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THE GENDERED NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT AND INSECURE EMPLOYMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND: A STORY OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Evidence of the decline of the ‘traditional’ standard employment arrangement and the rise of poor quality ‘bad’ jobs has been escalating internationally and nationally. Nonetheless, despite much attention being given in recent decades to the changing nature of employment and job quality much of this discussion overlooks the interaction with gender.

Using data from the Northern Ireland element of the United Kingdom Quarterly Labour Force Survey, as well as data from the Northern Ireland element of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings this paper aims to examine, over a twenty-year period from 1996 to 2016 (a) changes and continuities in terms of gendered patterns in the nature of employment and job quality; and (b) trends toward the ‘feminisation of employment norms’, marked by an overall downward pressure on security of employment and job quality.

The results presented in this paper show that in many ways gendered patterns in the nature of employment and job quality is a story of continuity. Women remain more likely to be in insecure employment, work varying hours, work short hours, and dominated in particular sectors and occupations which are more likely to have low pay. Furthermore, the results of this study also show that higher levels of education narrow the gap between males and females in terms of likelihood of being in insecure employment, whilst having children further amplifies the differentiation.

There is also evidence of an overall convergence or ‘harmonising down’ of employment security and quality for both men and women, in a way that reflects the security and quality of employment that has typically been associated with women. All in all, these findings reflect what is referred to as a ‘feminisation of employment norms’ characterised by both continuation and change in the gendered nature of employment and employment quality.

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THE GENDERED NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT AND INSECURE EMPLOYMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND: A STORY OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Lisa Wilson, NERI*

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The past few decades we have seen the nature of employment undergo considerable change, with evidence showing one of the most notable changes to have been the decline of the traditional ‘standard’ employment arrangement (regular, full-time, permanent, with a single employer), and the increase in alternative ‘non-standard’ employment arrangements – such as part-time, temporary/fixed-term contract work; self-employment, agency work, zero-hours employment, on-demand/’gig’ work (European Commission, 2016; ILO, 2016; Mandl *et al*, 2015; Wilson, 2016). Whilst this shift has prompted intense interest and scrutiny for some time, renewed concern has been given to this issue since the global financial crisis in 2008. International organisations, politicians, academics, policy makers, businesses and the trade union movement have all become increasingly focused on the changing nature of employment and the reshaping of the labour market. Particular attention is being given to what these changes mean for job security and the quality of jobs.

Given that the ‘standard’ employment arrangement has been the normative model around which labour laws and legislation and other nodes of employment regulation such as job related social benefits, social security and taxes were based, the growth of ‘non-standard’ forms of employment has been giving cause for concern (Deakon, 1986; Fudge, 2017). This is because of the long-term correlation which these forms of employment have in terms of being insecure, and more generally, poorer quality, when compared with the traditional ‘standard’ employment arrangement (European Commission, 2016; ILO, 2016; Mandl *et al*, 2015; Wilson, 2016). That is, despite considerable extension of labour regulations to cover non-standard forms of employment e.g. Part-time Workers & Fixed Term Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (Legislation.gov.uk, 2002a; 2002b) and recognition in more recent years that ‘non-standard’ employment does not necessarily equate with poor-quality. Nevertheless, it consistently tends to be the case that all ‘non-standard’ forms of employment are on-the-whole poorer in quality when compared with ‘standard’ employment. Specifically, whilst differences are found between different forms of ‘non-standard’ employment, when compared with the traditional ‘standard’ all forms of ‘non-standard’ employment have been found to bring less security, lower earnings, fewer or longer hours of work on average, higher occupational safety and health risks, less satisfaction, and less training (See ILO, 2016).

Nevertheless, despite much debate about the changing nature of employment and the rise of poor quality jobs, relatively little attention has been given to-date to the gendered nature of these changes. As a result, the gendered nature of changes in employment and the gendered nature of job quality (and in particular the gendered nature of poor quality jobs) has been overlooked. Also, overlooked has been the extent to which the erosion of the 'standard' employment relationship and the spread of 'non-standard' forms of employment denote the 'feminisation of employment norms'. The 'feminisation of employment norms' is a concept coined by Vosko (2002) and later developed by Cranford *et al* (2003) to refer to a shift in the labour market towards employment which is of poorer quality, and which exhibits qualities traditionally associated with women. Female employment has been traditionally more likely to be insecure in terms of duration of employment and working hours, lower paid, dominated in particular sectors and occupations, and have poorer terms and conditions of employment resembling those conventionally associated with women.

In recognition of the lack of attention that has been given to these issues this paper examines the links between gender and the changing nature of employment. Specifically, this paper seeks to assess: (a) changes and continuities in terms of gendered patterns in the nature of employment; and (b) the extent to which the nature of employment is undergoing a general trend toward the 'feminisation of employment norms' and an ensuing overall downward pressure on security of employment and job quality. In addition, this paper looks at the gendered impact of education and children on the likelihood of being in insecure employment. Failing to examine changes in the nature of employment via a gendered lens we are at risk of concealing important aspects and explanations of changes and continuities in the labour market.

Furthermore, changes in the gendered nature of employment and job quality and the extent to which we are undergoing a 'feminisation of employment norms' overtime is of particular interest in the context of growing debates about the impact which technological innovation and change, demographic trends in terms of an increasingly ageing population, and the expected continued growth of the services sector. These issues are going to have a significant role in shaping the future of work in terms of the structure of the labour market, the nature of employment, and the quality of jobs.

Therefore, using data from the Northern Ireland element of the United Kingdom Quarterly Labour Force Survey, as well as data from the Northern Ireland element of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings this paper shows that employment for both men and women is undergoing a general trend towards that which is increasingly insecure in terms of the employment arrangements and hours in which people work. Specifically, throughout the twenty years from 1996 to 2016 we have

seen declining proportions of men employed in traditional 'standard' full-time, permanent employment and an increase in the proportions of men part-time permanent, temporary and own-account self-employed. What is more, whilst we have seen a general increase in the proportions of females in full-time permanent employment between 1996 and 2014, we have since 2014 seen a substantial decline in the proportion of females in full-time permanent employment, declining by 4.3% between 2014 and 2016. Furthermore, we have seen a substantive increase in the proportion of females in part-time temporary and own-account self-employment - some of the most insecure forms of employment.

Nevertheless, the results in this paper also show that despite the convergence in terms of employment arrangements and the turn to more insecure forms of employment, enduring gendered differences remain. Females remain more likely to be employed in more insecure forms of employment than males. Moreover, despite substantial restructuring of the labour market in terms of industrial sectors and occupations throughout the past twenty years, specifically in terms of the decline of male dominated sectors there remains a persistent segregation of men and women into different sectors and occupations.

Additionally, whilst it is commonly thought that higher or lower levels of education will increase or decrease one's likelihood of being in secure or insecure employment the evidence presented in this paper shows that whilst higher levels of education increase the likelihood of full-time, permanent employment for both males and females, education has a stronger influence for females than it does for males. We can interpret these results as showing the particular benefits of educational attainment to improving females labour market outcomes. However, we can also interpret these results as showing that the 'penalty' of having no qualifications is much lower for males than females, with 60% of males with no qualifications in a full-time permanent job, compared with 34.7% females.

In terms of the influence of children in determining one's likelihood of being in secure or insecure employment, the evidence presented in Section 4 shows that whilst males with no children (68.2%) have a higher likelihood of being in a permanent, full-time job than females with no children (63%), having children further amplifies the differentiation between males and females. Having one or more children reduces the likelihood of females of being in permanent, full-time employment by almost one-third, with only 44% of females with one or more children working in a permanent, full-time job. On the other hand, interestingly, having children increases the likelihood of males being in a permanent, full-time job, but decreases the likelihood of males being in self-employment.

2. CHANGING EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 The rise of the traditional 'standard' employment arrangement, the gender contract and the institutionalisation of a segmented labour market

Whilst there is no legal definition of the 'standard' employment arrangement, broadly speaking it refers to employment which is full-time, regular, direct with a single employer, with a contract of permanent, indefinite duration, has reasonably stable hours, and access to social benefits and entitlements. 'Non-standard' employment arrangements then cover all employment relationships that do not conform to one or more of these 'standard' characteristics. These can be very diverse, and include for instance the following partly overlapping employment types: part-time work; temporary/fixed-term contract work; self-employment, agency work, zero-hours employment, on-demand work amongst others.

The traditional 'standard' employment arrangement came to the fore as the normative benchmark model of (male) employment in the period following the Second World War. Its emergence was the product of a long, complex and contested process involving employees, employers, trade unions, political parties and the State. Together they were involved in negotiating a new entente social contract which promised *workers* security, a 'family wage' and improved living standards, *employers* a committed workforce and robust demands for their products, and *the State* a greater degree of social cohesion and political stability to underpin economic growth (Lewchuk *et al*, 2011; Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989). Labour law, legislation and policy and the emergence of other areas of regulation such as job related social benefits, social security and taxes including pensions, paid holidays, sick pay, shorter work weeks, and disability insurance were all hinged to the notion that employment would be 'standard' in nature. This solidified its dominance and contributed to its ascendancy as the normative model of employment throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.

However, even in this post-war period, the 'standard' employment arrangement never fully replaced all other forms of employment. Thus, whilst the 'standard' employment arrangement was typical for male workers within the industrial goods-producing sectors many 'non-standard' forms of employment continued to persist. The majority of these jobs were filled by women in what is often known as 'pink collar' jobs such as clerical, caring, and cleaning jobs (Presser *et al*, 2008; Standing, 1999). However, because labour laws and policies, job related social benefits, taxation and social insurance system were designed and built around the 'standard' employment arrangement, workers in forms of employment that fell outside of this were less likely to be able to benefit from these protections. In this sense, the fact that labour law, legislation and policy were focused on the 'standard' employment arrangement, meant that workers in 'non-standard'

employment arrangements were not covered by the regulations or social protections. Unsurprisingly, this resulted in differential and inferior conditions of work for workers in 'non-standard' employment arrangements (Fudge and Vosko, 2001). This in turn prompted a correlation between 'non-standard' employment arrangements and poor(er) quality employment (Fudge and Vosko, 2001).

At the time however, the selective nature of the 'standard' employment arrangement and the inferiority of 'non-standard' employment was on-the-whole considered unproblematic. This was largely a result of gendered assumptions about the role of men and women in the labour market, and in society as a whole. From the outset, the 'standard' employment arrangement was linked to a particular 'gender contract'. This is a term used to denote the roles of males and females in both the public and private sphere - male as breadwinner, female as caregiver. That is, the 'standard' employment arrangement was designed to provide principally male workers with a 'breadwinner's wage'. This would provide a stable and adequate income sufficient to take care of a growing family, provide security against unforeseen events that could impede the ability to work, and offer security in retirement. Thus, as the key role of women was thought to be as caregiver, if a woman did participate in the paid labour market her wage was assumed to be a 'secondary wage' and not central to a family's subsistence. Thus, as women constituted the largest share of 'non-standard', unprotected workers for these reasons the inferiority of 'non-standard' forms of employment was largely considered uncontentious (Vosko, 2006).

As such, in spite of the sizeable proportion of workers and families who benefited from the emergence of the 'standard' employment arrangement and all of the protections and regulations that came to be associated with it, it was selective in nature. It served to institutionalise a segmented gendered dual labour market where men dominated in a labour market where the regulated and protected 'standard' employment arrangement was the norm. Meanwhile the employment standards and the quality of employment in the 'non-standard' labour market were the resort of the majoritively female workers. Yet, owing to gendered assumptions about the role of men and women in society and a social contract which gave precedence to the 'standard' employment arrangement the selective nature of labour law and employment regulation and the poorer quality of 'non-standard' employment became *'invisible at worst and unproblematic at best'* (Fudge and Vosko, 2001: 277).

2.2 The feminisation of employment, the spread of 'non-standard' employment arrangements, and the growth of poor quality jobs

Whilst there had been a gradual rise in labour force participation among women since the Second World War this began to accelerate in the 1960s. Stimulating this growth was the success of the

women's movement and the introduction of equality legislation. This included the rights for married women to access work, the right to equal pay, the right to not be discriminated against in work, education or training on the basis of gender and the right to statutory maternity provision (ONS, 2013). Further to this, changes in patterns of pregnancy and demographic structures of family, as a result of increased access to the contraceptive pill, led to a decline in normative expectations in terms of the role of men as breadwinners and women as caregivers (Burgess and Connell, 2004). Moreover, the rise in mass production led to the possibility of domestic tasks being undertaken on the basis of purchased commodities, in a less labour-intensive way. This reduced the time and effort women spent doing domestic labour, and in turn increased the time women had available to sell their labour for income in the market economy (Glucksmann, 1995). In addition, the rise in certain types of employment that had come to be associated as 'women's work' such as clerical work, health work, and care work stimulated the growth in women's labour force participation (Akbulut, 2007).

Together these changes had a major impact on women, and in particular younger women, who increasingly began to take up paid employment in the labour market. Indeed, by the 1960s and 1970s paid employment became the norm even for married women, while married women with children increasingly returned to work once their youngest child reached school age (Crompton *et al*, 2007). By the 1980s and 1990s even mothers of young children were staying in the labour market, albeit predominately within particular sectors and occupations associated with women, and in 'non-standard' forms of employment (Hakim, 1992; Institute for Employment Studies, 2006).

Perhaps unsurprisingly then at the same time as the numbers of women participating in the labour force began to pick up pace there was also an increase in the proportions participating in 'non-standard' employment. Thus, whilst 'non-standard' employment has always supplemented the 'standard' employment model, in the mid- to late-1970s we began to see hastened growth in 'non-standard' employment and a decline in the traditional 'standard' employment arrangement (European Commission, 2016; Gutierrez-Barbarrusa, 2016; ILO, 2016). However, whilst some attribute the growth in 'non-standard' employment to factors of labour supply in terms of the increase in female labour force participation and the choice of women to work in this way (Standing, 1989), several other factors have also been key. These include, among others, pressure from globalisation and technological change (Dolphin, 2015; Ware-Barrientos, 2013), as well as deindustrialisation and the shift from manufacturing to services (ILO, 2015; Kalleberg *et al*, 2003). Both of these trends prompted changing organisational strategies and the increasing pursuit of numerical, functional and pay flexibility (ILO, 2016; Kalleberg, 2011; Uzzi and Barsness,

1998), as well as partial deregulation of the labour market and an overall weakening of collective bargaining rights (Heery *et al*, 2002; Nowak, 2012).

Moreover, irrespective of the specific factors this accelerated growth in 'non-standard' forms of employment has prompted much discussion about the quality of such work. Many scholars have argued that the growth in non-standard employment signalled the erosion of the rights, benefits and entitlements that had come to be associated with 'standard' employment. Early theorists commented that the growth in 'non-standard' employment served only in the interests of the employer, whom increasingly sought to use employees to their own advantage in an 'as needed' basis, and in turn reduce labour costs, notably through reductions in wages, social insurance, fringe benefits, and redundancy payments (Atkinson, 1984; Beck, 1992; Gorz, 1999 and Hutton, 1996). Later others argued that this shift represented a break-down of the post-war social settlement in a way that give primacy to employers demands for flexibility, at the expense of employees' security, pay, and working conditions (Ashiagbor, 2006).

More recently the heterogeneous nature of 'non-standard' forms of employment has been recognised. The crude synonymising of 'non-standard' employment as poor quality has been rejected in favour of an approach that recognises that all employment arrangements are at some risk of poor quality (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989). As such recent work has focused on assessing job quality across multiple dimensions, such as job security, earnings, quality of the working environment, working hours, career development and training opportunities among others (European Commission, 2016; ILO, 2016; OECD, 2015). Nevertheless, in analysing the quality of 'non-standard' employment an extensive body of evidence demonstrates that 'non-standard' forms of employment tend to be of poorer quality when compared with the traditional 'standard' employment arrangement (European Commission, 2016; ILO, 2016; OECD, 2015; Wilson, 2017). 'Non-standard' forms of employment tend to bring less security, have lower earnings, lower social security coverage, offer fewer hours of work on average, possess higher occupational safety and health risks, lower likelihood of promotion, less satisfaction, less training, and lower likelihood of worker representation when compared to standard employment arrangements (ILO, 2016).

2.3 The feminisation of employment norms

Nonetheless, despite much attention being given in recent decades to the changing nature of employment, job quality and the growth of insecure and poor-quality jobs much of this discussion overlooks the interaction with gender. Moreover, much of the discussion in terms of the feminisation of employment has taken it for granted as entailing only women's mass entry into the paid labour force (Standing, 1989; 1999). However, Vosko (2002) and Fudge (2006) argue

that we have to *rethink* feminisation and move beyond a focus on the movement of women into the labour force. This restrictive emphasis on female labour force participation Vosko (2002) argues welds the notion of feminisation to a narrow set of trends, and conceals important labour market changes such as the convergence towards 'non-standard', insecure and poorer quality employment.

Fudge and Vosko (2003: 458) however maintain that these changing labour market trends are *'both shaped by, and in turn shapes enduring gender inequalities both inside and outside of the labour market'*. They argue that the growth in insecure employment and poor-quality jobs amounts to the 'feminisation of employment norms', rather than a genderless erosion of the 'standard' employment arrangement. As such, Vosko (2002) argues that by assessing the changing nature of employment via a gender lens we will be better placed to understand what effect gender is having on the increase in non-standard, insecure, poor quality employment. It could be that employment is of poorer quality because more women are in employment and so the change in the overall structure of the labour market to be of poorer quality is accounted for by the expansion of women's work which is traditionally of poorer quality and more insecure in nature. Or we are witnessing an overall convergence or 'harmonising down' (Armstrong, 1996) of employment security and quality in a way that reflects the security and quality of employment that has typically been associated with women. Thus, a more general 'feminisation of employment norms' affecting the labour market experience of both men and women. Moreover, Vosko (2002) argues that by looking at the changing nature of employment via a gender lens we can capture the extent of enduring differences and continuity in terms of gender inequalities in the workplace.

In order to assess the (a) changes and continuities in terms of gendered patterns in the nature of employment and; (b) the extent to which the 'feminisation of employment norms' is applying an overall downward pressure on security of employment and job quality for both men and women the analysis in this paper will examine: (1) change and continuity in the gendered nature of labour force participation; (2) change and continuity in the gendered nature of insecure employment; (3) change and continuity in the gendered nature of working hours; (4) change and continuity in the gendered nature of the industrial structure of the labour market; (5) change and continuity in the gendered nature of occupations; and the gendered nature of occupations and incomes. Also considered is the differential impact for males and females which educational qualifications and having children have on the likelihood of being in insecure employment.

3. DATA AND METHODS

The analysis in this paper draws on data from the Northern Ireland Quarterly Labour Force Survey (NI-QLFS), as well as from analysis of published statistics from the Northern Ireland element of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings Survey (ASHE) (NISRA, 2017). Utilising these data allows us to examine trends over a twenty-year period from 1996 to 2016 toward (a) the 'feminisation of employment norms' and an ensuing overall downward pressure on security of employment and job quality; and (b) changes and continuities in terms of gendered patterns in the nature of employment and job quality.

The sampling frame used in the NI-QLFS is POINTER, which is the Government's central register of domestic properties. It is obtained from the Land and Property Services who own and maintain the list of domestic properties in Northern Ireland. The theoretical sample for the NI-QLFS comprises 3,250 addresses, made up of five 'waves', each containing approximately 650 private households. However, due to the cumulative effect of refusals and ineligible addresses, the number of 'active' addresses is approximately 2,700 each quarter (NISRA, 2013).

The NI-QLFS uses calibration weighting. Calibration weighting typically involves calculating a design weight, making adjustments for non-response, and finally calibration to population totals. Specifically, the weights are formed using a population weighting procedure which involves weighting data to population estimates and then adjusting for the estimated age and sex composition. The NI-QLFS survey has been designed to give reliable estimates for each quarter.

Analyses of NI-QLFS data in this paper are restricted to those in employment (i.e. paid employees and self-employed workers) aged between 16 and 64. The following specifics should also be noted. Family workers are excluded from the analysis owing to sample size issues. Those jobs identified in the analysis as 'temporary' captures dependent employment of limited duration or that which is not permanent in some way. The available data does not allow us to distinguish between different types of temporary work - such as seasonal/casual jobs versus jobs done under a contract for a fixed period of time.

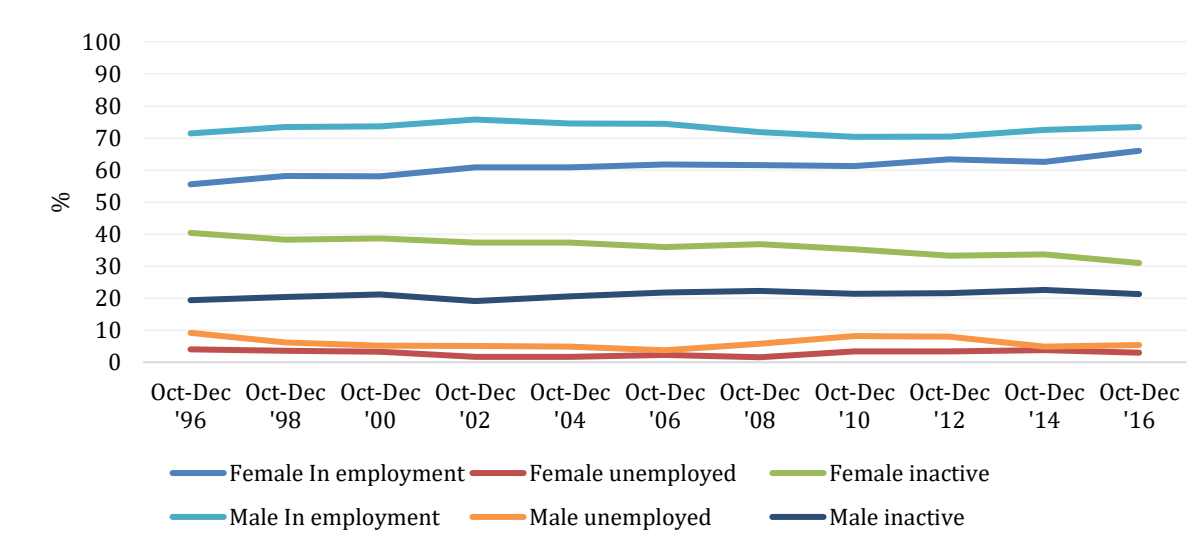
4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Change and continuity in the gendered nature of labour force participation

As discussed in Section 2 the term 'feminisation' is typically used to refer to women's mass and rapid entry into the labour market with much early work on this issue tending to put forward the idea that the rise in female labour market participation was leading to the substitution of women for men, and an ensuing rise in male unemployment (Standing, 1989). However, as presented in Figure 1 below, an examination of male and female employment, unemployment and inactivity

trends throughout the past twenty years shows that this view misses important aspects of the story in terms of the changes and continuities in the gendered nature of labour market participation.

Figure 1: Participation in the labour market by gender, percentage



Consistent with trends in other industrialised countries the dramatic rise since the early 1970s in female employment and the slow drop in male employment in Northern Ireland is well-documented (Heaton, 1992; Murphy, 2011). However, whilst much of the increase in female employment and drop in male employment took place in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s throughout this period men continued to consistently have a markedly higher employment rate than females (McDowell, 2010). Moreover, as shown in Figure 1 above whilst we have continued to see a steady increase in female employment over the past twenty years, male employment has remained substantially higher than female employment, although the gap has been narrowing with an 8.5% decrease in the gender gap in employment between men and women over the past twenty years. By end of 2016 the employment rate for men was 73.4%, up from 71.5% in 1996. The employment rate for women was just over 66%, up from 55.6% in 1996. A 7% gap remains in the employment rates of men and women.

In looking at Figure 1 we can see that much of the gap in the employment rate between males and females is driven by the increased likelihood of females to not participate in the paid labour market, albeit this has been decreasing consistently throughout the past twenty years whereby we are increasingly seeing a convergence in the economic inactivity rates of males and females.

On the other hand, on-the-whole we are seeing no evidence that male unemployment is increasingly diverging from female unemployment as the employment rate of females increases. Thus, whilst male unemployment is persistently above that of women the data suggests that the

perception of early feminisation scholars that women's rising labour force participation is resulting in more unemployment for men is overstated (Standing, 1989).

All in all, however, whilst the narrowing of gender gaps in terms of labour market participation in terms of the convergence in employment rates and economic inactivity rates of males and females gives cause for optimism, as is clear from the data presented below, this does not signify the disappearance of gender from discussions about labour market participation. Indeed, substantial disparities remain with males continuing to be more likely to be in employment than females. If the gap in employment between males and females continues to decline at the same rate as it has done throughout the past twenty years, it will take another twenty years to close the gender gap in employment between men and women.

The lower participation rate of females in the labour market continues to be strongly related to the higher likelihood of women to remain out of the paid labour force in order to undertake care activities in the home. Females account for nine-tenths of the total number of people who are looking after family/home. This further reflects the fact that for families with children childcare provision is not always available or affordable (McQuaid *et al*, 2013). Furthermore, it reflects a lack of flexible employment which allows employees to vary their paid working hours to accommodate their non-paid working activities.

4.2 Change and continuity in the gendered nature of insecure employment

Examining changes in mutually exclusive forms of employment for men and women over time brings insight to the relationship between insecurity in employment and gender, and continuities and changes over time. In this way, as discussed in Section 2.1 men have traditionally been dominated in 'standard', full-time, secure employment, whilst females have been majoritively in more insecure 'non-standard' forms of employment.

The analysis distinguishes between employees and the self-employed, and further between the self-employed with employees and own-account self-employed who have no employees. While all self-employment by its very nature can be considered insecure, the increasing tendency for the self-employed to be without employees/own account workers and to work part-time suggests that the growth of self-employment may owe more to the spread of precarious employment than to a surge in entrepreneurial spirit (D'Arcy and Gardiner, 2014). A further important reason for distinguishing between employees and the self-employed relates to the degree of regulatory protection and that the self-employed do not benefit from employment regulations on working time, breaks, paid leave, minimum wage, social protection, and pension rights (ETUC, 2016). Evidence of the rise of dependent self-employment is particularly worrying in this regard.

The analysis also distinguishes between employees based on permanent and temporary employment status with those employed on permanent contracts are considered as being in secure employment. Those in temporary employment are easily defined as being in insecure employment because apart from the fact that such workers have no guarantee of the work continuing, their contracts are generally easier to terminate than those employed on permanent contracts. Furthermore, the analysis breaks each of these forms of employment by full-time part-time status since this distinction is central to any gender analysis.

In terms of the results, focusing first on changes for men and women in the share of employment that is permanent and full-time in nature we see a decline over the period 1996 to 2016 in the share of men employed in this form of work (-1.3%), and an increase in the share of women (1.5%). Nonetheless, by the end of 2016 men continued to have a much higher likelihood of being in full-time permanent employment, with 68.5% of total male employment compared to 53.9% of total female employment being full-time and permanent in nature. What is more, whilst we have seen a general decline in more recent years in the overall share of employment which is full-time and permanent in nature (Wilson, 2017) an examination of Table 1 below shows that women have been driving this decline. Specifically, female full-time permanent employment has declined by 4.2% in the years from 2014 to 2016.

Furthermore, over the period 1996 to 2016 we have seen a decline in the proportion of women's employment that is part-time and permanent, and an almost doubling from 3.1% to 6% in the total share of male employment that was part-time and permanent. Nevertheless, by the end of 2016 women remained over five times as likely to be part-time permanent employed compared to men.

In terms of the share of men and women in temporary employment, when we look over time, whilst we have seen a slight increase in the proportion of men who are temporary employed, women continue to have a higher likelihood of being in temporary employment. What is more, in looking to Table 1 below we see that whilst part-time temporary employment had been on the decline for some time for women, in more recent years this appears to be on the rise again.

Turning now to the share of employment which is self-employment – both own-account and with employees we see from Table 1 below that the percentage of men's and women's employment that was self-employed own-account work increased over the period 1996 to 2016. At the same time self-employment with employees has declined suggesting that both men and women have increasingly been engaging in more precarious types of self-employment. These trends have

become increasingly pronounced in the two years from 2014 to 2016 with a 1.5% increase in the proportion of males and a 1.7% increase in the proportion of females in own-account self-employment.

Taken these results together we might argue that the enduring higher likelihood of women to be in all forms of part-time work provides evidence to show that profound continuities in gender inequality remain. Nevertheless, the data also bring to the fore changes and trends toward the 'feminisation of employment norms' clear from evidence of the movement of more men into more insecure, forms of employment traditionally associated with women. What is more, the move away from employment being full-time and permanent in nature and the particular increasing likelihood of both genders to be own-account self-employed points to an increase in more insecure, less protected, lower quality employment.

Table 1: Share of labour market comprised of mutually exclusive employment forms for women and men, 1996-2016

		<i>Self-employed</i>				<i>Employees</i>			
		<i>Own account</i>		<i>With employees</i>		<i>Permanent</i>		<i>Temporary</i>	
		<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Full-time</i>	<i>Part-time</i>
Women	1996	2.5	2.5	1.7	0.5	52.4	32.3	3.7	4.3
	1998	1.8	1.7	0.9	0.3	57.8	30.2	3.3	3.9
	2000	1.6	1.8	1.4	0.5	53.5	34.2	3.3	3.8
	2002	1.9	1.0	1.9	0.4	53.3	34.7	1.8	5.0
	2004	1.9	1.8	1.8	0.4	54.4	32.5	3.1	4.0
	2006	2.6	1.6	1.6	0.7	54.3	32.6	2.0	4.6
	2008	2.6	1.2	1.2	0.3	56.0	33.0	2.6	3.2
	2010	3.1	2.3	1.3	0.9	56.2	30.2	2.5	3.5
	2012	2.0	2.0	1.1	0.2	56.5	32.2	2.7	3.3
	2014	2.5	1.9	0.7	0.4	58.2	29.1	2.9	4.3
	2016	3.2	2.9	1.4	0.7	53.9	30.6	2.6	4.7
Men	1996	14.1	0.9	7.9	0.1	69.8	3.1	2.4	1.8
	1998	12.6	0.4	6.8	-	71.8	3.4	3.4	1.7
	2000	12.8	0.5	6.7	0.1	74.0	3.1	2.5	0.1
	2002	13.0	0.5	6.8	0.1	71.9	3.8	2.4	1.6
	2004	13.2	1.0	8.7	-	69.0	3.9	2.5	1.8
	2006	14.4	1.2	7.4	-	71.0	2.6	2.0	1.4
	2008	13.9	1.3	6.8	-	69.5	4.5	2.3	1.2
	2010	14.0	2.8	6.7	2.8	67.9	4.2	2.5	1.6
	2012	12.6	1.4	5.9	0.7	70.1	5.5	1.5	2.8
	2014	13.6	1.4	4.2	0.2	69.9	5.7	3.3	1.6
	2016	14.3	2.2	4.7	-	68.5	6.0	2.3	2.0

Note: '-' indicates that the sample size was too small to yield reliable estimates.

Continuity and change in the gendered nature of different types of employment arrangement is further revealed when we examine the shares of women in different forms of employment arrangement over the past twenty years. In doing so we see continuity in the dominance of both women and men in different forms of employment arrangement. Specifically, as shown in Figure 2 below across all periods women have comprised the majority of those in all forms of part-time employment. For example, in 2016 women accounted for over 80% of those in permanent part-time employment, close to 70% of those in temporary part-time employment, and just over 55% of the part-time self-employed without employees. In contrast, men generally account for the majority of those engaged in full-time employment comprising 58% of the full-time permanently employed (58%), 78% of full-time own-account self-employment, and 83% of full-time self-employment with employees. Full-time temporary employment is an exception to this however whereby in 1996 women held the majority share of workers in temporary full-time arrangements. By the end of 2016 closely approximate shares of males and females were full-time temporary employed.

Figure 2: Percentage female in each employment arrangement



Note: Sample size too small to yield reliable estimates for those self-employed part-time with employees.

4.3 The gendered impact of education and children on insecure employment

Whilst previous research has shown evidence of the influence of education on one's likelihood of being in different employment arrangements, with those with higher levels of education having a higher likelihood of being in a permanent, full-time job than those with lower or no educational qualifications (Wilson, 2017) little is known about how gender mediates the relationship between education and likelihood of being in particular employment arrangements. Furthermore, whilst previous research has documented evidence of a 'motherhood' penalty for women with children

in terms of pay and working arrangements little to no such research has looked at this issue in Northern Ireland. This section examines the gendered impact of education and having children on likelihood of being in secure or insecure employment.

Focusing first on the influence which gender has on the relationship between education and employment arrangements we see that whilst higher levels of education increases the likelihood of both males and females of being in a full-time, permanent job it has a much stronger influence on women than men, and greatly increases the likelihood of females being in a permanent. Specifically, only 34.7% of females with no qualifications are in a permanent, full-time job. Having below degree qualifications increases the proportion to 50%, with a degree or above level qualifications increasing the proportion to 64.6%.

Whilst these results can be read as showing evidence of a strong positive influence of human capital for female likelihood of being in a full-time, permanent job it also shows that the 'penalty' of having no qualifications in terms of the likelihood of being in full-time permanent employment is much lower for males compared to females, with 60% of males with no qualifications in a permanent, full-time job compared with 34.7% of females.

Table 2 below shows some interesting results in terms of the gendered impact of education of being in part-time, permanent employment. In this way, it shows that education and in particular having degree or above level qualifications strongly reduces the likelihood of females being part-time permanent employed, with 58.2% of females with no qualifications in part-time permanent employment, compared to 18.2% of females with degree or above level qualifications.

Furthermore, in terms of the gendered impact of education on likelihood of being in particular employment arrangements we see that higher levels of education have a negative influence on the likelihood of both females and (particularly) males being in self-employment. Specifically, close to one in three males with no qualifications are in self-employment, this reduces to almost one in four males with below degree level qualifications, and to slightly over one in ten males with degree level or above qualifications.

Turning now to the gendered influence of having children on the likelihood of being in particular employment arrangements the data shows that whilst males with no children are more likely than females to be in a full-time permanent job, having children greatly amplifies the differentiation between male and female likelihood of being in a permanent, full-time job.

Specifically, having one or more children reduces the female likelihood of being in a permanent, full-time job by almost one-third, with only 44% of females with one or more children working in a permanent, full-time job. On the other hand, interestingly, having children increases the likelihood of males being in a permanent, full-time job, but decreases the likelihood of males being in self-employment.

The decrease in the proportion of females with children to not be employed in permanent, full-time employment appears to be driven almost entirely by the much higher likelihood of females with children to work part-time, comparable to evidence found in many previous studies. Indeed, having one or more children almost doubles the proportion of females employed in permanent part-time employment (40.8% compared to 21.5%). Interestingly, lower proportions of females with children are in temporary employment, than females without children. The opposite is true for self-employment with higher proportions of females with children in self-employment.

Table 2: The gendered impact of education and children on likelihood of being in particular employment arrangements, 2016

		Self-employed Full-time	Self-employed Part-time	Permanent Full-time	Permanent Part-time	Temp Full-time	Temp Part-time
		%	%	%	%	%	%
Educational qualifications ***							
Degree or above	Male	10.5	1.5	79.6	3.5	3.6	1.3
	Female	4.0	2.9	64.6	18.2	4.8	5.6
Below degree	Male	21.1	2.1	65.3	7.4	1.9	2.2
	Female	5.2	3.6	50.2	34.8	1.7	4.5
No qualifications	Male	26.6	3.7	60.0	5.2	1.6	2.7
	Female	1.1	6.0	34.7	58.2	-	-
Number of children ***							
0 children	Male	19.2	2.4	68.2	5.1	3.5	1.6
	Female	4.5	3.1	63.0	21.5	2.8	5.2
1 + children	Male	18.7	1.8	69.0	7.1	0.8	2.6
	Female	4.7	4.2	44.0	40.8	2.3	4.1

Note: Temp = temporary. *** = Statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

4.4 Change and continuity in the gendered nature of working hours

Working hours have been identified as an important aspect of job quality with evidence showing that too few hours, too many hours, or a lack of control over ones working hours poses problems for workers (ILO, 2016). Hours that are excessive create risks for workers' in terms of conflicts over work-life balance, as well as health and safety concerns. Hours that are too short, create risks in terms of the worker not being able to obtain adequate earnings. Historically, working hours have been influenced heavily by gender with those who work the longest paid hours being traditionally much more likely to be men. On the other hand, women have been more likely to work short hours.

In seeking to assess the gendered nature of working hours, as well as continuities or changes over time Table 2 below shows the percentage of males and females working in different hour bands. By examining the gendered nature of different working hours, we are able to assess the extent of both short and long working hours for both genders.

One of the most notable findings is the substantive increase over time in the percentage of males working few hours per week (0-8 hours). Specifically, in 1996 4.4% of males worked between 0-8 hours per week. By 2016 this had increased to almost 10%. We see a similar doubling in the proportion of males working 9-16 hours per week increasing from 2.1% of all male workers in 1996 to 4% by the end of 2016. On the other hand, the percentage of women working 0-16 hours per week has remained constant since 1996 and women continue to have a much higher likelihood of working short hours compared to males.

In contrast, as shown in Table 2 we have seen a reduction in the proportions of both males and females working 41 hours and over. In particular, we have seen sharp declines in the proportion of males working between 41-48 hours and 48+ hours between 1996 and 2016. The proportion of males working 41-47 hours has declined from 17.9% in 1996 to 13.3% in 2016. The proportion of males working 48 hours or more has declined from 29.4% in 1996 to 21.1% in 2016. Nevertheless, males continue to have a much higher likelihood of working long hours, compared to females.

Table 3: The gendered nature of working hours, 1996-2016

% workers working different hours ***	Male			Female		
	1996	2006	2016	1996	2006	2016
0-8 hours	4.4	3.7	9.7	14.1	11.6	14.7
9 - 16 hours	2.1	2.1	4	11	10.8	10
17-40 hours	46.2	55.4	50	60.5	64	63.4
41-47 hours	17.9	14.7	13.3	8.1	7.8	6.9
48+	29.4	24.1	21.1	6.3	5.7	5.1

Unpredictable or having working hours that vary from week-to-week have also been used in previous research as an indicator of poor job quality. Evidence shows that having working hours that vary from week-to-week leads to an increase in work-life conflict, as well as having negative repercussions on safety and health, and leading to insecurity over earnings as the worker does not know how many hours of work that they are going to be given.

Respondents to the NI-QLFS are asked if the number of hours worked in the reference week differed from the person's usual hours. This allows us to determine gender differences in the

instability of working hours and the extent to which working schedules vary on a week-to-week basis, and indeed changes in this overtime.

As shown in Table 3 below the most notable change has been the substantive increase between 2006 and 2016 in the proportion of both males and females who said that their hours varied. Between 2006 and 2016 we seen a 9% increase in the proportion of males whose working hours varied, and a 16% increase in the proportion of females. Thus, whilst both instability in working hours grew for both genders an implication of the stronger increase for females is that by the end of 2016 females were more likely than males to have varying working hours. By the end of 2016 29% of females said their working hours varied, compared to 25.7% of males. In 2006, 16.6% of males' hours varied, compared to 13.4% of females.

Table 4: Percentage of workers whose hours vary, by gender, 2006-2016

	Male		Female	
	2006	2016	2006	2016
Hours vary: Yes	16.6	25.7	13.4	29

4.5 Change and continuity in the gendered nature of the industrial structure of the labour market

Scholars frequently claim that due to industrial restructuring and a substantial rise in services that gender segregation in the industrial structure of employment is declining (Standing, 1999). This section thus seeks to ascertain if we are seeing a decline in the gendered nature of the industrial structure of the labour market, and if so, how this is occurring. To do this, this section looks at overall changes in the industrial structure of the Northern Irish labour market between 1996 and 2016, as well as to changes in the share of total male and female employment which is occupied in different industrial sectors. In doing so we will be able to ascertain the extent to which the industrial structure of the labour market is moving away from those sectors where the 'standard' employment arrangement traditionally took hold (i.e. goods-producing sectors). Moreover, we will be able to assess the extent to which these changes are being driven by changes in the industrial structure of male and female employment.

Table 4 below shows the percentage of all workers, as well as the percentage of males and female employed in each industrial sector as a share of total employment over the period from 1996 to 2016. From this substantial changes and continuities in the gendered industrial sectoral distribution of employment are clear.

Table 5: Percentage in each industrial sector by share of total employment, 1996-2016

	All			Male			Female		
	1996	2006	2016	1996	2006	2016	1996	2006	2016
Agriculture & fishing	4.3	3.2	3.1	6.3	5.7	5.6	1.8	0.4	0.6
Energy & water	0.9	1	1.2	1.5	1.8	1.9	0.1	0.1	0.5
Manufacturing	17.3	13.2	11	22.5	19.3	15.1	10.9	6	6.6
Construction	9.7	9.9	8.5	15.9	17.1	14.7	2	1.5	2
Distribution, hotels & restaurants	20.1	20.8	18.8	18	18.4	18.1	22.7	23.8	19.6
Transport & communication	4.2	4.3	5.8	5.9	5.9	8.7	2	2.4	2.7
Banking, finance & insurance	5.9	10.1	14.6	5.3	9	14.3	6.7	11.5	14.8
Public admin, education & health	34.4	33.7	31.8	22.2	19.1	16.9	49.7	51	47.4
Other services	3.3	3.6	5.2	2.5	3.8	4.7	4.2	3.5	5.8

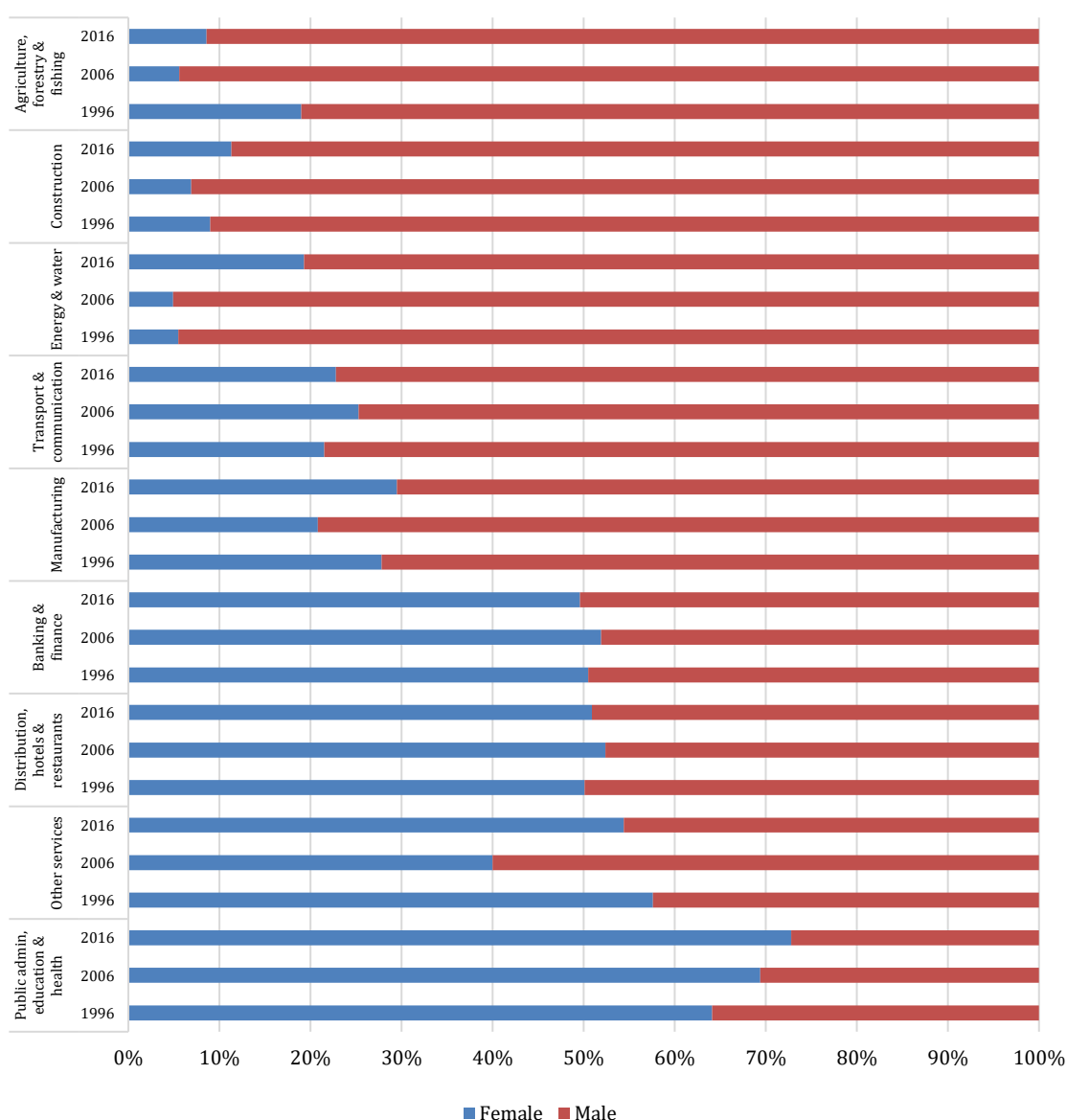
One of the most notable changes has been the relative decline in several male-dominated sectors where the ‘standard’ employment arrangement once took hold. Specifically, between 1996 and 2016 manufacturing declined by just over 6% as a share of total employment. We have also seen a decline in the share of total employment over the period in the agriculture and fishing sectors and the construction sector. By the end of 2016 less than one in four workers (22.6%) were employed in one of these three sectors, down from just under one in three in 1996 (31.3%).

In contrast, over the same period, we have seen considerable growth in the proportion of workers in service industries. In particular the banking, finance and insurance sector has undergone considerable growth as a share of total employment since 1996. By the end of 2016 the banking, finance and insurance sector comprised close to one in six of all employment. The distribution, hotels and restaurants sector comprised close to one in five of all employment. We have also seen notable growth in the share of total employment in transport and communication and other services sectors.

Whilst this shift away from manufacturing and goods-producing industries towards service industries signifies the well-researched phenomena of de-industrialisation (Skuflic and Druzio, 2016), it also signifies the intensification of the sectors of employment traditionally associated with women and in particular to the movement of men into these jobs. Indeed, in looking to percentage changes in the share of total employment in each industrial sector by gender we see that whilst there has been an increase into the service industry for both males and females, these changes have been more substantive for males. That is, employment in the service industry as a share of total employment has grown more strongly for males (+14%) than females (+7.3%).

Despite these trends however, men continue to dominate in traditionally male-dominated sector where the 'standard' employment arrangement took hold. Indeed, withstanding the substantive declines in the share of total male employment which is in the manufacturing, construction and agriculture and fishery sectors, Figure 3 shows that men continue to dominate in each of these sectors. Men make up 70.5% of those in manufacturing, 88.7% of those in construction and 91.4% of those in the agriculture and fishery sector. In contrast, women (73%) comprise a much larger proportion of those in the public administration, education and health sector.

Figure 3: Percentage male and female in each industrial sector, 2016

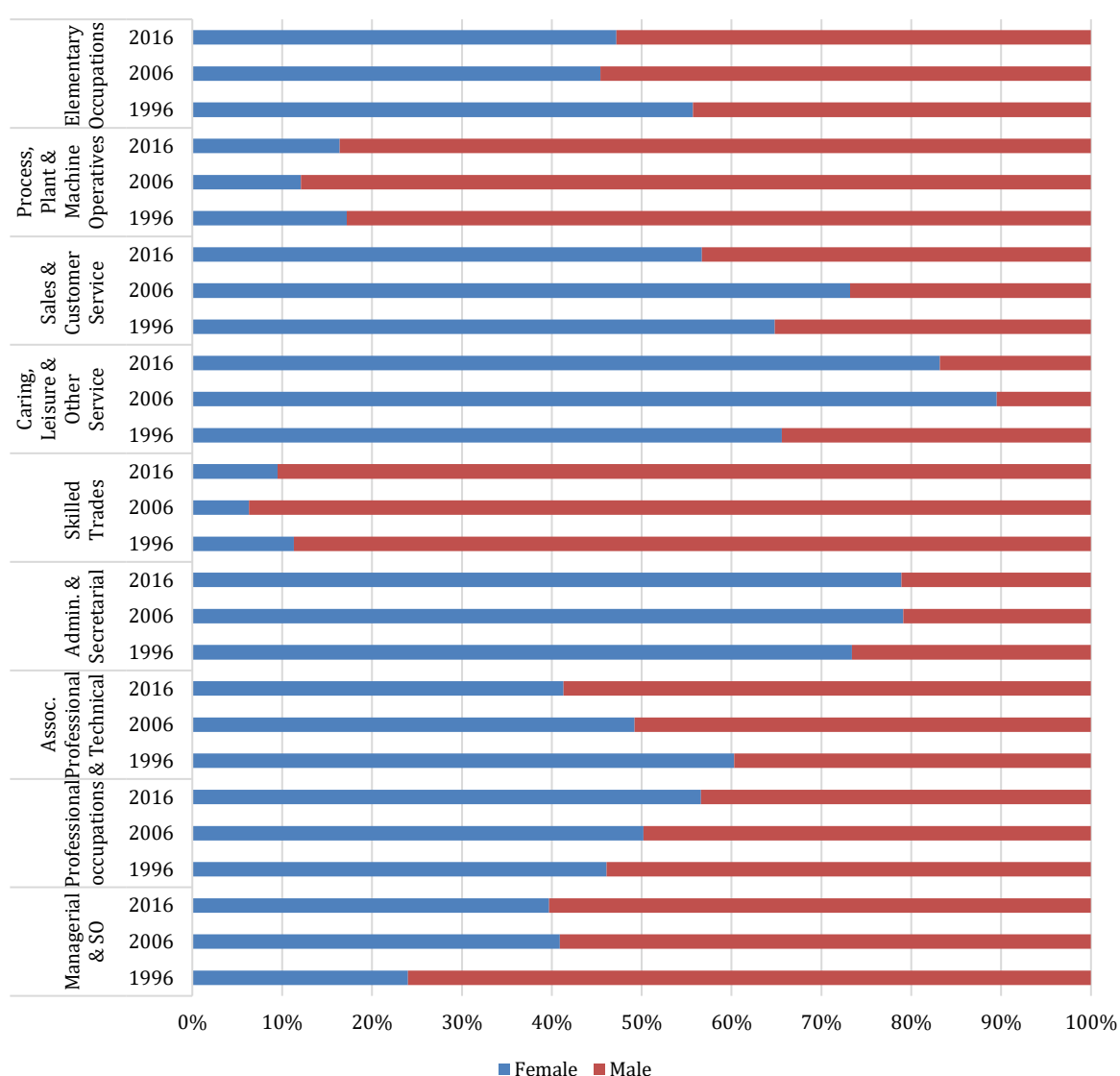


At the same time, in growing sectors such in banking, finance and insurance and other services male and female shares of employment are similar (banking, finance and insurance 49.6% female, 50.1% male and other services 54.4% female, 45.6% male). Similarly, the distribution, hotels and

restaurant sector is comprised of similar shares of males (49.1%) and females (50.9%). Taken together both changes in the (gendered) proportions comprising each industrial sector over time, alongside the distributional share of females and males in each sector points to both changes and continuities in gendered nature of industrial sectoral segregation. In this way, the above data shows that whilst gender differences in industrial sector distributions have narrowed and are less pronounced in certain sectors than they were twenty years ago, substantive gendered sectoral segregation persists with men continuing to dominate in sectors that have traditionally been associated with them.

4.6 Change and continuity in the gendered nature of occupations

Figure 4: Percentage male and female by occupational structure, 1996-2016



Looking at trends over time in male and female shares in each occupation also show substantive change, yet continuity in terms of gender. Specifically, looking to Figure 4 above we see that males

and females continue to dominate in occupations to which they have traditionally been associated.

In each period, women dominate in what has been termed 'pink collar' jobs - administrative and secretarial occupations, sales and customer service occupations and caring, leisure and other service occupations. Similarly, men have and continue to dominate in managerial and senior official occupations, skilled trades occupations, and as process, plant and machine operatives.

4.7 The gendered nature of occupations and incomes

The gendered nature of different occupations and incomes is also evident when we examine male and female median hourly earnings across occupations, alongside gender pay gaps across occupations. Table 5 below ranks occupations from the lowest hourly median pay excluding overtime to the highest hourly median pay excluding overtime. We see that females dominate in five of the ten lowest paid occupations, and in only four of the top ten paid occupations.

Furthermore, in seven of the ten lowest paid occupations median female hourly earnings excluding overtime are below that of males. Here the extent of the gender pay gap varies but is most extreme for those in leisure, travel and related personal service occupations where female median hourly pay at £7.50 is 32% below that of the median male hourly pay of £9.88.

Of course, we have to be mindful that this is the median figure and that there is quite a bit of variation within each occupation and within each gender in terms of pay nevertheless the above data demonstrates the gendered nature of occupational income.

Table 6: The gendered nature of occupational and income segregation, 2016

	Male Median hourly pay excluding overtime (£)	000's	Female Median hourly pay excluding overtime (£)	000's	Proportion female in occupation	Proportion male in occupation	Gender pay gap (%)
1. Sales occupations	7.44	24	7.21	37	0.6	0.4	3.2
2. Elementary administration and service occupations	7.52	37	7.30	40	0.2	0.8	3.0
3. Elementary trades and related occupations	7.70	10	7.20	-	-	-	6.9
4. Customer service occupations	8.03	6	8.83	7	0.5	0.5	-9.1
5. Leisure, travel and related personal service occupations	9.88	5	7.50	7	0.8	0.2	31.7
6. Textiles, printing and other skilled trades	8.50	12	8.30	7	0.4	0.7	2.4
7. Caring personal service occupations	9.09	6	8.45	59	0.9	0.1	7.6
8. Process, plant and machine operatives	9.01	42	7.52	9	0.2	0.8	19.9
9. Secretarial and related occupations	8.45	-	9.32	18	1.0	-	-9.3
10. Transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives	9.23	10	-	-	-	-	-
11. Administrative occupations	10.24	22	10.76	63	0.7	0.3	-5.1
12. Skilled construction and building trades	10.52	14	-	-	-	-	-
13. Health and social care associate professionals	10.43	6	11.70	13	0.7	0.3	-10.9
14. Science, engineering and technology associate professionals	17.35	31	16.54	7	0.2	0.8	4.7
15. Skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades	11.73	39	-	-	-	-	-
16. Other managers and proprietors	13.09	6	11.29	5	0.5	0.6	13.8
17. Culture, media and sports occupations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18. Business and public service associate professionals	17.75	20	16.56	17	0.5	0.5	6.2
19. Science, research, engineering and technology professionals	17.35	31	16.54	7	0.2	0.8	4.7
20. Health professionals	20.62	10	17.23	50	0.8	0.2	16.5
21. Business, media and public service professionals	17.78	21	16.56	17	0.4	0.6	6.9
22. Protective service occupations	19.23	15	19.62	4	0.2	0.8	-2.0
23. Corporate managers and directors	21.65	35	19.57	15	0.3	0.7	9.6
24. Teaching and educational professionals	24.39	15	23.29	32	0.7	0.3	4.5

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This paper sought to examine the changing nature of employment and insecure employment in Northern Ireland via a gendered lens with the aim of assessing (a) the extent to which gendered patterns in the nature of employment and job quality mark change or continuity in terms of the traditional gender inequalities that have characterised the labour market; and (b) the extent to which the nature of employment in Northern Ireland is undergoing a general trend toward the 'feminisation of employment norms' and an ensuing overall downward pressure on security of employment and job quality for both men and women.

Gendered inequalities in employment - a story of change and continuity

The results of this study showed evidence of enduring gender inequalities in the labour market, with women continuing to be more likely to be in insecure and part-time employment with women comprising the majority of workers in permanent part-time, temporary full- and part-time employment, and part-time self-employment without employees. Men continue to hold a greater share of permanent, full-time employment. Furthermore, over the twenty-year period from 1996 to 2016 women have continued to be more likely to work short hours. What is more, evidence in this paper shows that gender significantly mediates the relationships between employment arrangements and both levels of education and having children. Higher levels of education narrow the gap between males and females in terms of likelihood of being in insecure employment, whilst having children further amplifies the differentiation.

In addition, whilst in 2016 gender segregation is less pronounced across industrial sectors and occupations than in decades past, substantive gender segregation remains with men continuing to dominate in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing and construction, and females continuing to dominate in public administration, education and health. The same is true in terms of occupational segregation where we see that over the twenty-year period from 1996 to 2016 substantial continuity in terms of gendered occupational patterns. Both men and women continue to dominate in occupations that have traditionally been associated with them. Furthermore, when we examined the income of men and women across occupations ranging from the lowest hourly paid to the highest hourly paid is examined we seen that women dominate in the low paid occupations. What is more, across the vast majority of occupations there remains a substantive gender pay gap, with women continuing to earn less pay per hour than men. The largest gap is in leisure, travel and other personal service occupations where the median hourly pay excluding overtime of females is 31% below that of males.

All in all, examining gender differences within and across different forms of employment arrangement illustrates a key element of the changing nature of employment. Women continue

to dominate in the most insecure, poorest quality forms of employment. Furthermore, as is demonstrated by the higher likelihood of women to be in the lowest paid occupations, even if women are in full-time, permanent employment they are more likely than men to be low paid, and doubly, to earn less than men in these low-paid occupations. A double penalty.

The feminisation of employment norms

Despite substantial continuity in terms of many enduring gender inequalities the results in this paper also shows evidence of substantive change, marked by the 'feminisation of employment norms'. In this way, throughout the past twenty years we have seen an overall convergence towards more insecure, poorer quality employment. We have seen a substantive decline in the proportion of males employed in the traditional 'standard' (male) normative model of employment of full-time, permanent work, with males increasingly being employed in more insecure 'non-standard' forms of employment which have traditionally been associated with women. Moreover, we have seen particular increases in the share of male employment which is part-time, and a more than doubling over the twenty years from 1996 to 2016 in the share of low hour employment amongst males.

The drive towards employment which is less secure, and irregular or variable in terms of working hours and the increase in both low hour and high working hours shows evidence that a 'harmonising down' or convergence toward a feminisation of employment norms. Alongside evidence that insecure forms of employment are generally poorer in quality when compared with the traditional 'standard' employment arrangement points towards the need for policy to focus on improving the security and quality of jobs and to reassess the 'demand' from employers for insecure workers. Moreover, policy needs to give careful consideration as to why non-standard forms of employment are poorer in quality than the traditional 'standard' form of employment.

Thus, whilst in recent years we may be seeing an increase in the demands for flexible working practices from both workers and employers it does not necessarily follow that these forms of employment should bring inevitable trade-offs in terms of job quality, as suggested in the Taylor Review (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2017). Thus, whilst the Taylor Review makes this supposition it is not at all clear why these trade-offs to job quality or security are inevitable. Why should flexibility come at the cost of pay? Or training and development? Or any aspect of job quality? Why - if both employers and workers increasingly want flexible employment practices - must it come at the cost of job security? Policy needs to find a way to ensure that in the desire for more flexible work that the rewards, entitlements and benefits long-associated with employment are not sacrificed.

Policy implications

This continuation of gender inequalities in the labour market and the domination of women in insecure, poor quality employment points to the need for policy to carefully examine, and take heed of the relationship between the higher likelihood of women to work in insecure, short and variable working hours arrangements and activities related to social reproduction, and the traditional role of women within the home deemed as responsible for care and family work.

In current policy there continues to be a lack of recognition of unpaid work and its economic and social value. Indeed, there is an implicit hostile narrative running through economic policy that to be economically inactive due to family or caring commitments is an individual failing which can be explained largely in individual terms via a culture of worklessness, with Government strategies focused on increasing the participation of this group into paid work (Bailey, 2016).

This is clear if we look through the current strategy to reduce economic inactivity in Northern Ireland which states that *'some forms of economic inactivity are not problematic. Northern Ireland, for example, has a higher proportion of students contributing to our inactive total than any other region of the United Kingdom. This can be viewed as a benign form of inactivity where the investment in education and skills is highly likely to repay dividends to the individuals and wider economy in the future.'* It however identifies those with family or caring commitments as one of two problematic target groups, who need to be supported into paid employment. Lack of recognition of the value and importance of the unpaid work carried out by this group in the report is clear when it states that by engaging in paid work those who are currently looking after their family or home will be able to *'better provide for [their] families and make a fuller contribution to society.'* (Department for Employment and Learning, 2015: 3).

In all of this there is an avoidance of the need to address the barriers which women face entering the labour market and the enduring inequalities in which women face when in the labour market. There is a need for policy makers to recognise that gender inequalities are being facilitated through a lack of adequate paid parental leave, good quality, affordable and accessible childcare and other social care services for family members, and also of family-friendly flexible working arrangements for both women and men. Previous research shows that the higher likelihood of females to work in certain sectors and occupations is related to the fact that some women choose to enter certain sectors and occupations, because they are more compatible with care responsibilities (Cassirer and Addati, 2007). On the other hand, many occupations traditionally dominated by men do not offer family-friendly flexible working arrangements which further compounds existing gender inequalities.

Moreover, the evidence presented in this paper in terms of the overall convergence towards insecure, poor quality employment points to the need for policy makers to develop an employment strategy which moves away from the traditional concern of such documents with quantity, and the number of jobs, and necessity to focus on job quality through a focus on at once increasing the share of jobs in the labour market which are 'standard' in nature, and improving the quality of non-standard jobs. Furthermore, given evidence of the long-term and enduring continued higher likelihood of women to be in insecure and poor-quality women the specific barriers which women face points to the need for a women's focused employment strategy to address the many peculiarities which continue to shape women's experience in the Northern Ireland labour market.

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