

**LABOUR MARKET DETACHMENT
AMONG OLDER MEN**

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a descriptive analysis of older men of working age who have become detached from the labour market.

The paper presents statistics on men aged 50-64, derived from a new survey. All of these men had not had a regular full-time job for all or most of the preceding six months. Most had not worked for much longer. The survey provides a particularly wide range of information including:

- * present position (sick, retired, unemployed etc)
- * marital status
- * household composition
- * social class/occupation
- * qualifications
- * housing status
- * duration of non-employment
- * work history
- * reason for job loss
- * job aspirations and job search
- * obstacles to re-employment
- * health
- * financial circumstances
- * benefits status

Other published reports based on this data include a description of the overall survey sample, which covers men aged 25-64¹ and a detailed investigation of Incapacity Benefit claimants².

¹C. Beatty and S. Fothergill (1999) *The Detached Male Workforce*, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University

²C. Beatty and S. Fothergill (1999) *Incapacity Benefit and Unemployment*, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University

The survey

The survey was carried out by ourselves and colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University. It covers men in seven contrasting localities across Britain. Roughly 400 interviews were conducted in each of three towns:

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

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

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

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

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

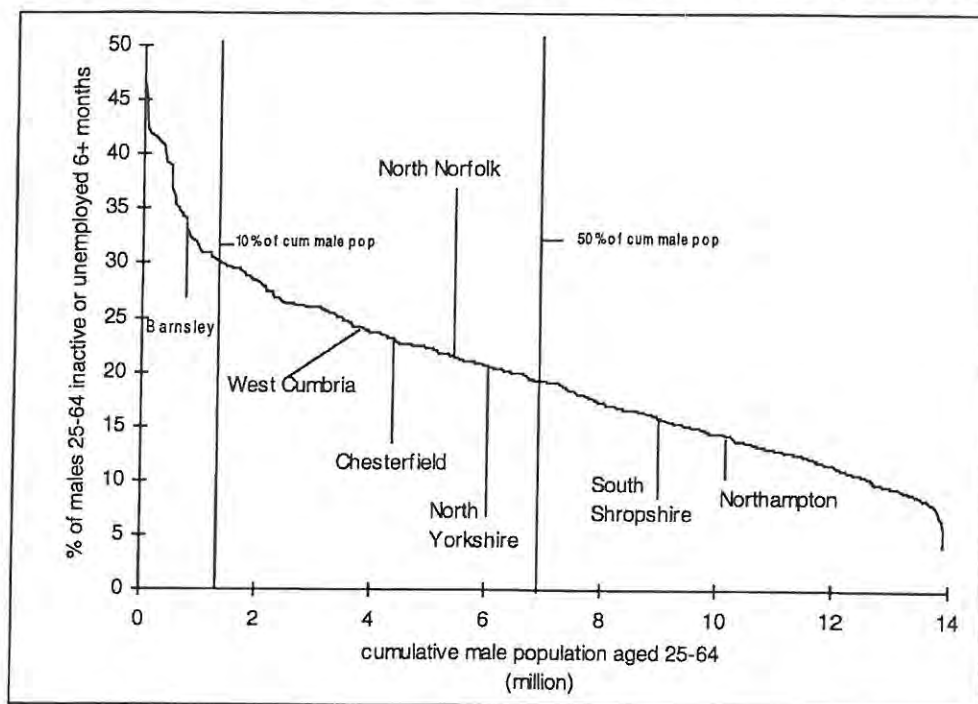
NORTH YORKSHIRE, as an example of an upland rural area. (The survey area was within the North York Moors).

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

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

Figure 1 shows how each of the survey areas ranks in terms of a composite indicator of labour market detachment. Barnsley, Chesterfield and Northampton were chosen as being representative of the top 10 per cent, next 40 per cent, and bottom 50 per cent of districts across Britain. The four rural areas include a range of local conditions.

Figure 1: Long-term unemployment and economic inactivity among men, by district, 1996-7



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

Only 3 per cent of households refused outright to participate in the survey. However, in all areas relatively few households contain men within the scope of the survey - ie men of working age who had been without a full-time job for most of all the preceding six months. The majority of households, in contrast, contain men in work or over the retirement age, or only women or students. Interviews were therefore carried at only a small minority of the addresses initially visited. The interviews themselves involved a tightly-structured questionnaire and generally lasted 15-30 minutes. In total, 1,703 were

successfully completed, of which 973 were with men aged 50-64. It is the sub-set of older men that forms the basis of this paper.

In the analysis which follows the results from all seven survey areas are mostly pooled to provide an overall picture. Various weightings of the data from individual areas are possible in order to generate 'national estimates', and a number have been tried. However, no single weighting is ideal and in practice alternative weightings make little difference to the figures presented (generally no more than 2-3 percentage points in either direction). For the sake of simplicity, unweighted figures are therefore presented throughout.

The older detached workforce

Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the older, detached male workforce, as revealed by the survey.

In this table and in nearly all subsequent tables we have divided the data in three different ways : first according to the men's self-declared status, second according to their benefits status at the time of the interview, and third according to whether or not they had income from a pension. As all the men were aged under 65, the pension income in question is all from private or company sources, not the state retirement pension. Owing to missing data (for example because of refusals) information on benefits and pension status is available for fractionally fewer respondents than for self-declared status.

Table 1 shows that the biggest single group, comprising nearly 40 per cent of the total, are men who describe themselves as 'long-term sick or disabled'. The next largest group - just over 30 per cent of the total - are those who say they are 'retired from paid work altogether'. Two other groups are significant. One is the self-declared 'unemployed' (15 per cent) and the other those describing themselves as 'in part-time employment' (just under 10 per cent). The remainder include full-time carers, those looking after family or home, and a range of others. In subsequent tables we group all

Table 1: Survey respondents aged 50-64

Self-declared status	number	(%)
Long-term sick or disabled	372	38.2
Retired from paid work altogether	304	31.2
Unemployed	150	15.4
In part-time employment	91	9.4
Full-time carers	30	3.1
Looking after family or home	5	0.5
On government scheme	2	0.2
Full-time student	1	0.1
Other	18	1.8
Total	973	100.0

Benefits status	number	(%)
ICB claimants	421	43.7
JSA claimants	92	9.5
Other claimants*	90	9.3
No benefits	361	37.4
Total	964	100.0

Pension status	number	(%)
Pension income	545	57.0
No pension income	411	43.0
Total	956	100.0

* excludes Child Benefit

Source: Survey data

these remaining men under the 'other' label. For the sake of simplicity, we also refer to the three larger groups as the 'long-term sick', 'long-term unemployed' and 'early retired'. More than 40 per cent of all 50-64 year old detached men are Incapacity Benefit (ICB) claimants. This is the principal state benefit paid to men who are deemed unfit for work by virtue of their physical or mental health. The number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants is more modest, at just under 10 per cent of the total ³. A similar proportion are claimants of other benefits, which include housing-related benefits (Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit) and a range of specialist benefits (eg Severe Disablement Allowance, Industrial Injuries Benefit, Invalid Care Allowance). Just over a third of all 50-64 year old men without full-time employment do not draw on the benefits system at all.

The table also shows that pension income is widespread - received by 57 per cent of all these detached men. In passing it is worth noting that the routes to a pension at this age are diverse. For some, reaching a certain age will have automatically triggered entitlement. For others, early receipt of a pension may have been negotiated as part of a severance package. For a further group, pension entitlement may have been brought about by enforced retirement due to ill-health, perhaps before the age of 50.

Table 2 compares these 50-64 year old men with younger, 25-49 year old men detached from employment. There are important but often predictable differences. Far fewer of the younger group without work describe themselves as 'retired'. Far more of the younger group say they are 'unemployed', and this is reflected in the much greater importance of Jobseeker's Allowance. Far fewer of the younger group have pension income, and overall they are more dependent on the benefits system.

³This figure for JSA claimants includes 23 men who described themselves as 'unemployed' but said they were claiming Income Support, not JSA. Income Support is no longer available to unemployed claimants, having been replaced by income-based JSA in October 1996, but the two payments are effectively identical and easily confused. Detailed benefit rules do however allow some non-employed men aged 60-64 to claim Income Support rather than income-based JSA. 13 of the 23 men are aged 60-64.

Table 2: Survey respondents: comparison between age groups

Self-declared status	Men aged 25-49 (%)	Men aged 50-64 (%)
Long-term sick or disabled	35.1	38.2
Retired from paid work altogether	1.1	31.2
Unemployed	40.3	15.4
In part-time employment	8.5	9.4
Full-time carers	6.1	3.1
Looking after family or home	2.3	0.5
On government scheme	0.8	0.2
Full-time student	4.1	0.1
Other	1.7	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0

Benefits status	Men aged 25-49 (%)	Men aged 50-64 (%)
ICB claimants	34.3	43.7
JSA claimants	35.9	9.5
Other claimants*	18.2	9.3
No benefits	11.7	37.4
Total	100.0	100.0

Pension status	Men aged 25-49 (%)	Men aged 50-64 (%)
Pension income	7.0	57.0
No pension income	93.0	43.0
Total	100.0	100.0

* excludes Child Benefit

Source: Survey data

The composition of the older detached workforce varies from place to place, to some extent systematically. Table 3 ranks the survey areas from the slackest labour market (Barnsley) to the tightest (Northampton). Generally speaking, in the slacker labour markets the self-declared long-term sick comprise a greater share of the total - half in Barnsley, compared to a third in Northampton. Part-time workers are markedly more numerous in the tighter labour markets, presumably because more opportunities are available.

Table 3: Self-declared status of 50-64 year old detached men by survey area

	Barnsley (%)	Chesterfield (%)	Rural Areas (%)	Northampton (%)	All Respondents (%)
Long-term sick	49	37	34	34	38
Early retired	26	33	35	30	31
Long-term unemployed	17	18	13	14	15
Part-time workers	4	8	10	16	9
Other	4	4	8	6	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey data

In the analyses that follow, we do not disaggregate the data by location as well as by sub-group because there is generally an insufficient number of respondents to draw robust conclusions. We do however flag up some of the main differences between places. That location plays a role in defining the circumstances of men without jobs does nevertheless need to be born in mind in interpreting all the data, even when location is not specifically highlighted.

Given the data available from the survey, the potential number of cross-tabulations is immense. We take the view that it is more important to present the salient features rather than all the possible permutations. In the subsequent tables we have also sought to express the data in the way that answers the question most likely to be asked. Thus

in looking at the role of age we have presented the data so as to show, for example, what share of each age group has a pension. In other cases we have turned the data around, showing for example what share of men with pensions say they want work. In a few important cases we have presented the data both ways. This will become clearer as the exposition proceeds.

The impact of age

Table 4 shows important differences within the 50-64 year old group. Six points are of note:

- * Overall, the age distribution of detached men is skewed towards the back end of the age range, with 44 per cent in the 60-64 group. This observation is consistent with national datasets such as the 1991 Census and the Labour Force Survey.
- * The proportion who consider themselves to be 'retired' rises steeply with age, but even among the 60-64 year old group does not reach half.
- * The proportion who consider themselves 'unemployed' falls with age, and this is reflected in the declining significance of Jobseeker's Allowance.
- * In contrast, the long-term sick (and ICB claimants) are prominent in all three sub-groups.
- * The share of non-claimants increases with age.
- * Pension income is important across all three age groups, rising to more than two-thirds of all 60-64 year old detached men.

Table 4: Age breakdown of older detached men

	Self-declared status (%)					All
	Long-term sick	Early retired	Long-term unemployed	Part-time workers	Other	
50-54	45	16	22	8	10	100
55-59	40	27	16	12	5	100
60-64	34	43	11	8	4	100

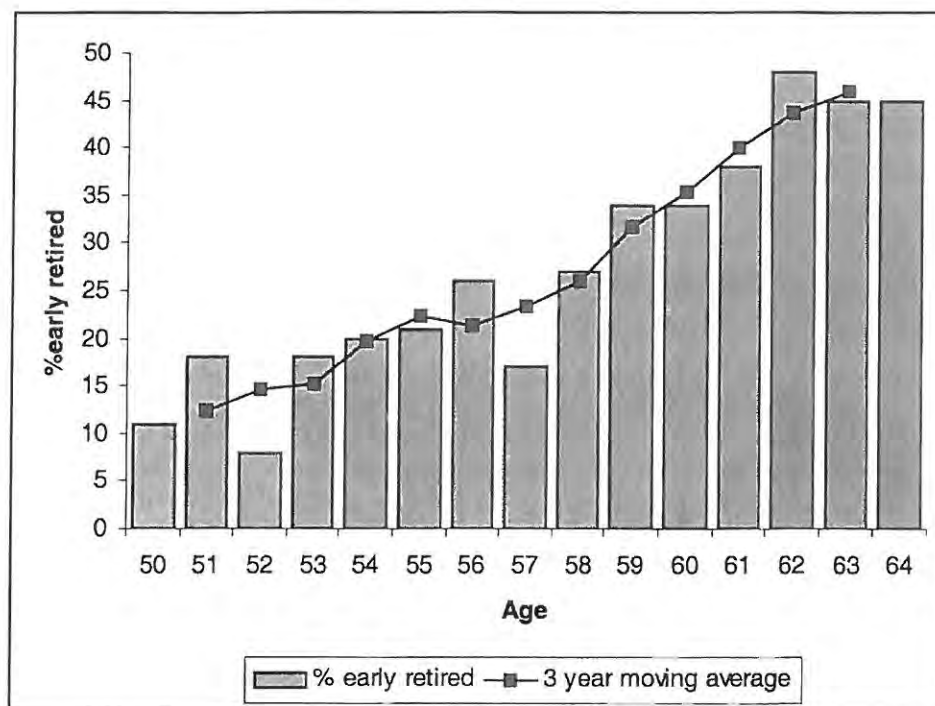
	Benefits status (%)				All
	ICB claimants	JSA claimants	Other claimants	No benefits	
50-54	44	18	12	26	100
55-59	46	9	9	36	100
60-64	42	6	8	44	100

	Pension status (%)		All respondents (%)
	Pension income	No pension income	
50-54	41	59	24
55-59	51	49	32
60-64	70	30	44
			100

Source: Survey data

Age is sufficiently important to explore its influence a little further. Rather than a continuous and steady rise in the number of retired or pension recipients across the 50-64 age range, there may be particular ages at which there are sharp increases. Figures 2 and 3 explore this possibility. In both cases the modest sample size distorts the picture but to counteract random fluctuations we have also included a three-year moving average.

Figure 2: Early retirement among detached 50-64 year old men

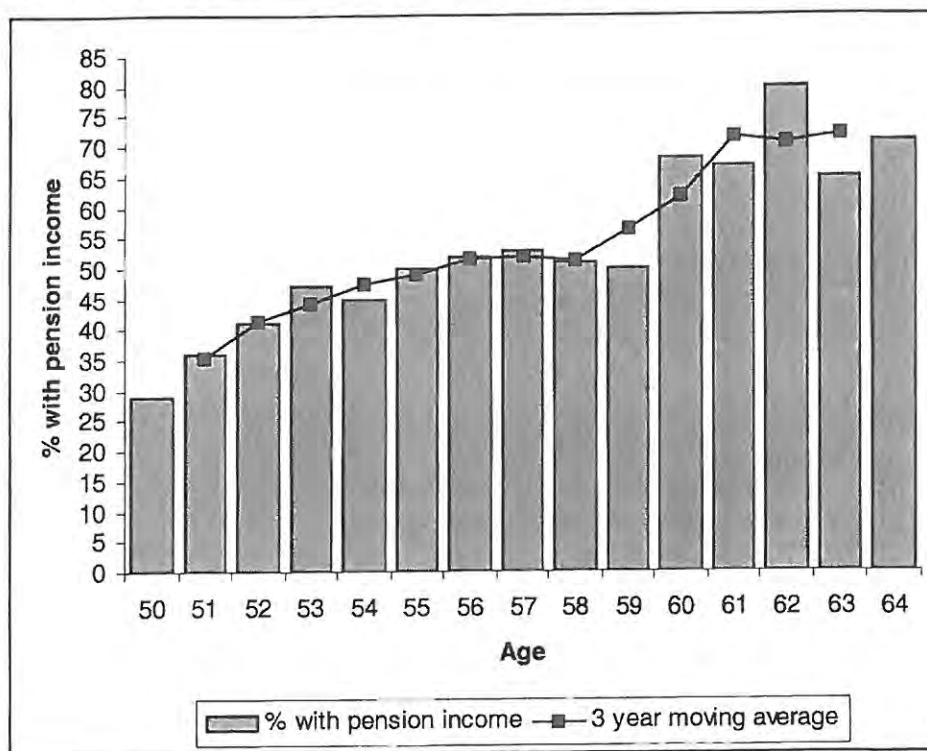


There is indeed evidence of step-changes. The proportion of self-declared retired is at a plateau of 12-15 per cent for men in their early 50s. It rises to a further plateau of 20-25 per cent for men in their mid 50s. This is followed by a further rise to a final plateau of around 45 per cent for men in their early 60s.

The share of detached men with pension income is consistently higher than the share of self-declared retired at all ages. Again however there is evidence of more than one

plateau. For men in their middle and late 50s this is the 40-50 per cent range. Around age 60 the proportion of detached men with a pension rises steeply to a new plateau around 70 per cent. No doubt this reflects the large number of private and company pension schemes which are triggered when a man reaches 60.

Figure 3: Share of detached 50-64 year old men with pension income



Other personal and household characteristics

Table 5 shows the **marital status** of detached 50-64 year old men. Nearly four-out-of-five are married, so this group dominates the overall picture. There are nevertheless subtle differences between the married men and their single/ divorced/widowed counterparts, who are less likely to have pension income, more likely to be unemployed JSA claimants, and rather less likely to see themselves as retired.

Table 5: Marital status of 50-64 year old detached men

	Self-declared status (%)					All
	Long-term sick	Early retired	Long-term unemployed	Part-time workers	Other	
Single	40	24	23	7	6	100
Married	37	33	13	11	6	100
Separated/divorced/widowed/other	45	25	23	5	2	100

	Benefits status (%)				All
	ICB claimants	JSA claimants	Other claimants	No benefits	
Single	41	17	14	28	100
Married	43	8	9	41	100
Separated/divorced/widowed/other	49	16	9	26	100

	Pension status (%)		All respondents (%)
	Pension income	No pension income	
Single	38	62	9
Married	61	39	78
Separated/divorced/widowed/other	44	56	13
			100

Source: Survey data

Household composition, shown in Table 6, is similarly dominated by men living with a partner but no dependent children. These men account for more than two-thirds of the total. Compared to the other groups, they are less likely to draw on the benefit system. More than 60 per cent have pension income, compared to fewer than half in each of the other groups.

Table 6: Household composition of 50-64 year old detached men

	Self-declared status (%)					All
	Long-term sick	Early retired	Long-term unemployed	Part-time workers	Other	
Partner, no dependent children	37	35	13	10	5	100
Partner, at least 1 dependent child	39	14	18	10	18	100
No partner, at least 1 dependent child	64	18	9	9	0	100
No partner other adults	52	17	19	7	6	100
Live alone	37	31	23	5	3	100

	Benefits status (%)				All
	ICB claimants	JSA claimants	Other claimants	No benefits	
Partner, no dependent children	42	7	9	42	100
Partner, at least 1 dependent child	47	13	12	29	100
No partner, at least 1 dependent child	64	9	18	9	100
No partner other adults	51	11	11	26	100
Live alone	47	18	8	27	100

	Pension status (%)		All respondents (%)
	Pension income	No pension income	
Partner, no dependent children	62	38	70
Partner, at least 1 dependent child	47	53	8
No partner, at least 1 dependent child	46	54	1
No partner other adults	40	60	6
Live alone	47	53	15
			100

Source: Survey data

Social class, defined in terms of usual occupation, reveals stark contrasts as Table 7 shows. Overall, the detached 50-64 year old male workforce is weighted towards manual workers. At 40 per cent, skilled manual workers comprise the largest single group by some margin. But it is the contrasts along the social hierarchy that are most striking:

- * The self-declared 'retired' are more prevalent among white-collar workers. Slightly more than half of all professionals without full-time jobs, and just under half of other white-collar workers, put themselves in this category. The comparable proportion for manual workers is below a quarter.
- * Part-time working is more prevalent among white-collar workers, especially professionals, suggesting that it is often an 'add-on' to early retirement.
- * Conversely, self-declared long-term sickness is more prevalent among manual workers though there is a high incidence of ICB claimants across the spectrum.
- * Very few non-employed white-collar workers are JSA claimants. Manual workers are more likely to claim JSA, but the dependence on this benefit is still much lower than for Incapacity Benefit.
- There is a clear progression in the receipt of pension income. 88 per cent of professionals without full-time jobs have pension income, compared to just 25 per cent of unskilled workers.

The issue of social class is sufficiently important to look at from the other way round as well : what proportion of each group (eg long-term sick, early retired) is made up of men from each social group? This is shown in Table 8.

The large numbers of skilled manual workers who are without full-time employment means that this group is prominent throughout. They make up around half the ICB claimants and nearly half the JSA claimants as well. They also make up a third of those in receipt of a pension. So although professional and other white-collar workers are more likely to be receiving a pension it is clearly wrong to think that they are the only ones.

Table 7: Social class (based on occupation) of 50-64 year old detached men

	Self-declared status (%)					
	Long-term sick	Early retired	Long-term unemployed	Part-time workers	Other	All
Professional	15	52	2	26	4	100
Intermediate	23	46	6	17	6	100
Skilled non-manual	29	40	14	11	6	100
Skilled manual	50	22	19	4	6	100
Semi-skilled manual	38	24	21	9	9	100
Unskilled*	51	16	29	3	1	100

	Benefits status (%)				
	ICB claimants	JSA claimants	Other claimants	No benefits	All
Professional	27	2	0	71	100
Intermediate	30	4	4	63	100
Skilled non-manual	36	5	9	51	100
Skilled manual	56	11	11	22	100
Semi-skilled manual	43	17	17	23	100
Unskilled*	47	25	15	13	100

	Pension status (%)			All respondents (%)
	Pension income	No pension income	All	
Professional	88	12	100	5
Intermediate	75	25	100	23
Skilled non-manual	74	26	100	16
Skilled manual	48	52	100	40
Semi-skilled manual	38	62	100	9
Unskilled*	25	75	100	8
				100

*includes two respondents who were 'armed forces'

Source: Survey data

Table 8: Social class (based on occupation) of 50-64 year old detached men

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Professional	5	2	8	1	13	4
Intermediate	23	14	33	9	42	26
Skilled non-manual	16	12	20	15	19	16
Skilled manual	40	53	28	49	17	40
Semi-skilled manual	9	8	7	11	8	13
Unskilled*	8	10	4	15	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Professional	3	1	0	9	7	1
Intermediate	15	9	9	38	30	13
Skilled non-manual	13	8	15	22	20	9
Skilled manual	52	46	48	24	34	50
Semi-skilled manual	8	15	16	5	6	12
Unskilled*	9	21	12	3	3	14
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

*includes two respondents who were 'armed forces'

Source: Survey data

Table 9 deals with the **level of qualifications**. Graduates comprise 12 per cent - or one-in-eight - of the total, but these men are especially prominent among the early retired and part-time workers. Graduates also make up nearly a quarter of those who do not draw on the benefits system. At the other end of the educational spectrum, nearly two-in-five of all detached 50-64 year old men say they have no formal educational qualifications at all. These men make up nearly half the long-term sick and nearly half the long-term unemployed.

Table 9: Selected qualifications of 50-64 year old detached men

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Degree	12	5	17	5	29	6
O'level/CSE/GCSE	23	13	33	17	45	20
NVQ/ONC/OND/HNC/HND	13	6	18	15	20	11
Craft apprenticeship	22	25	23	19	13	27
None	39	48	30	46	20	42

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Degree	6	3	1	23	17	4
O'level/CSE/GCSE	15	10	9	41	32	12
NVQ/ONC/OND/HNC/HND	8	17	8	19	16	9
Craft apprenticeship	26	15	17	21	21	24
None	45	54	56	24	31	50

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

Source: Survey data

Table 10 looks at **housing status**. Overall, nearly three-quarters of 50-64 year old detached men are owner occupiers, and nearly half are in the privileged position of having no mortgage. The advantageous housing status of so many may go some way towards explaining why they are able to get by without working. Again, however, there are important differences between groups. The early retired are twice as likely as the long-term sick to own their home outright. Those with a pension (whether early retired or not) are also twice as likely to own their home outright as those without. A high

Table 10: Housing status of 50-64 year old detached men

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Owner-occupier – no mortgage	46	32	67	39	53	41
Owner-occupier – with mortgage	25	29	20	18	37	29
Rented – social housing	24	35	9	39	5	27
Rented – private	2	4	0	3	2	0
Other	2	1	3	1	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Owner-occupier – no mortgage	36	22	32	67	59	29
Owner-occupier – with mortgage	28	16	17	26	28	23
Rented – social housing	31	54	44	4	10	42
Rented – private	3	5	3	1	1	4
Other	2	2	3	3	3	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey data

proportion of benefit claimants, especially those in receipt of JSA, live in social housing (ie rented from the local council or a housing association). Hardly any of those who do not claim benefits live in this type of accommodation.

The process of detachment

All the men in the survey had been without a regular full-time job for "most or all of the last six months". In fact, the length of **time since their last job** was usually considerably longer, as Table 11 shows. Only 1 per cent of these 50-64 year old men had never had a full-time job. But nearly half had not worked full-time for at least five years, and 20 per cent had not worked for ten years or more. For these men, the degree of labour market detachment appears considerable.

To some extent all the main sub-groups share this long-term detachment but there are important differences as well. In particular, the detachment of the long-term sick is longer-standing. 60 per cent of the long-term sick haven't had a regular full-time job for at least five years. In contrast, the duration of early retirement and unemployment is generally shorter - for two-thirds it is less than five years.

Although it is generally quite a few years since all these men worked full-time, they are rarely without substantial work experience. One indicator of this is the **length of time in their last job**, shown in Table 12. In no less than 45 per cent of cases, this job had lasted at least twenty years. In two-thirds of all cases it had lasted ten years or more. Once more, however, there are important differences between sub-groups. The early retired are particularly likely to have had a long period in their last job. Indeed, this sort of continuous, long-term employment with a single employer is often the pre-condition for early entitlement to substantial pension rights. In contrast there is evidence that the long-term unemployed have had a more turbulent employment history - for 40 per cent, their last job had lasted less than five years.

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

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Less than 6 months	3	2	3	7	3	2
6 months up to 1 year	8	5	9	12	12	11
1 year up to 2 years	9	7	13	9	8	5
2 years up to 5 years	31	25	40	28	32	25
5 years up to 10 years	28	32	23	25	32	27
10 years or more	20	28	11	19	13	29
Never had one	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Less than 6 months	2	7	3	3	3	3
6 months up to 1 year	5	12	9	12	8	8
1 year up to 2 years	7	11	5	13	11	7
2 years up to 5 years	27	22	26	39	37	23
5 years up to 10 years	32	27	26	23	25	31
10 years or more	27	22	29	10	15	27
Never had one	1	0	2	0	0	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey data

Table 12: Length of time in last regular full-time job

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Less than a year	5	6	0	12	0	6
1 year up to 5 years	16	21	4	28	10	30
5 years up to 10 years	12	15	10	13	11	11
10 years up to 20 years	22	26	22	18	20	13
20 years or more	45	33	65	30	59	41
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Less than a year	5	14	5	2	2	8
1 year up to 5 years	19	40	20	6	6	30
5 years up to 10 years	14	14	16	9	8	18
10 years up to 20 years	27	17	18	19	24	20
20 years or more	36	15	41	64	61	23
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey data

Table 13 shows the **principal reasons for the last job ending**. Information on the causes of job loss needs to be interpreted with care. Sometimes there is a single, clear-cut reason. On other occasions a range of factors of varying importance come into play, especially where a job is left voluntarily. The survey sought to identify the principle cause of job loss, and Table 13 groups the responses into five broad categories - compulsory severance (where it is the employer that brings the job to an end), voluntary redundancy or retirement, other voluntary severance, illness and other reasons.

Table 13: Principal reasons for last full-time job coming to an end

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Compulsory*	34	31	22	65	30	36
Voluntary – redundancy/retirement	35	13	69	15	50	22
Voluntary – own reasons**	7	4	3	10	12	26
Ill health or injury	23	50	6	4	4	9
Other	2	2	0	5	3	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Compulsory*	31	69	37	26	27	42
Voluntary – redundancy/retirement	19	8	26	63	53	10
Voluntary – own reasons**	4	12	15	7	3	12
Ill health or injury	45	3	20	2	17	31
Other	2	8	2	2	1	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

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

** Includes leaving a job to become a full-time carer

Source: Survey data

The reasons vary strongly between the sub-groups. Half the long-term sick left because of illness or injury. Two-thirds of the long-term unemployed left because they were laid off. Two-thirds of the early retired took voluntary redundancy or retirement. These differences are predictable. But what is perhaps more significant is that in each group a substantial proportion of men left for other than the 'obvious' reason. Thus nearly half the long-term sick left for reasons other than sickness. And nearly one-third of the early

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

The process of labour market detachment varies in subtle but important ways between locations, as Table 14 shows. The survey areas are again ranked according to the degree of labour market slack, from Barnsley to Northampton. It is noticeable that in the Barnsley labour market a higher proportion of 50-64 year old men were compulsorily laid off from their last job. In Barnsley, such men are twice as numerous as those whose last job came to an end mainly because of ill-health or injury. Voluntary redundancy and/or retirement is more common among men in a tighter labour market such as Northampton.

Table 14: Principal reasons for last full-time job coming to an end, by survey area

	Barnsley (%)	Chesterfield (%)	Rural Areas (%)	Northampton (%)	All Respondents (%)
Compulsory*	44	32	30	30	34
Voluntary – redundancy/retirement	32	38	32	39	35
Voluntary – own reasons**	4	5	9	7	7
Ill health or injury	19	23	25	23	23
Other	1	2	4	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

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

** Includes leaving a job to become a full-time carer

Source: Survey data

Just as a high proportion of men have previously had long periods of stable full-time employment, their recent detachment from employment is mostly unusual. Table 15 deals with **previous experience of non-employment** and shows that in the vast majority of cases there was no period of out-of-work before starting the last job, or before starting the job before that. The JSA claimants were rather more likely to have experienced period of non-employment between jobs but, even among this group, only two-in-five were affected.

Table 15: Share of men with previous experience of non-employment

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Before starting last job	20	24	10	29	15	30
Before starting job before that	13	16	5	15	10	23

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Before starting last job	21	38	30	11	13	30
Before starting job before that	14	19	23	7	7	20

Source: Survey data

Job aspirations

That many of the men who are currently detached from the labour market have not lost the **will to work** is indicated by Table 16. This shows the answer to the question "Would you like a full-time job?" 30 per cent of the interviewees said "yes". These include more than a third of the long-term sick and more than two-thirds of the long-term unemployed.

The early retired are more clearly satisfied with their status - more than 90 per cent say they do not want a full-time job.

Table 16: Job aspirations

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Would like a full-time job	30	36	7	69	18	25
Thinks there is a realistic chance*	5	2	1	19	3	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Would like a full-time job	34	79	24	14	16	18
Thinks there is a realistic chance*	2	20	3	5	2	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

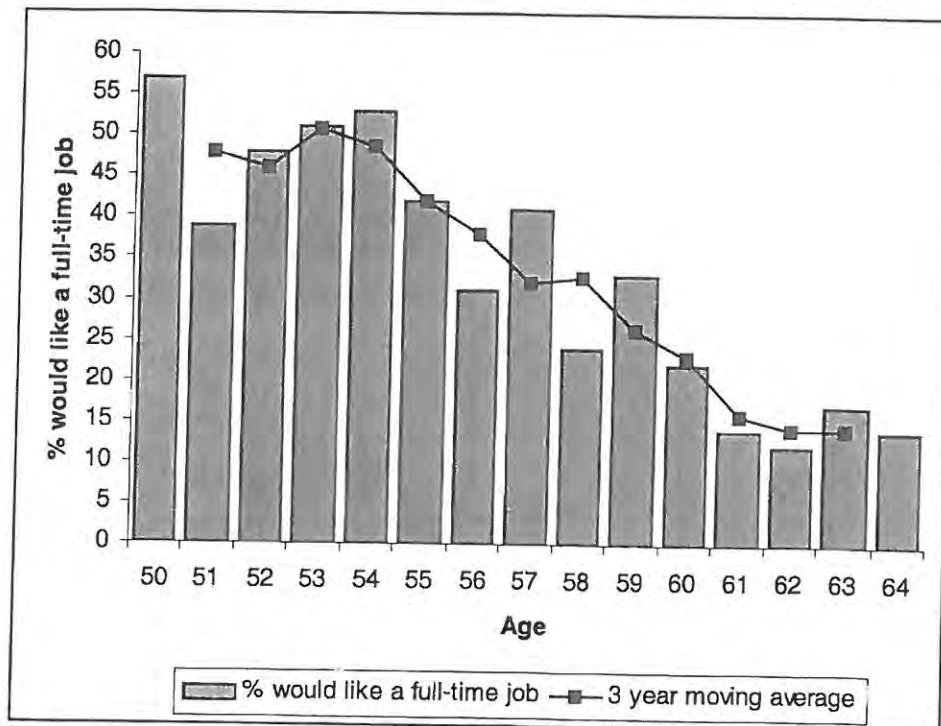
*Share of respondents who 'would like a job' and 'think there's a realistic chance'.

Source: Survey data

Figure 4 shows how the proportion of men who say they would like a full-time job declines with age. As men move nearer the state pension age of 65, and as age takes its toll on health, it is hardly surprising that fewer see any point in want work. Moving nearer 65, the men who have been forced out of employment reluctantly are also joined by successive cohorts of men who are retiring early out of choice, thereby shifting the balance. What Figure 4 also shows, however, is that the proportion who want work appears not to fall away smoothly but in a series of steps - from just below 50 per cent

for men in their early 50s, to around 35 per cent among those in their late 50s, and finally to around 15 per cent for men in their early 60s.

Figure 4: Share of detached 50-64 year old men who would like a F-T job



Wanting a regular full-time job and expecting to get one are of course different things. The second part of Table 16 shows the answers to the question "Do you think there is a realistic chance you will ever get one?", which was asked of those who said they would like a full-time job. Among these men, there is widespread pessimism - hardly any think they have a realistic chance. The long-term unemployed are somewhat more hopeful than the long-term sick or the early retired, but even among this group pessimism is the norm.

Wanting work is also not the same as actually **looking for work**. For all the 50-64 year old men included in the survey, Table 17 compares the answers to two questions - "After your last job ended did you look for full-time work?" and "Are you presently looking for full-time work?".

Table 17: Looking for full-time work

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Looked after last F-T job ended	32	25	20	75	34	30
Looking now	12	1	3	59	12	9

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Looked after last F-T job ended	23	86	41	27	24	44
Looking now	2	74	6	10	5	22

Source: Survey data

Taking the 50-64 year old sample as a whole, 32 per cent said they looked for work after their last job ended. By the time of the survey, this had fallen to just 12 per cent. The notable exception are the JSA claimants, among whom the proportion looking for full-time work has been more consistently high. This may owe something to the stringent rules governing eligibility for Jobseeker's Allowance, which replaced previous unemployment-related benefits in October 1996, but even so, a sizeable minority of the older long-term unemployed appear to have given up looking for work.

The decline in job search activity by the long-term sick and early retired is sharp. Just 1 per cent of the older long-term sick say they are now looking for work, compared to 25 per cent at the time their last job ended - and as many as a third saying they would like a job, noted earlier. One interpretation could be that individuals' health has deteriorated, making job search increasingly impossible. Alternatively, the decline in job seeking among the retired as well as the long-term sick could be the result of growing disillusion. Indeed, as job-seekers give up the struggle or their personal circumstances change they

may at the same time re-define their personal status. At least some of today's 'long-term sick' and 'retired' may initially have seen themselves as 'unemployed'.

Table 18 shows that the share of men looking for work, now or after leaving their last job, does not vary a great deal between our survey areas. There is however evidence that the proportion who would like a full-time job is lower in slacker labour markets. This could reflect an adjustment in men's aspirations to the realistic prospects of finding work: there is little merit in aspiring towards a job if you feel you are never going to get one, or if the few jobs available are unsuitable or poorly paid. It is nevertheless worth noting that in our earlier study of Incapacity Benefit claimants⁴ we found that on average the ICB claimants in places such as Barnsley have a wider range of financial resources than those in Northampton for example. This is indicated by the proportions with a pension, with redundancy money, and owning their home outright. This appears to owe something to the financial packages available to men leaving industries such as coal, which was once Barnsley's dominant employer.

Table 18: Job aspirations by survey area

	Barnsley (%)	Chesterfield (%)	Rural Areas (%)	Northampton (%)	All Respondents (%)
Would like a full-time job	24	30	30	34	30
Looked after last full-time job ended	31	37	31	31	32
Looking now	10	14	12	13	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey data

Table 19 shows the **reasons for not looking** cited by those who are not presently seeking full-time work. The dominant reason given is ill-health or injury - cited in more than half of all cases and by nearly all the non-jobseeking long-term sick. Almost half

⁴ Incapacity Benefit and Unemployment (op.cit.)

Table 19: Reasons not looking for full-time work

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Ill health or injury	54	96	24	45	5	22
Decided to retire	30	7	66	10	33	10
Little chance of a job due to my age	16	7	20	48	26	8
Don't need to work	9	1	17	3	15	10
No / few jobs available	6	2	5	13	19	6
Full-time carer	5	0	2	7	1	55
Not enough suitable jobs	5	2	5	16	11	8
No better off	4	1	5	11	4	2
Full-time education	1	0	0	3	0	4
Other	9	1	7	13	43	20

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Ill health or injury	93	29	52	8	43	73
Decided to retire	10	8	17	59	43	8
Little chance of a job due to my age	9	58	21	20	16	16
Don't need to work	2	4	4	20	12	3
No / few jobs available	2	4	6	10	6	5
Full-time carer	1	13	32	2	2	9
Not enough suitable jobs	2	13	8	8	5	6
No better off	1	13	4	6	5	2
Full-time education	0	0	2	1	1	1
Other	1	4	1	20	10	5

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

Source: Survey data

the long-term unemployed who are not looking for work also cite ill-health. Among the early retired, the decision to retire itself is cited as the reason for not seeking full-time work in two-thirds of cases, though even among this group ill-health also figures prominently.

One-in-six men in the 50-64 year old group cite 'little chance of a job due to my age'. Given prevailing views about ageism in the labour market, this proportion is perhaps surprisingly low but it probably reflects the importance of other factors - notably ill-health and retirement - in motivating men's decisions rather than the absence of ageism. Amongst the JSA claimants who have given up looking for work, the handicap of age is felt strongly. A sizeable minority of the early retired and of part-time workers also cite the handicap of age as a reason for not looking for full-time work.

The role of health

That ill-health or injury is cited so often as a reason for not looking for full-time work deserves further investigation. This is not easy. The interviewers were clearly not in a position to make an informed judgement of their own so it is necessary to rely on what individuals say about themselves. This in turn may be influenced by their benefit status.

Table 20 looks at the cases in which health or injury played a **role in job loss**, though not necessarily the dominant role. In 40 per cent of cases in the sample of 50-64 year old men, health or injury was cited as a factor in the last job coming to an end. This compares to 23 per cent who cited health or injury as the principal factor leading to job loss (in Table 13 earlier). Among the long-term sick the proportion citing health as a factor is particularly high (73 per cent). Among the other sub-groups it is lower. It is also worth noting the converse point - that 27 per cent of those describing themselves as 'long-term sick or disabled' did not leave their last job for reasons at all connected with health.

Looking further back in people's job histories, Table 20 also shows that health was only a very minor factor in bringing preceding jobs to an end, including among those who now describe themselves as long-term sick.

Table 20: Cases in which health or injury was a factor in job ending

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Last regular full-time job	40	73	25	12	11	21
Job before that	7	11	2	6	4	2
Job before that	4	6	1	3	2	3

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Last regular full-time job	73	5	39	11	35	47
Job before that	9	8	8	2	4	9
Job before that	5	7	4	1	3	5

Source: Survey data

Table 21 presents a **self-assessment of health**. This condenses the answers to three questions : 'Does your health limit the work you can do?', 'Does your health keep you from doing some types of work?', and 'For the work you can do, does your health limit how much you can do?'

Three points worth noting. First, a degree of self-reported ill-health is widespread among 50-64 year old detached men - only 40 per cent say that their health doesn't limit the work they can do. Second, among the long-term sick a degree of self-reported health limitation is nearly universal. Third, although nearly all the long-term sick say their health

limits their ability to work, only 28 per cent say that they can't do any work. Likewise, the other sub-groups rarely report an inability to do any work - the problem is normally the type and quantity of work.

Table 21: Self-assessment of impact of health on ability to work

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Can't do any work	13	28	5	3	1	2
Some or a lot of limitation	46	70	33	35	19	36
No limitation	40	2	61	61	80	63
Don't know	1	1	1	1	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA Claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Can't do any work	27	0	12	1	9	18
Some or a lot of limitation	70	29	48	21	43	50
No limitation	2	70	40	77	47	31
Don't know	1	1	0	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey data

The 50-64 year old age group is one in which the health of individuals is likely to deteriorate through time. To explore this process, Table 22 looks at the present day self-assessed health of men in relation to the principal reason for the loss of their last full-time job. A proportion of those who left their last job for reasons other than ill-health

or injury may now face considerable limitations on the work they can do arising from deteriorating health. More optimistically, some of those who left through ill-health may have made at least partial recoveries.

There is evidence that both these processes are at work. Of those who left their last job mainly because of ill-health or injury only 29 per cent say that they can't do any work, though a further 52 per cent say that their health limits them a lot, and only 1 per cent now report no limitations. Conversely, nearly a third of those who were compulsorily laid off now say that they are either limited a lot or can't do any work. Around one-in-five of those who left their last full-time job voluntarily also report this scale of disability.

Table 22: Self-assessed health in relation to cause of job loss

Principal reason for job ending	Health limitation on work				Total (%)
	None (%)	Some (%)	A lot (%)	Can't do any work (%)	
Compulsory*	41	27	19	13	100
Voluntary – redundancy/retirement	61	19	16	4	100
Voluntary – own reasons**	57	22	18	3	100
Illness or accident	1	17	52	29	100
Other	48	22	13	17	100
Total	40	22	25	13	100

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

** Includes leaving a job to become a full-time carer

Source: Survey data

Financial circumstances

Table 23 is particularly important. It combines the answers to several questions in the survey in order to show the sources of **financial support** available to detached 50-64 year old men.

Table 23: Sources of financial support

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Regular paid part-time work	13	2	6	4	89	18
Temporary/casual/seasonal paid work	6	1	6	10	24	9
Pension income	57	42	86	32	76	36
Lump-sum redundancy pay	30	19	45	25	40	21
Partner in work	28	29	25	24	48	21
Benefits system*	63	98	30	74	7	59

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Regular paid part-time work	1	7	10	29	16	8
Temporary/casual/seasonal paid work	0	7	2	15	8	5
Pension income	49	11	29	85	100	0
Lump-sum redundancy pay	22	12	21	47	46	10
Partner in work	30	13	12	35	32	23
Benefits system*	100	100	100	0	44	87

* excluding Child Benefit

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

Source: Survey data

The first line of Table 23 shows that paid part-time working is not widespread except among the self-described 'part-time workers'. Interestingly, even a small number of these (11 per cent) were not engaged in regular part-time work at the time of the survey, presumably because their work was irregular or because they were between jobs.

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

Unsurprisingly, the third line shows that it is the men who describe themselves as early retired who are most likely to have a pension - 86 per cent, though that still leaves one-in-seven early retirees who don't have one. 76 per cent of part-time workers, and 42 per cent of the long-term sick also have income from a pension. Even 32 per cent of the long-term unemployed have pension income.

By comparison with pensions, lump-sum redundancy pay is less widespread. Again, it is the early retired who are the most likely to have a lump-sum redundancy payment to draw on, though the figures here are likely to be boosted by the lump-sum pension payments also made on finishing work. 40 per cent of part-time workers also have access to lump sum redundancy money.

Only a minority of detached 50-64 year old men - 28 per cent overall - have a partner in work. Part-time workers are the most likely to have a working partner. JSA claimants are particularly unlikely to have a partner in work - a reflection perhaps of the benefits system, which reduces an unemployed man's means-tested entitlement in response to his partner's earnings.

The final line of Table 23 shows the extent of dependency on the benefits system. Virtually all those describing themselves as long-term sick - 98 per cent - are claiming one benefit or another. In contrast, only 30 per cent of early retirees and 7 per cent of part-time workers are benefit claimants. Interestingly, 44 per cent of those who receive pension income also draw on the benefits system.

The financial resources of non-employed men are sufficiently important to look at from the opposite direction as well. Table 24 shows what share of men with different resources (eg partner in work, benefits system) fall into different categories. The most striking feature of this table is the importance of Incapacity Benefit claimants, who comprise 70 per cent of all benefit claimants in this 50-64 year old detached group. Also, those with a partner in work are overwhelmingly either non-claimants or claimants of Incapacity Benefit.

Table 24: Sources of financial support

	Self-declared status (%)					All
	Long-term sick	Early retired	Long-term unemployed	Part-time workers	Other	
Regular paid part-time work	6	15	5	66	8	100
Temporary/casual/seasonal paid work	7	27	24	34	8	100
Pension income	28	47	9	12	4	100
Lump-sum redundancy pay	24	47	13	12	4	100
Partner in work	39	27	13	16	4	100
Benefits system*	60	15	18	2	5	100

	Benefits status (%)				All
	ICB claimants	JSA Claimants	Other claimants	No benefits	
Regular paid part-time work	3	5	7	85	100
Temporary/casual/seasonal paid work	2	10	3	86	100
Pension income	37	2	5	56	100
Lump-sum redundancy pay	31	4	7	58	100
Partner in work	46	5	4	46	100
Benefits system*	70	15	15	0	100

	Pension status (%)			All respondents (%)
	Pension income	No pension income	All	
Regular paid part-time work	74	26	100	13
Temporary/casual/seasonal paid work	67	33	100	6
Pension income	100	0	100	57
Lump-sum redundancy pay	86	14	100	30
Partner in work	65	36	100	28
Benefits system*	40	60	100	63
				100

* excluding Child Benefit

Source: Survey data

Table 25: Benefits status

	All respondents (%)	Self-declared status				
		Long-term sick (%)	Early retired (%)	Long-term unemployed (%)	Part-time workers (%)	Other (%)
Jobseeker's Allowance	10	0	1	57	2	4
Income Support	10	18	4	1	1	31
Incapacity Benefit	43	88	22	12	1	11
Severe Disablement Allowance	5	12	1	1	0	5
Housing Benefit	18	23	4	36	4	25
Council Tax Benefit	22	30	6	42	6	27
Family Credit	0	0	0	1	0	0
Other	10	14	4	4	0	36
No benefits*	37	2	68	26	93	39

	Benefits status				Pension status	
	ICB claimants (%)	JSA claimants (%)	Other claimants (%)	No benefits (%)	Pension income (%)	No pension income (%)
Jobseeker's Allowance	0	100	0	0	2	20
Income Support	12	0	49	0	2	29
Incapacity Benefit	100	0	0	0	37	51
Severe Disablement Allowance	9	0	16	0	5	6
Housing Benefit	20	55	39	0	2	38
Council Tax Benefit	27	63	48	0	5	45
Family Credit	0	1	2	0	0	1
Other	12	2	44	0	6	14
No benefits*	0	0	0	100	56	13

* excluding Child Benefit

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

Source: Survey data

Table 25 looks in more detail at **benefits status**. Two points are worth noting. First, Incapacity Benefit provides support for more than two-in-five of all detached 50-64 year old men. Adding in Severe Disablement Allowance, which is available to those with insufficient National Insurance contributions to entitle them to Incapacity Benefit, the proportion claiming sickness-related benefits rises to just under half. Some of the 'other' benefits claimed also include further sickness-related benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Industrial Injuries Benefit. The long-term sick are inevitably the main claimants of sickness-related benefits, but not exclusively. More than 20 per cent of early retirees are Incapacity Benefit claimants. So too are 12 per cent of the self-declared unemployed.

The second notable point about benefit status is the role of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit - claimed around 20 per cent of detached 50-64 year old men. Claimants of these two benefits are especially prevalent among the long-term unemployed and long-term sick. By comparison, few early retirees draw on either.

Hidden unemployment

We have previously argued that economic inactivity among men hides substantial unemployment⁵, and that hidden unemployment is particularly marked among Incapacity Benefit claimants. We do not wish to repeat all the arguments here, but they can be summarised by saying that a lack of suitable job opportunities leads to some unemployed men with health problems gravitating towards Incapacity Benefit. We are not suggesting that these men are making fraudulent claims or that the reported health problems are fictitious. The point is simply that in a fully-employed economy many of the men present claiming Incapacity Benefit would still have been in employment.

Incapacity Benefit claimants are particularly numerous among 50-64 year olds. Men of this age, especially manual workers, are the group that was most exposed of all to industrial restructuring and job loss in the 1980s and 90s. It is hardly surprising

⁵see for example C. Beatty, S. Fothergill, T. Gore and A. Herrington (1997) *The Real Level of Unemployment*, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University

therefore that ICB claimants are so prominent. Table 26 presents a range of statistics concerning Incapacity Benefit claimants, using measures deployed in our previous studies.

Table 26: Male Incapacity Benefit claimants aged 50-64, Great Britain 1998

	number
Incapacity Benefit claimants aged 50-64	710,000
'Real unemployment' - SE 1991 benchmark	310,000
Health not main reason for last job ending (55%)	390,000
Want a full-time job (34%)	240,000
Looked for work after last job ended (23%)	160,000
Presently looking for work (2%)	10,000

Sources: DSS, survey data

The first line shows the number of male ICB claimants aged 50-64 in Great Britain in March 1998, taken from DSS data.

The second line shows an estimate of hidden unemployment based on a comparison with levels of 'permanent sickness' among men in the South East of England in 1991. The assumption here is that the South East illustrates what is achievable in a relatively fully employed economy (though in practice even the South East level in 1991 is likely to contain some hidden unemployment). Excesses over the South East level (8.5 per cent of 50-64 year old men) is assumed to be hidden unemployment. This is the procedure we have adopted in a number of previous reports and articles. In this instance it points towards some 310,000 hidden unemployed.

The remaining lines of Table 26 show estimates derived from the survey data. In each case we have taken the relevant proportion revealed by the survey and applied it to the total number of 50-64 year old ICB claimants shown in the first line of the table.

On this basis, very few male ICB claimants in this age group (just 10,000) are estimated to be looking for work, though substantially more (160,000) are estimated to have looked after their last job ended. These are however narrow views of hidden unemployment. ICB claimants are not required to be active job seekers in order to remain entitled to their benefit, and if there are few suitable jobs available it is hardly surprising that they give up looking. A wider view is required.

The more revealing figures are therefore the estimated numbers for whom health was not the main reason for their last job ending (390,000) and those who say they would like a full-time job (240,000). These are closer to the estimate based on the South East benchmark.

In practice, estimates of hidden unemployment based on the lack of a key role for health in job loss are likely to be inflated in this age group. As Table 22 noted earlier, there is some evidence of a subsequent deterioration in health among some men. Our considered view is therefore that the evidence points to 250-350,000 hidden unemployed men.

It is important to emphasise, once more, that in describing these men as hidden unemployed we are not suggesting that their benefit claims are fraudulent, or that their disabilities are anything less than real. These are 50-64 year old men who are hidden unemployed in the sense that they **might reasonably be expected to have been in work in a fully-employed economy.**

An assessment

In previous reports based upon this survey data ⁶ we have emphasised the differences between groups. The detached male workforce is united by its separation from regular, full-time work but by little else. It comprises a number of distinct sub-groups - the long-term sick, early retired, long-term unemployed and so on.

But overlain on these differences there is evidence in the data for 50-64 year olds of what could be described as two parallel 'worlds'. Both are associated with detachment from the labour market but the meaning of that detachment is quite different. We have not been able to explore this idea exhaustively within the confines of this short report, but broadly the two worlds can be described as follows.

The first is the **middle class world**. This includes most lowly white-collar workers as well as traditionally middle class professionals. Detachment for this group mostly takes the form of early retirement. They leave voluntarily from jobs which they have usually held for a very long time, and in doing so begin to draw on accumulated pension rights. They mostly own their home outright and they no longer have dependent children living with them. A sizeable minority maintain contact with the labour market through part-time working. Nearly all no longer want a full-time job, though a small minority do look initially for work before reconciling themselves to retirement. Overall, this group draws little if at all on the benefits system.

The other is the **working class world**, which includes just about all manual workers. These men are much more likely to have fallen out of work because of redundancy or ill-health. Some are owner occupiers, even without a mortgage, but a great many others live in rented housing. Fewer men in this world have a pension. Accordingly, they tend to be more dependent on the benefits system, above all on Incapacity Benefit. Indeed, it can appear that for working class men, Incapacity Benefit functions as the alternative to a pension when meaningful job opportunities for them have come to an end. In the working class world, many of the men who have become detached would still like a job. But hardly any now think there is a realistic chance of one.

⁶see for example *The Detached Male Workforce* (op.cit.)

It is important to emphasise that the characteristics of the middle and working class worlds are not mutually exclusive. There is overlap. Quite large numbers of working class men do have a pension for example, though hardly any of the middle class men are without one. Incapacity Benefit is also widely claimed across the social spectrum, even though it is more common among working class men.

In numerical terms, it is the working class world that is the larger. On the basis of occupational background for example, the middle class/working class split is approximately 40 : 60. That balance varies from place to place. Among our survey areas, the working class model is more prevalent in Barnsley than say Northampton. Middle-class policy makers need to take note. It is not their world of early retirement and comfortable pensions that predominates among 50-64 year old men without jobs. A more accurate characterisation would be the manual worker, made compulsorily redundant, with physical limitations on the work he can now do and heavily reliant on the benefits system.

In policy terms, the middle class/working class dichotomy also suggests different approaches. For the early retired white-collar worker, there is generally little prospect of labour market re-attachment and since most tend not to make a big claim on the benefits system there is probably little reason for pursuing this objective either. These men need policies which help maintain an active lifestyle and promote participation in community life.

For the involuntarily detached manual worker the approach needs to be different. Many of these men still want and need jobs. The solution to their problems is to create more jobs including suitable and flexible jobs, especially in depressed areas, and to help them fill them. And for the ones who neither need nor want to work, perhaps for reasons of ill-health, the benefits system needs to be modified to reflect the reality of early retirement.

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