

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers * (%)
25 - 34	15	9	30	1	15	17
35 - 44	19	21	25	1	14	35
45 - 54	23	27	23	13	23	27
55 - 64	44	43	22	86	48	21
	100	100	100	100	100	100

* In this and subsequent tables 'full-time carers' includes men describing themselves as 'looking after family or home'.

Source : Survey data

disabled'. A quarter described themselves as 'unemployed' and nearly a fifth as 'retired from paid work altogether'. These three groups are by some margin the largest and, for the sake of convenience, we subsequently refer to them as the 'long-term sick', 'long-term unemployed' and 'early retired'.

The remainder include those describing themselves as 'part-time workers' - making up just under ten per cent of the total - or 'full-time carers', who along with those saying they looked after family or home made up nearly a further six per cent. The remainder, comprising just four per cent of the interviewees, comprise full-time students, men on government schemes and others.

Table 4 shows the **age** of these detached men. In this and subsequent tables, figures are presented for all respondents and for each of the five largest groups defined on the basis of self-declared status.

As a whole, the detached male workforce is skewed towards the older age bands. 55-64 year olds make up more than forty per cent of the total. Unsurprisingly, 86 per cent of the early retired fall into this age band, though that still means that one-in-seven early retired men are under 55. The long-term unemployed are more evenly spread across the age groups with if anything a weighting towards the younger age bands. Full-time carers share this more even distribution across the age range, but with 35-44 year olds figuring especially prominently.

The long-term sick - numerically the largest group - are skewed in terms of age, though not as much as the early retired, with more than forty per cent in the 55-64 age group and just under one-in-ten in the 25-34 group. Part-time workers broadly share this age distribution - nearly half are aged 55-64.

The **marital status** of the detached male workforce, shown in Table 5, to a large extent reflects age differences. The long-term unemployed, being a younger group on average, are less likely to be married. Just half the long-term unemployed are married, compared to two-thirds of the long-term sick and more

Table 5 : Marital status of detached men

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Married	65	66	49	82	74	70
Single	19	17	30	7	17	11
Separated/divorced	11	12	13	6	6	15
Widowed	2	3	1	4	1	1
Other	4	2	8	1	4	3
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

Table 6 : Household composition

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Partner, no dependent children	49	49	31	77	54	37
Partner, at least 1 dependent child	22	20	29	5	24	37
No partner, at least 1 dependent child	3	3	2	1	3	14
No partner, other adults	10	10	16	3	7	10
Live alone	17	18	22	15	12	3
	100	100	100	100	100	100

N.B. 'Dependent children' are defined here as all children aged less than 18.
 'Other adults' includes some children aged 18 or more.

Source : Survey data

Table 7 : Social class of detached men

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Professional	4	2	2	8	9	1
Intermediate	18	12	10	33	36	8
Skilled non-manual	13	11	10	20	17	11
Skilled manual	41	52	43	28	23	45
Semi-skilled manual	11	10	15	7	9	19
Unskilled	13	13	20	4	6	16
Armed Forces	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	1	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

than four-fifths of the early retired. Overall, around two-thirds of the interviewees were married.

Living with a partner and being married are not however the same thing, given the growing number of co-habiting couples. Table 6 deals with **household composition** and shows that in total just over seventy per cent of the detached male workforce live with a partner. The long-term unemployed and full-time carers are the most likely to have dependent children at home. Around half of full-time carers in the survey had dependent children and 14 per cent were single parents. In contrast, few of the early retired have dependent children, a reflection no doubt of their age. The long-term unemployed are the most likely to live alone, but around one-in-six of the long-term sick and the early retired also live alone.

Table 7 shows the differences between the groups in terms of **social class**, measured by the Registrar General's socio-economic classification of occupations. The early retired and part-time workers are distinctly more middle-class than the rest - just under two-thirds of both groups had previously worked in white-collar or intermediate occupations. Skilled manual workers predominate among the long-term sick and, given the absolute size of this group, among the detached male workforce as a whole. Skilled manual workers are also prominent among the long-term unemployed and among full-time carers, and both these groups also include sizeable minorities of 'unskilled' workers.

Differences in social class are reflected in the **level of qualifications**, shown in Table 8. 17 per cent of early retirees, and no less than 21 per cent of part-time workers, are graduates, compared to just 4 per cent of the long-term sick, 4 per cent of the long-term unemployed and 3 per cent of full-time carers. These differences are especially notable because the long-term unemployed are on average the youngest group and therefore the most likely to have had the opportunity to participate in the expansion of further and higher education. At the other end of the spectrum, nearly half of all the long-term sick, full-time carers and the long-term unemployed say they have no formal qualifications at all.

Table 8 : Selected qualifications of detached men

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Degree	9	4	4	17	21	3
'O' level/CSE/GCSE	28	19	28	33	46	24
NVQ/ONC/OND/HNC/HND	15	9	17	18	24	10
Craft apprenticeship	19	21	15	22	14	18
None	40	49	44	29	24	48

N.B. Columns do not add to 100 because some respondents have more than one qualification.

Source : Survey data

Table 9 : Housing status of detached men

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Owner-occupier - no mortgage	29	20	18	66	36	15
Owner-occupier - with mortgage	23	26	16	21	32	23
Rented - social housing	38	45	53	9	19	57
Rented - private	6	5	9	0.3	10	2
Other	4	3	5	4	3	3
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

Table 10 : Length of time since last regular full-time job

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Less than 6 months	6	2	12	3	5	8
6 months - 1 year	11	6	17	10	14	3
1 - 2 years	10	8	10	14	8	9
2 - 5 years	31	27	28	40	30	28
5 - 10 years	26	32	19	23	31	30
10 years or more	15	22	11	11	10	21
Never had one	2	2	2	0	2	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

Table 9 looks at **housing status**. Overall, half of the men without regular full-time jobs are owner-occupiers, and rather more than half of all these are in the privileged position of having no mortgage. But once again this disguises big differences between groups. Nearly 90 per cent of the early retired are owner-occupiers, and three-quarters of these have no mortgage. In contrast, half the long-term sick, and more than half of all long-term unemployed and full-time carers, live in rented accommodation. Amongst these, social housing (either council or housing association) predominates.

How have they become detached?

All the men in the survey had been without a regular full-time job for "most or all of the last six months". In fact, the length of **time since their last job** was usually considerably longer, as Table 10 illustrates. Only 2 per cent of the whole sample had never had a full-time job. But more than 40 per cent had not worked full-time for at least five years, and almost three-quarters had not worked full-time for at least two years. For these men, the degree of labour market detachment appears to be considerable.

To some extent all the main sub-groups share this long-term detachment but there are important differences as well. In particular, the detachment of the long-term sick is longer-standing - nearly a quarter haven't had one for at least ten years. More than half the long-term sick haven't had a regular full-time job for at least five years. Half the full-time carers too haven't been in regular employment for at least five years. In contrast, the duration of early retirement and long-term unemployment is generally shorter - less than two years for nearly 40 per cent of both groups.

Although it is generally quite a few years since all these men worked full-time, they are rarely without substantial work experience. One indicator of this is the **length of time in their last job**, shown in Table 11. In nearly 30 per cent of cases, this

Table 11 : Length of time in last regular full-time job

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Less than a year	13	11	27	0.3	7	10
1 to 5 years	26	25	37	5	25	46
5 to 10 years	13	16	12	10	12	16
10 to 20 years	20	25	13	22	20	15
20 years or more	29	23	12	64	37	14
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

job had lasted at least twenty years. In nearly half of all cases it had lasted ten years or more. Even this understates the extent of previous stable employment. The survey enquired about the last three jobs : in 36 per cent of all cases, at least one of these jobs had lasted twenty years or more.

Once more, however, there are important differences between sub-groups. The early retired are particularly likely to have had a long period in their last job. Indeed, this sort of continuous, long-term employment with a single employer is often the pre-condition for early entitlement to substantial pension rights. In contrast, there is evidence in Table 11 that the long-term unemployed and also the full-time carers have had a more turbulent employment history - for more than half, their last job had lasted less than five years.

Table 12 shows the **principal reasons for the last job ending**. Information on the causes of job loss needs to be interpreted with care. Sometimes there is a single, clear-cut reason. On other occasions a range of factors of varying importance come into play, especially where a job is left voluntarily. The survey sought to identify the principal cause of job loss, and Table 12 groups the responses into five broad categories - compulsory severance (where it is the employer that brings the job to an end), voluntary redundancy or retirement, other voluntary severance, illness and other reasons.

The reasons vary strongly between the sub-groups. Half the long-term sick left because of illness or injury. Two-thirds of the long-term unemployed left because they were laid off. Two-thirds of the early retired took voluntary redundancy or retirement. Nearly half of full-time carers left for their own reasons, for example to take up their new role as a carer. These differences are predictable.

But what is perhaps more significant is that in each group a substantial proportion of men left for other than the 'obvious' reason. Thus nearly half the long-term sick left for reasons other than sickness. And nearly one-third of the early retired left for reasons other than voluntary retirement. More than a quarter of the men who

Table 12 : Principal reason for last job ending

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Compulsory *	38	27	64	21	34	32
Voluntary - redundancy /retirement	23	11	8	69	32	7
Voluntary - own reasons **	12	5	14	3	25	46
Illness or accident	24	52	9	7	4	6
Other	4	3	5	0.3	5	8
	100	100	100	100	100	100

* Compulsory redundancy or retirement, dismissal, end of temporary contract

** Includes leaving job to become full-time carer

Source : Survey data

Table 13 : Previous experience of non-employment

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
BEFORE STARTING LAST JOB						
None	69	70	52	90	77	59
Less than a year	17	15	25	9	13	20
1 year or more	13	13	21	1	11	20
Can't remember	1	1	1	0	0	2
	100	100	100	100	100	100
BEFORE STARTING JOB BEFORE THAT						
None	76	75	68	94	80	75
Less than a year	13	14	17	4	9	11
1 year or more	9	9	13	1	9	10
Can't remember	2	2	2	0.4	2	4
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

Table 14 : Job aspirations

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Q: WOULD YOU LIKE A FULL-TIME JOB?						
Yes	49	49	86	7	38	40
No	47	46	12	90	56	54
Don't know	4	5	2	3	6	6
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Q: DO YOU THINK THERE IS A REALISTIC CHANCE YOU WILL EVER GET ONE? (for those answering 'yes' to first question)						
Yes	38	21	52	9	45	32
No	44	60	32	75	36	39
Don't know	18	19	15	16	19	30
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

now describe themselves as 'long-term sick' in fact left their last job because they were laid off. These discrepancies are important in interpreting the labour market status of individuals. How they describe themselves now - 'sick', 'retired' and so on - may in fact be a response to their labour market detachment rather than a reflection of the processes that detached them in the first place.

Just as a high proportion of men have previously had long periods of stable full-time employment, their recent detachment from employment is mostly unusual. Table 13 deals with **previous experience of non-employment** and shows that in a majority of cases there was no period of out-of-work before starting the last job, or before starting the job before that. The long-term unemployed were rather more likely to have experienced a period of non-employment between jobs but, even among this group, only half were affected. When gaps in employment occurred, they were also relatively short compared with the often lengthy periods of non-employment now being experienced.

Do they want work?

That many of the men who are currently detached from the labour market have not lost the **will to work** is indicated by Table 14. This shows the answer to the question "Would you like a full-time job?". 49 per cent of the interviewees said "yes". These include half the long-term sick and nearly 90 per cent of the long-term unemployed. The early retired are more clearly satisfied with their status - 90 per cent said they did not want a full-time job.

The answers given by part-time workers and full-time carers are especially interesting because they reveal that in many cases their present labour market position is not a situation of first choice. Two-out-of-five men in both these groups say that they would like a full-time job.

Table 15 : Looking for full-time work

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
After last full-time job ended	44	27	83	21	48	35
Now	26	5	77	4	30	3

Source : Survey data

Wanting a regular full-time job and expecting to get one are of course different things. The second part of Table 14 shows the answers to the question "Do you think there is a realistic chance you will ever get one?". Of those who would like a full-time job, opinion is fairly evenly divided between those who do think that they have a chance and those that don't, with the 'don't knows' forming a sizeable minority. The long-term unemployed are distinctly more hopeful than the long-term sick or the early retired.

In turn, even thinking that there is a realistic chance of getting a full-time job is not the same as actually **looking for work**. For all the men included in the survey, Table 15 compares the answers to two questions - "After your last job ended did you look for full-time work?" and "Are you presently looking for full-time work?". This reveals both a lower intensity of job search and a shift through time.

Taking the sample as a whole, 44 per cent said they looked for work after their last job ended. By the time of the survey, this had fallen to 26 per cent. The notable exception are the long-term unemployed, among whom the proportion looking for full-time work - more than three quarters - has been consistently high. This may owe something to the stringent rules governing eligibility for Jobseeker's Allowance, which replaced previous unemployment-related benefits in October 1996.

The decline in job search activity by the long-term sick and early retired is sharp. Just 5 per cent of the long-term sick now say they are looking for work, compared to 27 per cent at the time their last job ended - and as many as half saying they would like a job, noted earlier. One interpretation could be that individuals' health has deteriorated, making job search increasingly impossible. Alternatively, the decline in active job seeking among the retired as well as the long-term sick could be the result of growing disillusion. Indeed, as job-seekers give up the struggle they may at the same time re-define their personal status. At least some of today's 'long-term sick' and 'retired' may initially have seen themselves as 'unemployed'.

Table 16 : Reasons for not looking for full-time work

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Ill health or injury	58	96	47	25	9	10
Decided to retire	21	5	6	65	24	2
Little chance of job due to age	12	5	32	20	0	0
Full-time carer	9	1	10	2	5	84
Don't need to work	6	1	2	6	0	0
Not enough suitable jobs	5	3	14	5	14	4
No / few jobs available	5	2	13	5	16	2
No better off	3	1	11	6	3	2
Full-time education	3	1	3	18	1	1
Other	9	1	17	6	45	19

N.B. Respondents could cite more than one reason. All figures are expressed as a percentage of those in each group who are not looking for full-time work.

Source : Survey data

Table 16 shows the **reasons for not looking** cited by those who are not presently seeking full-time work. The dominant reason given is ill-health or injury - cited in more than half of all cases and by nearly all the non-jobseeking long-term sick. Half the long-term unemployed who are not looking for work also cite ill-health. Among the early retired, the decision to retire itself is cited as the reason for not seeking full-time work in two-thirds of cases, though even among this group ill-health also figures prominently.

Is health an impediment?

That ill health or injury is cited so often as a reason for not looking for full-time work deserves further investigation. This is not easy. The interviewers were clearly not in a position to make an informed judgement of their own so it is necessary to rely on what individuals say about themselves. This in turn may be strongly influenced by their benefit status, since those who are in receipt of sickness-related benefits, such as Incapacity Benefit, may feel obliged to emphasise their health problems.

Table 17 looks at the of cases in which health or injury played a **role in job loss**, though not necessarily the dominant role. In 39 per cent of cases in the whole sample, health or injury was cited as a factor in the last job coming to an end. This compares to 24 per cent who cited health or injury as the principal factor leading to job loss (in Table 12 earlier). Among the long-term sick the proportion citing health as a factor is particularly high (73 per cent). Among the other sub-groups it is lower. Even so, it is worth noting the converse point - that 27 per cent of those describing themselves as 'long-term sick or disabled' did not leave their last job for reasons at all connected with health.

Looking further back in people's job histories, Table 17 also shows that health was only a very minor factor in bringing preceding jobs to an end, even among those who now describe themselves as long-term sick.

Table 17 : Cases in which health or injury was a factor in job ending

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Last regular full-time job	39	73	15	27	13	14
Job before that	7	11	5	2	6	1
Job before that	4	7	4	1	4	0

Source : Survey data

Table 18 : Self-assessment of influence of health

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Q: DOES YOUR HEALTH LIMIT THE WORK YOU CAN DO?						
Yes	55	98	29	39	23	31
No	44	2	70	60	77	69
Don't know	1	1	1	1	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Q: DOES YOUR HEALTH KEEP YOU FROM DOING SOME TYPES OF WORK? (for those answering 'yes' to first question)						
Yes	75	71	81	82	86	97
No	3	1	9	4	11	3
Can't do any work	20	27	7	12	3	0
Don't know	2	1	3	2	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Q: FOR THE WORK YOU CAN DO, DOES YOUR HEALTH LIMIT HOW MUCH YOU CAN DO? (for those answering 'yes' to first question but not 'can't do any work')						
A lot	52	67	22	40	21	23
Quite a bit	27	24	29	32	32	40
Just a little	11	5	22	16	18	27
Not at all	10	3	26	12	29	10
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Survey data

Table 19 : Sources of financial support

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Regular paid part-time work	13	3	4	6	92	4
Temporary/casual/seasonal paid work	6	1	7	6	17	2
Pension Income	35	31	12	86	45	6
Lump-sum redundancy pay	19	14	11	45	25	5
Partner in work	24	24	16	25	44	17
Benefits system *	74	98	86	32	26	83

* excluding Child Benefit

N.B. An individual may have more than one source of financial support, so columns do not add to 100

Source : Survey data

Table 18 presents a fairly complex **self-assessment of present-day health**, focusing on whether certain types of work are problematic or whether the problem lies in how much people are able to do. Three points are worth noting. First, a degree of self-reported ill-health is widespread among men without regular full-time jobs - 55 per cent say that their health limits the work they can do. Second, among the long-term sick a degree of health limitation is, according to the individuals themselves, nearly universal. Third, although three-quarters of the long-term sick say their health keeps them from doing some types of work, only a quarter say that they can't do any work. Likewise, the other sub-groups rarely report an inability to do any work - the problem is normally the type and quantity of work.

How do they get by?

Table 19 is particularly important. It combines the answers to several questions in the survey in order to show the sources of **financial support** available to detached men.

The table shows that paid part-time working is not widespread among the detached male workforce, except of course among the self-described 'part-time workers'. Interestingly, even a small number of these (8 per cent) were not engaged in regular part-time work, presumably because their work was irregular or because they were between jobs. Of all the men who were doing regular, paid part-time work, 40 per cent were working in their usual occupation. 46 per cent were working fewer than 16 hours a week - an important cut-off in determining eligibility for unemployment-related benefits.

The second line of Table 19 looks at temporary, casual and seasonal paid work. Again, this is not widespread, and confined to a minority within all the sub-groups.

Table 20 : Benefits status of detached men

	ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	Long-term sick (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Early retired (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Full-time carers (%)
Jobseeker's Allowance	17	1	58	1	8	3
Income Support	20	25	22	4	5	55
Incapacity Benefit	39	86	9	23	2	6
Severe Disablement Allowance	5	12	1	1	0	6
Housing Benefit	30	34	46	4	16	47
Council Tax Benefit	34	37	52	6	16	51
Family Credit	2	1	3	0.3	7	3
Other	11	17	4	4	2	44
No benefits *	26	2	14	68	74	17

* excluding Child Benefits

N.B. An individual may be receiving more than one benefit, so columns do not add to 100.

Source : Survey data

Rather more than a third of men without full-time jobs receive income from a pension - which in this case means a company or private pension because the survey only covered men below the state pension age of 65. Unsurprisingly, it is the early retired who are most likely to have a pension - 86 per cent, though that still leaves one-in-seven who do not have one. However, pensions are much more widespread than just this group. 45 per cent of part-time workers, and 31 per cent of the long-term sick also have income from a pension. Even 12 per cent of the long-term unemployed have pension income.

By comparison with pensions, lump-sum redundancy pay is less widespread. Again, it is the early retired who are the most likely to have a lump-sum redundancy payment to draw on, though the figures here are likely to be boosted by the lump-sum pension payments also made on finishing work. A quarter of part-time workers also have access to lump sum redundancy money.

Only a minority of detached men - 24 per cent overall - have a partner in work. Part-time workers are the most likely to have a working partner. The long-term unemployed are the least likely - a reflection perhaps of the benefits system, which reduces an unemployed man's means-tested entitlement in response to his partner's earnings.

The final part of Table 19 shows the extent of dependency on the benefits system. Overall, nearly three-quarters of all detached men rely to some extent on the benefits system, but this disguises important differences between sub-groups. Virtually all those describing themselves as long-term sick - 98 per cent - are claiming one benefit or another. 86 per cent of the long-term unemployed are benefit claimants as well, as are 83 per cent of full-time carers. In contrast, only 32 per cent of early retirees and 26 per cent of part-time workers are benefit claimants.

Table 20 looks in more detail at **benefit status**. This is another table that needs to be interpreted with care. There can sometimes be reluctance on the part of

individuals to talk about the benefits they are claiming, though just 15 out of 1703 interviewees declined to answer questions on their benefit status and the impression of the interviewers was that the answers they did receive were remarkably frank. There can nevertheless be occasional confusion about precisely which benefits are being claimed. For example, Jobseeker's Allowance was relatively new at the time of the survey and includes both contribution-based and income-based elements, the latter having replaced more-or-less identical Income Support payments. Since the claimant unemployed are no longer entitled to Income Support, most of those among the self-declared unemployed who said they were receiving Income Support were probably in fact recipients of income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

Three points are worth noting about benefit status. First, Incapacity Benefit provides support to nearly two-in-five of the entire detached male workforce. Adding in Severe Disablement Allowance, which is available to those with insufficient National Insurance contributions to entitle them to Incapacity Benefit, and the proportion claiming sickness-related benefits rises to 44 per cent. Some of the 'other' benefits claimed also include further sickness-related benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Industrial Injuries Benefit. The long-term sick are inevitably the main claimants of sickness-related benefits, but not exclusively. Nearly a quarter of all early retirees are Incapacity Benefit claimants. So too are 9 per cent of the long-term unemployed.

The second notable point about benefit status is the prominence of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit - claimed by around a third of detached men. Claimants of these two benefits are especially prevalent among the long-term unemployed and full-time carers. By comparison, few early retirees draw on either benefit.

The third point is the importance of Income Support among full-time carers. Under the heading of 'other' benefits, full-time carers are also often claimants of Invalid

Care Allowance, which is paid to individuals who look after a severely disabled person for at least 35 hours a week.

An assessment

The survey on which this paper is based looked at what might at first sight be expected to be a fairly cohesive group - men aged between 25 and 64 who had not had a full-time job for most or all of the last six months. All these men are united by having a considerable degree of detachment from employment. In practice, the findings demonstrate that this is a far from cohesive group. The five largest sub-groups, which account for 96 per cent of the total, differ in important respects from each other. Sufficient is now known about them to provide an accurate pen-portrait.

The men describing themselves as **'long-term sick or disabled'** are the largest single sub-group and are a predominantly older group - more than 40 per cent are 55 or over, though there are a number of younger men as well. They tend to be married and living with their partner, though only a minority have dependent children. By background, this group is strongly working class, with skilled manual workers accounting for half the total. Around half live in accommodation that is rented, usually from the local council or housing association. They tend to have a long period of detachment from the labour market, often five years or more, though quite a number have previously had long periods of stable employment. Ill-health or injury was the principal trigger to their last job ending in only half of all cases, though nearly all see ill-health as an important obstacle to returning to work. More than a third of the long-term sick lost their last job as a result of compulsory redundancy. Half would like a full-time job. Very few actually look for work, however, and the proportion doing so declines as their period without work grows. This group is heavily dependent on the benefits system, and in particular on Incapacity Benefit, though nearly a third do also have income from a private or company pension.

The '**long-term unemployed**' - the second largest sub-group - are more evenly spread across the age range. They are more likely to be single - nearly a quarter live alone - but reflecting their lower age they are also more likely than the sick or retired to have dependent children. On average, their levels of skill and training are lower too. Their work experience is also more spasmodic. Several have experienced a series of relatively short-term jobs, sometimes with period of non-employment in between. Compulsory redundancy is the most common reason for their last job coming to an end. The long-term unemployed bear the hallmarks of being relatively poor - two-thirds are in rented accommodation and they are heavily dependent on the benefits system, notably Jobseeker's Allowance. They do however generally want work, and the overwhelming majority are actively looking for work.

The men describing themselves as '**early retired**' - the third largest sub-group - are on average more affluent than the sick or long-term unemployed, and more comprehensively detached from the labour market. Unsurprisingly, they are an older group - nearly nine-out-of-ten are 55 or over. Relatively few have dependent children living at home, and most are married. The higher social status of this group comes across in a number of ways. They are better qualified and are more likely to have worked in white-collar occupations, and more than half own their home outright. Their work experience is different too. Often they have previously worked for one employer for a very long time, and these jobs have usually come to an end through voluntary redundancy or retirement rather than compulsory severance. Nine-out-of-ten in this group do not now want full-time work, though a larger minority did initially seek it, suggesting that retirement was not always the first choice. The early retired draw on the benefits system markedly less than the sick or long-term unemployed but, even so, nearly a quarter are Incapacity Benefit claimants.

The men who describe themselves as '**part-time workers**' are a relatively small group. By virtue of their part-time employment they have the strongest residual attachment to the labour market but paradoxically in many other respects they are

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similar to the early retired who, as we noted, mostly now show little desire for employment. On average, part-time workers are a relatively old group - nearly half are over 55. They are often well qualified and come from white collar occupations. More than two-thirds are owner-occupiers, and nearly half have a pension. These indicators point strongly towards part-time working as an adjunct to early retirement for middle class professionals, perhaps as a valuable source of additional income or maybe just as a way of remaining active. However, there is also evidence that for a minority of part-time workers this is a second-best solution. A third say they would like a full time job, for example, and approaching a quarter draw on means-tested benefits.

Lastly, men who say they are '**full-time carers**', including those who look after family or home full-time, are a small group with much in common with the long-term unemployed. They are spread across all the age-bands, and like the unemployed are generally poorly qualified. They live predominantly in rented housing, and around half have dependent children. They are also heavily dependent on benefits. Where they differ from the unemployed is that they are much more likely to have left their last job voluntarily (to take up their caring role for example), they have on average been out-of-work longer (half for five years or more) and hardly any are now looking for work. In some respects therefore, being a full-time carer takes on the appearance of a career choice for men who might otherwise have been vulnerable to unemployment or low pay. To speculate, if their earning power had been greater they might have remained in employment and bought in the caring services which they themselves now provide.

Some policy implications

The policies of the new Labour government are strongly underpinned by an economic philosophy which sees 'supply side' problems as lying at the root of Britain's indifferent rate of economic growth. Thus labour supply is to be

expanded by bringing in groups hitherto marginalised from the workforce and at the same time the quality of the workforce is to be up-graded by investment in education and training. Reform of the benefits system is inextricably linked to these policies. At its simplest, the philosophy has been expressed as "work for those who can, security for those who cannot".

The 'detached male workforce', as we have called it, is now a major part of the economic landscape of the UK. Even a single component within it - the long-term sick of working age - is now larger than the stock of male claimant unemployed. What do our survey findings therefore have to say about the government's approach?

The first point to note is that the detached male workforce hides vast numbers of men who have been marginalised by the labour market changes of the last two decades. It is convenient to stereotype the older, economically inactive man as someone who has the means to retire early and to welcome the spread of this phenomenon as a release from the excessive years of hard labour once demanded of everybody. The stereotype is misleading. The voluntarily early retired are a minority among the detached male workforce. A more accurate stereotype is the older manual worker, whose health is past its best, for whom there is no longer a meaningful role in the labour market and for whom the benefits system now offers a preferable means of support.

Detachment from the labour market is often forced upon men rather than actively sought. We have argued elsewhere (eg Beatty et al 1997, Beatty and Fothergill 1999b) that economic inactivity among men hides substantial unemployment. The evidence from the survey confirms this. Without wishing to repeat the detailed arguments set out in those other papers it is important to note for example: the high proportion of the detached workforce who say they would like a full-time job; the substantial proportion who were compulsorily laid off; and the relatively small proportion who say they are unable to work, even among the long-term sick. But this is unemployment of a particular kind. These are men who would have still

been working if appropriate jobs had been available but who have often now given up looking for work. So Labour policy is right in thinking that there is a large but detached male workforce that could in theory still have a big role to play in the economy.

The second point to note from the survey is the very heavy dependence of the detached male workforce on the benefits system. The early retired and part-time workers are the exception to the general rule - more of them manage to be financially self-sufficient. But more than 80 per cent of the long-term unemployed and of full-time carers, and virtually all the long-term sick, are claimants. In the government's terms, security may be being provided for those who cannot work, but there is a strong suspicion that it is being provided more widely as well. So Labour's approach seems right again in linking re-integration into the labour market with a re-focusing of social security expenditure.

The third point to note from the survey is the diversity within the detached male workforce. As we have noted, this isn't really a single group. It is united by prolonged detachment from regular full-time work but by little else. Any policies which seek to promote labour market re-attachment need to come to terms with this reality.

At one extreme there are affluent early retirees who don't want to work any more. If they are not benefit claimants - and most are not - there seems little reason for promoting their re-attachment even though their skills are necessarily lost to the economy. At the other extreme there are the long-term unemployed - nearly all on benefit, nearly all wanting work, nearly all seeking work. For this group the obvious way forward is to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of adequately paid jobs and, where necessary, training to go with them. In between there is a range of sub-groups, each with particular needs. The long-term sick are the most numerous, but also a diverse group themselves. A 50 year old ex-miner, with only modest limitations on what work he can do, may above all need new jobs in his

area. A 30 year old with severe disabilities and no work history may need much more intensive personal training and support.

The Labour government is undoubtedly aware of these differences. However, two years into its New Deal flagship the programme has only just been extended to cover older workers, and the funding for these groups remains modest compared to the money available to tackle the much smaller number of unemployed under-25s. On this front, the survey findings show that the government has much thinking and policy development still to do.

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