

PART-TIME WORKING IN IRELAND IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of part-time work is one which has become increasingly important in industrialized economies, most notably Norway, Sweden, United States, Canada, Denmark and the United Kingdom, where it accounts for a substantial and growing proportion of total employment. It has been noted that resort to part-time workers was generally a response to a shortage of available labour, particularly when it coincided with periods of economic boom. However the view that part-timers would be engaged at times of economic upturn and be among the first categories of workers to be let go at periods of recession has not been upheld during the last decade. It is now recognized that part-time working is no temporary practice. Rather it represents a growth segment of an otherwise static to falling labour force in many developed economies.

The selection of Ireland as the location for study is particularly relevant since unlike some other EC countries where part-time working is extensive and well established, Ireland has been slow to adjust to this pattern of work, despite high levels of unemployment. In most countries where part-time working is common it is associated with women workers. This association in the minds of employers and trade unionists may be important in formulating attitudes towards part-time working which could have affected the prospects of Irish women in obtaining part-time opportunities and a place in the labour force.

Some recent labour market theorists have related part-time working to the

preoccupation of many employers with their search to reduce labour and other costs. Increasingly it is argued that 'flexibility' is required to meet market needs. The 'flexibility' model extends to a number of growing labour practices including 'Numerical Flexibility' (which includes the use of part-time labour as one of a number of means of meeting changes in levels of output) (Institute of Manpower Studies, 1986).

Associated with these developments there has been a significant change in the relative importance of service industries compared with the diminishing share of employment in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors in most developed economies. Service sector employment accounts for a large and growing proportion of the labour force and is expected to continue to grow in coming decades especially in the information-related industries which include professional and financial services. Indeed the size and rate of growth of services has come to be a hallmark of developed economies. By its very nature, the service sector does not lend itself comfortably to a manufacturing type production schedule based on one or more 8 hour shifts. Consumer-based services are increasingly demanded by the public on an extended hours basis, which has been the trend in the United States and Western Europe in retailing, banking and fast-food catering. There are no indications that this trend will be reversed and it seems more likely that the existing trend will continue. Where extended services are made available there are inevitable scheduling problems which make it more attractive for employers to engage part-time staff.

Part-time work represents an already well established alternative to full-time working and a possible future 'model' of working which appeals to certain categories of workers and aspiring re-entrants to the labour market. This paper explores the phenomenon of part-time working in Ireland, relative to its development in other European Community countries.

Having evaluated variations in the relative importance of part-time employment within the Community, unpublished Irish data are analysed to arrive at hypotheses concerning current patterns and the apparent reluctance of Irish employers to employ part-time labour.

Part-time is defined as "voluntary work, performed on a regular basis, in respect of which an employer and employee agree to shorter working hours than normal hours of work". This definition, which is used by the

Commission of the European Communities, emphasizes the voluntary and regular nature of part-time work; the fact that it is performed in a formal employment context and that there are no restrictions on the hours or patterns of hours worked.

2. ANALYSIS OF PART-TIME WORKING IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

This analysis is confined to the countries (9) which have been members of the European Community (EC) since 1975 or earlier. Although the information which is published by Eurostat on part-time employment, obtained from national Labour Force Sample Surveys, is limited compared with census data from some countries, it has the main advantage of being standardized, in terms of definition (e.g. of activity rates and (un)employment), timing (in a reference week between March and May) and survey procedures, throughout member states. This allows more reliable cross-country comparisons to be made than if individual country based data were used. The Labour Force Survey is also a particularly useful source of national data on countries, such as Ireland, which do not collect such data in the national Census of Population.

2.1 Location of Part-time Workers in the EC

in 1987, there were over 15 million part-time workers in the 9 member states (excluding Greece, Spain and Portugal), compared with almost 11 million in 1975. The greatest concentrations of part-time workers were in the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy. Together, these countries accounted for 82 per cent of part-time workers in the European Community in 1987. All countries experienced increases in the overall level of part-time working between 1975 and 1987. In Ireland there was an increase of 11 per cent in part-time working. The Netherlands¹ registered the largest increase in part-time working, followed by Belgium, France, Denmark and the UK (Table 1). For women, the level of part-time employment increased in every member state. Allied to the rising level of female participation in the European Community, the increase in part-time working represents a shift in the standard pattern of working.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between part-time and full-time employment in each of the member states. In terms of relative importance to the

labour force, the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom were the countries in which part-timers accounted for at least one-fifth of all workers in 1987. Even though there were considerable numbers of part-time workers in France, Germany and Italy, they formed less than 13 per cent of persons with an occupation in those countries. In 1987 the countries in which part-time working was less common were: Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg and Belgium. On average, part-time workers accounted for 14 per cent of all workers in the European Community in that year, compared with 11 per cent of workers in 1975.

2.2 Women and Part-time Employment in the EC

The increase in female labour force participation throughout the European Community has meant that women are slowly but perceptibly comprising a larger segment of the labour force. Whereas in 1975 women accounted for 35 per cent of all workers, by 1987 this had risen to 39 per cent. The OECD has stated that the importance of the rise in the number and percentage of women workers "could be overestimated if the considerable part-time element of female labour force participation were ignored" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1983).

The likelihood that women workers will be employed on a part-time rather than a full-time basis varies widely between different member states. By 1987, 45 per cent of women workers in the United Kingdom worked part-time and in Denmark the figure was 42 per cent. In Germany, 30 per cent of women worked part-time and more than one-fifth of French and Belgian women worked other than full-time schedules. Italy and Ireland had the lowest proportion of women workers engaged in part-time employment (Eurostat, 1989).

If the data for married women workers are examined, the pattern across different countries emerges as more consistent and the importance of part-time working for married women becomes quite stark. With the exception of Italy, at least one quarter of married women workers were engaged part-time in 1987 (Eurostat, 1989). In Denmark and the United Kingdom half of employed married women were working part-time. In Ireland the level was 26 per cent, a similar level to that in France, Belgium and Luxembourg.

2.3 Part-time Working Across Industrial Sectors in the EC

Sectoral data, available since 1983, indicate clearly that part-time working is closely associated with the service sector. However, Italy and Ireland contrast strongly with the other member states. Whereas all other countries had at least 70 per cent of part-time workers in the service sector in 1983, the comparable figures for Italy and Ireland were 46 per cent and 63 per cent respectively. Not only does part-time working account for a much smaller portion of total employment in these two countries, but where part-timers do exist, they are more likely to be spread over the three industrial sectors. Thirty-five per cent of Italian part-time workers were engaged in agriculture in 1983, and the comparable figure for Ireland was 24 per cent of part-time workers. Outside of Italy and Ireland the range of part-time workers engaged in agriculture was from 2 per cent in the United Kingdom to a maximum of 14 per cent in France (Table 2).

In 1983, part-time workers in manufacturing were more common in Germany, Italy and, to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark. By 1987, some countries registered an increase in part-time manufacturing jobs most notably the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Denmark. Ireland and Germany experienced a decrease in part-time manufacturing employment (Table 2).

All countries experienced a further concentration of part-time working in the service sector. Within the Community the level rose from 76 to 79 per cent between 1983 and 1987. In Ireland there was a notable increase from 63 per cent in 1983 to 74 per cent in 1987. In Italy the shift towards more part-time working in services was less pronounced. These data indicate that countries like the United Kingdom and Denmark which have a high concentration of jobs in services generally, also tend to have the greatest number of part-time service jobs. Germany has a more highly developed manufacturing sector which continues to employ a higher than average percentage of the labour force, 40 per cent in 1987 compared with an EC (9) average of 34 per cent. Therefore it would be expected that relatively fewer part-time service jobs would be created in Germany. Italy and Ireland have a less well developed service sector employing less than the EC (9) average of 60 per cent. They also employ a larger proportion of the labour force in agriculture than other member states (Eurostat, 1989).

Part-time women workers are more heavily concentrated in the service sector than their male counterparts. In 1987 the service sector accounted for 79 per cent of all part-timers and 82 per cent of female part-time workers in the Community (9). In all countries, women were less likely than men to work part-time in agriculture and manufacturing and hence were more likely to be engaged in the service sector (Eurostat, 1989).

Certain conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing analysis of part-time working. First, it tends to be associated with women workers and higher levels of female participation in the labour force. Where men work part-time it is more likely that they are engaged in agriculture and manufacturing than is the case for women. The link between part-time working and women's participation is even stronger for married than single women workers. Clearly the part-time option, where available, is predominantly sought by married women to enable them to participate in the labour force whilst having and rearing their children.

A second major conclusion is that there is no overall predominant pattern to explain part-time working across the member states. All of the data point to considerable differences, often between neighbouring countries. High levels of part-time working occur in the Netherlands, Denmark and United Kingdom. Part-time working is lowest in Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg and Belgium.

The third major conclusion is that part-time working occurs mainly in the service sector. It is only in Italy and Ireland that it supports a significant number of workers in the agricultural sector. Overall the trend is towards increased concentration of part-time working in the service industries.

3. PART-TIME WORKING IN IRELAND

As Section 2 of this paper has shown, compared with most other member states of the European Community, Ireland has a particularly low level of part-time working. This section examines mainly unpublished statistics for part-time working in Ireland from the Labour Force Surveys, available for the years 1975 to 1987. In the 1988 Labour Force Survey, the Central Statistics Office published, for the first time, data on part-time as well as full-time working in Ireland. Due to the nature of the sample and the small number of part-time workers, these data are the most detailed

which the Central Statistics Office are prepared to release, in published or unpublished form. Although limited in terms of specifying the detailed occupations held by part-timers, the data are adequate in illustrating the relatively complex changes which have occurred since 1975 in the importance of the different industrial sectors and occupations.

The surveys rely on self-description (i.e. the respondent's own judgement) to distinguish part-time from full-time workers and they exclude people who are on short-time working. Unlike the national surveys which tend to set a minimum and/or maximum hours worked, the EC Labour Force Survey uses no such definition, although a distinction is made between occasional and principal (main) employment.

Between 1975, the first year for which data are available, and 1988, part-time employment increased from 71,500 to 87,200 jobs (Figure 2). Although this represents an increase of 15,700 part-time jobs over 13 years, or 22 per cent over the 1975 level, the proportion of persons working part-time in Ireland has remained relatively unchanged. In 1975, part-time workers accounted for just under 7 per cent of those persons with an occupation. In 1988 part-timers employed in Ireland, represented less than 8 per cent of persons with an occupation.

A distinction is made in the Labour Force Surveys between 'regular' and 'occasional' part-time employees. If these categories are examined they indicate that the share of part-time working which is regular has increased from 59 to 83 per cent of part-time jobs between 1975 and 1988. Whilst in 1975, 42,500 part-time workers held regular jobs, the total in 1988 was 72,000. Hence regular part-time employment has increased by 69 per cent since 1975.

3.1 Personal Characteristics of Part-time Workers in Ireland

Relative to other EC countries, a higher proportion of men worked part-time in Ireland, accounting for 31 per cent of all part-time workers in 1988. However, if the marital status and age characteristics of male/female part-time employees are examined separately they suggest two distinct groups of workers, reflecting different sets of reasons for working part-time. The proportion of single men working part-time rose from 53 to 57 per cent between 1975 and 1988. Married men have formed between 35 and 42 per

cent of male part-time workers. In contrast with their male counterparts, single women accounted for only 21 per cent of female part-time workers in 1988, although this had increased from 17 per cent in 1975. Married women predominate among part-time workers and continue to account for over 70 per cent of all female part-time workers. The proportion of 'once married' (i.e. widowed, separated or divorced) men and women among part-time workers has fallen since 1975 (Drew, 1990).

Part-time women workers predominate in all age groups with the exception of over 65 year olds. However, amongst the 15-24 age group, men have accounted for virtually half the persons working part-time since 1975. In the age categories 25 to 64 years, women accounted for at least three-quarters of all part-time employees. At 65 years of age and over, men held a higher proportion of part-time jobs compared to the average male level in 1988 (Drew, 1990).

These demographic statistics suggest that, in Ireland, men are more likely to work part-time either upon entry to the labour force, possibly to facilitate further studies or multiple job holding, or at an age close to or following retirement age. In contrast, women accounted for more than three-quarters of all part-time workers in the 25-44 age bands which are associated with family formation and child-rearing.

3.2 Part-time Employment Patterns in Ireland

Part-time Employment within Industrial Sectors

In 1975 part-time employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing, accounted for over one-third of all part-time jobs compared with under 14 per cent of all part-time employment in 1988 (Figure 3). The comparable figures for full-time employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing were 22 per cent in 1975 and 14 per cent in 1988. This suggests that, whilst in the 1970s part-timers were over-represented in the primary sector, this pattern had reversed in the 1980s so that a smaller proportion of them were engaged in agriculture compared with full-timers.

Part-time workers were under-represented in the manufacturing sector which accounted for 27 per cent of all persons who held jobs in 1988 but

only 9 per cent of part-time job holders. Building, transport and communications and public administration combined have consistently accounted for less than 10 per cent of all part-time employment since 1975 (Figure 3).

The important industrial categories in which part-timers were found are commerce, professional services and other industries (including the category of personal service). Commerce, which includes retail distribution, banking and business services accounted for almost one-quarter of all part-time jobs in 1988. However, it is in professional services that there has been the most significant and continuous growth in part-time employment over the period 1975 to 1988 from 12 per cent to 25 per cent (Figure 3). This category has almost overtaken commerce and largely displaced agriculture as a source of part-time jobs.

Among female part-time workers the significant employers in 1988 were, in order of importance: professional services, commerce, other industries and agriculture (Drew, 1990). Together, these groups accounted for 87 per cent of all female part-time employment in 1988.

In summary, an additional 15,700 part-time jobs had been created over the period 1975-1988 and the nature of these jobs has altered considerably. Part-time jobs in agriculture have fallen dramatically. In manufacturing, the level of part-time working has remained fairly constant with the lowest levels occurring in 1979 and 1984/85. It is in the service sector that the most significant change in part-time employment has arisen. In 1975, part-timers in the service sector constituted over half of the total part-time labour force. By 1988 this figure had risen to nearly three-quarters. This increase has been particularly rapid in the 1980s and hence it has been in services that the real growth in part-time employment has occurred, which has tended to be camouflaged by the static, or falling, levels of part-time working in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors.

In general, the sectoral shift in part-time employment has occurred in parallel with that of full-time jobs, with a somewhat accelerated reduction of part-time jobs within agriculture, forestry and fishing and a parallel move towards the increased importance of part-time employment in the service sector.

Part-time Workers According to Occupational Group

An examination of the data relating to part-time occupations reinforces the earlier conclusion of a substitution of part-time service for part-time agricultural occupations, an effect which, while not altering the overall levels of part-time working, has changed the nature of part-time working in Ireland (Table 3).

Since 1975, the number of part-time farmers and agricultural workers has been steadily falling with the loss of 13,900 part-time jobs, from 26,000 in 1975 to 12,100 in 1988. This fall has been offset by job increases in clerical work (+6,100), commerce (+5,900), service work (+4,000) and other part-time jobs (including unskilled work and transport and communication workers) (+3,300). However, the major increase in jobs occurred among professional and technical occupations, a rise of some 8,700 between 1975-88.

Within the service sector, the most important part-time occupation was 'service worker' in 1988. This was followed by 'commerce, insurance and finance worker' and 'professional and technical workers'. Also important were 'agricultural worker', 'clerical worker' and 'producer, maker, repairer'. The remaining occupational categories accounted for less than 10 per cent of all part-time jobs (Figure 4).

Table 3 illustrates the changes in part-time occupations, for men and women, since 1975. The most striking observation from this table is that apart from women in part-time manufacturing occupations, part-time jobs have increased for men and women in all sectors except agriculture, since 1975. In 1988, women were still disproportionately represented in part-time agricultural occupations and were less common among the producer, maker and repairer group, than male part-timers. However, the use of part-time male and female labour in manufacturing occupations is small, relative to service jobs and has not maintained any consistent pattern since 1975.

Within service occupations, men and women have increased their representation in all occupational groups. Female part-time employment has increased considerably in the professional sector (by 6,400 jobs) and the clerical sector (by 5,500 jobs). The increase in male part-time employment

has been more evenly spread over 'other industry', professional, commercial and service worker categories.

This distribution of part-time occupations illustrates one of the interesting features of part-time working, in its association with very low-skilled occupations (e.g. cleaning, catering and sales assistants) and with higher level professionals such as teaching, nursing and paramedical skills which accounted for 19 per cent of part-time jobs held by women in 1988.

Part-time Working according to Professional Status

Allied to the shift, since 1975, of part-time working in agriculture and service occupations to predominantly service occupations, there has been a reduction in the category 'assisting relative' with a corresponding increase in part-time 'employees'. Along side this change there has been a reduction in all part-time agricultural workers (including employers, self-employed, employees and assisting relatives) (Table 4).

There has also been a fall in the number of employers/self-employed persons working part-time in the manufacturing sector. This, like the reduction in agricultural workers, may reflect the rationalization process and the difficulties of running a manufacturing business in any but a full-time capacity. The only other category in which fewer part-timers were engaged in 1988 relative to 1977 was among assisting relatives engaged in the service sector (Table 4).

The major increase in part-time jobs has occurred in the employee category. In 1977 there were 35,000 persons engaged as part-time employees in agriculture, manufacturing and services. By 1988 this had risen to 67,100 employees, 56,600 of whom were in the service sector, compared with only 9,400 in industry and 1,400 in agriculture. Of the 32,100 part-time jobs held by employees created between 1977 and 1988, almost over two-thirds were taken by women. The status of assisting relative was, by 1988, a much diminished category in terms of numbers involved. Over 30,000 part-time workers were included under this category in 1977 but this had been reduced to just over ten thousand in 1988, and of these the majority were involved in the agricultural sector (7,300). This employment status is applied mainly to female part-time workers who constituted 73 per cent of all assisting relatives in 1988.

This examination of part-time working in Ireland between 1975 and 1988 shows that while it is a predominantly female option, there are still a substantial number of men working part-time, but for different reasons than their female counterparts. The 'classic' part-time worker is female, aged 25-44 and married with dependent children. Nearly three-quarters of all part-timers are employed in the service sector.

Although part-time working has not increased appreciably since 1975, there have been notable increases in part-time service occupations, at the expense of a fall in part-time job-holders working in agricultural production. A shift has also occurred away from part-timers whose status was that of employer and assisting relative, mainly in agriculture, to a substantial increase in the employee category of part-time worker.

4. FACTORS INFLUENCING PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT LEVELS IN IRELAND

Following examination of the statistics for part-time working in Ireland this section discusses the possible reasons for the past and current low levels of part time working in Ireland. The factors which appear to best explain these levels, i.e. a low level of demand by Irish employers for part-time labour, were examined further in the empirical research, the results of which are summarized in Section 4.3.

4.1 Supply/Demand Factors in Part-time Working

Positive Factors Influencing Use of Part-time Labour

In international terms, the reasons why employers organize part-time employment vary considerably depending upon the nature of the employer organisation. However, they may be considered under 4 major categories: (a) To cope with manpower or skill shortages; (b) To retain/attract employees who do not wish to work full-time; (c) Due to the volume or nature of the work; or (d) for the cost advantages attached to part-time employment (International Labour Office, 1963).

(a) Manpower/Skill Shortage

Conditions of labour supply are considered to be one of two major external forces which influence employers' use of part-time workers (Briar, 1987). When full-time labour is scarce, as in post World War II Europe, part-time employment may be favoured as a means of expanding the available supply of labour. This influence may be particularly important at a time when employers wish to attract married women into the labour force and find it necessary to provide jobs on their terms, i.e. on a part-time basis. Similarly, specific skill shortages, such as in office employment, nursing and teaching, may also require employers to organize part-time arrangements, when there is an inadequate supply of trained personnel available to work full-time. In certain enterprises, where difficult or disagreeable working conditions exist and full-time workers are not attracted to the jobs, employers may accept part-time workers in order to overcome the shortage of full-time recruits.

(b) In Response to Demands for Shorter Working Time and Retention of Valuable Workers

There is growing evidence of a desire among workers for a reduction in working hours. This has led not only to calls by unions for an overall reduction in working time but to demands from individual workers for alternative part-time and job-sharing arrangements. Hoff (1981) has claimed that in Germany, a considerable number of firms have responded positively to individual requests for part-time work as an alternative to granting collective working time reductions. However he states that only employees with specific characteristics (i.e. skills, length of employment) were able to exert enough pressure to provoke management into granting part-time employment. In Ireland, semi-state companies such as Aer Rianta, the Industrial Development Authority and FAS have also reacted positively to job-sharing arrangements to facilitate, usually female, members of their work force.

(c) Volume/Nature of Work

Nollen et al. (1978) have stated that the Manager's decision to use part-time labour is "first and foremost a problem-solving response to an operating problem, usually a scheduling problem such as peak demand

periods". There are a number of ways in which these conditions contribute to the use of part-time employees.

The most obvious incidence is where the job itself would not justify the use of a full-time employee, as in cleaning work undertaken in factories, offices and homes. Alternatively, the work itself may be of such an intensive or heavy nature that full-time work would not be appropriate, as had been the case with telephone operators engaged on international services, or as in the work of tele-typesetting which tends to be organized on a part-time (4 consecutive hours) basis (International Labour Office, 1963).

Peak demands and workloads also influence employers to engage part-time staff. Extended hours of opening in retail outlets is one example. More generally, employers may need to make arrangements for replacing full-time staff to allow time off, holidays and sick leave arrangements. In some cases, part-time arrangements may be utilized to conform to limited budgets such as in small business, offices and libraries where only part-time clerical or other staff can be supported. Some employers may organize part-time work to extend their plant utilization in the form of an additional part-time evening shift, or as a means of reducing or eliminating the need for over-time working by the company.

(d) Cost Advantage

Although there may be reduced labour costs for employers using part-time labour, through higher productivity, reduced overtime, lower absenteeism, turnover and hence recruitment, and lower salaries, social insurance contributions and fringe benefits, Nollen (1978) has stated that monetary gain is not central to the decision to use part-time employment. In Nollen's view managers are unlikely to weigh up the economic benefits and costs of part-time employment in making a decision about their use.

Negative Factors Influencing Non-Use of Part-time Labour

The reasons for non-use of part-time labour relate, perhaps primarily, to the absence of any perceived need to engage them, i.e. a scheduling problem or shortage of skilled labour. As Nollen states, "It is not that career part-time employment is unworkable. Rather, it is that there have

not been compelling business reasons - large and obvious economic returns - for organisations to use it" (Nollen et al., 1978).

A second major reason why employers may not engage employees on a part-time basis may be due to their lack of awareness of, or interest in, the need to make such opportunities available to existing or potential employees who would prefer not to work on a full-time basis. At a time of recession, it is unlikely that employers will be particularly receptive to accommodating such requests, even when they are made aware of them, in view of the apparent shortage of full-time jobs in the labour force (Nollen et al., 1978).

A third reason for employers not engaging part-time staff relates to their negative perceptions about part-time working. Employers may fear that part-time arrangements would be disruptive and complicated to schedule and possibly lead to increased absenteeism, fewer solid working hours and additional shift changes. They may believe that part-time employment would increase total labour costs - through higher administrative costs, in the areas of record keeping, training, supervision, social security contributions and possible higher production costs due to the need for additional equipment or work stations. Part-time workers are sometimes regarded as less committed to their jobs which could be perceived to lead to higher staff turnover (Nollen et al., 1978). Employers would also be conscious of possible friction amongst full-time employees, if part-timers were introduced and most importantly that where unions are involved in the enterprise they may object to their introduction.

Further, and less significant, reasons which have been cited as influencing employers' decision to not use part-timers are the fear that full-time workers would want to cut back to part-time, the possibility that professional standards would be weakened and that requests for employment would be stimulated from unqualified people.

4.2 Reasons for Low Levels of Part-time Labour in Ireland

Since the level of part-time working is low level in Ireland, relative to many member states of the European Community, it is important to consider the possible reasons. Is it a reflection of the unwillingness of women to work part-time (i.e. supply related) or due to a reluctance by employers to

seek or use part-time labour (i.e. demand related)? One reason might be that there is no perceived need by employers for part-time workers i.e. no scheduling problem or labour shortage. Another major reason may be due to the negative attitudes which tend to prevail in relation to employers' perceptions of part-time working i.e. that it is disruptive, complex and costly to schedule and administer. Part-time employees are commonly regarded as less committed to their jobs and this could be perceived to lead to greater turnover of staff. Employers would also be conscious of possible sources of friction between full-time and part-time staff over seniority, pay and conditions.

Employers' attitudes would also be affected by prevailing expectations in relation to the employment of women since part-time working is, rightly, associated with the re-entry of women to the labour force. Negative attitudes to women's re-entry to, or continuation in, the labour force would discourage employers from facilitating such women.

One further factor which could affect the use of part-time employees is the role that trade unions may play in encouraging/discouraging the practice and the degree to which individual unions can influence employers.

Supply-related Factors in Part-time Working in Ireland

The level of part-time working in any country tends to be associated with the labour market activity of women. In Ireland the female activity rate in 1987 was the same as that of Greece and the third lowest in the European Community at 34 per cent. Given the close association between low female participation rates, particularly by married women, and levels of part-time work, the first obvious question is - what do women want? Two surveys undertaken by Fine-Davis indicated that there was a strong desire amongst married women who wished to work outside the home, to work part-time. In a report published in 1976 only 12 per cent of non-employed married women wanted full-time work as compared with 88 per cent who wanted to work part-time (Fine-Davis, 1977). A similar result was obtained in a later survey in which 92 per cent of those expressing a desire to work outside the home, would prefer part-time work (Fine-Davis, 1983). She concluded that along with adequate child-care provision, as recommended in the Report of the Working Party on Child Care Facilities for Working Parents, and flexible working hours for men and women, "the

extension of part-time employment opportunities would constitute both a necessary and desirable change in work patterns", provided that the rights and guarantees that apply to full-time work are extended to regular part-time workers on a pro-rata basis.

Data for the unemployed persons seeking work also reinforce the association between part-time working and the employment of married women. In 1988, 91 per cent of the 21,800 persons who sought part-time work were married (or formerly married) women. More than two-thirds of these women were aged 25 to 44 years.

This preference for working part-time by women who have married and started a family is also reflected in the research on career/marriage expectations of Leaving Certificate students surveyed in 1981. Whilst half of the girls "would give up [their] job to mind children on a full-time basis", 40 per cent "would combine part-time working with minding children while spouse worked full-time", as compared to 6 per cent of boys who would opt for a similar arrangement. In marked contrast, less than 1 per cent of girls "would work full-time while spouse would give up work to mind children full-time", compared to 64 per cent of boys who aspired to such an option (Hannon et al., 1983).

Statistics for part-time workers support the view that, for many Irish women, part-time working is the only practicable means of combining parenthood with a job outside the home. Sixty-nine per cent of all Irish part-time employees were female in 1988; 79 per cent of whom were either married/divorced/separated and 81 per cent were aged 25-64 years. Among male part-time workers 57 per cent were single and 35 per cent were aged 24 years and under (Central Statistics Office, 1990). This suggests that part-time employment for men is sought/accepted at the time of initial entry to the labour market whereas for women it coincides with the period of marriage and family formation.

In 1988 55 per cent of women holding full-time jobs, had no dependent children. The likelihood of women working full-time diminishes with each dependent child. Working mothers with 3 or more dependent children accounted for only 13 per cent of women working full-time (Figure 5). The pattern for part-time women workers is different. Only 28 per cent of part-timers had no dependent children. The remainder had at least

one dependent child. Whilst the likelihood of working full-time correlates negatively with the presence of each additional dependent child, 23 per cent of part-time women workers had two dependent children, a higher percentage than those with only one dependent child. (Figure 5) Working mothers with 3 or more dependent children accounted for 31 per cent of all women working part-time in 1988. These data suggest that while full-time working may be feasible for women with one or no dependent children, it is more difficult to sustain with increased family size. Irish women, like their counterparts in other countries, would recognize part-time working as a way of maintaining a presence in the labour force whilst rearing small children, particularly in an environment where the state takes little or no responsibility for childcare.

Among unemployed married, separated or widowed women who were looking for work, the unpublished data for 1988 indicate that 21 per cent sought part-time jobs. This was not the case among single women, of whom 96 per cent were seeking full-time jobs, as compared with only 3 per cent who wanted part-time work. These data further emphasize the desire by married women to work part-time, unlike their single counterparts (Central Statistics Office, 1990).

Further evidence of the different role which part-time working plays in the male and female labour supply can be seen in Table 5. In 1988 only 23 per cent of all women cited "could not find a full-time job" as the reason for working part-time, as compared with 57 per cent of all men. While men were more likely to have opted for part-time working in the absence of a full-time job, to pursue further education/training or due to illness, disability or other reasons, 40 per cent of the women were working part-time due to 'family responsibilities'. A further quarter were doing so because they did not want a full-time job. Less than one per cent of all male part-timers cited 'family responsibilities' as the reason for working part-time. Among married part-time workers the divergence was even more pronounced. Almost half the married women who worked part-time mentioned that they did so because of family responsibilities, while a further 29 per cent stated that they did not want to work full-time. Only 15 per cent of married women were working part-time in the absence of a full-time job, whereas the comparable figure for married men was nearly sixty per cent (Table 5).

Whilst for men part-time working tends to be a 'second-best' option, for women it is both sought and used as a means of reconciling the dual role of parent and provider. In contrast, the majority of men, and indeed male school-leavers, would regard full-time working as the norm for the remainder of their working lives. The likely exceptions to this would be in circumstances where such jobs were unavailable or impractical, due to commitments such as further education, disability or the onset of retirement.

Nollen (1978) considered that "part-time employment does not occur and will not expand without concrete incentives for employers" in the form of inducements, cost savings or solutions to problems. The desire to work part-time, held by many married women, would not be enough in itself to create more part-time opportunities. Employers' demand for part-time labour will also be affected by wage and overhead costs, trade union attitudes towards part-timers and the general social, technological and economic climate.

Demand-related Factors in Part-time Working in Ireland

Having established that part-time working is preferred to full-time schedules by a sizeable minority of women, it is necessary to examine the demand for part-time labour by employers to try and explain the current low levels of part-time working in Ireland. The following are possible reasons why employers have been reluctant or unwilling to create opportunities for part-time working.

(a) Economic Conditions

Economic conditions in Ireland have tended to militate against the use of part-time workers. Ireland, unlike countries such as the United Kingdom, Denmark and Germany, has never experienced a labour shortage at any time this century. During the protectionist era prior to the late 1950s, Ireland's economy grew relatively slowly and there was an excess supply of labour whose traditional outlet was emigration (Ruane, 1982-83). Economic growth was characteristic of the 1960s and early 1970s but a general labour shortage was not evident, although there were specific skill shortages mainly in technical, managerial and craft trades. These were met by inducing skilled workers to relocate or return to Ireland, and through

expanded training opportunities. These skill shortages were not in areas where part-time working is common. Since the recession, unemployment has risen along with emigration which reached an annual outflow of over 50,000 people from Ireland in 1988 (Tansey, 1990). Hence there is still, and will continue to be, an excess supply of labour.

(b) Link Between Services and Part-time Work

The Service Sector in Ireland has grown rapidly over the last few decades. By 1988, services² accounted for 57 per cent of total employment in all sectors (Central Statistics Office, 1990). Unlike its emergence in Britain and Denmark the sector has not given rise to any substantial increases in part-time employment in Ireland.

There may be a number of reasons for this. White-collar employment (i.e. clerical, commercial, professional and technical jobs) has been a major contributor to job growth and in 1988 41 per cent of workers were engaged in white collar jobs (Central Statistics Office, 1990). This has created relatively few part-time jobs, except in areas such as clerical and secretarial staff and office cleaning. It might be hypothesized that Ireland's expansion of the service sector has not coincided with a labour shortage and therefore has generated few part-time jobs. A further reason may be that the public sector accounts for a large proportion of service employment, and, as in other countries, it has been slow to respond to the call for an expansion of part-time opportunities, until very recently (Humphreys, 1986).

(c) Attitudes Towards Female Labour Force Participation

Female participation in the Irish labour force has traditionally been low in Ireland and remains low by European Community standards. This is particularly the case for married women. In the European Community (12) the activity rate for married women in 1987 was 42 per cent (or 44 per cent if Spain and Portugal are excluded). In Ireland the rate was the second lowest in the Community at 29 per cent (Eurostat, 1989).

The reasons for this stem from religious and cultural norms. A woman's place is in the home, at least if she is married. This view was enshrined in Article 41 of the Irish Constitution which says "...the State recognises

that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved". Further evidence of this attitude prevailing, until the mid-1970s, can be drawn from the existence of a 'marriage bar' which prohibited the employment of married women in the teaching profession, the civil service and semi-state bodies. The bar also affected the careers of women in banking and some major private sector industrial companies since a similar policy applied to married women. For teachers, the 'marriage bar' was removed in 1958 when a specific shortage of such professionals was experienced. However, married women were still debarred from employment in the other organisations up until the enactment of the Civil Service (Employment of Married Women) Bill in 1973. In the Dail debate of 17 July 1973, which led to the enactment of this Bill, the Minister for Finance stated that:

"I do not think there is any real need to fear that the employment opportunities for young people will be jeopardised or minimised as a consequence of married women being entitled to remain in the public service.....One need only look at the private sector in any part of the country to see the number of married women who continue to work after marriage. It is small because God is good and one can usually project interests other than collecting wage packets as time passes by'.

(This quotation also highlights the fact that until the advent of legislation in the late 1970s all forms of artificial contraception were illegal in Ireland). Although married women were free to take up employment in the remaining companies and businesses, a combination of negative attitudes and a plentiful supply of single women, severely restricted their degree of participation. Unlike other European countries where women had entered the labour force during the War years on an unprecedented scale, there was no tradition in Ireland of women playing such a role.

(d) Trade Union Attitudes

A further external factor which has influenced employers' attitudes and willingness to create part-time jobs, is that of the attitude of the trade union movement. Like the Trade Union Congress in the United Kingdom, Irish unions have sought to protect the full-time jobs held by their

members. Even if employers did indicate a desire or willingness to engage part-time staff, the attitude of the Irish unions would generally be negative. Hence, the trade unions in Ireland could be perceived as an obstacle to the expansion of part-time employment. However, in 1986 in recognition of the likely increase in demand for part-time labour the Irish Congress of Trade Unions launched a campaign in which it actively sought the extension of equal rights for part-time employees, and the elimination of existing poor pay and conditions for part-time workers (Irish Congress of Trade Unions, 1986).

(e) Negative Expectations Relating to Costs of Part-time Staff for Employers

Since part-time employment is relatively uncommon in Ireland, it could be expected that employers would regard it as unattractive and cumbersome. If they have considered it, they might conclude that it would add to their labour costs, and create problems in relation to full-time staff, unions, scheduling and supervision. One specific area where employers would have been justified in seeing the practice as adding to costs was in National Insurance contributions. Prior to the introduction of the Pay Related Social Insurance (P.R.S.I.) Scheme in April 1979, part-time employment for the purposes of the trade or business of an employer was insurable at the ordinary rate of contribution for social insurance benefits irrespective of hours an employee worked in that employment (Vaughan, 1985). This would have penalized those who engaged part-time staff and hence this practice would have acted as a disincentive to the employment of part-time workers. In the United Kingdom, it had been possible for part-time workers to opt out of paying any stamp, with a corresponding loss of entitlements. This was not the case in Ireland.

This disincentive was removed with the introduction of PRSI which ensured that employment of 'inconsiderable extent' (i.e. total hours are less than 18 per week and the employee is not solely dependent on the earnings received or payment does not exceed £26 per month) comes under class J social insurance contribution rate. Under this, employers contribute 0.4 per cent of gross earnings and employees are insured for occupational injuries benefit only (Vaughan, 1985). Following the outcome of a recent case before the European Court of Justice in 1989, the exclusion of part-time workers from full social insurance cover is in breach of the EC Directive on Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Social

Welfare (Nesbitt, 1990). This ruling will have major implications for the Irish social welfare code.

In considering possible explanations for the past and current levels of part-time working in Ireland, it appears that the reasons did not relate to supply. Part-time working is favoured, if not positively preferred, by many married women, particularly with dependent children. It seems more likely that a variety of factors have depressed employers' demand for part-time (female) workers. These factors relate to high levels of unemployment and emigration which have characterized the Irish labour market, traditional attitudes towards, and expectations of, married women's role as mothers/housewives and low levels of part-time employment within the public service which has accounted for much of the growth in service sector employment since the early 1970s.

4.3 Case Studies of Part-time Working in Irish Banks and Supermarkets

Case studies in banks and supermarkets illustrate the important role of the trade unions in negotiating the terms and conditions of part-time workers (Drew, 1990). Negotiations between the Irish Bank Officials Association (IBOA) and the Associated banks led to a technology agreement under which part-time and full-time temporary workers could be recruited. The legacy of the agreement is that a strict quota (2.5 per cent) of part-time staff can be recruited, particularly from among former bank officials, but none of them can become full-time permanent bank staff. Similar negotiations took place between the supermarket multiples and the Irish National Union of Vintners, Grocers and Allied Trades Assistants for the introduction of part-time labour. This led to a two tier pattern of part-time labour usage in the supermarkets. There was no change in the terms and conditions of casual part-time staff but permanent part-timers could be recruited provided they were granted pro rata rights. A ratio of 1 in 4 part-time to full-time staff was instituted.

In both banks and supermarkets part-time workers were sought and used primarily to meet peak demands, to provide a measure of flexibility, because the work was not full-time, to avoid the need to use overtime, to cover extended hours of opening and to reduce wage/overhead costs. The reasons for non-use of part-time labour, which applied only in banks, related to continuous work flow, no perceived need for them and the possible

complications which could arise from using part-timers.

Within banks all part-time workers were female and aged 20-40 years, some, but not all, of whom were married and had formerly held posts as bank officials. In supermarkets part-time jobs were fairly evenly split between men and women. Among casuals, nearly 60 per cent were male whereas this ratio of male to female was reversed for pro rata part-timers where women predominated. All casual supermarket staff were single, while a minority of pro ratas were married. Casual staff were also younger than pro ratas, most were aged 20 years or younger whereas pro ratas ranged between 20 and 50 years of age. Most pro rata staff were under 30 years of age.

Factors influencing current and future demand for part-time labour varied between the banks and supermarkets. Technological change, changing trade union attitudes, customer demand and abolition of the marriage bar had been positive factors, to date, in banking. In supermarkets the significant positive influences had been rising labour costs, customer demand, abolition of the marriage bar, changing trade union attitudes, requests by staff to work part-time and the granting of equal pay for women.

The main factors which were considered likely to influence future levels of demand for part-time staff in banks and supermarkets were customer demand (particularly for lunch time and later opening in banks), rising labour costs and requests by staff to work part-time. Banks also cited technological change and changing union attitudes whilst supermarkets were more likely to view trade unions as a negative factor compared with other positive factors such as the economic climate, conditions of trading and the possibility of government intervention to promote part-time working. Half of the bank respondents believed that the granting of pro rata protection to part-time workers would negatively influence demand in the future. Supermarket respondents were unanimous in believing that such a move would have no effect either way on demand.

A majority of the respondents in banks considered that part-time working was appropriate for married men and women, parents, the retired, students and men and women with dependent relatives other than children. At least half of respondents in supermarkets deemed it appropriate for all the categories listed, including the disabled. However, some of the super-

market respondents distinguished between married women and men and similarly between mothers and fathers of young children. This emerged in the number (nearly half of respondents) who did not feel that part-time working was as appropriate for men in these situations.

Part-time workers in banks were rated equal to, if not better than, their full-time counterparts in terms of productivity, absenteeism, loyalty, employee relationships, availability, recruitment, training costs, wage costs, fringe benefits, supervision and use of overtime. A similar and even more positive view emerged in supermarkets. In banks the negative ratings of part-timers (mentioned by at least one third of respondents) related to promotability, record keeping costs and labour turnover. In supermarkets the only criteria by which part-timers were viewed as worse than full-timers by a majority of respondents was in terms of labour turnover.

The majority of bank and supermarket respondents believed that part-time working could be undertaken in most clerical, sales, secretarial and machine operating jobs, including that of terminal operator. Banks identified an extensive list of jobs which they believed could not be undertaken on a part-time basis which included management and any other posts requiring continuity, confidentiality, security or specialist skills. In supermarkets, manager, supervisor and chargehand were the jobs which in respondents' views could not be done by part-time staff.

In both banks and supermarkets, a major constraint on the extension of part-time working arises from the trade union agreements which effectively limit the scale of such posts. Attitudes were also important and related to negative expectations or experiences of part-time working. This was more important in the case of banks, where Head Office respondents had had little contact with such staff (none of whom worked in Personnel Departments) and among branch users who had experienced problems relating to the nature of the part-time temporary appointments (labour turnover, lack of continuity and dissatisfaction voiced by the part-time staff about wage rates and conditions). Due to the nature of their contracts part-time staff in banks were seen as synonymous with temporary staff and were generally viewed as a necessary expedient. In supermarkets it was clear that more part-time workers were sought and most respondents had favourable impressions of this category of worker. None dissented from the view that part-time permanent staff deserved pro rata rights.

4.4 Policy Initiatives supporting Part-time Employment in Ireland

In 1984 the Irish Government launched a pilot job-sharing scheme in the public service (Humphreys, 1986). By July 1985, 358 applications had been received, of which 191 were granted. The scheme was subsequently extended to the health sector, local authorities and higher education. However, Humphreys noted that participation has been disappointingly low, representing only a minuscule proportion of the labour force in any one organisation.

In February 1990, the number of job-shares in the Irish Civil Service was 902. Of that total, only 17 were men and the data indicate that there were no job-shares at a grade higher than that of Assistant Principal. The greatest concentration of job-sharers is in the clerical grades (Clerical Officer/Assistant) which accounted for 60 per cent of the total. Job-sharing personnel among executive grades (up to Higher executive/Tax Officer) totalled 208, or 23 per cent. The remaining job-sharers include Staff Officers and professionals or specialists.

In an attempt to address the problem of unemployment, the Government introduced a Social Employment Scheme (SES) in 1985, which offers part-time work on a half-weekly basis for one year to those who have been unemployed for over a year and a drawing Unemployment Assistance (Humphreys, 1986). A variant of this scheme was relaunched in 1988 as the Part-time Incentive Scheme, under which people who get part-time work for under 24 hours a week and who were on the long-term rate of Unemployment Assistance, or on the Social Employment Scheme, can get an income supplement (Blackwell, 1989).

Data for the early years of the SES are unavailable. However according to FAS who are currently responsible for administering the scheme, there were over 11,000 participants during 1989 (FAS, 1990a). Women's throughput on the Social Employment Scheme in 1989 was c. 1570, or 14 per cent of the total. This low participation is ascribed to lack of interest by women in the scheme and/or the nature of the work activities on the SES, many of which are purely manual. FAS have set a target of 17 per cent for female participation on the 1990 Social Employment Scheme (FAS, 1990b).

5. CONCLUSIONS

In international terms, part-time working is one of the major forces shaping the labour markets of industrialized market economies. In virtually all OECD and EC countries it has grown in association with increased female participation and service sector expansion. The increase in virtually all countries coincides with a general aspiration for reduced working hours.

There are obvious advantages for both employees and employers in part-time arrangements. These stem from the flexibility which it allows to employers to arrange part-time schedules to coincide with peak demands, staff shortages, or when the job does not require full-time labour. For employees, it allows the opportunity to reconcile working time with other pursuits, such as family, study and leisure activities. For trade unions, part-time working has traditionally been viewed with caution verging on hostility. This arises due to the perceived threat that part-time workers may undermine full-time employment and make the negotiation of shorter working hours for all more difficult. Many unions, including the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, have sought the improvement of employment rights for all part-time workers, in recognition of the growth in this form of employment.

By European standards the level of part-time working is particularly low in Ireland and has been so since her entry to the European Community. The current level is closest to that of Italy and, until recently, the Netherlands. The explanation for this does not point to any shortage in the part-time (potential or actual) labour supply. Rather the reasons appear to lie on the demand side, in the form of employers' reluctance to introduce/extend part-time schedules. The negative attitude towards part-time working by employers relates to the complex interplay of socio-economic factors in Irish society. In particular, historical and economic conditions have not created any labour shortage during this century which could have had the effect of drawing upon female part-time labour. This occurred in Britain and other European countries during and after World War 2. Traditional attitudes towards married women's employment, trade union opposition, negative expectations of the difficulties attached to part-time arrangements and, to date, the relatively slow rate of growth in the service sector, particularly in private services, have all conspired to dampen potential demand for part-time working. Alongside these, the social insurance

arrangements up to 1979 would have acted as an obstacle to potential employers of part-time labour.

Whilst the level of part-time working in Ireland has not increased substantially since 1975, there have been three significant shifts over the period 1975-88. The first has been the reduction in occasional part-time employment in favour of regular part-time working. The second trend has been in the substitution of part-time agricultural employment for jobs within the growing service sector. Hence the increase in service occupations. Finally there has been a reduction in the number of part-time assisting relatives (particularly in agriculture) and an increase in part-time employees (especially in services). These three shifts reflect the underlying transition of the Irish economy away from agriculture towards, in employment terms, a service based economy.

As in other countries, part-time working in Ireland is associated with women workers, although men account for a higher proportion of such workers in Ireland than in most EC states. Women part-time workers are predominantly drawn from the 25-65 age groups and are likely to be married and to have dependent children. The majority are working part-time due to 'family responsibilities' or because they do not want full-time employment. In contrast, men who work part-time are more likely to be under 25 years or over 65 years and single, compared with their female counterparts. Men tend to hold part-time jobs in the absence of full-time employment or for reasons such as health/study and are only rarely doing so for family reasons.

Over two-thirds of all Irish part-time workers, and three quarters of women part-timers in 1988, were employed in the professions, commerce and 'other' industries. The most common part-time occupations in 1988 were service, commercial, professional/technical and clerical jobs. Over 80 per cent of women part-time workers were concentrated in these occupations.

The case studies in banks and supermarkets illustrate the important role of the trade unions in negotiating the terms and conditions of part-time workers. In both banks and supermarkets part-time workers were sought and used primarily to meet peak demands, to provide a measure of flexibility, because the work was not full-time, to avoid the need to use overtime, to cover extended hours of opening and to reduce wage/overhead costs.

The main factors which were considered likely to influence future levels of demand for part-time staff in banks and supermarkets were customer demand (particularly for lunch time and later opening in banks), rising labour costs and requests by staff to work part-time.

Attitudes are likely to play an important role in furthering or hampering part-time employment opportunities. Irish employers have traditionally sought to conform to the full-time 'norm', which has suited male workers and trade unionists. Such attitudes are no longer tenable in the context of the need for flexibility in working life and a more equitable sharing of domestic work and childcare responsibilities within the home. The adoption of less rigid work structures, which allow part-time or job-sharing arrangements, sabbatical leave and/or career breaks, could provide the kind of flexibility for all workers which women have long sought.

FOOTNOTES

1. According to Eurostat, the definition of part-time work has been considerably changed in the Netherlands. Up to 1979, it was defined as "working less than 40 hours and less than the number of hours which would be usual in a given job". Since the 1981 survey part-time work has been defined as "working less than 40 hours". This change has increased the incidence of part-time work captured by the survey.
2. Services include: Distribution trades, Commerce, Transport and Communications, Finance, Public Administration and Other Services.

Table 1 Persons Working Part-Time in the EC (9) 1975-87

COUNTRY	YEAR										
	1975	1977	1979	1981	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	Percentage Change 1975-1987	
	THOUSANDS										
FR of GERMANY	T	2830	2980	2938	3187	3275	3204	3337	3419	3584	19.6
	M	294	282	247	259	265	323	318	342	323	9.9
	F	2536	2698	2691	2928	3011	2875	3019	3076	3061	20.7
FRANCE	T	1757	1907	1784	1793	2053	2199	2323	2518	2504	42.5
	M	387	404	321	299	317	342	395	426	438	13.2
	F	1370	1502	1463	1494	1736	1846	1928	2092	2066	50.8
ITALY	T	1116	1185	1068	1051	952	1113	1086	1036	1156	3.6
	M	461	460	412	405	335	448	416	392	441	-4.3
	F	655	726	656	645	617	665	669	644	715	9.2
NETHERLANDS	T	440	460	544	1102	1041	NA	1150	NA	1718	290.5
	M	92	98	95	337	225	NA	258	NA	516	529.3
	F	358	373	449	765	815	NA	892	NA	1202	235.8
BELGIUM	T	175	216	215	225	275	278	302	330	343	96.0
	M	25	28	24	31	44	33	42	47	43	72.0
	F	149	188	192	193	231	245	260	283	300	101.3
LUXEMBOURG	T	9	7	8	NA	10	9	11	10	11	22.2
	M	1	1	1	NA	1	1	2	2	2	100.0
	F	7	6	7	NA	8	7	8	8	9	28.6
UNITED KINGDOM	T	4089	4214	4070	4275	4389	4950	5085	5209	5446	33.2
	M	347	340	293	445	458	596	611	644	750	116.1
	F	3743	3874	3777	3830	3931	4354	4474	4565	4696	25.5
IRELAND	T	70	76	59	NA	75	66	69	66	78	11.4
	M	20	20	17	NA	21	19	18	19	23	15.0
	F	50	56	42	NA	53	47	51	48	55	10.0
DENMARK	T	477	513	558	565	561	522	618	626	638	33.8
	M	63	75	73	74	86	113	117	126	133	11.1
	F	414	438	485	491	475	409	501	500	505	22.0
EUROPE 9	T	10962	11559	11245	12197	12630	12330	13980	NA	15279	39.4
	M	1680	1698	1483	1850	1752	1880	2177	NA	2668	58.8
	F	9282	9861	9762	10347	10878	10450	11803	NA	12610	35.9

Due to rounding up of totals for men/women, some columns do not add up to the exact combined totals

NA indicates data not available

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Surveys 1975-87

Table 2 Employment of Part-time Workers in the EC (9) according to Sector 1983 and 1987

Country	Agriculture		Industry		Services		Percentage Change		
	1983	1987	1983	1987	1983	1987	1983-1987		
	Thousands (%)		Thousands (%)		Thousands (%)		Agriculture	Industry	Services
Germany	323 (9.9)	253 (7.5)	657 (20.1)	646 (19.1)	2295 (70.0)	2486 (73.4)	-21.7	-1.7	8.3
France	295 (14.4)	237 (9.5)	257 (12.6)	261 (10.5)	1494 (73.0)	1993 (80.0)	-19.2	1.6	33.4
Italy	328 (34.5)	349 (30.2)	185 (19.4)	218 (18.9)	439 (46.1)	589 (50.9)	6.4	12.8	34.2
Netherlands	49 (4.7)	77 (4.5)	113 (10.9)	208 (12.3)	874 (84.4)	1408 (83.2)	57.1	84.0	61.1
Belgium	7 (2.6)	7 (2.0)	28 (10.2)	36 (10.5)	239 (87.2)	299 (87.5)	0.0	28.6	25.1
Luxembourg	*	*	*	*	8	9	-	-	12.5
United Kingdom	87 (2.0)	100 (1.8)	566 (13.0)	615 (11.3)	3716 (85.0)	4719 (86.9)	14.9	8.7	27.0
Ireland	18 (24.0)	11 (14.3)	10 (13.3)	9 (11.7)	47 (62.7)	57 (74.0)	-38.9	-10.0	21.3
Denmark	16 (2.9)	29 (4.7)	71 (12.7)	83 (13.3)	469 (84.4)	511 (82.0)	81.3	16.9	9.0

Percentages (%) total 100% for each year across the three sectors

* Denotes that cells are too small to be presented

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey 1983 and 1987

Table 3
Part-Time Workers In Ireland
according to Sex and Occupational Group 1975 - 1988

	1975		1979		1983 Thousands		1988		Change 1975-88	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agricultural Workers	9.6	16.4	5.8	12.2	6.6	11.8	5.8	6.3	-3.8	-10.1
Producers, Makers, Repairers	2.6	3.2	2.4	1.3	3.6	2.6	3.8	2.6	+1.2	-0.6
Clerical Workers	0.4	4.7	0.7	5.0	0.8	7.2	1.0	10.2	+0.6	+5.5
Commerce, Insurance, Finance Workers	2.5	7.6	2.5	5.9	2.8	9.7	4.5	11.5	+2.0	+3.9
Service Workers	1.4	14.2	1.0	11.7	1.5	14.3	3.0	16.6	+1.6	+2.4
Professional & Technical Workers	0.7	4.7	1.1	3.6	1.8	7.9	3.0	11.1	+2.3	+6.4
Others (including Unskilled, Transport and Communication Workers)	3.0	1.5	2.9	1.6	3.9	1.8	6.0	1.8	+3.0	+0.3
TOTAL	20.2	52.3	16.4	41.3	21.0	55.3	27.0	60.1	+6.8	+7.8

Source: Unpublished Labour Force Survey Data 1975-88, Central Statistics Office, Dublin.

Table 4 Part-Time Workers in Ireland according to Employment Status, Industry and Sex, 1977 and 1988

Year	1977		1988		Change 1977-88	
SECTOR	Total/(Female)		Total/(Female)		Total/(Female)	
Agriculture	Thousands		Thousands		Thousands	
Employer/Self Employed	7.6	(2.3)	3.5	(0.6)	-4.1	(-1.7)
Employee	1.6	(0.2)	1.1	(0.4)	-0.5	(+0.2)
Assisting Relative	25.5	(21.4)	7.3	(5.3)	-18.2	(-16.1)
Total	34.7	(24.0)	11.8	(6.4)	-22.9	(-17.6)
Industry						
Employer/Self Employed	6.8	(4.2)	1.3	(0.3)	-5.5	(-3.9)
Employee	0.3	(0.1)	9.4	(4.4)	+9.1	(+4.3)
Assisting Relative	0.3	(0.1)	0.3	(0.3)	0.0	(+0.2)
Total	7.0	(4.4)	10.9	(5.0)	+3.9	(+0.6)
Service						
Employer/Self Employed	3.8	(2.8)	5.2	(3.1)	+1.4	(+0.3)
Employee	28.1	(22.5)	36.6	(43.5)	+28.5	(+21.0)
Assisting Relative	4.7	(4.2)	2.5	(2.1)	-2.2	(-2.1)
Total	36.6	(29.5)	64.4	(48.7)	+27.8	(+19.2)
Total						
Employer/Self Employed	12.9	(5.7)	10.0	(4.2)	-2.9	(-1.5)
Employee	35.0	(26.3)	67.1	(48.2)	+32.1	(+21.9)
Assisting Relative	30.4	(25.8)	10.1	(7.8)	-20.3	(-18.0)
Total	78.3	(57.9)	87.2	(60.1)	+8.9	(+2.2)

Source: Unpublished Labour Force Survey Data 1977 and 1988, Central Statistics Office, Dublin.

Table 5
Part-time Workers in Ireland according to Sex and Reason for Working
Part-time in 1988

Reasons for working Part-time	WOMEN			MEN		
	Single	Married*	Total	Single	Married*	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
In Education/Training	22.4	0.4	5.0	24.0	0.9	13.7
Illness/Disability/Other	10.9	6.5	7.5	9.7	18.8	13.7
Did not want Full-time	12.4	28.7	25.1	10.4	20.5	14.8
Could not find Full-time	51.2	15.0	22.8	55.2	58.9	57.0
Family Responsibilities	3.1	49.4	39.6	0.7	0.9	0.7
Total (Percentage)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total (Number in '000s)	12.8	47.3	60.1	15.3	11.7	27.1

* Refers to Married, Separated and Widowed

Source: Central Statistics Office, Labour Force Survey 1988, (Unpublished), 1990.

Figure 1 Percentage of Workers Employed Part-time in the EC (9) 1975-87

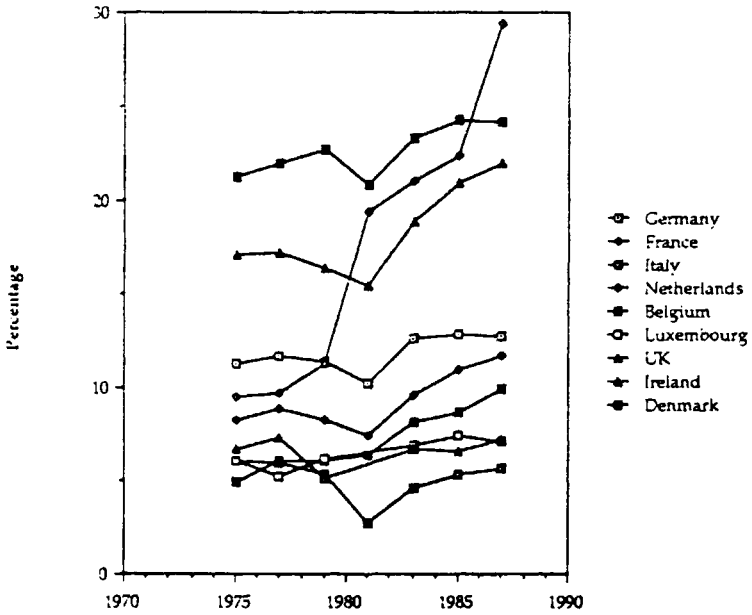


Figure 2 Numbers Working Part-time in Ireland 1975-88

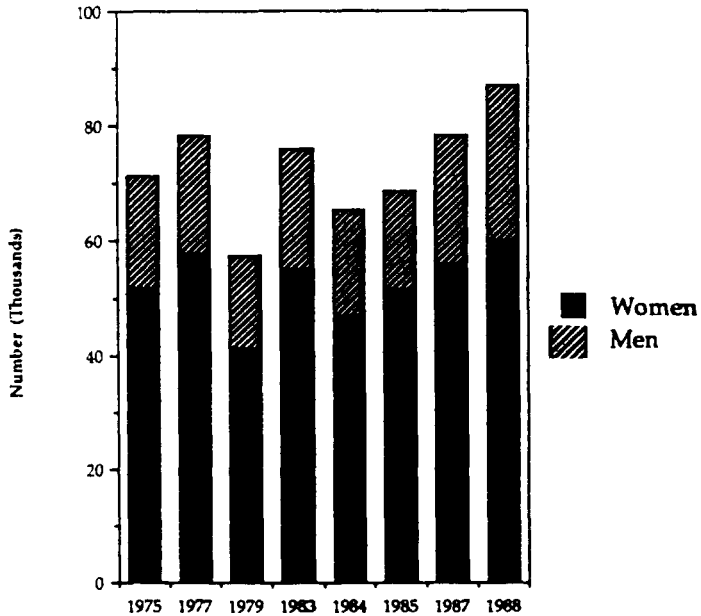


Figure 3 (a) Part-time Employment in Ireland according to Industrial Group 1975

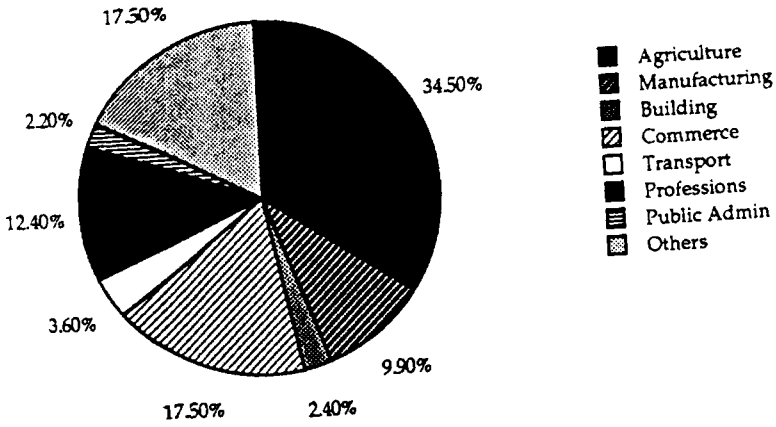


Figure 3 (b) Part-time Employment in Ireland according to Industrial Group 1988

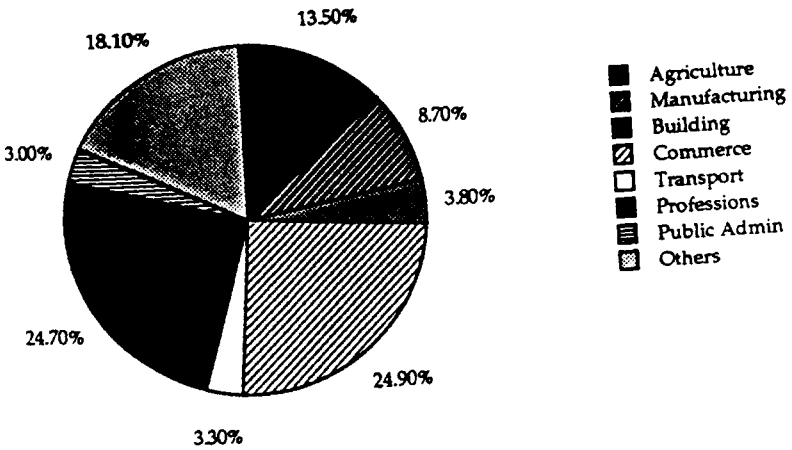


Figure 4 (a) Part-time Workers in Ireland according to Occupational Group 1975

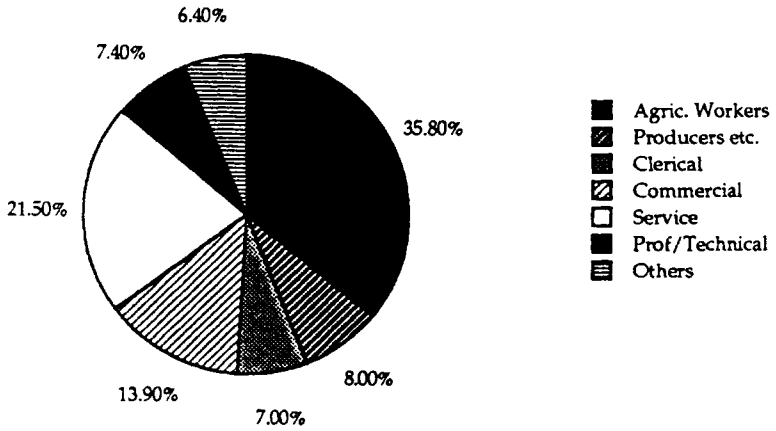


Figure 4 (b) Part-time Workers in Ireland according to Occupational Group 1988

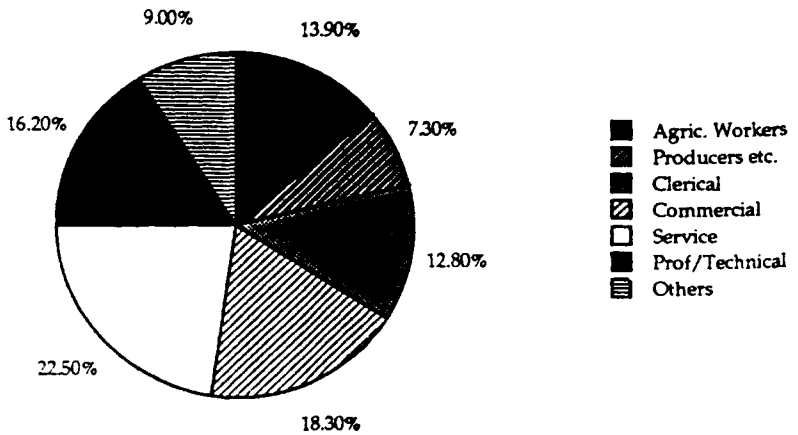
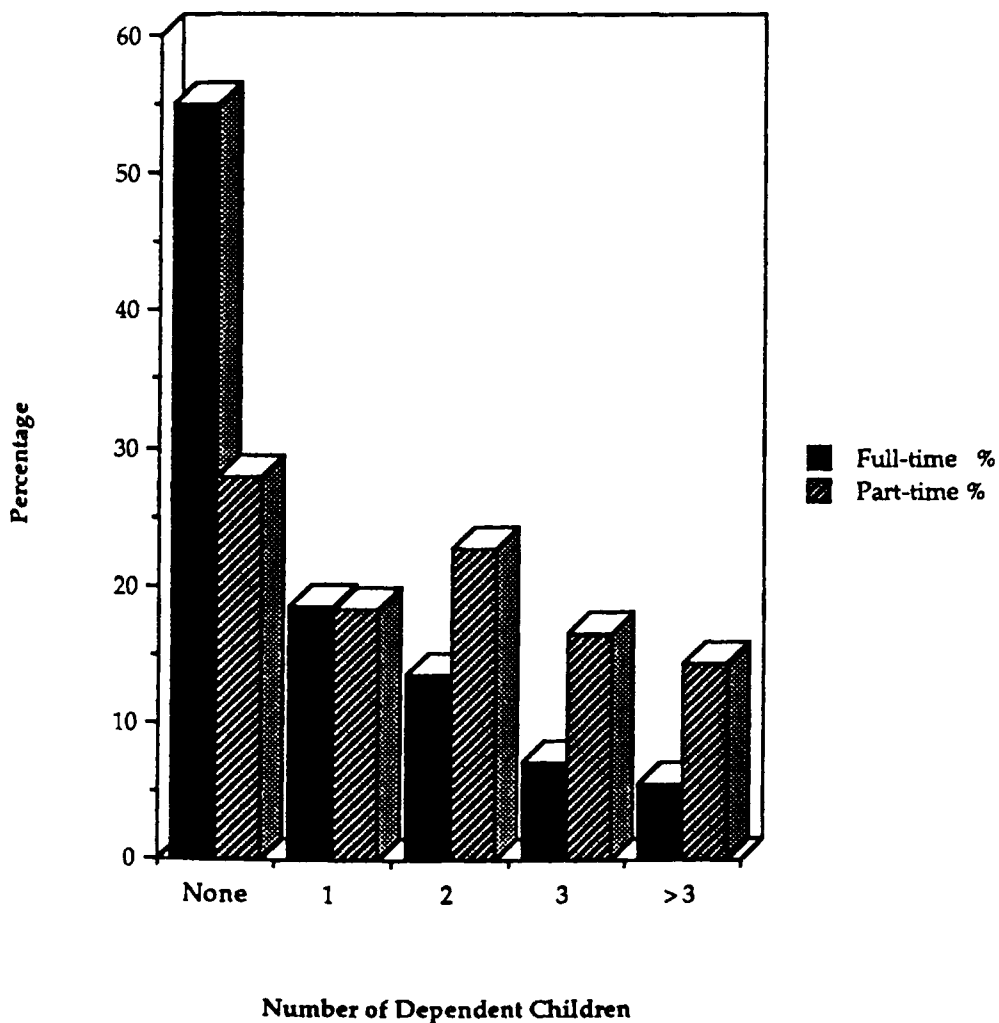


Figure 5 Irish Women Working Full/Part-time in 1988



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DISCUSSION

M. Cashell: There can be no arguing that part-time work is going to be with us for some time. There is some debate internationally about whether the changes which we are seeing are structural, that is, fundamental upward shifts in part-time jobs (as well as temporary jobs and self-employment) or whether they are simply cyclical phenomena. That debate is far from conclusive. Our view in the Department of Labour is that the growth and change which is taking place in Ireland will continue in the medium term, but modestly and perhaps even erratically. It is difficult to put figures on what that growth pattern would be. Donal Dineen who examined recent trends and future prospects as regards changing employment patterns in Ireland (work commissioned by the National Pensions Board) expects part-time employment in the non-agricultural sector to increase modestly (to 90,000 or 9% of the non-agricultural workforce) in the period up to the mid 1990s. He envisages much stronger growth in two other components of labour market flexibility viz temporary work to increase to 14% of non-agricultural employment by 1996 and self-employment to 13.5%. He cautions that these are all extrapolations of existing trends and are fraught with problems.

Since all Irish studies (those of Dr. Drew and Donal Dineen and also the work by John Blackwell) are based on the Labour Force Survey it is as well to recognise that self-classification as part-time is going to lead to some misreporting. There is also the point that the Labour Force Survey is a snapshot that is taken in a reference week between March and May and, because of this, may well exclude seasonal workers who have in their ranks part-time workers. Before leaving this subject of data there is one point I wish to clarify. It arises in the context of the current debate concerning the regulation of the part-time labour market. The very great majority of Irish part-time workers work over 18 hours/week and thus are indistinguishable from full-time workers regarding their treatment under labour and social security law. Of the 72,000 regular part-time workers in 1988 less than 20,000 fall outside the scope of labour law and it is to this category that the Minister for Labour is currently directing his attention.

The important points that I take away from Dr. Drew's analysis are these. First, the most interesting development since 1975 has been the "regularisation" of part-time employment, indicative of greater permanence.

And, second, the shifts by sector and occupation - notably the redistribution away from agriculture towards commerce and the professional services. Having said that, and notwithstanding data difficulties, I believe we need to look at sub-sectors in greater detail to see how part-time work has moved with employment generally and other forms of atypical (non-standard) employment, and indeed how it is likely to move in sectors where employment is planned to rise.

Dr. John Bradley in a paper presented at a FAS/IPC seminar on employment and productivity at the end of last month observed the downturn in employment in distribution (wholesale and retail) in 1987 and speculates that the recent increase in part-time workers may be distorting the picture. There is some evidence that regular part-time work is increasing rapidly and consistently in retail distribution. We could also usefully assess what is happening in the health and education component of professional services. Employment in insurance, financial and business services is growing rapidly (with a temporary deterioration during 1984-86) and it would be most useful to see in this sector whether part-time recruitment is moving in tandem with the general increase or is remaining a stable and quite small proportion of the overall.

I mention these examples to underscore the point that the part-time work phenomenon is largely one of a fairly small number of subsectors and that to look at aggregates may conceal from us important shifts.

Other dimensions on which we need more information are

- why employers are having recourse to part-time workers and what they propose to do in the future; their attitudes to these workers
- whether Irish employers have long-term labour use strategies in which part-time workers have a place or whether recourse to PTW is a short-term reaction
- the role of costs including non-labour wage costs
- how part-time work is faring in sectors including manufacturing where women workers predominate, and whether there are differences between the indigenous and the foreign firms.

All these pieces of information are necessary - and more - if there is to be a response to the thrust of Dr. Drew's argument that the conditions of demand are to be altered and we are to get non-users to start using part-time workers and to get users to use more.

In this context there are aspects of the "positive" features influencing employers to hire PTW and the "negative" factors influencing non-use on which I wish to comment.

The Loughlinstown-based European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has launched a survey of experiences of atypical work including PTW which should fill out the picture more about Ireland and seven other EC countries. The survey involved interviews with management and employee representatives and already an initial interpretation of the data from the first 5 countries surveyed (B D I E and UK) has revealed some tentative answers. At first sight, the results appear to debunk a popularly-held view that cost advantages are the main reason why firms employ part-time workers. However the significance of cost varies quite substantially from country to country, from 10% in Italy to 47% in the UK. That is to say, in the UK managers representing 47% of the total workforce of firms employing part-time workers consider that cost advantages are the main reason for introducing PTW. We await with interest the results of the Irish end of the survey to throw more light on the factors influencing the use and the non-use of PTW. In the meantime there are some points which seem to one to be important.

The first is that (as Dr. Drew concludes) economic conditions and a perennial excess labour supply militates against the use of part-time workers. While we have experimented with mechanisms like the part-time SES or the Social Welfare PTJI we have not responded to unemployment as Germany did with redistribution of work via creating more part-time jobs.

The second is that part-time work may not be the only tool available to employers when they wish to respond to a shortage of full-time recruits or a scheduling problem (peak demands etc.). I believe it would be useful to see how temporary work contracts, use of agency workers, sub contracting, overtime and different patterns of work organisation are all being used to achieve the numerical internal labour market flexibility that part-time work also provides. I believe that there is enough anecdotal evidence about the

grey economy that we can speculate whether regular part-time work is not also being displaced by such practices.

Thirdly, I can also agree with Dr. Drew when she argues that people link part-time work with women workers and that traditional attitudes towards womens employment may dampen the potential demand for part-time work. One could speculate that if part-time jobs become strongly desired by men because of a change in taste, the numbers would probably increase very dramatically.

There is one last point I would like to extract from a great wealth of data and ideas and references.

Do we *want* to increase part-time work now? why?

The first priority in this economy is more *full-time* jobs - it is reasonable to say that this is what the majority of the unemployed are looking for, along with those who work part-time *involuntarily*.

Moreover it seems to me that before we talk about creating more PT jobs we need to think about making the present ones better. This is very much the thinking of the Minister for Labour who has indicated his intention to extend rights under employee protection legislation to part-time workers not at present covered. Part-time work contributes to labour market flexibility but flexibility will have to be achieved within a socially acceptable regulatory framework. In other words, the challenge for the Minister is to find a balance of regulation which must not stifle innovation and change and, at the same time, must prevent an undue burden of adjustment falling on individuals or particular groups. Part-time work must not be a symbol of precarious employment for a group of individuals stigmatised by a society which is incapable of thinking about the future.

B. Nolan: The paper presents a great deal of interesting material, and provokes many questions, notably

1. why is the level of part-time working relatively low in Ireland? and
2. are the prospects for a significant growth in part-time working here, bringing Ireland up towards the EC average?

In Ireland, part-time workers account for only 7-8 per cent of the labour force, compared to the EC (9) average of 14 per cent. The percentage engaged in part-time work here has risen only marginally, from 6.7 per cent in 1975, whereas the EC (9) average rose from 11 per cent to 14 per cent.

The paper documents how this static overall average in Ireland masks a decline in the numbers working part-time in agriculture and an increase in the service sector. To understand this pattern, though, we have to look at what was happening to *overall* employment levels in each sector. Did part-time working in industry in Ireland decline simply because total numbers employed in that sector fell, and did part-time working in services expand in line with, or more rapidly than, overall employment in services? While the text does refer to overall employment trends, it would be helpful to have both the level of part-time working in different countries and the trend over time set firmly in the context of the sectoral breakdown of the labour force in each country/year. We could then clearly distinguish between differences/changes in the extent of part-time working due to differences/changes in sectoral composition, and those due to variations in the extent of part-time working within sectors. This could be done readily on the basis of the agriculture/industry/services breakdown used in the cross-country comparisons in the paper (Table 2). This would facilitate some simple but informative shift/share exercises. For example, holding the extent of part-time working in Ireland *within* each sector constant, one could calculate (a) what the overall extent of part-time working would be if Ireland had the UK's sectoral composition, or (b) how much the shift in the sectoral composition of the Irish labour force, taken alone, would have altered the extent of part-time working between 1975 and 1988.

The answer to (a) is that the difference in sectoral composition actually

makes very little difference: if Ireland had the UK's sectoral composition - or indeed the EC (10) average - but the actual percentage working part-time in each sector was unchanged, the overall percentage working part-time in 1987 would be very close to its actual level of 7.2 per cent. This is because the percentage working part-time in agriculture, at 6.5 per cent (in 1987), is greater than that in industry (2.9%) but less than in services (9.5%). Thus a shift out of agriculture into *both* industry and services, to conform to the UK/EC average pattern, makes little difference to the numbers working part-time.

The answer to (b), though, is that if Ireland's sectoral composition had remained at its 1975 pattern, the percentage working part-time in 1987 would have been lower - 6.8 per cent compared with the actual 7.2 per cent. This reflects the fact that the sectoral shift which actually took place was out of both agriculture and industry and into services, the sector with the highest percentage working part-time.

Even there, though, the difference produced by the sectoral shift is not great. What is "different" about Ireland, then, is the low incidence of part-time working *within* sectors. This is true of agriculture and industry as well as services - the EC (10) averages for 1987 were 15.9 per cent working part-time in agriculture, 5.8 per cent for industry, and 18.4 per cent for services, compared to the Irish figures of 6.5 per cent, 2.9 per cent and 9.5 per cent respectively. Given the size of the service sector, and the prospects for its further growth, it is the relatively low level of part-time working in that sector in Ireland which is its key distinguishing feature. It should be noted that the percentage working part-time in services has been increasing, though, up from 8.1 per cent in 1983.

Why then is the extent of part-time working across sectors so low in Ireland? Clearly the relationship with the low overall rate of participation of women is a central one. It is important to emphasize once again that the low overall level of female participation in Ireland reflects the fact that *married* women are much less likely to be in the labour force than elsewhere - single women have activity rates very similar to the EC average. However, in addition to the low rate of participation by married women, it is also necessary to explain why relatively few of the married women who *are* working, are doing so on a part-time basis - 26 per cent compared with the EC (10) average in 1987 of 37 per cent. The percentage of men

and of single women working part-time is also low in Ireland relative to the EC average. It appears, then, that both the low level of participation by married women and a low incidence of part-time working irrespective of sex and marital status have to be explained.

The paper discusses a number of the factors which may be at work, on both demand and supply sides of the labour market. One factor which is not discussed, though, and may be an important influence on married women's labour force participation, is the financial incentives they face. The income tax and PRSI systems have a major impact on the incentive to work for married women, and these structures may explain some of the differences across countries in female participation and, in particular, female part-time working. A recent study by the OECD (in *Employment Outlook 1990*, Ch.6) shows the way in which joint versus separate taxation creates very different incentives in different countries for substitution of earnings by the wife - particular from part-time work - for those of the husband. Where their incomes are taxed separately - as in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Sweden - the net earnings of the household will rise when a proportion, say a quarter, of the income earned by the husband - at average earnings or above - is replaced by the same gross earnings received by the wife working part-time. Where there is joint taxation - as in Belgium, France, and Ireland - then the wife is simply taxed at the husband's marginal rate and there is no such gain. Indeed, given that there is a ceiling on (the husband's) PRSI contributions, there may actually be a loss in net earnings from such a substitution. The OECD study finds that these varying financial incentives for splitting work more evenly between husband and wife do help to explain cross-country differences in the extent of part-time working by women.

More generally, labour force participation by married women has been found to be particularly sensitive to the financial incentives faced - much more so than for men. A forthcoming study for the NESC by T. Callan and B. Whelan using Irish micro-data shows that similar conclusions apply in Ireland.

However, it should also be noted that increasing female participation would not *necessarily* imply similar increases in part-time working though. As the paper and the OECD study both illustrate, there is a great deal of diversity in experience across countries. Some countries such as the UK

saw women's participation growing largely through increases in part-time working, whereas others such as the US have equally high women's participation but much less of it is part-time. It is not possible to identify a single consistent pattern over time, a "model" which will inevitably be followed.

The UK experience is also instructive when we consider two of the factors mentioned in the paper as constraints on the growth of part-time working, on the demand and supply sides respectively - namely the excess supply of labour as evidenced by high unemployment, and scarcity of child-care facilities. The UK saw rapid growth in part-time employment despite both high unemployment and what are by EC standards very low levels of provision of pre-school child care. It is only relatively recently that skill shortages in particular areas have been highlighted and employers actively encouraged to adopt more flexible work practices. Such factors would not in themselves constitute a sufficient explanation of the slow growth in part-time working here.

Finally, it is worth making brief reference to the income position of part-time workers. No data on incomes is included in the LFS, the source for Dr. Drew's paper, but such information is available in the Survey of Income Distribution, Poverty and Use of State Services, carried out by the ESRI in 1987. Analysis of this data shows that a majority of part-time - defined as working less than 30 hours per week - *employees* earned less than weekly earning thresholds such as £100 or £130. However, although their average hourly earnings were less than those of full-time employees, only about one third of the part-timers in the sample earned less than £3.25 per hour - the hourly equivalent of £130 per week (with a 40 hour working week). Thus part-time working is by no means coterminous with low hourly pay. The part-time workers below such an hourly earnings threshold were almost all (88%) female, and a relatively high proportion were under 25 (26%), whereas for all part-timers these figures were 77 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. Almost all these part-time employees on low hourly pay were in services, with the women heavily concentrated in retailing and personal services. There still remain a substantial number of part-time workers who are *not* low paid in hourly terms, though - particularly in the professional and technical occupations.

This distinguishes between part-time and full-time employees on the basis

of usual hours of work, and therefore includes some who work less than 30 hours but would be regarded - and would regard themselves - as full-time e.g. primary teachers. This presumably biases downwards the percentage on "low" hourly earnings. It is worth mentioning in passing that the EC definition of part-time workers mentioned by Dr. Drew at the beginning of her paper, referring to work where "an employer and employee agree on shorter working hours than normal" appears to be something of a desideratum. In practice, in Ireland and most other EC countries, the LFS simply asks respondents whether they consider their employment to be full-time or part-time.

In conclusion, then, I would reiterate thanks to Dr. Drew for her fascinating paper, highlighting a topic of growing importance and obvious relevance for policy-makers.

D. Garvey: The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a large and expensive survey and I am pleased that researchers are increasingly making extensive use of it in their writings on a whole range of labour market issues; and tonight's paper is another example.

A previous speaker has urged caution on the basis of the possible limitations in the LFS data on part-time work. I am sure that a survey date in say July would yield higher estimates of part-time work. This is not a crucial point, however, since Dr. Drew has examined the structure of part-time work in Ireland vis-a-vis LFS results with a similar timing from other countries.

The section, introduced for the first time in the Report on the 1988 LFS, which gives labour force aggregates according to the ILO recommendations contains much useful information on part-time work. It shows clearly that males and females engage in part-time work for very different reasons. In 1989, for example, nearly 40 per cent of the males engaged in part-time work were looking for fulltime work compared with only 12 per cent for females. The number of unemployed males looking for part-time work was negligible, while some 28 per cent of unemployed females were looking for part-time work. Over a few surveys just over 50 per cent of unemployed married females were looking for part-time work.

It appears that there are no supply-side factors to prevent a considerable

increase in the number of (especially female) part-time workers. Indeed it is very likely that if part-time working was a widely available option a large number of currently inactive females might be interested.

In the interviewing/enumeration work of the CSO we take on many married women and my impression is that their productivity is very high particularly while their earnings do not exceed the special PAYE/PRSI allowance. Once they exceed that limit however they quickly become aware that they are liable for tax at their husband's marginal tax rate. So I tend to agree with the point made by Brian Nolan about the financial disincentives involved.

It does seem therefore that employers to some extent manipulate part-time working patterns within very narrow considerations. In this regard it is interesting to examine the sharp increases/decreases in the number of part-time workers in the last few years. In the year to April 1989, for example, when the official labour force estimate showed a drop of 1,000 the estimated number of part-time workers fell by 5,000 to 82,200. It will be interesting to eventually examine the same data for 1990 - I will be surprised if there is not a sizeable increase in part-time working.

Maurice Cashell is undoubtedly correct when he says that the great need is to create more fulltime jobs. There is however a clear demand from married women for more part-time work. I suspect that policy initiatives in this latter direction could be rewarded by high levels of productivity from a highly motivated workforce.

Reply by E. Drew: I should like to thank all the contributors to the lively discussion which has followed this paper.

M. Cashell has commented on the need for analysis of sub-sectoral data in greater detail. One of the major limitations of the LFS data is that it is a sample survey and consequently facilitates analysis at only the broadest level. The case studies, referred to in section 4, show that change is occurring, especially in private services. Since these case studies were undertaken, one of the Associated Banks has recruited permanent part-time workers to its staff. This reflects a fundamental shift, in principal, from the use of part-time workers as merely a temporary expedient, as well as contributing, in practice, to an accelerating demand for part-time

workers in Ireland. It is as yet too early to ascertain whether such developments represent a trend in which part-time labour is a substitute for, or supplement to, the full-time workforce.

Further insights from these case studies as to employers' motivation, attitudes towards and the economic costs/benefits attached to the use of part-time labour in banks and supermarkets are included in my report published by the Employment Equality Agency. As M. Cashell has stated, more research is clearly required particularly on service sector employment.

I am most grateful for B. Nolan's sectoral examination of part-time versus full-time working in Ireland and the insights which this provides. I agree that fiscal conditions provide a strong financial disincentive towards women's participation in the Irish workforce despite the changes precipitated by the Murphy case and the option which is now available for separate assessment. However, another factor mentioned by Nolan which may affect a woman's job choice, in seeking part-time as opposed to full-time employment, is the limited availability of low cost childcare and/or the option to claim such costs against tax. For some married women with dependent children, the burden of childcare expenses out of income after tax may make formal sector employment seem uneconomic. Hence, an employment strategy which minimizes either tax contributions (through recourse to what M. Cashell has called the 'grey economy' jobs in areas such as domestic cleaning/childcare) and/or eliminates or minimizes the cost of child care (by work scheduled during school hours) is particularly attractive to married women. Many of the job opportunities implied by this strategy will fall into the category of part-time work.

This leads me to a point which has been referred to by a number of contributors, that of under-enumeration of part-time workers. It is impossible to calculate the number of part-time workers who are not included in LFS data due to seasonal factors, the under estimation of women's work on the family farm and the undeclared work which is undertaken part-time (and full-time) outside the formal economy.

B. Nolan has highlighted a further problem which arises in relation to the definition of part-time work. What the EC definition and LFS practice illustrate is that there is no longer (if it ever existed) any satisfactory dividing line between part-time and full-time hours of work. Rather than

regarding part-time and full-time as two alternative options this lack of consensus suggests that part-time work is but part of a continuum of working time patterns on which there are areas of obvious overlap (most notably in teaching).

The finding in Blackwell and Nolan's research that part-time working is not automatically synonymous with low pay is an important one. This reinforces the point which I have stressed in Section 3.2 of the paper. While part-time working is perceived to be associated with the bottom of the occupational pyramid, in cleaning and other personal service jobs, the Irish data show that, as in other countries, it is also undertaken at the top end of the occupational pyramid in the education, health and caring professions.